

Matias Erroz. Our goal was another attempt on the huge north ridge of Latok I. Although one of our bags, the one containing much of our technical climbing equipment, was lost during the flight to Islamabad, we continued to our base camp on the Choktoi to acclimatize. On June 26, while still waiting for our gear, we attempted a ca. 6,000m peak on the northern rim of the Choktoi Glacier, a little to the right of Biacherahi Towers. The striking line on the south face, which overlooks the glacier, is a 1,000m névé couloir a little to the right of the summit fall line. It is about 30m wide with an average angle of 55°. We named it the Supercouloir. We left base camp around 2:00 a.m. and climbing unroped were on the summit ridge by 6:00 a.m. Here things got trickier, and the rope came out. Willie spent a long time above me before returning to the belay. He'd been thwarted 60m short of the summit by a slabby headwall. Having no rock shoes and a minimal rack, he decided to back off. We descended and were back in camp at 11:30 a.m.

The following day Willie and Matias did a 10-pitch rock route on a tower just behind base camp: Medocinos Route (5.10). On the 30th the three of us tried a two-day ascent of Indian Face Arête, a prominent rock spur on a minor ca. 5,200m peak below the north spur of Latok III. [The ca. 800m route was first climbed in 1990 by Sandy Allan and Doug Scott at British 5c and A2, but they stopped at least six pitches below the summit and made a rappel descent. In 1999 four Italians climbed to about the same high point. Later that year British climbers Sam Chinnery, Ali Coull, and Muir Morton reached the summit via the upper half of the arête, which they gained after climbing a 400m dihedral (A3) on the quasi-vertical west flank—Ed.] We took a sleeping bag, a stove, and food but at the base of the route left most of it and went for a continuous-push ascent. This decision was influenced by the fact the weather had been perfect for 10 days. When we were half way up it snowed, but we kept going and by dark were 120m below the summit. We spent a miserable night in a sort of cave, continued to the top next morning in 30cm of new snow, and rappelled steeply into the west couloir, down which we bum-slid to the base of the route. This seems to be the only time the original line has been followed throughout to the summit. We climbed 16 pitches, up to 5.10a and A1.

On July 10, after a long spell of bad weather, Willie and Mathias climbed Biacherahi North (5,850m) via the northeast ridge, which although technically easy was a nightmare on a dangerously corniced crest leading to the summit. We then went onto the north ridge of Latok I (7,145m) with a portaledge and haul bag, hoping to make a continuous ascent, but it was not to be. There was too much deep snow and too many dangerous mushrooms. We abandoned the climb on July 20 at 5,400m, noting that the north face, to the left, looked well formed, with good ice runnels and little in the way of avalanche danger. We climbed one more new rock route close to base camp at 5.10+ before returning to Skardu.

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TRANGO GROUP

Trango II (6,327m), southwest ridge (Severance Ridge), not to summit. Trango II is the major snow-capped peak immediately north of Trango Tower and Trango Monk. Between August 15 and 19 Jonathon Clearwater (New Zealand), Samuel Johnson (U.S.), and I (Canada) made the



Trango II (6,327m) showing the line on the southwest (Severance) ridge climbed by Clearwater, Frimer, and Johnson. To the right are Trango Monk (ca. 5,900m) and Trango Tower (6,251m). *Sam Johnson*



Superb crack climbing on "the Shield," Severance Ridge, Trango II. Higher, the crack all but disappeared and thin aid plus a pendulum were needed to exit this golden granite headwall. *Jeremy Frimer*

first ascent of a 1,600m-high ridge on its southwest side, naming it Severance Ridge. Despite taking only enough food for three days, we spent five on the climb, being battered by stormy weather much of the time. The route offers quality climbing on orange granite with splitter cracks, all in a fine place. It was the hardest, most spectacular climb in any of our alpine careers.

The route began on a steep, smooth rock face just half an hour's walk north of Trango base camp. On the first day we worked our way up this 900m face, encountering over a dozen sustained 5.9 to 5.11 pitches. The crux two pitches involved run-out stemming in a tight corner, then underclinging beneath a steep arch before surmounting a roof. We finished the day by traversing a long knife-edge atop the smooth rock face.

On the second morning we soloed an ice/mixed gully and, as a storm moved in, climbed simultaneously up moderate rock on a steeply ascending ridge. By noon we had reached the base of a steep headwall, where we found a sheltered bivouac. The headwall, dubbed "the Shield," is a particularly blank feature, save for a perfect hand crack up its center. However, the crack narrows, then disappears, at half-height, requiring thin aid and an aggressive pendulum. With only blankness above, we aided left, exiting the face of the Shield to arrive at an exposed hanging belay, just as

a raging storm began. After nearly opting for retreat, we painstakingly aided a 40m pitch, best described as a "flaring off-width garden," using an ice tool for excavation. At its top the crack became a parallel, clean offwidth, requiring a single tipped-out cam as a nerve-wracking mov-



Atmospheric weather on the narrow "Roadway" of Severance Ridge, Trango II. The northeast face of Uli Biaho Tower (6,109m) is visible through the clouds on the far side of the Trango Glacier. *Jeremy Frimer*

ing point of aid. Climbing into the night, we finished the Shield with a pitch of burly and sustained fist cracks.

We'd anticipated that the final ridge would go smoothly but instead found the terrain to be complex and challenging. After a storm on the third night, we began climbing along the narrow ridge above. Yet another storm moved in. We soon came to a series of gendarmes that forced us onto the left side of the crest. Every pitch involved traversing flaring, thin crack systems at sustained 5.10. Overtaken yet again by nightfall, Sam attempted to lead a difficult pitch with poor protection, almost taking a huge pendulum before wisely retreating. We rappelled 60m into an adjacent gully and bivouacked. Having not eaten all day, we had trouble staying warm that night.

On our fifth and final morning we climbed several ice and mixed pitches up the gully to reach the end of the knife-edge, where it met the summit snow slopes. Exhausted but elated, we traversed these slopes and started our descent immediately, without visiting the summit. [The team traversed 150m below the summit to reach the south ridge—Ed.] We downclimbed the ridge, then made six rappels below Trango Monk to reach the Trango Tower approach gully, descending this to the valley floor. We rate Severance Ridge VI 5.11 A2 AI 3 M5; it had 63 pitches.

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Editor's Note: Trango II appears to be the same peak as that climbed in 1995 by Antonio Aquerreta, Fermin Izco and Mikel Zabalza after their ascent of a new route on Trango Tower. Confusion arises as they reputedly referred to it as Trango Ri (a.k.a Trango I), which according to the new Polish map is the next peak to the northwest.



Jeon Yang-jun jumaring during the first ascent of The Crux Zone (A4). Below him is the snow-covered Shoulder, while above his head can be seen the approach gully from the Trango Glacier. *Lee Young-jun collection*



Kim Hyung-il leading one of the lower pitches of The Crux Zone above the Shoulder. *Lee Young-jun collection*

Trango Tower, southeast face, The Crux Zone. A Korean expedition comprising leader Kim Hyung-il and members Jang Ki-heon, Jeon Yang-jun, Kim Pal-bong, Wang Dae-shik, and I established base camp on July 12 at 4,150m alongside the Trango Glacier. Nine days later we had sited our high camp on the Shoulder at 5,600m.