



AAC Publications

Quesillo, west face (not to summit), and other peaks

Peru, Cordillera Huayhuash

In June, Saro Costa, Luca Vallata, and I (all from Italy) explored the southern part of the Cordillera Huayhuash, where we attempted four peaks and succeeded on one climb (though we didn't reach the summit). We set up base camp close to Sarapococha, near Jurau Lake, which sits just below the west side of Quesillo (5,600m), Huaraca (5,537m), Jurau (5,674m), and other peaks.

After acclimatizing, Saro Costa and I attempted a direct route up the unclimbed southeast face of Tsacra Grande (5,774m), which lies in the southwestern part of the range in the Segya Valley. After exiting the main central gully, which ascends the first half of the face (AI4+ M6), and then continuing up the snowy upper portion of the mountain, our attempt ended approximately 150m below the summit due to classic and dangerous Andean snow conditions. From our highpoint we quickly abseiled down our line of ascent. [Editor's note: A Dutch team reported an attempt on the east face of Tsacra Grande in 1986 and also retreated 150m below the summit (AAJ 1987); however, since they noted beginning from the col near Tsacra Chico Oeste, they may have climbed the existing east ridge route, which actually climbs a weakness on the right side of the east face before joining the upper ridge (AAJ 1965).]

We rested for a few days and then the three of us set off for a new route on the west face of Quesillo (5,600m). Over two days, we climbed the wall via a prominent, left-angling snow ramp that splits the rocky face: El Malefico Sefkow (800m, ED2 AI5 M5+ A1). However, we did not reach the true summit; upon reaching the summit ridge huge cornices turned us back. We descended thenorthridge (Lindauer-Salger, 1964) to the Huaraca-Quesillo Col. [Editor's note: Many AAJ reports cite similarly dangerous corniced terrain on the path to Huayhuash summits, and many "new routes" have not reached their summits. On Quesillo, this was noted most recently in 2007 by a four-person British team on the first ascent of the peak's east ridge; their route stopped just below the summit (AAJ 2008). Quesillo's summit was likely last reached in 2006 by Carlos Buhler and Brad Johnson after their new route up its northeast face (AAJ 2007).]

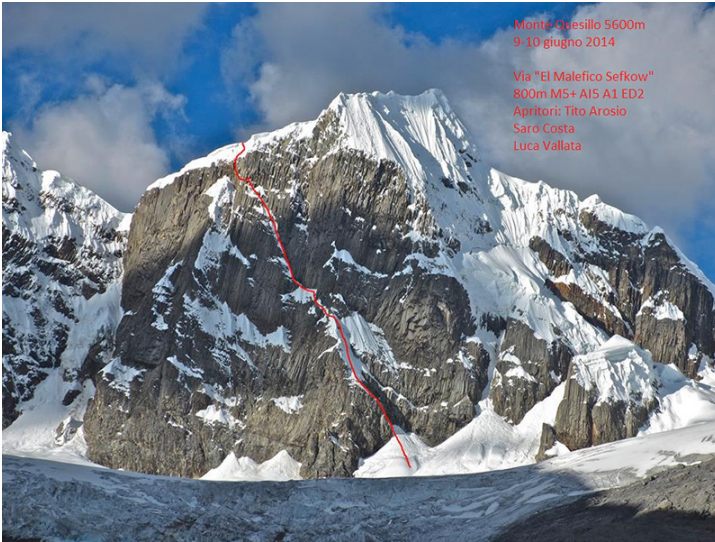
After a few days of bad weather we all set off for the massive west face of Siula Grande (6,344m) to try and repeat the difficult Noches de Juerga (Jost-Mlinar-Monasterio-Zerovnik, AAJ 2002), the only route that seemed in condition. Unfortunately, the condition of the face, coupled with high temperatures, stopped our attempt at ca 5,700m.

The day before leaving base camp we tried to make a quick raid up the west face of Huaraca (5,537m), but we were stopped at mid-height; the route turned out to be much more challenging than expected, and we didn't have enough gear for aid climbing. This small but very steep face remains unclimbed. [Editor's note: The same British expedition that climbed the east ridge of Quesillo in 2007 also made the first ascents of the north ridge and northeast face of Huaraca after first reaching the col between Huaraca and Jurau; both routes (graded D) reached the summit (AAJ 2008).]

From our experience in the range, it seems that the lesser-known and shorter mountains still offer big opportunity for new and interesting routes. It also seems, as others have said, that global warming has had a major effect on these mountains. For example, the Simpson-Yates route on Siula Grande appears as though it may no longer be in condition due to a newly formed serac in the middle of the wall.

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Images



The new route (not to summit) on the west face of Quesillo.



A toppled mini-bus along the approach road into the Cordillera Huayhuash.



Climbing under clear skies on Quesillo.



Mixed climbing below the cornices along Quesillo's north ridge.



Leading out a steep rock section on Quesillo.



Climbing through cornices on Quesillo's north ridge.



The team atop Quesillo's north ridge after climbing El Malefico Sefkow.



Bathing in Lake Jurau. The prominent peak on the right is Quesillo; the sharp peak in the center is Huaraca; to the left are Jurau and Carnicero.



The attempted route on the impressive, unclimbed east face of Tsacra Grande with the highpoint marked.



Leading up a melted-out mixed pitch on Tsacra Grande.



Looking down the sustained ice face on Noches de Juerga on Siula Grande.



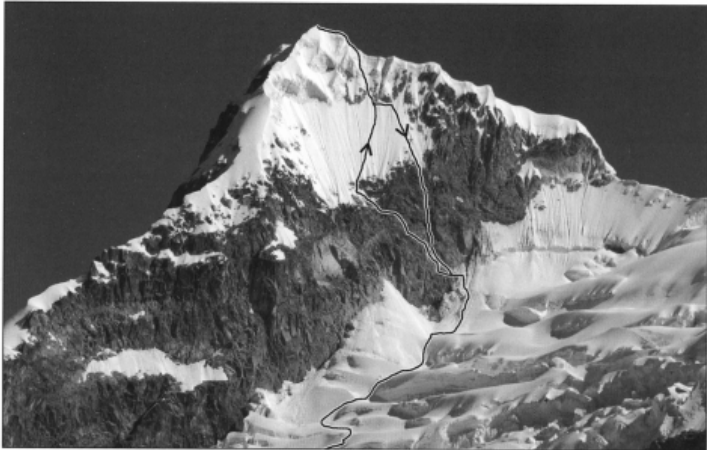
The attempted route on the west face of Huaraca with highpoint marked.



Heading up steep mixed terrain on the west face of Huaraca.



On steep and thin ice on Huaraca's west face. The team was unprepared for difficult terrain like this and was forced to retreat midway up the wall.



The Northeast Face (Buhler-Johnson, 2006), and line of descent, on Nevado Quesillo (5,600m). The skyline on the right is the 1964 North Ridge (Lindauer-Salger). Brad Johnson

The northeast face of Quesillo from AAJ 2007.



Huaraca, with the Northeast Face (left) and North Ridge routes. Carl Reilly

The northeast side of Huaraca, from the AAJ 2008.

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