

East Face of Cerro Cota 2000. Author: Toru Nakajima translated by Yudai Suzuki
800m, 20 pitches, 7a/A3, X, (wet/icy)

Feb. 27 and 29: Fixed ropes up to the pitches 4, then, hauled gear.

Mar. 5–9: One push ground up ascent, rappel the route.

Team

Toru Nakajima

Yudai Suzuki

Kosuke Kawachi

Protection Used

Camelot, Totem Cam, Zero Friends combo

#0.1–#3 x3, #4–#6 x2, 2 sets of nuts

Various pitons, ice screws, cam hooks, and beaks

All cams and pitons were retrieved except for the rappel stations.

Beaks and Thin pitons are very useful

Placed bolts

Ring bolts x7

8mm goujon bolts x3

All the bolts are hand drilled (non-electric drill)

Mostly for the belay stations. We used only 3 ring bolts for the hard aiding pitches.

p1

P1 of the original route (Osa ma non Troppo). 6c+. 55m. Lead: Nakajima

The glacier has retreated, so the start is about 5m lower than the original route's approach. This doesn't significantly affect the grade.

It's a runout from the easy first half, but the slab moves just before the belay are somewhat difficult.

There's one bolt, so it's not too scary, and the grade felt a bit easy. However, there's no bolt at the top, and the rock is somewhat brittle, so it's scary. Set a belay using a cam.

p2

P2 of the original route. 7a. 50m. Lead: Nakajima

It starts with a reachy slab move, and the rock remains fragile afterward, making it quite scary. The route-finding is also difficult, and I imagine it would be quite challenging to climb without bolts.

While I feel the 7a rating is a bit generous, I was more nervous than the grade suggested. Also, the rock directly below the belay station is fragile (with loose flakes), making it very scary.

p3

P3 of the original route. A3. 30m. Lead: Suzuki

A bolt ladder over a roof, but the roof is deteriorating, and some bolt protection is obviously missing, making it difficult. Furthermore, even in the sections not deteriorating, the bolt spacing is quite wide, requiring frequent hooking, which makes it feel more of a struggle than the grade suggests. I placed one ring bolt in a collapsed blank section midway.

p4

P4 of the established route. A2/6b+. 55m. Lead: Kawachi

Starting from a somewhat fragile section, it leads to a vertical crack and a large flake. The vertical crack section consists of a series of beaks; although there are few bolts, the aid climbing difficulty is high. This reflects the high level of commitment shown by the Italian first ascent team. Furthermore, if you free climb, it is expected to be quite difficult, requiring at least 8a. The flake section in the latter half is also packed with loose rocks, making it slow progress.

p5

P5 of the established route. A2+/6b+. 25m. Lead: Suzuki → Nakajima → Suzuki

It gets difficult right from the start, and the rock appears to be deteriorating. Since breaking through via aid climbing was difficult, the strategy was for Nakajima to free climb a section and then hand off to Suzuki. Note that on the first lead attempt (the second day of fixing), they were forced to retreat due to snow, and they tried again on the first day of the main attempt. During the main attempt, snow remained on the upper right ledge midway up, forcing them into a considerable struggle.

p6

P6 of the original route. A1/6b. 50m. Led by Nakajima

A flake extending from the finger hold to the off-pitch section. The rock is stable, making for a safe lead, but it was quite wet during the attempt, so we had to mix in cam aids. Bivouacked at the top.

p7

6b. 45m. Lead: Nakajima

Branching off from pitch 7 of the established route, we traversed to the right through a large flake band, climbing down in some sections. The crux of the moves is on the initial section of the original route. We placed two bolts at the top.

p8

Rappelling the very loose 4th class rock. 15m. We placed two bolts at the belay station.

p9

5a 20m. Led by Nakajima

Walked through a massive flake band, dodging loose rocks. The rock was quite unstable and crumbling; it was terrifying. A 10m cut anchor appeared from the belay station on this pitch. From here, using the preceding party's anchor, we were able to descend to the ground in four 60m rappels.

p10

A1/6b. 35m. Led by Nakajima

After climbing just under 20m up a thin flake to the right, traverse a ledge for about 15m. Although free climbing was certainly possible, the rock was wet, so I switched to cam aid immediately. It can be climbed using a combination of cams up to #0.1 and free climbing. The traverse section has many loose rocks, so caution is required. Set a belay using two anchors from the previous party. From here, the beautiful corner system begins to the summit.

p11

A2/6c+. 60m. Lead: Suzuki

A long, beautiful corner crack. There are rest points at key spots, but it's a long, sustained climb. The final 15m is especially very thin. If it is freed, this would make for a magnificent at least 8a pitch. Belay station using one bolt and a piton from the previous party. There is a wide terrace next to the top, making it suitable to set up the ledge.

p12

A2/6a+. 60m. Lead: Nakajima.

