

in the Kichik Alai and Alai ranges, Andrei Lebedev (leader), Ilia Guerov, Boris Malakhov, Piotr Rykalov, and I (assistant leader) began our expedition to China's Kashgar Range. Over 28 days, with no camels, L.O., or other support, we explored the southeast slopes of Muztagh Ata and the southeast slopes of Kongur (traveling 250 kilometers in total). We crossed two technical passes on the first part of our route; on the second part, we crossed a forgotten pass from the Karakul area east to the Teresaz-Su Valley. Here we descended to the lowest point of our route (2800m). We then went to the upper Chingensu, walking through the complicated icefall of the South Chingen Glacier and made a traverse (from east to west) of Peak Kezi-Sel (6525m on Chinese maps; 6590m on Soviet maps and in the Himalayan Index). This peak lies in the Kashgar Range to the south of Kongur; it was attempted in 1982 (see 1983 *AAJ*, pp. 296-7).

We then attempted an ascent of Jamanjar (7229m), which lies between Kongur and Kongur Tjube. Strong winds and deep fog stopped us at the east summit (7100m) on July 31. We had no time for a second attempt. On August 5, we crossed Torugart Pass back into Kyrgyzstan.

OTTO CHKHETIANI, *Russia*

#### KUN LUN SHAN

*Shipton's Arch, First Ascent.* In May, Sam Lightner, Nancy Feagin, Jeremy Schmidt, Gordon Wiltsie, and I went on a mini-adventure to revisit an arch originally introduced to the western world by Eric Shipton. The arch lies in the Kara Tagh, a tiny mountain range 25 or 30 miles northwest of Kashgar in China's Xinjiang Province, and towers at least 1,200 feet above the narrow gorge it spans. The fact that no one has visited it since Shipton seems odd. But the arch is hidden within an obscure, crumbly range of conglomerate, and is surrounded by maze-like slot canyons. It is impossible to see without some careful research, some persistence, and some good luck. Or you can simply wander a little ways northwest of Kashgar, ask any local goat herder, and he'll tell you just how to get there.

Our trip was organized by Jeremy Schmidt, who had won the backing of the National Geographic Society by pitching our trip both as a journey of exploration and a journey back in time to learn about Shipton and his wanderings in the vast expanses of northwest China. I had seen the arch from a distance in 1993 and had given Jeremy the idea of refinding it. Sam Lightner Jr. had added the challenge of climbing the arch, fleshing out the trip.

Once in Kashgar, it took us only a couple of days to reconnoiter the mountain range, known as the Kara Tagh by the local Uygers and Tajiks. By following the directions given to us by local goat herders, we spotted the arch. We then hired a local guide to show us the proper slot canyon that led to the arch from the south side of the range. He took us about halfway there before we ran out of daylight.

But Shipton (and his wife) had written that the approach from the north, though harder to find initially, was easier to follow. So we swung around to the north, where another goat herder took us all the way there—about a three-hour hike up a narrow canyon with a few short but vertical chimneys that are slippery when wet.

Once established at the base of the arch, Sam, Nancy, and I climbed up its west arm, placing a couple of bolts for each belay and six or seven bolts for protection along the way. We climbed approximately 600 vertical feet to attain the summit.

The climbing up the western arm is generally easy fifth class with one or two over-



*Shipton's Arch from the south, just outside the small village of Mingyol, about 30 kilometers west-northwest of Kashgar. MARK NEWCOMB*

hangs that went at about 5.6. The rock is loose conglomerate. The exposure is similar to the East Ridge of Wolf's Head in the Wind Rivers with several hundred more feet of exposure on either side.

Having climbed the arch and done some measurements via a wild rappel undertaken by Sam, we proceeded to rappel down the 800-foot wall that led down to the slot canyon beneath the arch. We rappelled off double bolt anchors placed in relatively solid, water-polished conglomerate. Once down, we threaded our way southward out the slot canyon, reaching in a few hours the point to which we had been led before by our local guide and completing our journey through the Kara Tagh.

MARK NEWCOMB

*Chakragil, West Ridge.* While taking advantage of a free week during a visit to the far reaches of Xinjiang Province in northwestern China, I climbed the west ridge of Chakragil (22,071'). I took no map or altimeter and am therefore uncertain of the elevations of my camps. The roundtrip, from the Karakoram Highway and back, took six days. I had long been intrigued by Eric Shipton's account, in his book *Mountains of Tartary*, about his attempt with Bill Tilman in 1948 on the north ridge.

I took three days to ascend to a high camp. My route ascended the northerly of two glacier basins. A deep gorge with a swift, muddy stream exits the southerly of the two. A clearer, mellower stream and a substantially shallower gorge exits the northerly. It's an easy hike up the northerly basin, onto the terminal moraine of the glacier and along the lateral moraine on its north-northwesterly flank.