



## Potala Shan, North Face, Jiayou, Second Ascent and Historical Clarification

China, Sichuan, Qionglai Shan, Siguniang National Park

**After four previous attempts in the seven years, He Chuan, Sun Bin, and Wang Zhen completed the second ascent of Jiayou, the route that Yasushi Yamanoi from Japan climbed in 2005 up the north face of Potala Shan (5,428m).** Yamanoi soloed the route from June 28 to July 19 in generally poor, snowy conditions, fixing the lower section and then completing the route over seven days in capsule style. He took a further two days to descend and graded the 18-pitch route 5.8 A3+ (see AAJ 2006).

In mid-August, the three Chinese climbers made a base camp at 4,650m, 100m below the start of the wall. Starting on August 20, in a single push with a portaledge, they climbed the route in 15 pitches over five days. Most of it follows a large dihedral, and over 70 percent of the route was climbed on aid. They added eight new bolts, on bivouacs, rappel anchors, or to reinforce belays. Like Yamanoi, the Chinese finished their ascent upon reaching the southeast ridge at around 5,350m, still a long way from the summit; they descended to base camp in a day.

Up to a point four pitches below the top, which appeared to be the last of Yamanoi's bivouacs, they found his bolt belays and abandoned gear. At the top of the next two pitches they found bolt belays and abandoned gear; above that they found nothing.

He Chuan reports that the last two pitches are mainly in a two- to five meter-wide chimney chocked with jammed blocks. The terrain is 20° less than vertical, not steep like the great dihedral below. Above the last bolt, He Chuan climbed a short offwidth and then a narrow chimney to reach the wide chimney with chockstones; he passed behind or alongside the big chockstones. All this was relatively dry and considerably easier than the main dihedral below, going free rather than on aid. There were no bolts, slings, or any form of rappel anchors visible.

Yamanoi said there had been a lot of snow and ice on the route, forcing him to wear full plastic boots for his entire climb. He felt the last section of the route was probably the hardest, while for the Chinese these pitches were by far the easiest. Yamanoi remembers rock covered by ice, which he climbed without pitons. He climbed around a red pyramid to finish, and in the last part there appeared to be several dangerous hanging flakes. He spent only 15 minutes on the mist-covered ridge before descending, and thinks he used slings for rappel anchors. Yamanoi also remembers leaving a lot of material on the route as he battled to escape an incoming storm.

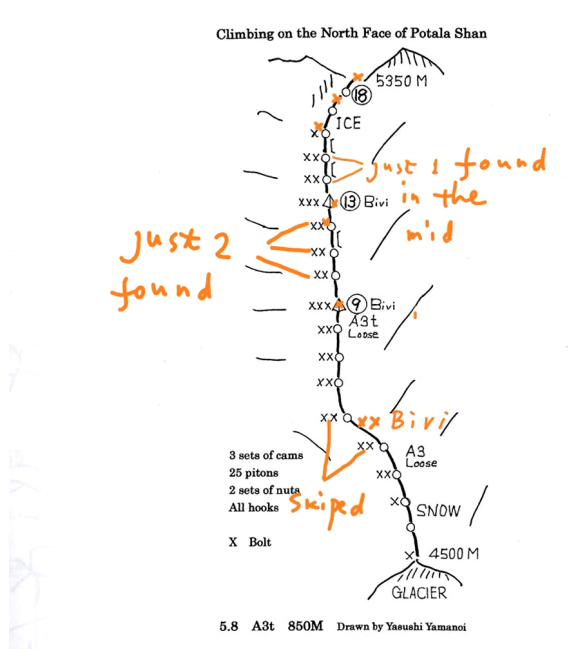
Despite the absence of evidence from the 2005 ascent on the final section, He Chuan accepts Yamanoi's account, adding that a plastering of snow and ice on the last two pitches would completely change the difficulty of that section. He also notes that a violent earthquake affecting this area in 2008 could have removed jammed blocks and rappel anchors.

Chuan confirmed the base of the wall was at 4,750m, making the route 600m rather than the originally reported 850m.

Potala Shan's summit likely has been reached by only one route, established by Andrej and Tanja Grmovsek from Slovenia in the autumn of 2003 (see AAJ 2004). The two climbed the west face (800m, VIII-) to the north (main) top of the broad mountain.

– **Lindsay Griffin**, with information from He Chuan, China, Xia Zhongming, Germany, and Yasushi Yamanoi, Japan

## Images



The original topo of Jiayou drawn by Yasushi Yamanoi, with annotations by the Chinese after their 2020 ascent.



Sun Bin in the wide chimney filled with large chockstones that forms the last section of the route Jaiyou.



Looking down the north face dihedral of Potala Shan in 2020 from a similar point to that seen in a 2005 Yamanoi image. The abandoned Japanese rope is visible on the right.



He Chuan in the large chimney forming the last section of Jiayou on the north face of Potala Shan.

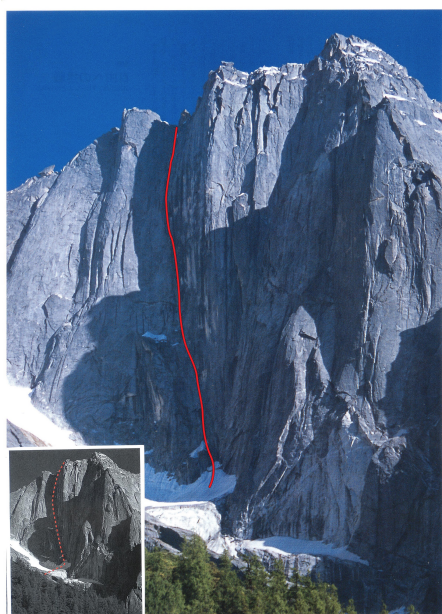


In this drone image, He Chuan (circled) stands on the southeast ridge at the top of Jiayou on the north face of Potala Shan. Down and right of him is the large, broken chimney system used to exit the route. The summit of Potala is way off picture to the right.





Looking down the dihedral during the 2005 ascent of the north face of Potala Shan. The location is similar to the image taken on the 2020 ascent.



The line of Jiayou (Yamanoi, 2005) on the north face of Potala Shan. Both ascents of this route to date stopped at the ridge. The summit is at upper right; It has only been ascended from the right, via the west face (800m, VIII-), first climbed in 2003 by Andrej and Tanja Grmovsek.

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