

Triennial Report 1971-3 The Andes

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Mountaineering in the Andes means, for the average European or American mountaineer, Peru and, at best, FitzRoy and Torre. But the Andean cordillera is the longest mountain chain in the world, is shared by seven countries and its higher regions vary greatly, not only within each country, but also within a few miles of territory. This contribution will endeavour to review the various facets of the development in South American mountaineering that took place in the last three years.

VENEZUELA

With no major or conspicuous peaks to be explored or ascended for the first time, Venezuela does not usually attract climbers, except its local ones, who concentrate heavily on the Mérida range, leaving all but forsaken the other two Andean chains of their country, Culata and Santo Domingo. The only significant fact in Venezuelan mountaineering was that, for the first time, a national climbing team travelled abroad, having ascended two peaks in northern Peru.

COLOMBIA

This is the only Andean country with no native mountaineers. Thus, all activity has been in the hands of foreigners. In the central (volcanic) range, attempts to climb in the Huila massif (*c* 5300 m) have failed, due to the notorious weather of the region. In the same range, but further N, the government of the state of Caldas has been making efforts to create interest among the local tourists for the snow volcanoes that rise near the large cities of Medellín and Manizales. A few roads have been built or improved and the large ski lodge on the slopes of Nevado del Ruiz (*c* 5300 m) has been reconditioned. But it has been in the Santa Marta range where most of the significant Colombian climbing has occurred, since stable weather and new routes on very fine peaks are the main attractions of this, the highest coastal mountain chain in the world. Main events are the new routes done on the E ridge of Pico Santander by a British expedition and another on the N ridge of El Guardián, by an American one, both in 1972. It appears that access to this fine range is not as simple now as it used to be. The Bintikúa Indians of the villages of Sogromé and Donachuí have permitted passage through the land that encloses the valley of Donachuí only after extorting from mountaineers a tax of a day's labour on roads and several hundred *pesos*. The two parties mentioned above avoided problems by entering the range via the San Sebastián-Mamancanaca route over ridges, instead of the Atanquez-Donachuí way hitherto used.

ECUADOR

In contrast with the two previous countries, Ecuador has registered a dramatic increase in the number of local mountaineers. As a proof of this extraordinary activity stands the peculiar mass climbing that occurred simultaneously on 25 summits, ranging from 4500 m to the 6267 m of Chimborazo, on 25 July 1973. This mass attack was organized by the new clubs of El-Sadday and Intiñán which, together with Nuevos Horizontes, have instituted a mountain rescue service, with its base in Quito. However, the more important mountaineering enterprises in the country were left to foreign expeditions. The German Bednar 1970 party ascended three peaks of the Tabernáculo massif and Monja Chica (all four, *c* 5200 m). The Italian climber Marino Tremonti ascended, with two Alpine guides, the difficult peak of Fraile Grande (5200 m), in December 1972. It appears now that there are no unclimbed ice peaks in Ecuador, unless some of the summits of the northern rim of El Altar massif have been left untouched.

PERU

The last three years have only confirmed the trend that Peruvian mountaineering began to develop in the mid 1960s. Since nearly all the major peaks in the country (i.e., over 6000 m) have already been climbed, new routes are sought on them and unclimbed but much lower peaks are being methodically ascended. But this type of activity offers some variations from region to region.

Cordillera Blanca and Cordillera Huayhuash. The finest new routes on Peru's major peaks have been attempted in these two magnificent ranges and, at times, not always successfully. The great s wall (rock) of Huandoy Sur (6160 m) has been attacked eight times by experienced mountaineers. Several faces on Chopicalqui, Chinchey and Chacaraju have defeated besiegers, demanding besides a price in lives. On the other hand, a great success was scored on Huascarán, on whose huge E rock face an Austrian team under E. Koblmüller engineered a way up to the 6769 m top, on 26 July 1972. Leigh Ortenburger directed in 1971 a strong party that opened up new N face routes on Huandoy Norte (6395 m), Artesonraju (6025 m) and Pirámide (5885 m).

In spite of being so heavily travelled every year, the Cordillera Blanca still offers room for exploration. The Deutschen Naturfreunde Andenexpedition 1971 penetrated the Queshque valley, in the southern extreme of the range, and ascended in its cirques a total of 27 hitherto virgin summits, from 5000 to 5645 m. H. Adams Carter, editor of the *American Alpine Journal*, has been leading groups to the little-known eastern slopes of the range for the last few years. In its trip of 1972, the Carter party ascended some attractive mountains, including the Milpocraju and Tumarinaraju (5670 m).

