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Broad Peak, Southwest Face, New Route to 6,800m

Asia, Pakistan, Baltoro Muztagh

Our group of 10, with Kiomars Babazadeh as leader and me as climbing leader, started toward Broad Peak on June 23. Our goal was the first new route in the Himalaya by Iranian climbers. On our way to base camp, we met the French climber Ludo Giambiasi, who was returning from two attempts Broad Peak with Elisabeth Revol, one on the southwest face, the same face we had planned to try. At base camp, they had spontaneously decided to try the southwest face and climbed alpine-style up to about 6,250m, in the middle of a tricky ridge. After their excellent attempt, we still had the chance to experience stepping on new ground and completing the route. We wished him a safe trip back home, and he a safe and successful expedition for us.

On June 30 we reached base camp at 4,800m, and on July 2 started our climb. It was a rather easy up to 5,200m, where we encountered an 80m step. A 50m ice and snow gully was followed by 30m of vertical and overhanging loose rock, which led to our Camp 1 at 5,370m.

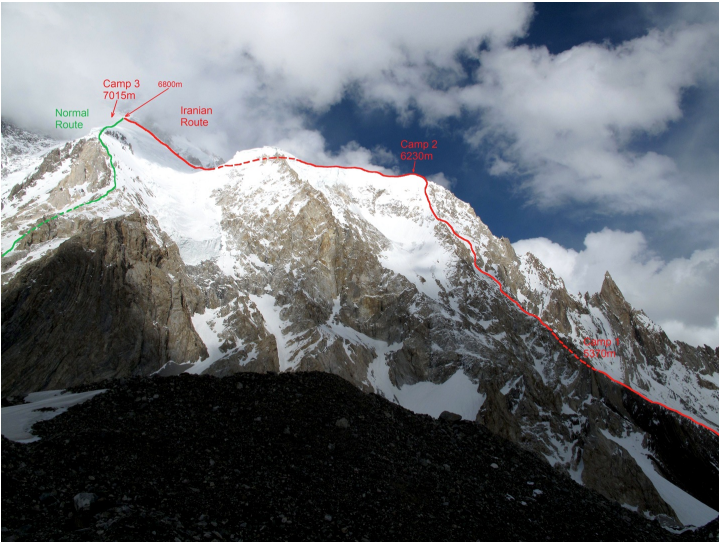
From there, rock and snow climbing led to 5,650m, followed by snow slopes to the ridge at 6,220m. About 50m below the ridge we faced a major difficulty: a 75° ice slope covered by 40cm of snow that we had to shovel off to reach the ice. We reached the ridge on July 21, having fixed some 1,600m of rope. What we saw was not encouraging—the ridge was all but easy. Just past the site of our Camp 2, at 6,230m, there was a 30m drop and then a knife-edge ridge leading to a gendarme.

After a few days of rest at base camp due to bad weather, we climbed back to the ridge on July 26 and climbed the gendarme, which was easier than expected. We found a sling on top that must have been left by the French during their descent. The next day we climbed a snow dome, the last 15m of which was 85° ice covered by snow, the crux of the whole route. Soon the technical difficulties eased significantly, and after another 100m we reached a plateau that had been hidden from view.

The wide plateau was about 1.5 km long. It led to a rock and snow spur, where, at 6,800m, we joined the normal route, just below Camp 3. Aidin Bozorgi and I slept at Camp 3 at 7,015m on August 13, a windless and relatively warm night. But I could not go further because of altitude sickness. We abandoned the summit and left base camp on August 18.

Editors Note: French climbers Ludovic Giambiasi and Elisabeth Revol attempted this line May 30–June 1, 2009. Climbing alpine-style, they reached the ridgeline at ca 6,200m in two days. However, the narrow ridge beyond was loaded with early-season snow and appeared too dangerous, and the climbers decided to retreat from a short way beyond their second bivouac. The Iranian team cleaned its camps and garbage from the mountain, as well as substantial amounts of garbage left by other expeditions on Broad Peak. Unfortunately, however, the Iranians also left about 1,600m of fixed rope on their route.

Images



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