



AAC Publications

Altar Massif, Monja Grande, First Communion

Ecuador, Andes

In December, Nicolas Dávalos (Ecuador) and I climbed a new line up the southwest side of Monja Grande (5,316m), one of the major peaks comprising the Altar Massif. (Editor's note: Monja Grande's elevation is frequently stated as 5,160m, but the author's GPS confirmed the 5,316m elevation, and the peak is not much lower than neighboring Obispo, generally given 5,319m.) **We approached Altar on December 2 and acclimatized the following day. At 2 a.m. on December 4, we left the Italian Camp on El Altar's south aspect and traversed the glacier toward Monja Grande. The approach was long but straightforward through several crevasse fields, with soft snow conditions (55°–65°) up to the Obispo–Monja Grande col.**

From the col, we aimed straight for the summit, climbing three and a half new pitches up soft ice and snow (AI3), left of the 1968 south face route. We finished up a narrow ice gully to reach the summit. We descended our route by rappel from V-thread and piton anchors and reached the Italian Camp later that day. We named our route First Communion (700m, 250m of technical climbing, AI3), after Nico's first time climbing Altar and also carrying on the Catholic naming tradition. On December 5 we summited Obispo and then descended to the trailhead on December 6.

– Felipe Proaño, Ecuador

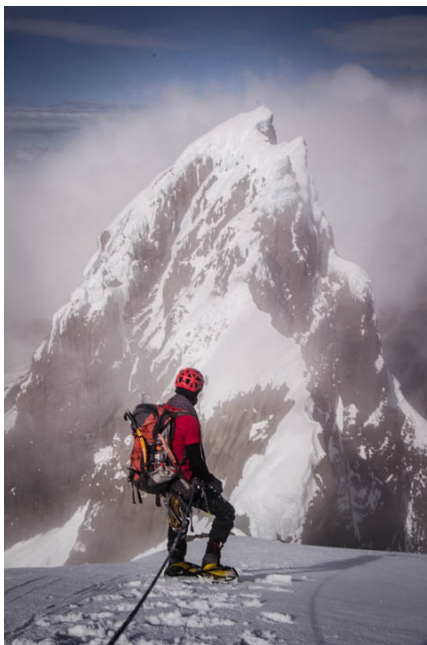
Images



Felipe Proaño leading up an icy feature on First Communion, a new variation up the southwest side of Monja Grande.



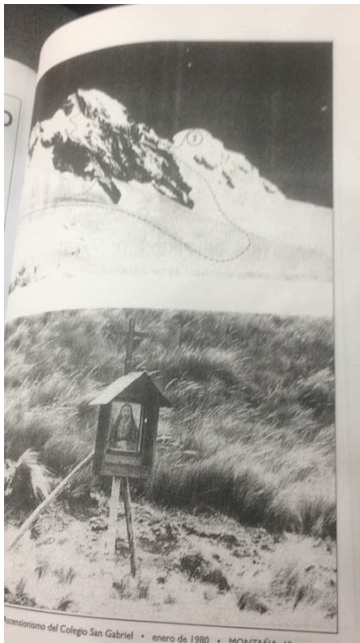
A foreshortened view of the east ridge of Obispo, as seen from just above the Obispo–Monja Grande col.



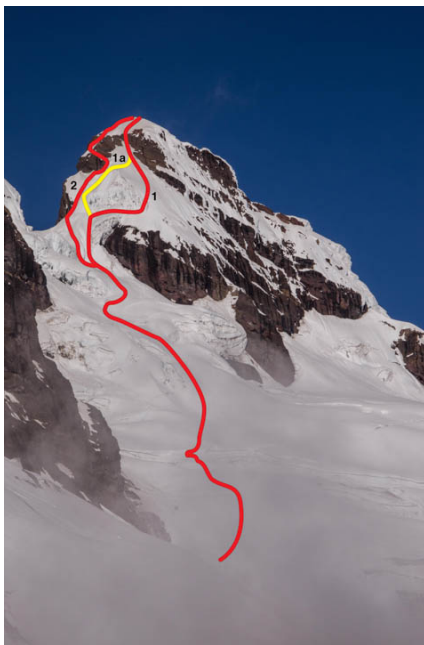
Felipe Proaño looking out on Obispo's east ridge from the summit ridge of Monja Grande.



Felipe Proaño descending the southwest side of Monja Grande.



A scan from the Ecuadorian magazine Montaña shows the original 1968 south face line (#2), which was first repeated by Ecuadorian climbers in 1978. The most recent known ascent was in 2015, by Ecuadorian climber Nicolas Navarrete, who used a variation to avoid the low serac band.



Overview of routes on Monja Grande's south side. (1) The original 1968 route. (1a) 2015 variation to the 1968 route. (2) First Communion.

Article Details

Author	Felipe Proaño
Publication	AAJ
Volume	59
Issue	91
Page	0
Copyright Date	2017
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions