



AAC Publications

Illampu: Revisions of Climbing History on the West Side

Bolivia, Cordillera Real

THE HISTORY and exact whereabouts of established routes on Illampu, particularly its western aspect, has been something of a muddle. New information about several routes is helping to set the record straight.

Illampu has two summits: north (6,310m, but not to be confused with Pico del Norte, which lies much farther north again) and south (6,368m), separated by a quasi-horizontal, narrow, and often corniced ridge. The normal route to the south summit is the southwest ridge, generally gained from the north via the glacier below the west face, and first climbed in 1928 by Erwin Hein, Alfred Horeschowsky, Hugo Hortnagel, and Hans Pfann (800m, AD). The second ascent was made by Japanese and the third, in 1964, by Yugoslavians (reported repeats of the "Yugoslavian Route" are in fact ascents of the normal route).

In his book *The Andes of Bolivia*, the enigmatic Alain Mesili records his first ascents of the Ruta Corridor (D+, Kramer-Mesili-Pratt-Whitelock, 1978) on the north face (which he labels the southeast face), and the Ruta Las Torres (1980) on the northwest buttress (which he labels south ridge), reaching the crest via the north flank. The northwest ridge was almost certainly first climbed, in part or in whole, in 1970 by Americans Andy Harvard, James Jenny, and Todd Thompson, who traversed over the south summit and down the southwest ridge. In June 2002 two Frenchmen, Sébastien Constant and Jérôme Mercader, started up the Ruta Corridor and branched right to complete Conjunction des Imbeciles (M4 WI5) to the north summit. From here they crossed the connecting ridge to the main top and descended the normal route to regain their camp, all in one long day.

In 1978 four Spanish climbed the west face and upper northwest ridge—the first route to be successfully accomplished on the west face. The four climbers who made the first ascent, over three days in August, were Òscar Cadiach and Àlex Ossó, and Enric Dalmau and Francesc Magrinyà. (The report in AAJ 1979 names the wrong climbers.) The route was TD- (UIAA IV 65°), and the team crossed both summits and descended the southwest ridge. The Slovenian Route reported in AAJ 1984, climbed by Janko Humar, Slavko Sveticic, and Zarko Trusnovac, is a repeat of this line.

In 1984, Ales Rotar and Janusz Zupanc from the former Yugoslavia climbed a new route on the west face, right of the main rocky section, leading to the step on the southwest ridge just below a prominent shoulder (AAJ 1985). From there they climbed to the summit in six hours and descended the normal route. Without a decent map, their big problem had been reaching the face, which took almost three days. They were also strapped for cash; their gaiters were made from typewriter covers and their snow stakes fashioned from parts of a bicycle.

The most prominent feature of the 850m west face is the central couloir. This was climbed over three days, July 1–3, 1986, by Andrej Gradisnik, Robi Jamnik, and Stanko Mihev from Slovenia. Apart from the first 200m, it was very steep throughout. However, the three did not make a direct entry but instead worked up left to reach and then climb a narrow gully/ramp, which led back into the upper couloir. They named the route Koroska Smer. The direct start, therefore climbing the couloir throughout, was thought to be first climbed in 1990 by Patrick Gabarrou (France) and Juan Villeroel (Bolivia) at TD. Attempting to repeat this in 1997, Sam Chinnery and Paul Schweizer (U.K.) found the start badly melted out, so they moved left and climbed a thin ice smear through the rock band

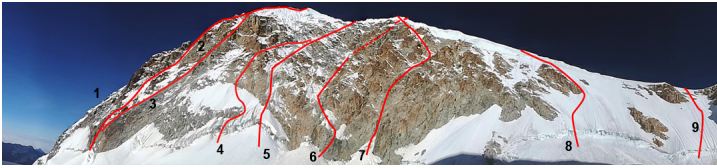
(Scottish 6) to reach a narrow gully, which led back into the main couloir. They followed this (mostly 65° ice) to the top and graded the route ED1.

In 1991 a team of Slovenians put up three new lines on the west face, all hard and some still unrepeated. On June 25, Mare and Miha Vreca climbed Nada Mañana (850m, ED1 VI- A0 85°) in 20 hours, more or less in the fall line from the north summit. The day after, following a failed attempt some days previously, Matjaz Jamnik and Miha Kajzelj climbed Paris-Texas on the right side of the face (850m, ED2 VI+ 75°), also in 20 hours. However, the hardest route, completed from June 25–27 in 30 hours effective climbing time, was Alpos Secret (850m, ED3 VII- A3 90°), climbed by Dusan Debelak and Tomaz Zerovnik. Still believed to be unrepeated, this latter route was considered the hardest in Bolivia at the time of its ascent.

In September 1996, a French pair reportedly climbed a new line, Entourloup (800m+, TD), on the west face, but it has not been possible to find details.

