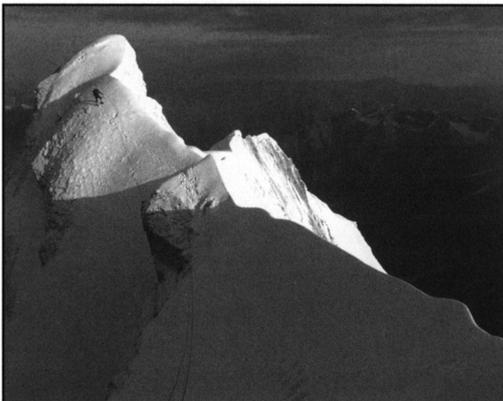




North Buttress of Sulamar (Khanjaylak II), showing Fowler-Ramsden line. Bruce Normand



Ramsden on Sulamar's summit ridge after climbing north buttress. Mick Fowler

*Tien Shan, Xuelian Range, Sulamar (5,380m), north buttress.* From mid-August to mid-September Mike Morrison, Paul Ramsden, Rob Smith, and I visited the north side of the Xuelian Range. This area had been visited twice before by mountaineering trips, both led by Bruce Normand; it is where Bruce, Jed Brown, and Kyle Dempster climbed their 2010 Piolets d'Or-awarded route on Xuelian West. We operated as two independent teams, with Morrison and Smith exploring side valleys off the Muzart Glacier, while Ramsden and I descended the rarely traveled Xiate Trail to explore the mountains beyond the snout of the Muzart Glacier.

Our original aim was to ascend the Muzart Glacier to the col at its head and attempt Xuelian East. However, heavy snowfall during the acclimatization period made glacier travel overly exciting. Both Paul and I fell completely into crevasses: a first for both of us in over 30 years of mountaineering. Deciding that the long approach to the head of the Muzart Glacier would prove too time-consuming and dangerous with so much fresh snow, we decided to retrace part of the walk-in and strike up an unknown valley to the foot of the north side of Sulamar.

This peak was first climbed in 2008 by Normand and Guy McKinnon, who refer to it as Khanjaylak II. Approaching from the south, they climbed the northeast slopes that rise from the col between Khanjaylak I (5,424m) and II (AAJ 2009).

It was with some relief that we eventually discovered we had chosen the correct valley and could reach our objective, the prominent 1,600m north buttress. We took a full day to walk to the

foot of the face from our base camp by the Muzart on the Xiate Trail. From there we climbed for just over two days up steep ice and mixed terrain, at TD+, to gain a fine snow ridge leading back left to the summit. Our bivouacs on the face were sitting/hanging.

We descended the previously unclimbed south ridge and regained base camp in a six-day round trip. All four of us felt the area to be one of the most beautiful in which we had climbed.

MICK FOWLER, UK, *Alpine Club*

## QINGHAI - QILIAN MOUNTAINS

Peak 4,722m; Peak 4,880m; Gradiska (5,254m), southwest face. Located on the Qinghai-Ganshou border in central China, the Qilian (locally, the “Heavenly Mountains”) run northwest for some 800km from the town of Xining. The main range is split between northwestern and southeastern sections, though a separate sub-group to the west of the southeastern section includes the highest peak, Kangze'gyai (ca 5,800m, see AAJ 2010). The highest peak in the main range is Qilian Shan (Qilianin, 5,547m), situated in the northwestern sector. From late July to early August Oh Young-hoon's 14-member Korean Youth Expedition planned to climb Gradiska (5,254m), the highest peak in the southeastern group. This peak has only been open to foreign mountaineers since 2000, and the first ascent is believed to have been made by Japanese in 2004. Information is hard to find, but the mountain is rarely visited and only the southwest face has been climbed.

The group established base camp at 4,100m, after a four-hour drive from Xining to Menwuan (3,600m), followed by three or four hours of walking. They placed Camp 1 at 4,600m, from where moraine led to 400m-high summit slopes up to 55°.

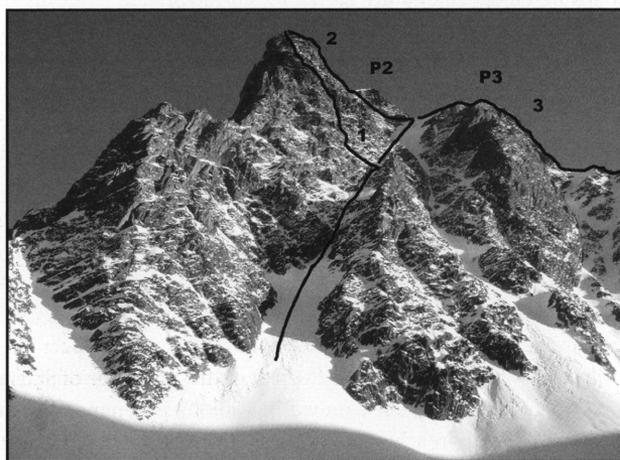
Most other mountains in the region are unclimbed and the expedition made first ascents of Peaks 4,722m and 4,880m.

CHRISTINE PAE, *Director Korean Alpine Federation*, and LINDSAY GRIFFIN, *Mountain INFO*

## SICHUAN

*New regulations.* Beginning January 1, 2011, new Chinese regulations make it financially much harder for small parties to attempt virgin peaks in Sichuan. Climbers will face up to five or six times the cost compared with 2010, with the rise in royalties more acute for lower-altitude peaks. Even for previously climbed peaks, individuals pay more than double 2010 prices.

For peaks above 7,000m the fee in 2011 is 2,800 Yuan



Foreshortened image of Xiaqiangla's 400m northeast face. Peaks 2 and 3 on north ridge are marked. (1) Matsushima-Sato Route. (2) Upper section of descent on north ridge. (3) North ridge, attempted by Kato and Yoshimura over Peak 3. *Chiharu Yoshimura*