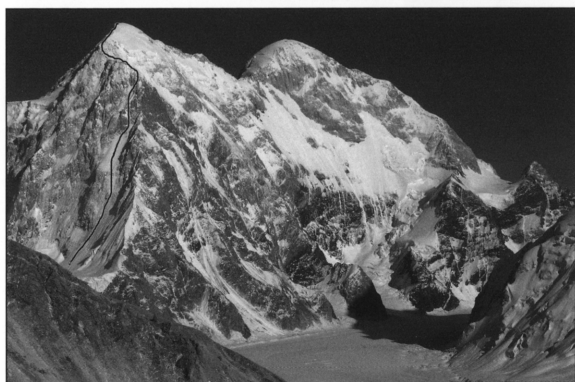


(A) Yanamax II (6,180m) and (B) northeast sub-summit of Xuelian (6,231m), seen from west-southwest. Marked are approximate lines of (1) Yanamaniacs and (2) west ridge attempt. Bruce Normand



Yanamax II (6,180m, left) and rounded summit of Yanamax (6,332m) from west-northwest. Marked is Yanamaniacs. Bruce Normand

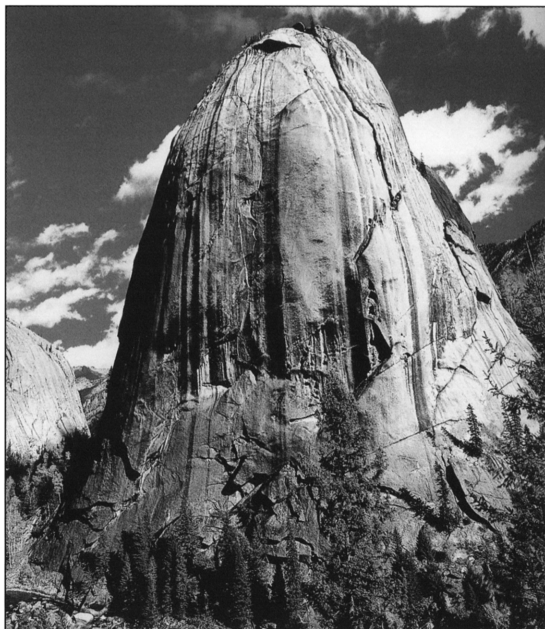
considerably more time than was available. They retreated.

On the 24th Brown, Dempster, and Normand returned to the previously established advanced base below Xuelian's west satellite (6,422m), Vilhauer prudently opting out of further climbing after frostnipping a toe during the Yanamax II ascent. Over the next four-and-a-half days they climbed the fine 2,650m marble prow that separates the north-northwest and north-northeast faces. They descended the west ridge, then the southwest ridge, and finally rappelled onto the southwest face, regaining the west ridge at 5,200m, below its steepest section. Down-climbing the northern flank they reached advanced base that night. Kyle Dempster's account of this route, named *Great White Jade Heist* (5.7 WI5 M6 R), appears earlier in the *Journal*. The three climbers were recipients of one of the 2010 Piolets d'Or.

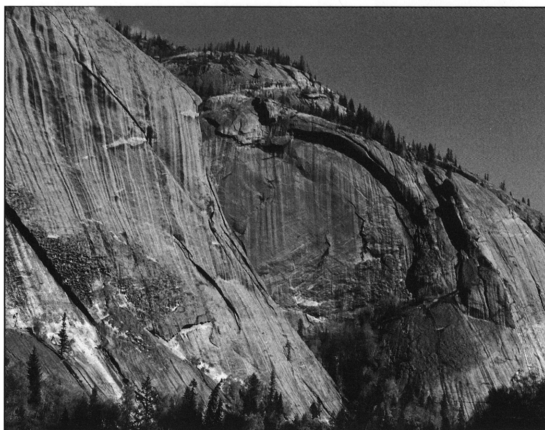
LINDSAY GRIFFIN, *Mountain INFO*

## ALTAI

*Keketuohai reconnaissance.* Keketuohai or Koktokay lies in the southern Altai Range of China's Xinjiang Province, close to the border with Mongolia and 600km north-northeast of Urumqi. For three years I have attempted to travel to the area on the recommendation of non-climbing friends in China. In autumn I was finally successful and discovered a wealth of granite towers and walls that have yet to be visited by rockclimbers. I was told that there are 108 granite peaks here, and I estimate rock faces to reach a height of ca 300m, though I only saw part of the area. These walls are situated along the gorge of the Iyrtish River, and some reach the valley floor. Of all the valleys I have seen during world travels, Keketuohai compares closest to Yosemite, and locals assured me that no one has ever climbed there. Spring and autumn would be the best seasons: summer is just too hot, and in winter the temperatures regularly fall to -40°C and lower; it is one of the coldest places in China. While there is certainly no El Cap or Half Dome, the volume of rock is possibly greater than Yosemite, and there are also many good boulders in the valley bottom.



Divine Bell in Keketuohai National Geological Park. *Dennis Gray*



Granite scenery in Keketuohai. *Dennis Gray*

There are daily flights from Beijing to Urumqi and two scheduled flights a week from Moscow. From Urumqi an express bus, going toward Altai, will drop you off at Fuyun, where it is possible to catch a mini-bus from the Tourist Hotel for the remaining 70km to Keketuohai. Foreigners cannot hire vehicles in Xinjiang.

So why has no one climbed there? Keketuohai is a National Geological Site; visitors are taken part way into the valley on a battery-driven "golf buggy" along a newly constructed road.

The area is populated by Kazakhs, who are building the park infrastructure and visitor access. They are unlikely to allow rock climbing, unless sanctioned by higher authority in Beijing or Urumqi. This may be possible, as Chinese authorities are always interested in creating opportunities that will provide jobs and foreign currency. The Chinese Mountaineering Association is probably not aware of Keketuohai's climbing potential.

Currently, the situation in Xinjiang is fraught: no internet access and not possible to phone from abroad. Traveling is dangerous, due to ethnic tension between the Uighers and Han Chinese. There were large riots in July and many subsequent ethnic incidents. Al Qaeda has now declared a jihad on the Han Chinese. However,

the local population, Kazakhs, have so far not involved themselves with this problem. Visiting Keketuohai would certainly necessitate one of the party having a basic grasp of Mandarin.

It may be that UIAA representatives could talk with CMA delegates about the possibilities of allowing rock climbing, or it might be that a group of climbers could arrive on spec, make friends with the Kazakhs, and hope that permission to climb was granted. But it's a long way to travel if the answer is no.

DENNIS GRAY, *Alpine Club*