

The north side of Disteghil Sar (7,885m, at right), Disteghil Sar East (ca 7,700m, left), and the upper Malangutti Glacier basin, from the summit of Peak 6,247m. *Bruce Normand*

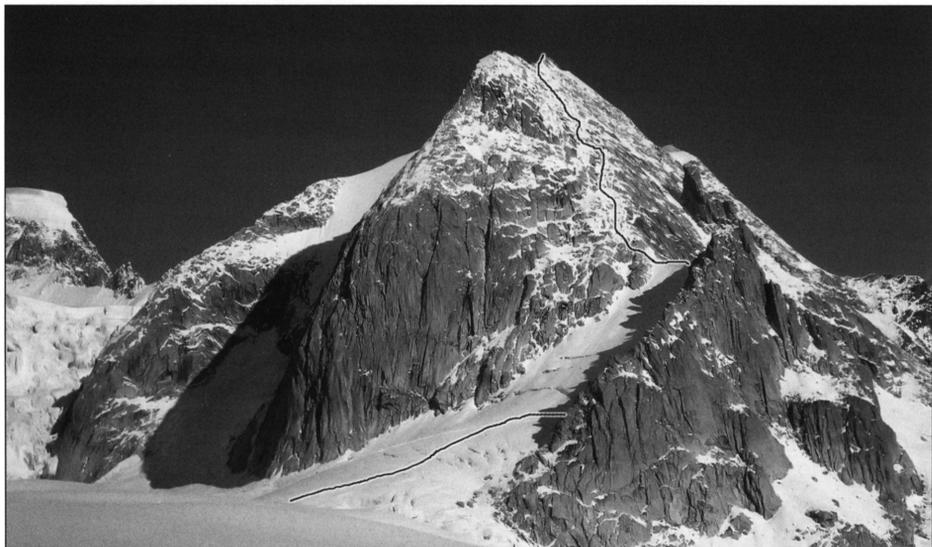
broken than in 1999. A quick reconnaissance to the meadow of Parigoz, base camp in 1999, revealed that the glacier directly above it had disintegrated badly and was no longer passable. We found a separate drainage system and climbed compact earth, scree, a remnant glacier, and a soft snow slope to rejoin the 1999 route on the northeast ridge of Peak 6,247m at 5,700m. The last 500m of the ridge required multiple efforts by Bowie and me, using a number of strands of fixed rope to pass crevasses that were absent in 1999. I estimated the ridge would need 10m of compact snow and ice to restore it to its former condition.

On July 4 Bowie and I reached the summit of Peak 6,247m to find that the decay and destruction continued to the summit of Disteghil Sar. The next day we made a reconnaissance of the upper basin by descending 700m and 4km into it. Crevasse fields and serac avalanche tracks complicated the route to Disteghil Sar's north ridge, which itself had far more exposed rock than I had seen. With the backup plan of a snow route on the north side of Disteghil Sar East out of the question for similar reasons, the expedition was at a premature end. The four of us spent the night in our Camp 2 on Peak 6,247m and the next three days stripping the route and returning to base camp.

BRUCE NORMAND. *Switzerland*

Solu Towers, attempt; Female Peak (Peak 5,290m), first ascent. The objective of this expedition was to climb one of the Solu Towers (ca 6,000m), situated above Snow Lake in the glacial heart of the Karakoram. The expedition included six women between the ages of 22 and 30, members of a group selected and trained by the French Federation of Mountaineering and Climbing (FFME): Sara Bertholet, Marine Clarys, Fanny Devillaz, Fleur Fouque, Marion Poitevin, and Karine Ruby. This group was accompanied by two guides, Gaël Bouquet des Chaux and I.

Upon arriving in Skardu on September 8, we were surprised to see snow covering the mid-elevation summits that dominate the great plain of the Indus. It was abnormally cold for the season, and the weather was gray. From September 10-14, we climbed 60km along the Biafo



Female Peak (5,290m), just to the north of the Solu Towers. The first-ascent party included six members of the French women's alpine-climbing team. *Gaël Bouquet des Chaux*

Glacier to Snow Lake and made our base camp at 4,750m at the base of the Solu Towers.

There are five Solu Towers, the highest topping out at 6,063m. The base of the walls is at about 5,100m. The faces are very steep, and the granite is compact. The arêtes are razor-sharp. The northern aspects are choked with ice and seracs. Only the middle tower (Tower 3, 5,979m) presents a weakness, and it was climbed in 1987 by Stephen Venables, solo. Nice work! *[Editor's note: Earlier the same year, Venables and Duncan Tunstall climbed the south summit of the same tower.]*

We spotted two possible lines: the southeast spur of Tower 2, which presented a 50°, 300m snow slope, then a 200m step of vertical granite, followed by arêtes with numerous rock steps caked in snow and ice. The other line was an ice gully between Towers 3 and 4, from which we hoped to climb Tower 4. The day after our arrival at base camp, we split into two groups, each carrying gear to the bases of these lines and fixing ropes across the bergschrunds. However, the forecast announced the arrival of a huge storm in 24 hours. There was just enough time for one team to climb 600m up the gully between Towers 3 and 4.

