

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°.

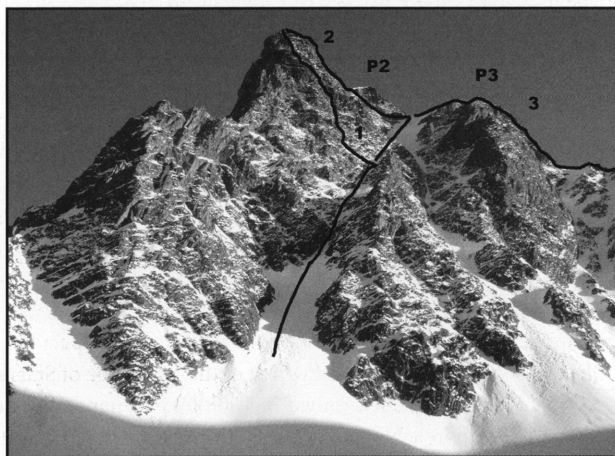
Most other mountains in the region are unclimbed and the expedition made first ascents of Peaks 4,722m and 4,880m.

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

per person. In reality, as there is only one peak of this height in the Province, this figure applies to parties attempting new lines or repeating established routes on Minya Konka (7,556m), which has seen several ascents since 1932.

Attempting an unclimbed peak between 6,000m and 7,000m costs 25,000–45,000 Yuan per expedition. If the mountain has been climbed, this drops to 1,800 Yuan per person (or a total of 15,000 for an expedition of 10 or more). At the time of writing, the criteria that define the sliding scale for expeditions remain unclear.

For peaks between 5,500 and 6,000m, the equivalent royalties are 20,000–35,000 for an expedition attempting an unclimbed peak and 1,000 per person for a climbed peak (9,000 for a team of 10 or more). Compare this with 2010 prices, when an expedition to an unclimbed peak was charged 9,000 Yuan.

For peaks from 3,500m to 5,500m, the cost is 15,000–30,000 per team for an unclimbed peak, 500 per person for a previously climbed summit (no expedition price quoted).

Those wanting simply to rock or ice climb pay 500 Yuan each, while everyone is required to contribute a 200-Yuan environment protection fee. When climbing within a national park, local entrance and environmental fees are additional.

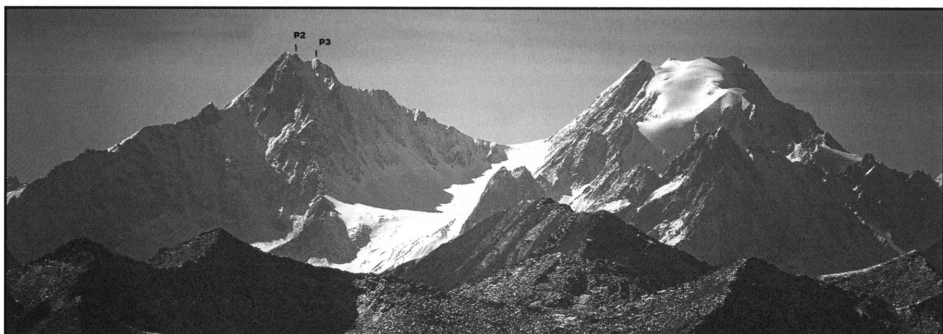
Staff fees increase less drastically. A Liaison Officer (officially mandatory when climbing on a mountain above 3,500m) costs 680 Yuan a day. This price includes wages, equipment, and insurance. Assistant L.O.s and interpreters cost 580, cooks 480, and other staff 300 Yuan. If a high-altitude porter is employed, the cost is 880 per day. On top of this each member of the Chinese staff needs a food allowance of 120 per day. It also seems likely that climbers will have to pay a service charge of five percent on the overall expenses incurred during their expedition.

LINDSAY GRIFFIN, *Mountain INFO*, with assistance from Tamotsu Nakamura and Jiyue Zhang

DAXUE SHAN

Dangling Range, Xiaqiangla (5,470m), northeast face. After my first ascent in 2007 of Bawangshan (5,551m) in the Qonglai Shan (AAJ 2008), I wondered what my next target should be. It didn't take long to find a mountain that fit my criteria: unclimbed, prominent, beautiful, and with easy access.

Xiaqiangla is an outstanding peak in the northern Daxue Shan, west of Danba and the Dadu



Xiaqiangla from northeast. Summit to right apparently unspecified on maps, though another off-picture to right is marked as 5,240m. North ridge attempt climbed from broad snowy col between the two mountains. Peaks 2 and 3 on north ridge are marked. Chiharu Yoshimura