



## AAC Publications

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### **Baintha Kabata, Southwest Face to South Ridge, The Alien Face**

Pakistan, Karakoram, Panmah Muztagh

**Our goal, like many teams before us, was the unclimbed southeast pillar of Baintha Brakk (The Ogre) leading to the east summit.** Francis Cazzanelli and Matteo Della Bordella (both from Italy), Symon Welfringer (France), and I arrived in Skardu in late June. The weather was hot and sunny during our trek to the Choktoi Glacier.

On the morning of June 28, we left for a proposed base camp on the Choktoi at 35°57'40.20"N, 75°50'18.61"E (known as Garfur Camp), but deep snow stopped our porters and donkeys 2km short of the camp. We sent up a drone and saw that not only was the proposed site full of snow, but it also appeared to have become unusable due to fallen boulders. We turned around and made camp at 35°57'6.55"N, 75°53'18.82"E (known as Thomas Camp).

In the meantime, a wonderful three-week spell of good weather had ended. Nevertheless, on July 1 a 3.5-day window allowed us to make an acclimatization trip. That night we camped at an advanced base (4,900m) below the east side of the Ogre at 35°56'48.74"N, 75°46'42.87"E. On the 2nd, we camped on the Sim La (5,481m on the Wala map, 35°58'6.13"N, 75°46'14.47"E), and on the third on a snow shoulder (ca 6,000m) at 35°59'28.31"N, 75°47'9.70"E, on the ridge northwest of Baintha Ahra (ca 6,300m). We used skis during this outing, which meant we were able to travel long distances efficiently, and the ski descent from the shoulder was one of the highlights of the expedition.

The weather was then mostly bad until July 11. On the 13th, we left for advanced base, and on the 14th made the dangerous ascent to the col between Baintha Brakk I and II, at the base of the southeast pillar. This approach is threatened by seracs to the north and enormous snow mushrooms to the south. Considerable avalanche debris showed we shouldn't linger, and by mid-day we were back in base camp.

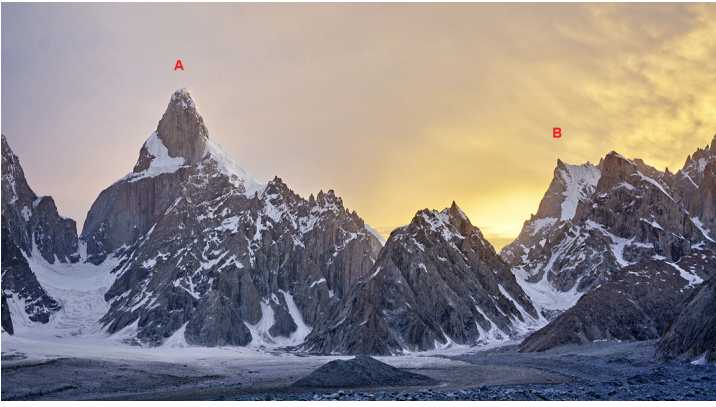
We set off with the next good weather forecast, but it began to snow heavily before we could climb to the col, forcing us back. A strong monsoon influence was making weather reports unreliable, and we determined there would not be a sufficiently long window to climb the pillar. On the 23rd, we carried out the thankless task of retrieving our gear from the col, and the next day Francis left for Skardu.

On the 26th and 27th, there was enough good weather for Matteo, Symon, and me to climb the southwest face and south ridge of Baintha Kabata (ca 6,290m). Our route started above the Sim La, where we climbed 400m (M3 60°) to outflank the initial towers of the south ridge on the left (west) and reach a steep rock step. This gave 200m of 6a to 6c. The 200m second step was climbed at M5 6b to a snowfield below the upper wall, where we camped. Next day we climbed a further 250m to the summit (difficulties to 7a) and descended the same route in worsening weather.

Our new line, The Alien Face (800m, 7a M5), climbs largely on the left (southwest) side of the crest but shares some of the middle section with the route climbed in 2008 by Colin Haley and Maxime Turgeon to make the first ascent of the mountain. [In the lower and upper section of the ridge, Haley and Turgeon climbed on the right (southeast) flank of the crest at 5.9 M5; see AAJ 2009.]

—Silvan Schupbach, Switzerland

## Images



Seen from the Choktoi Glacier to the east: (A) Baintha Brakk and (B) Baintha Kabata, with the south ridge of the latter in profile.



The Alien Face on the southwest face and south ridge of Baintha Kabata. The route started from the Sim La, just off picture to the right. The 2008 Haley-Turgeon route, making the first ascent of the mountain, was more on the right side of the ridgeline but shared some ground on the third tier of the rock buttress.



Baintha Kabata from the upper Choktoi Glacier, with the green line showing The Alien Face (2023) and the red line showing the approximate line of the Haley-Turgeon Route (2008).



On the south ridge of Baintha Kabata.

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