



AAC Publications

Siulá Grande, East Pillar to Southeast Ridge, Le Bruit des Glaçons

Peru, Cordillera Huayhuash

In the winter of 2016, Didier Jourdain presented a photo of Siulá Grande's east face to his teammates of the Groupe Militaire de Haute Montagne (GMHM). In 2003, Didier had visited the Cordillera Huayhuash and climbed a wonderful new route on Jirishanca; he thought it would be possible to find good rock on Siulá Grande (6,344m). Our team did a lot of research but did not find any record of attempts on this wild 1,400m wall.

Didier and I became very motivated by the prospect climbing such an unknown rock wall. The possibility of climbing in a party of two was exciting to us as well, since at the GMHM we usually climb in teams of four on high-altitude mountains. In a smaller party, there is more commitment; one has to bring more experience, physical and technical skills, and ability to handle doubts and fear.

Didier is 10 years older than me and had taken part in 20 expeditions. I had only done a few expeditions, but I was efficient on alpine ground and fast at rock climbing. We would form a good team.

In late August, Didier and I, along with other members of the GMHM, traveled to the southern Cordillera Huayhuash. The other members of the team, Arnaud Bayol, Antoine Bletton, Cyril Duchêne, and Dimitry Munoz, climbed a new route on Puscanturpa Este.

Our first attempt on Siulá Grande began August 21. We climbed three pitches before snowfall covered the vertical limestone and the wall became impassable. We spent the night only 100m above the bergschrund, then abseiled down and escaped to base camp the following day.

Our true start took place on August 24. It seemed we would have five days of good weather—just enough time, we thought, for a round trip to the summit. The wall was immediately steep and provided technical climbing on sticky limestone, with good rock, plentiful holds, and easy-to-find protection. Higher up, we climbed two ice pitches to reach a big cornice. We found a good ledge on the opposite side of the cornice for our first bivy. It was the perfect place to study the next pitches, and a natural line appeared up the right side of the wall.

In the morning we ascended slabs on less solid rock. Belays were difficult to establish, as we found only superficial cracks. Above, we couldn't see any cracks continuing up the more vertical ground. We began to have doubts about our line, as we didn't carry bolts.

Luckily, our intuition for the line proved correct, and we eventually reached a crack system leading toward the ridge atop the pillar. That night, August 25, we bivied at 5,600m, having climbed 10 varied pitches. Our bivy was just 100m below the top of the rock wall. The unclimbed southeast ridge of Siulá Grande hovered above us. This 700m ridge did not appear difficult, but in the Andes corniced ridges are never simple to climb, and it was also hard to see exactly how we would reach the ridge from the top of the rock pillar. A fine hail began as we dug out our two-square-meter bedroom.

On August 26 we woke at dawn to climb the final rock pitches. A short pendulum led us to the foot of a nearby crack system, which took us to the ridge. These vertical 100m provided excellent 6b pitches. In all we climbed 24 pitches up the pillar.

At noon we finally saw the scene ahead: Connecting the pillar to the ridge would not be easy. We fixed our 60m hauling rope that we used for our bag, making one full length rappel down vertical slabs that would be very hard to climb back up on our descent. After a second, shorter rappel, we reached icy ground approximately 100m below the pillar, at the col separating the pillar from the ridge. The huge cornices were now apparent, and we cast off toward the ridge. The weather forecast now promised a disturbance for the following day. We decided to climb as far as possible that afternoon. The snow conditions did not allow us to find good protection, and we often simulclimbed without anything to secure us. At 9 p.m. we reached a snow mushroom we had seen from the glacier, days earlier, and we dug a terrace just below it for a bivouac, at 6,200m, and plunged into a deep sleep by 11 p.m.

After an early start on August 27, we reached the summit without mishap at 8 a.m., far above a magical landscape. Despite the long descent ahead, we took time to enjoy the moment at this suspended place.

After retracing our steps down the icy ridge we found our way back to the col. We first had to climb a pitch of WI5 back out of the notch to reach the end of our fixed rope, which we then ascended to regain the east pillar. From there, the descent was committing: 700m of abseiling with our rack of about 30 pitons, nuts, and cams. We reached the glacier midday on August 28 and then base camp shortly after. During our five-day effort we felt both great pleasure and doubt on this untouched side of one of the most famous mountains of the Andes. We call our route Le Bruit des Glaçons (1,400m, ED 6c WI5).

– Max Bonniot, France, translated from French by Claude Gardien

Siula Grande : Le bruit des glaçons from gmhm chamonix on Vimeo.

Images



Le Bruit des Glaçons, the new route up the east face and southeast ridge of Siula Grande (6,344m).



Max Bonniot starting up the first pitches at 4,900m.



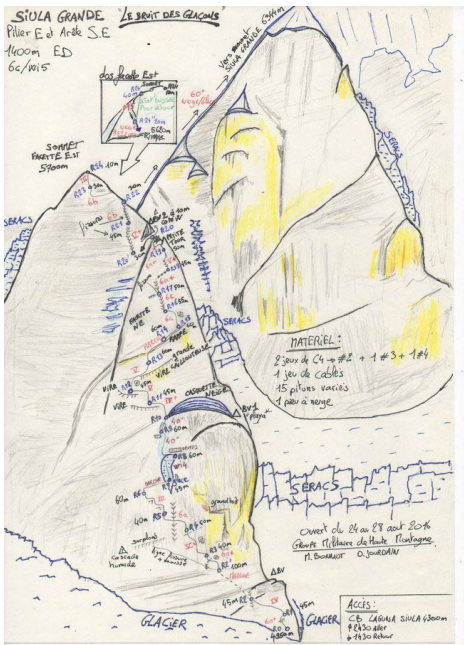
Max Bonniot climbing the final cracks system to reach the top of the east pillar of Siula Grande on the third day, around 5,700m.



Didier Jourdain (left) and Max Bonniot (right) atop the summit of Siula Grande.



Max Bonniot settles in for a bivy.



A topo for Le Bruit des Glaciers, the first route up the east face of Siula Grande.



Didier Jourdain leading a steep crack on the east pillar of Siula Grande.



The east face of Siula Grande (6,344m), seen from 4,500m during the approach.



During the August 16 reconnaissance of Siula Grande, around 4,600m.



Didier Jourdain fixing a safety line at the second bivy on the second day on Siula Grande, around 5,600m.



Didier Jourdain atop the rock portion of the climb, before abseiling down to reach the unclimbed southeast ridge of Siula Grande.



Didier Jourdain nearing the top of the southeast ridge, on the verge of reaching the summit of Siula Grande.



Didier Jourdain leading a tricky ice pitch to return to the top of the east pillar, during the descent from the summit of Siula Grande.

Article Details

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