The storm beat down on our base camp for two days, dumping a meter of snow. After this the walls were in really bad condition. We made the best of three days of variable weather (clear in the morning, snow in the afternoon) to climb a 5,290m summit north of the Solu Towers and southeast of Hispar Pass. This is a magnificent prow jutting out above the plateau of Snow Lake, offering a fantastic view of the entire massif. The route, on the northeast face, was mixed, made more difficult by the new snow. The entire team made the summit, which we named Female Peak, on September 21.

The next day a new storm began, dumping more than two meters of snow over three days. We abandoned all thoughts of climbing and pondered our retreat to Askole, which seemed very far away in these conditions. Our cook suggested that we abandon our gear and return for it next summer! Over three days we established a route along the glacier for more than 20km

for the porters to follow, since crevasses had been covered by fragile snowbridges. We met the porters on September 27, and some of them went all the way to Snow Lake to recover the remaining gear at base camp. By the end of the month we all were in Askole, where we stayed four days and established a five-pitch rock climb (6b) above the meadow. The men from Askole had blast climbing it.

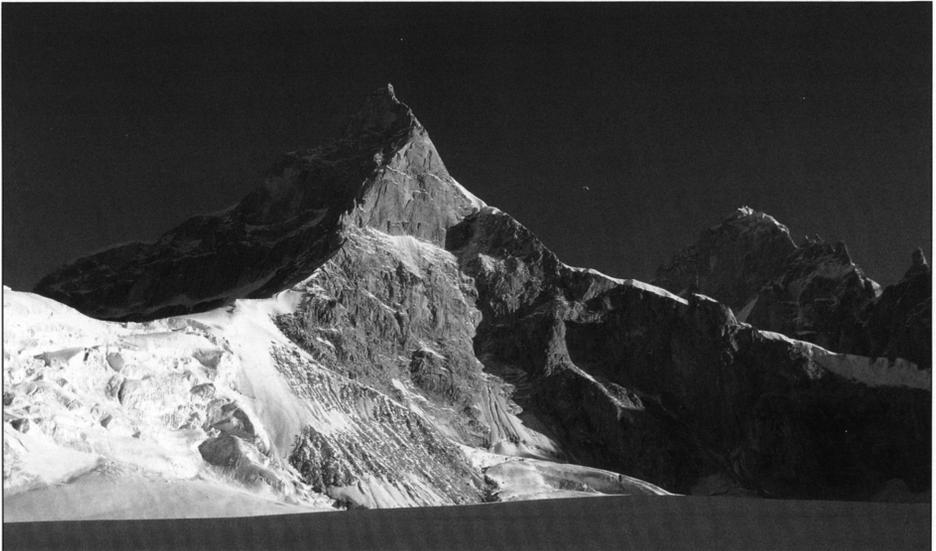
PIERRE NEYRET, *France (translated by Todd Miller)*

PANMAH MUZTAGH

Baintha Kabata, first ascent. Maxime Turgeon and I traveled to the Choktoi Glacier in August and September to attempt the unclimbed southeast buttress of the Ogre. Although weather denied us an honest attempt on the Ogre, during our acclimatization period we made the first ascent of a prominent peak at the head of the Choktoi Glacier, which we named Baintha Kabata (“Ogre’s Son” in Urdu). Baintha Kabata is connected to the Ogre by the ridge descending from the Ogre’s northeast buttress. The 5,000m col between these peaks connects the Choktoi Glacier to the glacial basin below the Ogre’s untouched north face, and eventually the Biafo-Hispar glacial system.

We made the ascent on September 3 and 4 via the south ridge. From the head of the Choktoi Glacier, at 4,700m, we climbed slopes up to 60° to reach the broad col between Baintha Kabata and the Ogre, and then along a steep snow ridge to the start of the technical difficulties at 5,200m. For the first several pitches we climbed mixed terrain up to M5 on the right side of the ridge, finally returning to the crest proper via a steep chimney of water ice. The ridge reared more steeply here, and we switched to rock shoes for two pitches of 5.9—with the altitude, heavy packs, and high-altitude boots dangling from our harnesses, this felt quite difficult. After a few moderate mixed pitches, we ran out of daylight and chopped a snow ledge for a cold bivvy at 5,700m.

On the second day we climbed the crest of the ridge, again up to about 5.9 and M5. The



Colin Haley and Maxime Turgeon made the first ascent of Baintha Kabata (ca 5,900m) by the south ridge, the sun-shadow line facing the camera. The unnamed peak to the right (ca 6,000m) is believed to be unclimbed. *Colin Haley*