

reaching the border, we turned west again onto the dirt road to Mongun Taiga through gorgeous steppe valleys in which nomadic herders lived year-round. One group of families honored our arrival by slaughtering a yak and rewarded (?) us with a hearty bowl of yak soup. Despite flat tires and mechanical breakdowns, after five days we reached Mugur Aksy, the town closest to Mongun Taiga, where we replenished our food and fuel. The day after we arrived, we rode the 30 kilometers to some yurts at the base of the peak, where herders warmly welcomed us with a platter of marmot. Fleas on marmots had caused an outbreak of bubonic plague, but we figured cooked marmot was safe. Early the next morning, we set off for the climb. A beautiful mass of a mountain with a round, snow-covered summit, Mongun Taiga towers 4000 feet higher than anything else in the region. The route was straightforward and not technical. We ascended the south face, first along a moraine that ran up to the snout of the big glacier. There Mirgen lit an incense offering to the spirit of the mountain; although the Tuvans call themselves Buddhist, old animist ways die hard. We continued up steep scree gullies left of the glacier to the end of the rock and up steep snow slopes to where the two main glaciers meet. From there, we roped up and followed the glacier's gentle grade to the summit. From the flat top, we had a tremendous 360° view, from Khindiktig Khol, the big lake to the north, to the Turgun Mountains of Mongolia to the south. We descended a different route to the west and ended up back at the yurts, shattered after a 13-hour day with a 6000-foot rise. This was probably the first non-Soviet ascent of the mountain. Following the climb, Mirgen left us and we continued on our way to Kazakhstan. Our route curled around the east and north sides of Mangun Taiga, where we spied more challenging routes.

SHEPARD KOPP

*Borkoldoy Region of the Central Tien Shan, Kirghizstan.* A mountaineering and trekking group of five Russians and six British (Marion Elmes, Mike Parsons, Larry Hootton, Jane Sanderson, Alan Martley and I) spent three weeks exploring the Borkoldoy region (41°15'N, 77°45'E) during August. We reached the area with a six-wheel-drive truck from Lake Issyk-kul to the north. The peaks were alpine in size and character, mainly a shade under 5000 meters. We climbed eight virgin summits. Snow conditions were generally poor and snow arêtes particularly difficult. Kirghiz nomads occupy most of the major valleys in the summer months. There are snow leopards, wolves and bears as well as sheep, goats and horses. The high valleys are grassland and superb walking and riding country. The weather was generally alpine—mixed and unsettled, but no storms lasted more than a day.

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*Pik Olympia, Tien Shan, Kirghizstan.* The UIAA (International Union of Alpine Associations), which represents 77 mountaineering associations world-