



AAC Publications

Latok II Southeast top (ca 7,020m), southwest face, Théorème de la Peine

Pakistan, Karakoram, Panmah Muztagh

In June the four-man French team of Antoine Bletton, Pierre Labbre, Matthieu Maynadier, and Sébastien Ratel connected lines of weakness up the previously untouched right side of the southwest face of Latok II (7,108m), just failing to reach the mountain's highest point.

The four established base camp at 4,800m, but were faced with consistently unsettled weather and were unable to make any meaningful acclimatization. They spent only one night at ca 5,800m, on the approach to the col below Latok II's northwest ridge, and climbed lower peaks close to camp. Then they received a text saying there would be a three-day weather window followed by 10 days of snowfall. Ready or not, it was now or never. After a bivouac at the foot of the face on the night of June 2, they climbed the initial 500m snow slope, and then followed a series of rising snow ramps cutting left through vertical granite walls. The weather deteriorated, and spindrift-swept runnels, giving "Ben Nevis ambience," led to a very poor bivouac site.

The next day was vastly better, so they continued up steep mixed terrain to make an early bivouac on a large snow terrace at 6,200m, where they could dry gear in the evening sun. They left at 2 a.m. on the June 4, traveling light and hoping to find an easy passage through the final rock wall to the summit ridge, where they would link with the original route at ca 6,700m. Unfortunately, they found hard climbing up powder-covered slabs and deep, scary snow on the summit ridge. At 6 p.m. they reached a small but distinct "bump," less than 100m below the main summit, and decided to call it a day. The forecast storm was due early next morning, and they wanted to escape the bottom of the face—a huge funnel for falling snow—before it was too late.

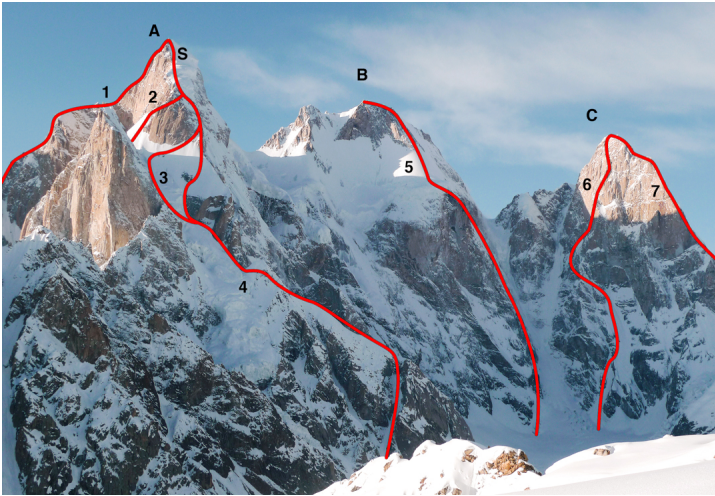
Regaining their bivouac site at 1 a.m. on the 5th, they hastily packed gear and then rappelled through the night. Despite falling asleep at anchors, and taking care constantly to check each other's actions, they made it safely to the rimaye at 10 a.m., picked up skis, and were back at base camp by 1 p.m.

Greg Child's well-known book *Mixed Emotions* was translated into French as *Théorème de la Peur*. As a salute the French have named their new line *Théorème de la Peine* (peine being "suffering"; 2,000m, ED1, M5).

From information supplied by **Matthieu Maynadier**, France

Editors' note: Latok II has been summited five times, more than any of the other peaks in this famous group. On the first ascent, by the southeast ridge, three Italians reached what appeared to be the top (the same point reached by the French) and, highly disappointed to find it wasn't, took a further three hours to reach the summit. On the second ascent of this route, in alpine style, three Americans also thought they'd reached the summit until, fortunately, clouds parted and revealed their mistake. They took 30 minutes to reach the main summit. The southwest face was climbed for the first time in 1997—twice. An American-German expedition climbed the high-altitude big wall Tsering Mosong, and a week later two other members of the same expedition climbed the left branch of the central couloir to the northwest ridge, which they followed to the summit. Prior to this there had been an attempt on the left side of the face by Christian Stangl and Austrian friends, which was only briefly noted in AAJ 1994. This party drove in a 1961 Land Rover from Austria and spent 68 days at base camp. They attempted the big wall left of the central couloir, but bad weather prevented them from getting above 6,100m.

Images



A) Latok II (7,108m). (B) Latok I (7,145m). (C) Latok III (6,949m). (1) Northwest ridge (Spanish, 2009). (2) Upper part of Théorème de la Peine and high point (S) on the southeast top (ca 7,020m). (3) 2006 American variant. (4) Southeast ridge (Italians, 1977). (5) South-southeast pillar (Japanese, 1979). (6) West face (Russians, 2011). (7) Southwest ridge (Japanese, 1979).



Steep mixed ground on day two of Théorème de la Peine.



The 2,000m southwest face of Latok II. (1) Northwest ridge integral (Spanish, 2009). (2) 1993

Austrian attempt. (3) Southwest face and northwest ridge: Nomadu (Germans, 1997). (4) Tsering Mosong (American-German, 1997). (5) Théorème de la Peine, to southeast top (2012).



Traversing the hanging snow ramps on the first day of Théorème de la Peine.



Clockwise from bottom: Maynadier, Ratel, Labbre, and Bletton in evening sun on the southeast top of Latok II.

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