



## AAC Publications

---

### Jangyaraju, South Face, Cita a Ciegas

Peru, Cordillera Blanca

**Part of what makes the Cordillera Blanca so exceptional for climbers is the proximity of stunning high peaks: Hire a taxi in Huaraz and within an hour or two you can be trekking toward your objective.** Following an attempt on Alpamayo, I only had four days left in the Ancash Region when I ran into Adam Bielecki (Poland) at Monkey Wasi, a popular climbers' hostel. He had nothing to do for the next several days. Though we only knew each other vaguely—I'd written a feature for *Rock and Ice* on his and Dennis Urubko's successful 2018 rescue of Elisabeth Revol on Nanga Parbat, and we'd chatted at the Piolets d'Or in Poland in 2019—we gambled and said what the hell, deciding to partner up.

Based on a tip from local guide Micher Quito, we set our sights on Jangyaraju (5,675m, a.k.a. Jangyaraja or Jatuncunca), an oft-overlooked peak of the Ranrapalca-Chinchey massif sandwiched between the more striking summits of Ocshapalca (5,881m) and Vallunaraju (5,686m). Climbing information about Jangyaraju—and even which peak is Jangyaraju—is convoluted. A 1975 expedition makes note of three unique summits: Jangyaraju Oeste (5,450m), Jangyaraju Este (5,675m), and Jangyaraju Central (5,630m); however, Evelio Echevarria's "Survey of Andean Ascents" describes these as Bolivar, P 5,675m, and San Martin, respectively (AAJ 1976). It's unclear which top was reached on the 1958 first ascent from the north side. The 1963 second ascent (also from the north) claimed the correct name of Jangyaraju is actually Bolivar, coinciding with the shorter, western summit (AAJ 1964). Reports in subsequent years defaulted to using Jangyaraju. Regardless, the eastern top appears to be the highest and most prominent summit of this group, and it's the only top that Adam and I felt was a real "summit" once we were up there.

In 2003, a team of Peruvian aspirant guides climbed a new route—possibly the first—on the technical and appealing south face of Jangyaraju's eastern summit: *Árbol de la Alegría* ("Joy Tree," TD+ 50°-65° [90° max]). Adam and I hoped to add another. On the morning of July 29, we approached the south face via the Llaca Valley, an excellent granite sport climbing corridor home to the popular multipitch Mission Lunatica. At base camp in the talus below the glacier, we scoped a line on the right side of the face. However, worried that it may have been climbed previously, we also eyed a second possibility that weaved directly up the broken rock buttresses in the center of the face (just right of the 2003 route).

Following a complex glacier approach in the wee hours of July 30, Adam started swimming—er, climbing—across a large snow bridge over the bergschrund to reach the rightmost line. Suddenly, there was a big whumpf! as a 50' swath of the snow bridge collapsed and Adam disappeared. I heard frantic swearing from below. Unharmful, he climbed out. Now unable to cross the 'schrund toward our Plan A, we opted for the central direttissima, unsure what kind of terrain we would encounter.

What followed were six pitches of lovely névé and alpine ice with the occasional mixed section (to M4). Adam led the first four rope-stretchers. [The 2021 route shares the same first pitch as *Árbol de la Alegría* before continuing directly up.] I led the next two. Adam took over for pitch seven—a harrowing, R-rated lead up rock slabs covered with a layer of snow the consistency of powdered sugar. At one point he yelled down (after nesting two microcams in a thin crack), "I could fall at any time!" For the final 20' to the ridge, he dug a diagonal tunnel through the now-deeper snow. Two traversing pitches along a dreamy knife-edge ridge led us to the pointy summit.

We descended via the mellow west ridge (which, if followed, banks south and leads to the north ridge of Vallunaraju). We made one rappel along the ridge and another at the col between Jangyaraju and Vallunaraju to reach the glacier. During the climb, we routinely struck rock beneath the ice and snow with our tools; based on pictures from drier years, the face often has much less ice and snow, and our line may involve more mixed climbing in such conditions. We used almost exclusively rock gear on the route, placing just a few ice screws and pickets. Adam and I named our nine-pitch route Cita a Ciegas ("Blind Date," 500m, D+ M4 70° [85° max]). The gamble had paid off.

— Michael Levy, USA

## Images



Michael Levy with the south face of Ocshapalca in the background during the descent from Jangyaraju.



The south face of Jangyaraju showing (1) Árbol de la Alegría (2003) and (2) Cita a Ciegas (2021).



Michael Levy leading up pitch four of Cita a Ciegas ("Blind Date," 500m, D+ M4 70° [85° max]) on the south face of Jangyaraju (5,675m).



Adam Bielecki traverses the summit ridge of Jangyaraju after the first ascent of Cita a Ciegas ("Blind Date," 500m, D+ M4 70° [85° max]) on the south face.

Article Details

Author	Michael Levy
Publication	AAJ
Volume	64
Issue	96
Page	
Copyright Date	2022
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions