

last step in the ridge looked difficult and time-consuming, so we traversed to the right side of the crest across an icefield and gained the summit at last light via a steep arête of rotten snow.

We rappelled the west face in the dark, entirely by V-threads, and thus reached the glacial basin below the north face of the Ogre. We climbed back through the Ogre-Kabata col and spent the rest of the night stumbling back to our base camp lower on the Choktoi. The Turgeon-Haley South Ridge (1,200m, V 5.9 M5).

COLIN HALEY, AAC

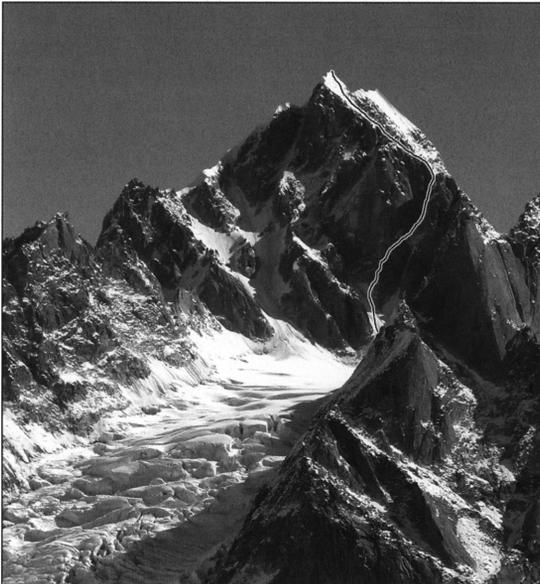
Latok I, attempt; Porter Peak, first ascent. On August 22 Whit Magro and I arrived on the Choktoi Glacier for my second trip in as many years to the north side of Latok I (7,145m). Last year Bean Bowers and I spent 42 days below Latok without any reasonable weather for an attempt. Surely this year would be different!

During our first two weeks at base camp the weather was quite good, allowing us to acclimatize on some of the smaller peaks above the Choktoi. During this time we managed the first ascent of a peak adjacent to the rock spire Bean and I had climbed in 2007. We dubbed this Porter Peak (ca 5,700m) in honor of the hard-working Balti porters that make Western expeditions to the Karakoram possible. We named our route Sirdar Indirect (700m, 5.9 WI5) to commemorate the many arguments between porter sirdars and expedition members each year. We also made an attempt on the unclimbed Middle Sister Spire, coming agonizingly close to the top before being turned back by icy cracks and impending darkness.

At the end of this two-week period of unstable but relatively good weather, Whit and I felt adequately acclimatized and turned our attention to Latok's north face. Almost on cue the snow began to fly. During the first storm nearly a meter fell at base camp over three days. The resulting avalanches off the north face convinced us to look at the north ridge, which we hoped

would offer a safer alternative, given the conditions. During a four-day period of marginal weather in mid-September, Whit and I were able to climb the north ridge to ca 6,000m in less than 10 hours, despite being hit by a massive spindrift avalanche. We left a tent, food, and fuel in hopes of making another attempt.

Unfortunately, significant snowfall continued through the end of September, and by the start of October temperatures on the Choktoi were too cold for snow to clear from the route. Whit and I headed home empty-handed once again. It's interesting to note that approximately 40 expeditions (a veritable who's who of alpine climbing) have visited the Choktoi Glacier since the late '70s, and no one has climbed any peak



The line of Sirdar Indirect (700m, 5.9 WI5) on Porter Peak (ca 5,700m). Josh Wharton

over 6,300m from this side, a success rate of zero percent on teams' primary objectives: Peak 6,960m, the Ogre, and Latok I. It would be easy to write off the valley as cursed, but Latok and the other world-class objectives are too big and beautiful to pass up. Cursed or not, I'm sure I will be back!

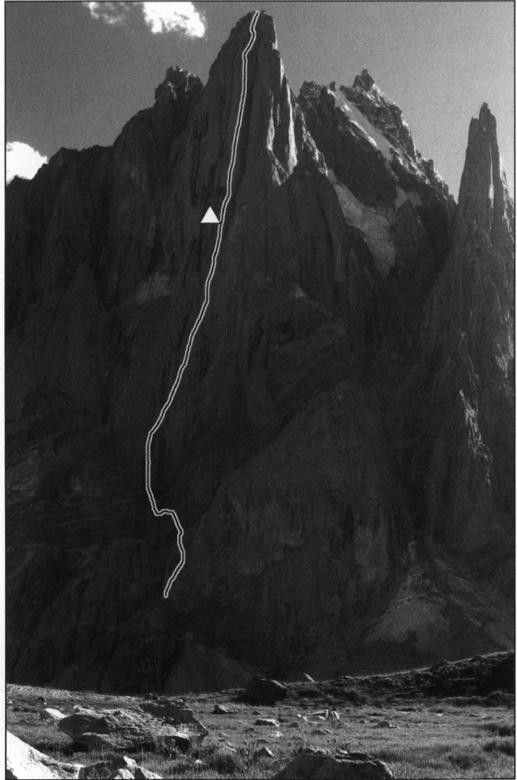
JOSH WHARTON, AAC

BALTORO MUZTAGH

Hainabrakk East Tower, The Choice. Simon Meis and I arrived in Islamabad on July 16 and traveled to the Trango Glacier, where we set up base camp for four weeks below Nameless Tower. Our two-man team had little big-wall experience, so we chose to go alpine style on all of the climbs we attempted. The leader was encumbered with only the minimal amount of gear, while the second climbed and juggled with a 35-liter bag containing bivy gear, food, and a stove. We carried a hammer and some pins but never pulled them out of the bag.

When we arrived in base camp nine days after leaving Calgary, we quickly started to acclimatize. The weather was incredible, with cloudless skies and 30°C temps in base camp, so after only four days we declared ourselves ready and jumped onto a route we had scoped on Hainabrakk East Tower (ca 5,650m).

Early on the morning of July 31 we left base camp and navigated up the loose, wet gully system that divides the lower southeast face to establish ourselves below the first crux headwall. As part of our acclimatization, we had climbed and cleaned six pitches of the route, so we could attempt to free them. The first pitch turned out to be the crux of the route, with sustained 5.11+R in a thin layback corner. After these initial difficulties, we moved quickly over terrain we had already climbed, and by noon we were 500m up the face. The climbing was clean and easily surmounted at moderate 5.10, with the occasional 5.11 pitch to spice things up. As the sun started to set, we fixed the last pitch we had climbed and lowered to a small dirt ledge that we could excavate into a bivy. We had collected water in a gully near the 10th pitch, which was essential as there was no snow on this side of the face for melting.



The Choice (1,000m, 5.11+R C3) on Hainabrakk East Tower (ca 5,650m). This was the fourth route to Hainabrakk East Tower's summit, and the third alpine-style ascent of the peak. The Choice traces a line to the left of Mystical Denmo, the 2005 Slovak route. See *AAJ 2006* for a photo showing the other lines on the face. *Joshua Lavigne*