



AAC Publications

Ango Raju, South Face, The Ice Maiden

Peru, Cordillera Blanca

Approaching the south face of Ango Raju. The Ice Maiden (400m, 6a R), climbed in 2022, is marked. In 1981, Rob Blatherwick and Dr. Johan Reinhard climbed much of the south face, following a route up the cleft to the right. At the time, a small glacier filled the area below the face. Photo by Daniel Lopez.

On June 5, Daniel Lopez and I made the first ascent of the south face of Ango Raju (5,119m GPS, 9°28'52"S, 77°5'17"W; a.k.a. Ango or Angu Raju) in Callejon Conchucos, which is located on the eastern side of the Cordillera Blanca. The valley is the main outlet on the east side of the range and drains into the Marañon River and eventually the Amazon.

I first learned of Ango Raju in 2020 after speaking with Dr. Johan Reinhard about high-altitude archaeology in the Andes (see AAJ 1983). Dr. Reinhard and partner Rob Blatherwick attempted the south face of the peak in 1981 but abandoned their attempt below the summit due to a frayed rope. Ango Raju has been cited in several spoken chronicles as a waka, an adoration site of capac cochas (human sacrifices). For this reason, there is a good possibility the summit was reached from the north in pre-Hispanic times.

It took us almost a full year to obtain a permit from the local municipality of San Marcos to enter this area, which involved time-consuming networking and a visit to the Peruvian embassy in Ecuador.

From the town of San Marcos, on June 2, we drove to the controversial boundary between the indigenous communities of Huaripampa, Carhuayoc, and Ango and the colossal zinc and silver mine Antamina. It had taken us almost a full calendar year to obtain a permit from the local municipality of San Marcos to enter this area, which involved time-consuming networking and a visit to the Peruvian embassy in Ecuador.

For three nights, we camped at 4,300m in a narrow valley, with abundant water, that accesses the main wall. Reinhard's 1981 picture showed a glacier at the bottom of the wall, but this is now nonexistent. The night before our attempt, it rained for several hours. On the 5th, we left camp at 7 a.m., hoping for dry conditions, but found the wall soaking wet. We decided to attempt it anyway.

We began to the left of the 1981 attempt. Over six hours, we climbed eight mostly long pitches on loose and decomposing limestone, with wet conditions throughout and some snow patches. We were very lucky to have only clouds and no additional rain during the ascent. The last pitch required some simul-climbing on easy terrain to reach the summit ridge.

Compared with the neighboring walls in the Cerro Tornillo basin (see AAJ 2022), the rock quality of Ango Raju is significantly inferior. Several sections of our route were extremely dangerous, and retreat would have been difficult due to poor anchors and overall loose rock. Our route can be identified by one pin and one bolt atop pitch one.

On the summit, we celebrated briefly and scouted for man-made structures there and on the lower north summit. (We did not observe any conclusive evidence of ancient structures.) We descended via a long hike down the north slopes.

In the late 1990s, Dr. Reinhard discovered various Incan "mummies" frozen on several Peruvian

mountaintops, including one dubbed The Ice Maiden—also the title of one of Dr. Reinhard’s books. Thus, we named our route The Ice Maiden (400m, 6a R) in honor of Dr. Reinhard’s fantastic discoveries.

– **Felipe Proaño, Ecuador**

Images



The south face of Ango Raju showing the route The Ice Maiden (400m, 6a R).



Map showing the location of Ango Raju on the east side of the Cordillera Blanca.



Approaching the south face of Ango Raju. The Ice Maiden (400m, 6a R), climbed in 2022, is marked. In 1981, Rob Blatherwick and Dr. Johan Reinhard climbed much of the south face, following a route up the cleft to the right. At the time, a small glacier filled the area below the face.



The south side of Ango Raju (5,119m GPS).



Felipe Proaño starts up the first pitch of the south face of Ango Raju in not so ideal conditions.



Rob Blatherwick and Johan Reinhard's 1981 attempt on Ango Raju, which ended below the summit due to a frayed rope.

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