

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!

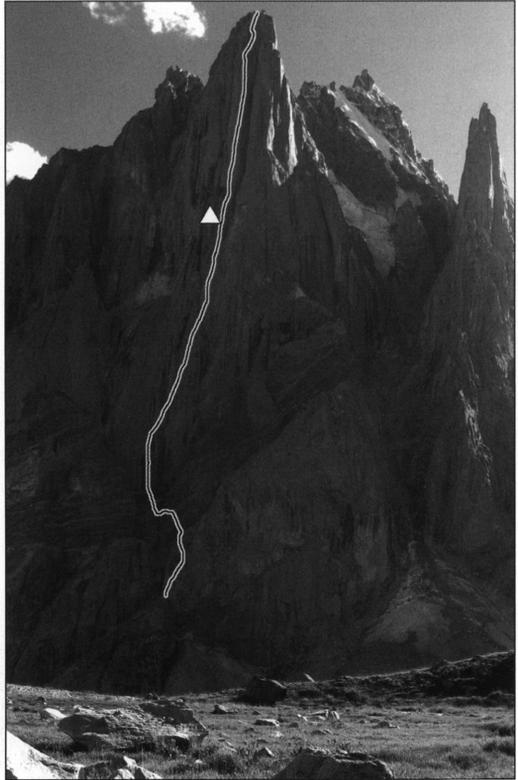
JOSH WHARTON, AAC

## 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*

We spent a restless night at 5,200m and continued toward the summit via a crack and corner system that split a massive headwall, the Golden Pillar. The rock was solid and clean, perfect for free climbing. We had freed every pitch until now, so we were hoping we could avoid aid, but the wall steepened to slightly overhanging and the rock became flaky. I threw my best efforts at a small finger crack, but at 5,400m a dirty, flaky, 5.12+ crack would be hard to onsight. After pulling off a loose block and taking a whipper, I resorted to aiding the steepest pitch of the route.

A couple of pitches brought us to the top of the Golden Pillar, where we found ice to melt into desperately needed water. Another splitter 5.11 finger crack presented itself, bringing us to within one pitch of moderate terrain. The last technical pitch turned out to be another thin crack that was too dirty to free-climb, so we added the second aid pitch of the route (C3). About 200m of moderate terrain brought us to the summit as the sun was setting.

We bivied on top in perfect conditions: no wind, 5°C, and clear skies. The only disadvantages were the pounding headaches and insomnia of altitude. The next morning we watched the sun rise behind Nameless Tower, spreading its rays in a blinding aura of light. We were in no rush to descend; we had food, water, perfect weather, and bolted rappels all the way to the valley (via the 2000 route For Better or Worse), so we took the time to make sure we didn't make any mistakes and to enjoy the splendor of the moment. The Choice (ca 1,000m, 5.11+R C3).

JOSHUA LAVIGNE, *Canada*

*Great Trango Tower, Norwegian Pillar.* The groundbreaking ascent of the Norwegian Pillar in 1984 is still the most outrageous line ever attempted by Norwegian climbers, and their story is the most profound in our climbing history. It was therefore with mixed feelings that Rolf Bae, Bjarte Bø, Sigurd Felde, and I trudged up the Dunge Glacier, a less-visited arm leading north from Pakistan's famous Baltoro. We were goggle-eyed and screaming at the out-of-this-world



(A) Trango Pulpit. (B) Great Trango Tower, southwest summit. (C) Great Trango Tower, east summit. (D) Little Trango. (E) Trango (Nameless) Tower. The Norwegian Pillar route closely follows the sun-shadow line to Great Trango's east peak. *Jafar / Courtesy Stein-Ivar Gravdal*