



## AAC Publications

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### **Baintha Brakk (Ogre, 7,285m), north face reconnaissance; Hispar Muztagh, Muki (6,330m), traverse; Peak 5,966m; Sosbun Group, Solu Hidden Tower (ca 5,850m), northeast and northwest faces.**

Pakistan, Karakoram, Panmah Muztagh

In five expeditions to different areas of the Karakoram, I've climbed virgin peaks and new routes up to 7,000m, but never seen a place like Snow Lake, its particular features making it so aptly named. In July and August we had to approach the foot of the mountains on skis, towing our gear on sleds, as in Alaska. And the weather there during the summer was not unlike that of Patagonia, making even the easiest ascent a treacherous proposition.

Daniele Bernasconi and I reached base camp (4,700m), at the entrance to the Sim Gang Glacier, and without wasting time skied the 20km up glacier to the foot of the north face of the Ogre. This is an impressive face, embroidered with many seracs. There are "weak points," if you accept the constant exposure to avalanches and icefall. We identified a feasible line, the northeast ridge (leading toward the unclimbed east summit), that is not too difficult but undoubtedly dangerous.

We returned to base camp and set out from there on July 7 to continue acclimatizing by making an ascent of the well-summitted Workman Peak (5,885m), north of the Hispar La. Then we set off north across Snow Lake and onto the Tahu Rutum Glacier, from where, on the 11th, we made the probable first ascent of a 6,330m (GPS) primarily snow/ice peak (Peak ca 6,400m on Miyamori and Swiss maps) via a traverse. This peak lies on the long ridge running east from Tahu Rutum, and is northwest of Tarci Peak (ca 5,800m), climbed in 1999 by Italians (AAJ 2000). We had waist-deep snow on the ridge, and no adequate equipment to protect the mixed sections. We named it Muki.

After nine days at or above base camp, we felt ready for the Ogre, confident that our remaining 22 days in the area would be more than enough for an attempt. However, from the 12th to the 28th, winter descended on base camp. There were only two days of fine weather, useful for drying sleeping bags and attempting two lower mountains. On the 22nd we climbed an easy, possibly virgin 5,966m (GPS) that lies on the continuation ridge northwest of Peak 5,925m (Miyamori and Swiss maps; see Dom Brakk in AAJ 2012). We made a ski descent from the summit.

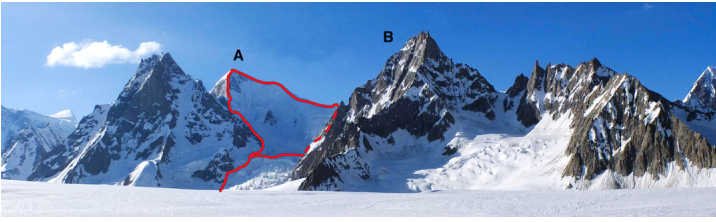
Later, we did the likely first ascent of Solu Hidden, the most northerly rock tower in the Solu Group. The ascent, via a rock buttress, a long snow/ice slope, and more difficult climbing, proved exciting.

The weather cleared on July 28, allowing us to return to the Ogre to assess conditions: Even the vertical rock walls were covered in a thick blanket of snow.

Afterward, I looked at the same old glass—was it half empty or half full? The end of a dream is only the beginning of a new adventure, but our four ascents did not replace the joy we would have felt if we'd been able to attempt the Ogre. I have to accept that the glass is half empty.

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## Images



Northwest along the Tahu Rutum Glacier. (A) Muki, with traverse marked. (B) Tarci Peak.



The Solu Towers from the entrance to Sim Gang Glacier. (A) Solu Peak (5,901m). (B) Solu Tower II (5,959m). (C) Solu Tower I (5,979m). (D) Unnamed. (E) Solu Hidden (ca 5,850m). (1) Tunstall-Venables, 1987. (2) Venables, solo, 1987. (3) Barmasse-Bernasconi, 2012.



Peak 5,966m, north of the Sim Gang Glacier, climbed and descended on ski in 2012.



Looking south from the summit of Muki toward Snow Lake and its surrounding peaks.

## Article Details

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