

hanging valley ringed by unclimbed granite peaks. It was an easy decision.

Back in Rilong we located Mr. Mah. He is a local horse packer, who has served multiple climbing teams; his trophies are fleeces and hats from past expeditions. Mr. Mah is a bargaining tactician who uses the language barrier to his advantage. He upsized us to four horses, yet he was fair, reliable, and entertaining. He dropped our gear by the river below our valley (two drainages north of Celestial Peak and the last main side valley to the west of the Changping before it starts its big bend to the west), and we carried loads up to a high camp.

We waited through four rainy days before attempting Chiwen (5,250m) on the south side of the valley. We climbed 10 long pitches in poor weather to the summit; some were 4th class (400m, 5.9). We attempted a 5,006m peak northwest of Chiwen, on the ridge towards Chibu. We first called the peak The Little Guy, but after he thwarted us three times we upgraded him to The Little Prince. We then bivouacked below Chibu (5,466m), the aesthetic prize of the valley. In a long day we climbed 14 pitches of sustained 5.9-5.10+, linking the steep gendarmes up the left side of the east face. The granite was good, and cracks were continuous. We descended our route in the dark. After waiting out a snow storm we finally summited The Little Prince (300m, 5.10+). We left the valley in slashing rain. In the 16 days we spent there we did not see anyone else.

The weather was poor to fair. It rained almost every second night, but when the sun does come out it dries the rock quickly. From local reports it seems that October is colder but has more consistent high pressure.

There is not a lot of unclimbed technical alpine rock left in the Changping, which is the more popular of the two parallel valleys for Chinese hikers and trekkers. However, a more thorough investigation of the Shuangqiao is warranted, a valley that has the advantage of being accessible by bus.

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KATHERINE FRASER, *Canada*

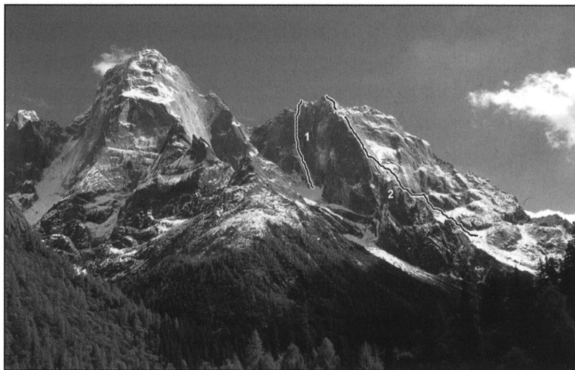
*Editor's note: Aidan Oloman was killed by an avalanche in interior British Columbia in January 2006.*



The east face of Chibu (5,466m), showing the line of the first ascent by Canadians Katherine Fraser, Katy Holm, and Aidan Oloman. The climb gave 14 pitches on good granite to 5.10+. *Katherine Fraser*

*Putala Shan (5,428m), north face, solo.* The north face of Putala Shan is an impressive big wall, which I have tried twice. I have not attempted the same mountain twice since 1990, when I made my last winter solo attempt on Fitz Roy in Patagonia. My first attempt on Putala did not go well. I hoped success would be the sign of my comeback, and I wanted to prove to myself that I was not finished as a climber.

I first saw Putala Shan in the autumn of 2003. I was trekking as part of my rehabilitation a year after my accident in Gyachung Kang. [In 2002 Yamanoi lost a total of five fingers on both hands and all of the toes on his right foot as a result of bad weather during an alpine-style



Seen from the northwest across the Shuangqiao Valley: the unclimbed Pt 5,592m (a.k.a. Barbarian Peak; left) and Putala Shan (5,428m). (1) Jiayou (north face) (850m, 18 pitches, 5.8 A3+, Yamanoi, 2005, not to summit). (2) Dalai Lama (west face) (800m, 22 pitches, VIII-, Grmovsek-Grmovsek, 2003). *Andrej Grmovsek*

ascent and descent of the north face of Gyachung Kang—Ed.]. Even compared to the big walls of places like Yosemite, the face on Putala seemed most attractive. In fact, I noticed many beautiful crack lines extending up to the crest. Although I made my final attempt after carefully evaluating my physical condition and cold weather equipment, the climb was as difficult as expected.

On June 25 we established base camp in a beautiful meadow at an altitude of 3,700m. My wife Taeko Yamanoi supported me as base camp manager, with a cook

and an interpreter. On the 27th I carried equipment and provisions to the bottom of the wall, at approximately 4,500m, then spent a week fixing rope on the first 300m, in weather as bad as on my last attempt. Progress was difficult due to continuous rain and snow. As I chose a route following a large corner, ice fell on me frequently.

On July 13 I began in earnest my capsule-style attempt with a portaledge. The rock, especially on the lower part of the route, is solid granite, but as I climbed higher expanding flakes slowed my progress to about one pitch a day. Ice coating the rock prevented free climbing, so I was forced to use aid. Shortly after beginning, I got slight frostbite on my hands and feet, which are now my Achilles heel after my accident in 2002. Both my down jacket and sleeping bag were soaked, so my extremities were unable to recover, and as I was unable to sleep, I also began to suffer from exhaustion. To make matters worse, the sun never reached the face, and the snow and ice sticking to the upper part of the wall made the climb very stressful. However, on the 19th, the seventh day of my climb, I topped out on the crest at an altitude of 5,350m. I needed two more days to rappel the route and return to base camp.

Summary: first ascent of Putala Shan north face (not to summit) via Jiayou (Chinese for “come on” or “do your best”); 850m, 18 pitches, 5.8 A3+.

YASUSHI YAMANOI, *Japan*

*Eagle Rock Peak, first ascent.* A man wearing a leather jacket with a bloody knife in his hands stands by the roadside, digging inside the body of a slaughtered yak. We realized we were in China.

Christof Looser, Martin Ruggli, and I started out for the now-famous Quonglai mountains, 280km east of Chengdu, on September 25. Our goal was to establish a new route on one of the rock peaks north of Siguniang. Our information came from Tamotsu Nakamura.

After reconnaissance we set up base camp in the Shuangqiao Valley (Double Bridge Valley) at an altitude of ca. 3,500m. Recently a (horrible) road has been built into this valley to bring hundreds of Chinese tourists from one scenic spot to the next. The tourists stick pretty much to the road, leaving the rest of the valley quiet.