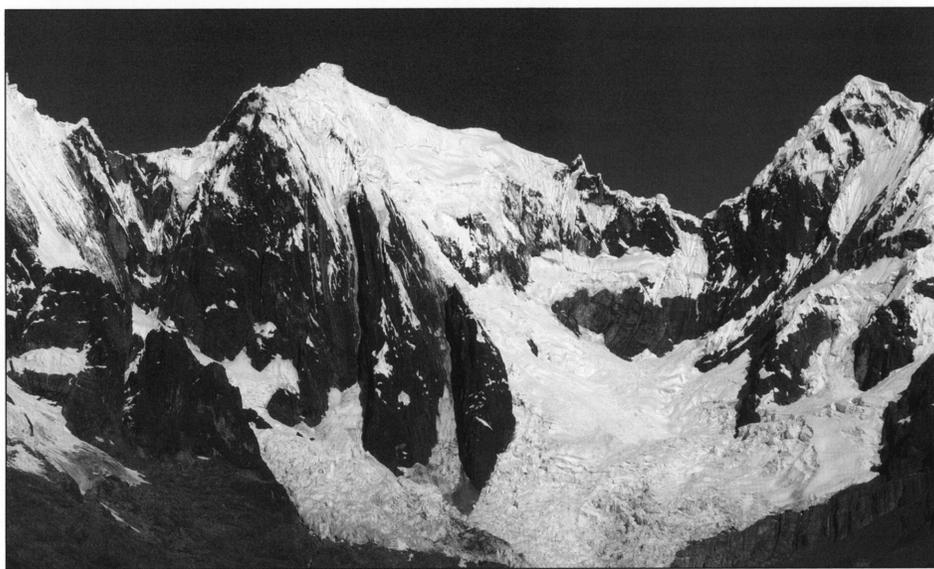
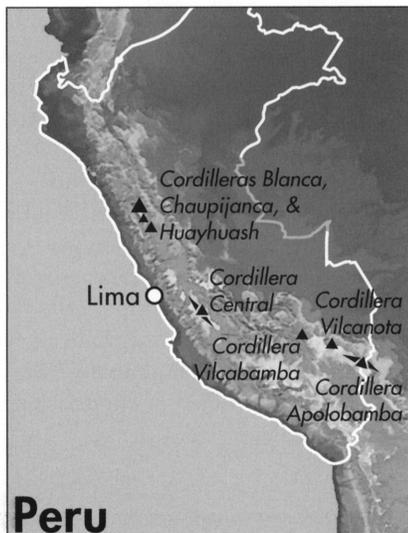


Peru

CORDILLERA BLANCA

Pucahirca Oeste, attempt. In late June John Miller and I set out for the Pucahirca group, assisted by a Mountain Fellowship Grant from the AAC. After acclimatizing in the Ishinca Valley, we were unable to establish a new line on the north face of Pucahirca Oeste (6,039 m) [some sources call this peak Pucahirca Sur], due to deteriorating snow and ice conditions.

The approach was our first challenge. We could make the three- to four-day trek with burros from Hualcayán to the north of Santa Cruz and Alpamayo, then down to Laguna Sajuna, or we could take a 10-hour bus ride over the range to Pomabamba. From Pomabamba a five-hour taxi ride to base camp still would await, if a taxi willing to negotiate the journey could be found. We decided to make the four-day trek, but a stomach bug sent me back to Caraz. After recovering, I took the bus to Pomabamba and a taxi as far as one would take me toward base camp, which left me 30km to cover by foot.



The unclimbed chimney on the remote northwest face of Pucahirca Central (6,014m), visible just left of center and guarded by a complex icefall approach as well as hazards from above. The peak's right skyline is the upper Southwest Arête route (Dionisi-Fecchio-Ghigo-Marchese, 1961), reached from the opposite side. From this side of the mountain, a 1980 Italian team led by Mario Curnis (Azzoni-Bianchetti-Bonicelli-Curnis-Fassa-Rota-Scarpellini-Navar-Testa) climbed the west face to a few meters below the summit before retreating in bad conditions. *John Miller*

We scoured John's telephoto pictures for the best lines in the cirque. Two interesting, unclimbed lines attracted us. A breathtaking ice chimney over 1,000' long split the middle of the northwest face of Pucahirca Central (6,014m). This intimidating line looked to have a horrific approach up the icefall. It would be quite an accomplishment, if global warming does not do away with it. The other line linked various promising features up the middle of the north face of Pucahirca Oeste. This was our line.

We camped on the glacier below the north face of Pucahirca Oeste. Some of the features that seemed in good condition just a few days before had deteriorated in the sun, and we watched debris fall directly down our intended line.

We made a high camp on the glacier and made an attempt that night. However, we moved slowly on the low rock buttress, which was less than optimal and steeper than expected. Combined with the fear of unfavorable conditions ahead, we turned back. The next morning we realized the wisdom of our decision when we watched an awesome avalanche sweep near our intended line.

ASA FIRESTONE, AAC

Taulliraju, El Centelleo. Riding a bike for three days from Carhuaz (2,650m) to Punta Olimpica/Pasaje de Ulta (4,890m) sounded like a fast, simple method of acclimatization. Two hours after Matej Flis, Tadej Golob, and I departed, though, I realized once more there are no shortcuts in alpinism.

Our objective was an alpine-style ascent up the unclimbed center of Taulliraju's south face. Aware of the difficulties before us, we brought all kinds of gear, but by daybreak on the first pitch, it was clear that we wouldn't be able to make our way over the powder-covered granite.

Thus we pared down our equipment for the GMHM Route (400m, TD+ WI4+ M4, Gleizes-Gryska-Prom, 1987), which we hoped to use to access the start of the east face, where we would attempt a new line. The GMHM Route surprised us with a variety of conditions. At nightfall we bivied on a comfortable shelf on the top of the buttress. The following day we continued along the Guides' Route (800m, TD+, Balmat-Fabre-Monaci-Thivierge, 1978) to the east face [Cordillera Blanca scholar and AAJ correspondent Antonio Gómez Bohórquez notes that this portion of the route is erroneously attributed to the 1978 Chamonix guides. Credit belongs to the 1976 Japanese team of Mizobuchi-Nagashino-Yoda.] half a pitch to the right of the Monasterio-Richey 2002 attempt (as we found out later). I started up the first two pitches wearing crampons, but after two falls, I changed to climbing shoes. The granite was first class, only briefly blemished by some huge, loose flakes. On the last pitch, powder again covered the rock, and it was nearly impossible to set belays.

The sun had already set behind Alpmayo as we stood on the summit (5,830m) on May 29, having completed El Centelleo (700m, VI 6b M6+). A glance down the Guides' Route wasn't promising, so we instead rappelled the east face, which appeared mushroom-free. At the end of the first rappel, I practically fell into an ice cave; it proved to be the best shelter we could find.

After we spent an uncomfortable night, the next rappel led to an established anchor. The following rappels were made in a similar manner to the base of the mountain. Looking over the photos back in base camp, we found we'd descended the Monasterio-Richey attempt.

GREGA LACEN, Slovenia (reprinted/adapted from ALPINIST, issue #18, www.alpinist.com)