In the Cordillera Huayhuash the Italian attempt to scale the w (ice) face of Nevado Rasac (6040 m) and the first ascent of the sharp peak of Rasac Oeste (5700 m) deserve mention, and the 1970 British expedition under Joe Brown,



88 *Nevado Milpocraju, Cordillera Blanca. The route of the first ascent in 1972 was by the facing ridge* Photo: H. Adams Carter

which tackled El Toro (over 5900 m) of the Yerupaja massif. Dangerous cornices and unstable snow forced the latter party to give up the attempt.

Central Peru. Since mountains east of Lima are relatively low and a major portion of them have already been explored or ascended, little climbing has occurred in this vast district in the last three years. The most noteworthy enterprise is the first ascent of the s ridge of Huagaruncho (5730 m), by two Norwegians and two Americans in July 1970.

Cordillera Occidental. In Peru's volcanic range are massed some of the highest peaks of the country, as well as its last unclimbed summits over 6000 m. However, all heights in the area are subject to revision. Several high peaks have been demoted to lower ranks. Coropuna (6615 m) is now thought to be less than 6400 m high, according to a preliminary survey by the Peruvian army. Sabancaya (6040 m) and Hualcahualca (6025 m) have been lowered by expeditions to 5976 and 5970 m respectively. It should not surprise therefore if the height of the great peaks of Solimana (6323 m), Ambato (6360 m) and Chachani (6087 m) also suffer a reduction. Solimana was ascended for the first time in 1970 by a joint Peruvian-Italian group after a memorable effort of 22 hours. Ambato or Ampato ('The Frog') was climbed by a German party in 1972; apparently this is also a first ascent, since, as in the case of Solimana, previous

parties had only reached lower points below the main summit. The same German party that visited Ampato climbed methodically all and every one of the peaks of the Chila range (north of Ampato), bagging in all 45 peaks between 5100 and 5520 m. This appears to be one of the rare cases in which a range is explored and totally climbed at the first visit.

Cordilleras Vilcabamba and Urubamba. The former, after being initially explored by the Swiss in 1959, became the favourite of Australasian climbers who, from 1962, have been so successful in their expeditions that they have nearly exhausted the unclimbed peaks of the rugged Pumasillo group (although unscaled faces are abundant). Salcantay (6271 m), highest in the region, has yielded routes as difficult as any peak in the Cordillera Blanca. Visiting expeditions have done much to clarify the confusing topography of the Vilcabamba. This has not been the case, however, for the Urubamba, in which not even the highest peak has been finally determined. The Urubamba, with its Palanganayoc group, is one of the few Peruvian ranges that offers excellent rock climbing. The Canadian John Ricker, in one visit to the ill-charted central Urubamba, obtained the impression that heights, in general, have so far been overestimated by climbers.

Vilcanota and Carabaya districts. The Carabaya area has become fairly well known, after the 1967 New Zealand expedition charted the Allinccapac group, but only sporadic light expeditions have visited it since. John Ricker made useful indications for the delimitation of the Vilcanota-Carabaya district, an important problem in Peruvian orography.¹

The Vilcanota is one of the most extensive of the ranges of Peru. Its best known district has been so far the Ausangate-Cayangate group of peaks. In the last three years two noted climbers, the German Olaf Hartmann and the Canadian John Ricker, have been carrying out exploration and climbing in almost every district of the Vilcanota. The sketch-maps and reports they have produced have appeared mostly in the *American Alpine Journal* from 1968 to 1972. Exploration seems to be more important in the Vilcanota than technical climbing, although the great peak of Ausangate (6384 m) has been ascended from many angles.

At the closing of the Peruvian chapter, some information must be given about the development of Peruvian mountaineering. César Morales Arnao continues to be the representative of the sport in the Ministry of Education. He has edited, up to now, nine numbers of the *Revista Peruana de Andinismo*, to which chapters on glaciology were added in the last issue. Peruvian mountain clubs, which numbered 23 in 1972, seem to have remained stagnant or even suffered a decline, judging from the list of Peruvian ascents published in *Revista* 9. The main Peruvian mountaineering undertaking of the last three years was undoubtedly the first ascent of Solimana (see above), in which Julián Blanco participated.

