



AAC Publications

San Luis (5,620m), René Flament; Huayna Cuno Collo East (5,600m), Charles de Seze.

Bolivia, Quimsa Cruz

In July, Gabriel Fava, Carlitos Molina, and I went to the remote and little-visited southern end of the Cordillera Quimsa Cruz, specifically the Huallatani Valley, accessed via the village of Rodeo and Altarani Valley to the southwest. We were unable to find any information on previous expeditions that had established a base camp in the Huallatani. It took around six hours by 4X4 to reach the area, first on roads along the Altiplano and then via bad pistes. We were excited by this fantastic and quiet valley, with its distant views south over the Altiplano and to the north a panorama of snow and ice mountains. In the west lay Huayna Cuno Collo and to the east San Luis, both summits included in Yossi Brain's *Bolivia: A Climbing Guide*. Between the two are three subsidiary summits, all unnamed on existing maps.

We established base camp at 4,950m on the north side of the large lake in the valley, near the ruins of mining houses, with a front-row view of the beautiful mountains immediately above. On July 1, Gabriel and I climbed San Luis by its west-southwest face (300m, D 55°), after approaching via 150m of mixed ground and 250m of glacier. On reaching the summit ridge we headed southeast to the highest point, which was quite close. We descended the southwest ridge (which at first heads more or less south), then slopes to the southwest to reach the glacier, and so down to the bottom of the face, where we reversed our approach. On both approach and descent we found deep snow, but the face was hard snow and ice. In the absence of previous known ascents, we named the route René Flament.

Because the forecast was bad for the next two days, we went down to Quime, a small and quiet village. For me it was an opportunity to recover: Unfortunately, just one year previously I was diagnosed with lung cancer, and had an operation to remove half of one lung.

Two days later we returned to base camp, and on July 7, after an approach of 350m, mainly over glacier, we climbed the east peak of Huayna Cuno Collo by its south face (350m, D+ 65°). We climbed the right and serac-free side of the face, a little left of an established route up the south spur. Once on the main ridge, there was too great a risk of wind slab to continue to the main summit, so we stopped on the east summit, about the same time as bad weather moved in. We descended the east ridge over snow and mixed terrain to reach the glacier, which we followed down to the south. Again, we found deep snow on both the approach and glacier descent, but the face had hard snow and ice. Again, in the absence of previous known ascents, we named the route Charles de Seze.

The Quimsa Cruz, which is so wild, beautiful, and still with new route potential, really deserves to be more visited.

Henry Bizot, France

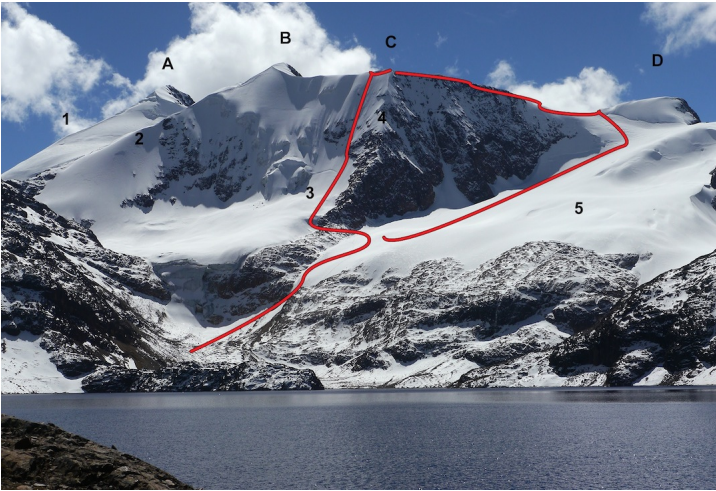
Editor's note: Here, an attempt to clarify names and climbing history of the southern peaks of the Quimsa Cruz. Yossi Brain, in his 1999 guidebook, notes that "there is more confusion over names and heights in the Quimsa Cruz than any other area in Bolivia". This is certainly true in the southern section, where "official" names, as recorded on the 1:50,000 Bolivian IGM map, are different from older maps of the region.

In 1939 Germans Wilfred Kühm and Josef Prem made the first ascent of San Luis from the Monte Blanco mine in the Altarani Valley. This valley lies immediately east of the Huallatani Valley and its large lake of the same name. Kühm and Prem ascended scree to the col north of Cerro Monte Blanco, and then climbed the southwest ridge of San Luis. They descended the northwest ridge, then southwest down the Huallatani glacier, eventually finding a track around the west side of Laguna Huallatani. At the time they referred to San Luis as San Juan, and they gave the name Cerro Aguilar to the highest summit of what is marked as Cumbres Khasiri on the IGM map. Later, they used this track to return to the Huallatani Valley, crossed it, and made the first ascent of Huayna Cuno Collo (5,640m) via the southwest ridge.

The same pair also made the first ascent of what is generally accepted to be the highest mountain in the range, a snow summit northwest of Huayna Cuno Collo, most commonly referred to as Jacha Cuno Collo (5,800m), but marked on the IGM map as Cerro Don Luis. According to Prem, Jacha Cuno Collo, Huayna Cuno Collo, and the unnamed summit to its east are referred to as Las Tres Marias.

In the late 1970s, a number of foreign climbers based in La Paz visited the Quimsa Cruz. A British couple, Barry and Kate Webb, climbed most of the peaks above the Huallatani Glacier. Once, Barry Webb soloed "a face" on one of the peaks and continued northwest along the main ridge to the summit of Jacha Cuno Collo; on another visit he and a partner traversed the whole ridge, as did one or two other groups, though their start and finishing points are unclear.

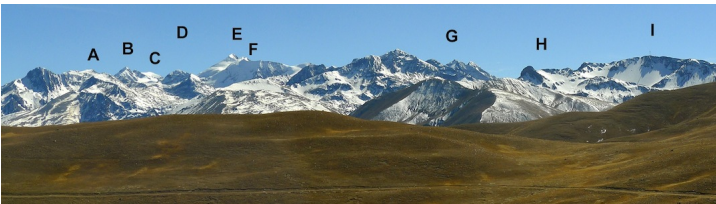
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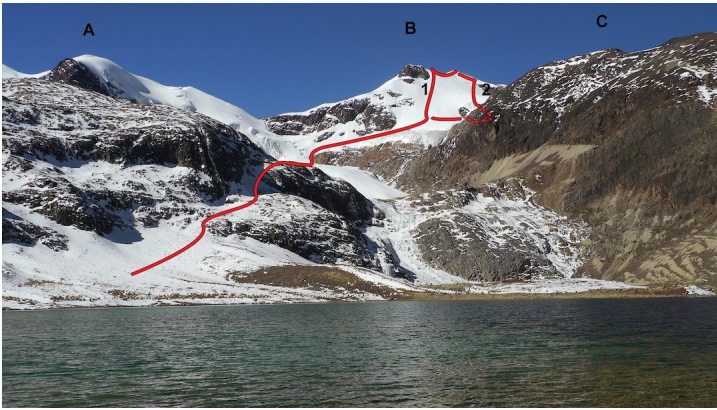
Las Tres Marias. (A) Jacha Cuno Collo. (B) Huayna Cuno Collo (the main summit is hidden further back). (C) Huayna Cuno Collo East. (D) Unnamed (ca 5,540m). (1) Southwest ridge (1939). (2) Southwest ridge (1939). (3) Charles de Seze (2013). (4) South spur (first ascent unknown). (5) 2013 descent route.



On the first ascent of Charles de Seze, south face of Huayna Cuno Collo East. The Huallatani Valley below.



Panorama of the southern Quimsa Cruz from the south. (A) Santa Rosa. (B) Gigante Grande. (C) Cerro Sofia. (D) Cerro Piroja. (E) Jacha Cuno Collo. (F) Huayna Cuno Collo. (G) Cumbres Kasira. (H) Cerro Salta Khasa. (I) Cerro Salta Hita (with large mast on summit).



(A) Cerro Piroja. (B) San Luis. (C) Cerro Monte Bianco. (1) René Flament. (2) 2013 descent.

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