– Lindsay Griffin, with assistance from Miha Habjan, Slovenia

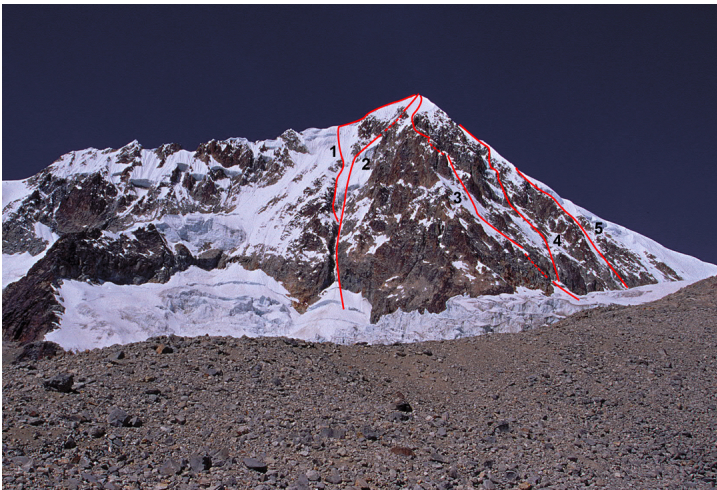
Images



A foreshortened view of the west face of Illampu. (1) Northwest Buttress (1970). (2) Spanish Route (1978). (3) Nada Mañana (1991). (4) Koroska Smer (1986). (5) Central Couloir Direct (1990). (6) Alpos Secret (1991). (7) Paris-Texas (1991). (8) Rotar-Zupanc (1984). (9) Start to the normal route, which continues up the right skyline ridge (1928).



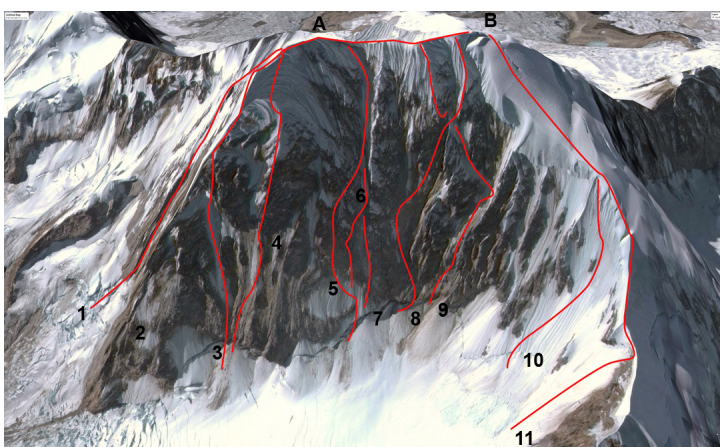
The north (left) and west faces of Illampu, separated by the northwest buttress (facing the camera) in dry conditions similar to those when the Spanish climbed the west face in 1978.



Illampu from the northwest. (1) Ruta Corredor (1978). (2) Conjuración des Imbeciles (2002). (3) Spanish Route (1978). (4) Nada Mañana (1991). (5) Paris-Texas (1991). The left skyline ridge leads to Pico del Norte (off picture to the left).



Jérôme Mercader about to embark on the icefall (WI5) at the top of the initial gully of Conjuración des Imbeciles, north face of Illampu.



The west face of Illampu with (A) north summit (6,310m) and (B) south summit (6,368m). (1) Conjuración des Imbeciles (2002). (2) Northwest Buttress (1970). (3) Spanish Route (1978). (4) Nada Mañana (1991). (5) Koroska Smer (1986). (6) Chinnery-Schweizer (1997). (7) Central Couloir Direct (1990). (8) Alpos Secret (1991). (9) Paris-Texas (1991). (10) Rotar-Zupanc (1984). (11) Southwest ridge (normal route) (1928).



Miha Kajzelj in the middle section of Paris-Texas during the first ascent.



The right side of the west face of Illampu showing the approximate lines of (1) Alpos Secret and (2) Paris-Texas.



Matjaz Jamnik on the lower icy section of Paris-Texas during the first ascent.



Matjaz Jamnik on the lower rock section of Paris-Texas during the first ascent.



During the first ascent of Illampu's west face in 1978 by a four-man Spanish team.



Oscar Cadiach during the 1978 first ascent of the west face of Illampu.



Low on the 1978 Spanish route during the first ascent of the west face of Illampu.



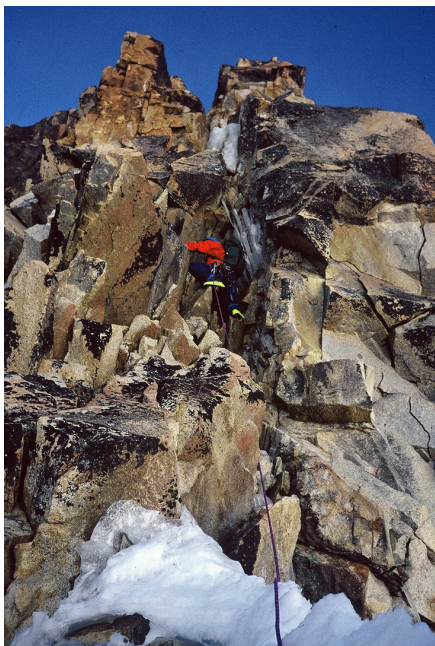
Partway up the new route climbed in 1984 by Ales Rotar and Janusz Zupanc on the right side of Illampu's west face. Pico Schulze behind.



The central section of Illampu's west face, seen in 1997. (1) Nada Mañana (1991). (2) Koroska Smer (1986). (3) Chinnery-Schweizer (1997). (4) Central Couloir Direct Start (1990). (5) Alpos Secret (1991).



The left side of the west face of Illampu. (1) Nada Mañana (1991). (2) Koroska Smer (1986).



Climbing the rock pillar right of the seracs high on Nada Mañana, west face of Illampu.



On the final snow rib of Nada Mañana, west face of Illampu.

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