¹ *AAJ*, 1970, pp 42-44.

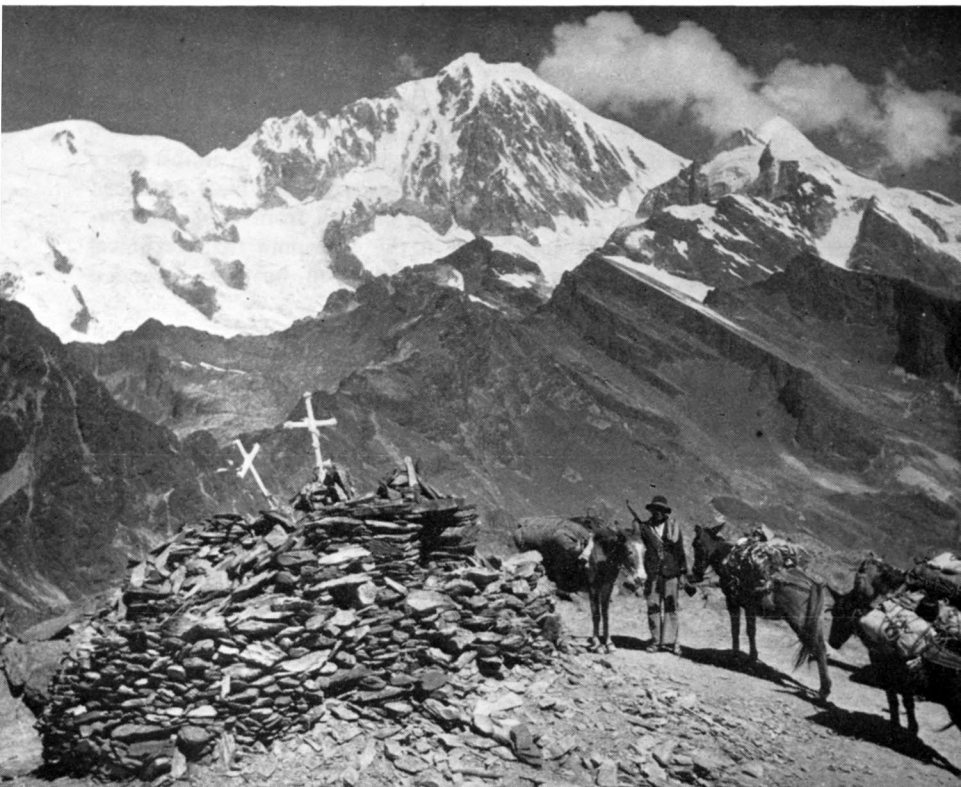
BOLIVIA

Exploratory mountaineering has been the main feature of Bolivian climbing in the last three years, since the three main ranges of the country—Apolobamba, Real and Quimsa Cruz—have received visits of fairly large teams that have unravelled important problems in their orography, as well as having scaled an impressive number of peaks. The Apolobamba range, situated astride the border with Peru, in spite of its isolation, has been visited fairly often. The main event for this particular range is that a re-study of its orography by the Italian climbers Mario Fantin and Camillo Zamboni revealed that there is only one Chaupi Orco peak, corresponding to the one previously known as Chaupi Orco Norte (6000 m), to which an estimated height of 6100 m has been given. The mountain hitherto known as Chaupi Orco (which retains its height of 6044 m) should receive, according to the Italians, the name of Nevado de Salluyo.²

The Cordillera Real has borne the brunt of visiting expeditions to Bolivia. It fell to the British university climbing groups and to the Japanese expeditions under Ichiyo Mukou to initiate mountaineering on a large scale in the 1960s. The Germans have continued the task of those predecessors and, taking

² Mario Fantin, *Alpinismo Italiano nel Mondo* (Bologna, 1972), vol 2, map no 105.

89 *Illampu, Cordillera Real, Bolivia* Photo: Club Andino Boliviano



advantage of the new national map produced by the Bolivian army, have climbed a large number of peaks in the districts of the Cordillera Real between Ancohumá and Condoriri. The Bayerische Naturfreunde 1969 expedition under Rudi Knott ascended 25 summits up to 5468 m in the Negrundi and Checapa groups. The Regensburg 1972 expedition under Anton Putz climbed 24 summits up to 5660 m in the Negrundi-Jancocota groups. A British expedition from the Imperial College Mountaineering Club ascended pretty much the same peaks that the Bangor 1966 expedition had visited, but opened on them many new routes. The Regensburgers also made the first traverse of the delicate ridge that connects Pico del Norte (6082 m) with Illampu (6362 m), a difficult proposition that in 1927 had defeated the redoubtable German Alpinist Hans Pfann.

There has been little or no traceable climbing by Bolivian mountaineers themselves, who unfortunately do not have a publication. However, several Bolivians have accompanied foreign expeditions on important mountains, the best known being Ernesto Sánchez, Rony Ibatta and Alfredo Martínez. The third Bolivian range, the Quimsa Cruz, located south of Illimani, contains a number of peaks of a tamer aspect than those of the Cordillera Real. Heights in the Quimsa Cruz chain have now been put in doubt, after the Bayerische Naturfreunde expedition mentioned above ascended six peaks in the northern section and lowered existing figures by some 200 to 300 m.

The other ranges of Bolivia, Santa Vera Cruz, Cocapata and Occidental, have received no traceable visit of importance. The volcanoes of the Cordillera Occidental, situated on the Chilean border, were climbed mostly from Chile during the late 1960s. Sajama (6520 m), Bolivia's highest mountain, located in this range but fully within Bolivian territory, is usually climbed once or twice every year.

CHILE AND ARGENTINA

Mountaineering in these two countries can be treated in a common chapter, since it has had a parallel development, not only in what concerns foreign expeditions, but also regarding the local mountain sport.

The *puna* or volcanic Andes at the northern third of each country was the home of the Inca and Atacameñan Indians, who conquered several very high peaks between the 15th and 17th centuries. This mountaineering by the ancients has unique overtones of Indian daring, enterprise and appreciation of the spirit of the hills that Chilean and Argentinian mountaineers have duly respected and recognised. A good number of expeditions from both countries have set out hoping, not to make a first ascent but rather, to be second after the ancients. The reward for this type of *arqueología de alta montaña*, as it is widely called, is represented in the handsome booty of statuettes, ornaments, textiles and pottery that is usually excavated from the high summits. It must be remarked, however, that this booty is not distributed among the finders, but it automatically becomes the property of the national government as museum



90 *Puna of Northern Chile. The twin summits of Cerro Las Tórtolas on which Indian relics have been found* Photo: Fed. de Andinismo de Chile

relics. In the last three years, Indian relics were found on the tops of Tórtolas (6323 m), Pili (6044 m), Paniri (5940 m), Aguas Calientes (5932 m), Miñiques (5910 m), Tambillos (5800 m), El Potro (5830 m), Cerro de los Mogotes (5380 m) and Imán (5070 m).

Climbers from both sides of the Andes have also endeavoured to seek out the highest unclimbed mountains of the *puna*. An Argentinian party located and ascended Bonete Chico (6850 m or 6392 m), whose position and even existence had been vague, until the date of the ascent, 1970. The Chileans ascended in the last years Cerro Olivares (6252 m), Los Perdidos (6300 m), Nevado Amarillo (6050 m) and Nevado del Cazadero (6660 m), the last three with members

of the Japanese expedition under Ichiyo Mukou; and, with Poles, El Solo (6189 m).

The central Andes of both countries are true Alpine zones, in which winter sport, hiking and technical climbing are possible all year round. However, since most of the peaks closer to the big cities have already been ascended many times, climbers are now moving to the northern and southern extremes of the central zone of their respective countries in order to seek new ground. The Club Mañke (Santiago) has been particularly successful in organising outings in little-known districts in which all peaks within a valley are methodically climbed. Technical climbing has also been developed locally, although at a slower pace than abroad, due mostly to the poor quality of the rock in these zones. Several climbers have already done the *sexto grado* and acquired an expertise, even on bad rock, which they have put to the test in Patagonia. But most of the great walls of the vast central Andes of Chile and Argentina are yet to be tackled. The sounder rock, in central Chile, is found in the Colchagua province, while in central Argentina, excellent rock was reported in the Campanario group by an English climber, Nigel Gallop.

