



AAC Publications

Huayna Illampu, Via dei Nembresi

Bolivia, Cordillera Real

In 1973, an Italian expedition led by Carlo Nembrini climbed Illampu (6,368m) and then moved to Illimani. After climbing that peak, they joined a search for the bodies of Pierre Dedieu (France) and Ernesto “Coco” Sanchez (Bolivia), who had been killed on the mountain. Sanchez had been considered the best alpinist in Bolivia at the time, climbing new routes with French resident Alain Mesili. The Italians located the body of Sanchez, but tragically, during the evacuation, Nembrini fell to his death.

In 2022, Rosa Morotti, a niece of Nembrini’s, wrote to me about her dream of opening a new route on Illampu, 50 years after the death of her uncle. I had visited Laguna Glaciar, a beautiful lake between Illampu and Ancohumá, four years earlier, and during that trip I saw a possible new line on the south side of Huayna Illampu, a 5,940m summit on the southwest ridge of Illampu. When Rosa wrote, I immediately thought of this potential line. [Information on Huayna Illampu’s climbing history is scant. The only prior reported line is the Mesili-Sanchez Route on the southwest face, climbed in 1973 and graded TD.]

On June 27, 2023, Rosa, Maria Teresa Llampá Vasquez (the first female IFMGA aspirant guide from Bolivia), and I made a five-hour trek from Sorata to reach the bottom of the face, where we camped. Carrying all of our equipment, we left at 4 a.m. for the face. The first part of the route followed a fine couloir for 300m, with two hard pitches of AI4 and M5. The route then became easier, but the snow was bad, forcing us to climb ice close to a big serac barrier. Above, a ridge led to the flat summit of Huayna Illampu, which we reached at 2 p.m.

We opted to make a second camp at this point and then left at five the next morning to continue up to Illampu’s main summit. Following the southwest ridge (normal route), we reached the top at 8:15 a.m. Rosa dedicated the route to her husband and all the people of Nembro (immediately northeast of Bergamo), where her father and Carlo were born: Via dei Nembresi (700m, ED AI4 M5).

— **Daniele Assolari, Italy/Bolivia**

Editor’s Note: The author is a guide based in the village of Peñas in the central Cordillera Real, and his company, La Cordillera Experience, is training and employing local people in adventure sports and tourism, as well as adding routes to the local cliffs. The red sandstone crags in Peñas now have more than 100 bolted routes, from 4 to 8b.

Images



The left-rising traverse below the serac barrier on Via dei Nembresi, south face of Huayna Illampu.



Bivouac on the flat summit of Huayna Illampu with Illampu behind. The upper part of the famous west face of Illampu is seen in profile on the left.



Huayna Illampu (5,940m) from the south, showing (1) the approximate line of the 1973 Mesili-Sanchez Route and (2) Via dei Nembresi (700m, ED AI4 M5, 2023). The climbers in 2023 continued up to Illampu (6,368m), which is hidden behind Huayna Illampu.



Huayna Illampu (5,940m) from the south, showing (1) the approximate line of the 1973 Mesili-Sanchez Route and (2) Via dei Nembresi (700m, ED AI4 M5, 2023). The climbers in 2023 continued up Illampu (6,368m).

Article Details

| | |
|----------------|------------------------|
| Author | Daniele Assolari |
| Publication | AAJ |
| Volume | 65 |
| Issue | 98 |
| Page | 198 |
| Copyright Date | 2024 |
| Article Type | Climbs and expeditions |