Not many foreign expeditions travel to these areas, since most of the peaks are now well trodden. What could be called 'fraternising' expeditions, from Socialist countries, have travelled to central Chile and climbed with local organisations. The only important foreign expedition that visited central Argentina was the Austrian Naturfreunde Andenexpedition 1971; it operated in the Ramada range, climbing several high peaks by new routes and making the first ascent of the great Cerro La Mesa (6230 m). Erroneous information had led them to the belief that this summit had been won by the Poles in 1934.

The s region of both Chile and Argentina, although perhaps the most scenic of the whole Andean cordillera, is seldom visited by foreigners or even by national climbers. Very few peaks are unclimbed. Callaqui (3020 m) in S Chile, is one of these few, but it is almost inaccessible because of the dense forest that surrounds its base. In the 1969-70 season, three Santiago climbers made the first known ascent of Las Yeguas (3499 m).

In Patagonia, famous or conspicuous peaks are running short, after most of the great towers of the FitzRoy and Paine groups have been conquered. Catedral del Paine was climbed by a British group in early 1971 and the Paine horns (Cuerno Principal, 2110 m, and Cuerno Norte, c 2000 m) were ascended by Chileans and South Africans, respectively. The FitzRoy group has a good number of *aiguilles*—not properly peaks—as yet unclimbed, and also Cerro Torre. The opinion voiced by several mountaineers that Maestri did not conquer the top in either of his two expeditions has gained ground. *Mountain* (Sept 1972) and *AAJ* 1973 have discussed this problem at length; the latter includes fine illustrations of the uppermost 50 m of the great mountain. But a number of 'problems' not too far below the standards of Cerro Torre have shown up elsewhere in Patagonia. Cerro Cubo ('The Bucket'), 2920 m, repulsed a Japanese expedition. The difficult Cerro Norte (2920 m), conquered by two Argentinians in February 1970, was declared to be more difficult than

FitzRoy. And an Argentinian group that climbed a peak in the Huemules group (Moyano glacier, Viedma lake) was greatly impressed by the savage towers that form the group.

After the more famous towers have been conquered, expeditions to Patagonia seem to have reverted to plain exploration and ice climbing. Five New Zealanders and a Chilean climbed three peaks in the Cachet group (Jan 1972) and another New Zealand group, two-man strong, made the third ascent of San Lorenzo (3600 m) and the first of six peaks, including Cerro Hermoso, in the Cordón Cochrane (Dec 1971 to Feb 1972). Among native climbers, as usual, the Argentinian-Slovenian brothers Juan and Pedro Skvarča have been the most active. They ascended three peaks in the Upsala glacier region in Feb 1970. The Chileans, on their side, ascended several peaks of the Paine massif and attempted Catedral del Paine. Claudio Lucero joined the New Zealand expedition that operated in the San Valentin massif and whose reports have received wide coverage.³

After the Shipton expeditions, Tierra del Fuego has been left as forsaken as it was before and only the three Italian expeditions that vainly attempted the western summit of Sarmiento are noteworthy.

The Andes were called on one occasion a 'happy range' for expeditions. South American governments have granted mountaineers a complete freedom of movement within each country or across international borders. At times they have even supplied material help in the form of ships, planes and lorries, a help not to be found in other continents. No fee has been charged per peak climbed and no reservation of a mountain or mountain area has been necessary. But there are possibilities that some of these facilities may be curtailed in the future. The governments, hard pressed in the midst of economic troubles and of shortages, will not be eager to provide material aid to expeditions. South American miners are becoming more restive, particularly in the case of Bolivians. This could make the mountain zones, where the Bolivian mines usually are, 'restricted areas'. And finally, there are signs of displeasure among some Bolivian and Chilean climbers regarding the poor judgment that several visiting expeditions have shown in the naming of Andean peaks. While this may be dismissed by some as merely a form of nationalism, it is true that Chilean and Bolivian mountain institutions have done well in making early moves to avoid having in their countries the unpleasant problems that have occurred in Peru. The Club Andino Boliviano, Bolivia's major mountain institution, ruled in 1963 that no name can be given to a Bolivian peak without its approval; this was reiterated in 1969 by the Club's president, Alfonso Gutiérrez Tamayo. In Chile, the Instituto Geográfico Militar formed, in 1972, a board on geographic names. Several leading mountaineers have been asked to join it.

³ *AJ* 75 225-30; *CAJ* 1972, pp 30-5; *Tararua* 1970, pp 42-5; all with very fine illustrations.