There are many loose rocks from the start, so significant cleaning would be required to free it. In particular, the final 10m consists of only two 4m slab-like flakes standing upright inside the corner, so you have no choice but to break through with risky free moves, which is quite nerve-wracking. At the final corner, while running out, a cam hook nearly came loose, putting us in a critical situation. We set up a cam belay point once we reached a finger crack in good condition. Note that there are three bolts (two hangers, one wire) by the previous party 3m to the right of this spot, but it is possible to proceed without using them. We used them primarily for hauling gear and rappelling.

p13

A1/6b. 50m. Led by Nakajima.

A beautiful finger-to-hand crack. Although there are loose rocks in places, the rock quality is good, and you can enjoy comfortable jamming. It was wet when we attempted it, so we had to use cam aids in some sections. I set up a belay point with a cam at a spot where I could stand.

p14

A1/6a+. 25m. Led by Nakajima.

Hand to fist crack. The rock quality was good again, making for comfortable jamming, but we had to use cam aids again in wet sections during our attempt. Just under 10m up, there was a belay point with an aluminum hanger set by the previous party, but after that, there were no further signs of them. We emerged onto a large terrace littered with loose rocks and set up a belay point with cams.

p15

A1/6a. 50m. Lead: Nakajima

After climbing about 15m up the flake band to the right of the corner, I entered the chimney, but this was a route-finding mistake. The rock in the flake band was mostly loose; not only was it difficult to place protection, but most of the rock moved even when climbing free, putting me in a desperate situation. It seems the correct approach from the start would have been to go through the sinkhole crack in the corner. The second half also had many loose rocks, keeping me on edge. I set a belay point with a cam at a spot where I could stand.

Note: There is a magnificent quartz cavity inside the chimney.

p16

A1/6b. 45m. Lead: Nakajima

Thin crack → Squeeze chimney → Off Width. Since I used a lot of #5 and #6 cams, I ran out of gears. I was pretty drained mentally and physically by p15, so honestly I don't remember much about it, but I think it was a route that could be free-climbed normally. After setting a belay point with cams on a stand-up ledge, I placed two bolts for bivouacking and descending. Bivouacked at the belay point.

p17

A2/6b+. 25m. Lead: Suzuki

We named this pitch "Ajo Ninja". It starts with a #6-sized off-pitch, quickly moves to #7 and #8 sizes, and becomes an intimidating roof off-pitch. We found a way through the holds on the left face and bypassed the roof section with a mix of A2 and free climbing. Returning to the off-width section required dynamic moves with poor protection, making it nerve-wracking. Even after returning to the crack system, the section remained challenging. We established a belay station using cams, chockstones, and pitons at a spot where we could stand.

p18

A2/6b. "Ajo dangerous chimney" 30m. Lead: Suzuki

The crack widens further, becoming an exhausting squeeze chimney. Non-Protection. making it more difficult than the grade suggests. Near the crux—the highlight of the route—Suzuki placed a

piton exquisitely in a tiny crack within a wet, extremely narrow squeeze chimney. After a grueling struggle lasting just under three hours, he broke through a mega 20m runout. After setting a belay station with cams at a standing position, we hand drilled one ringbolt for bivouacking and rappelling.

p19

A2+/6a. 60m. Lead: Nakajima → Suzuki → Nakajima → Kawachi

After climbing a 5m squeeze chimney and mantling onto a chockstone, the route transitions from a corner system into a couloir. About 15m further on, there is a frozen chimney. Nakajima attempted it free but fell while unprotected and had to retreat. After Suzuki placed two ringbolts, he hammered a pecker #3 into the ice and set a cam between two frozen loose falling rocks to get through, then finally placed a good #4 on the crack. Then, handed the lead back to Nakajima again. The route became a severely wet corner crack; they made progress using cam aid, but ran out of gear at a section where the crack widened into a wet squeeze chimney. With sunset approaching and strong winds picking up, they retreated once again, leaving just 10m to the ridge line. After bivouacking, Kawachi pushed through in the rain with determined aid climbing, and the team successfully broke through. This is a risky and terrific pitch that epitomizes the route. It would be a simple pitch if it were dry, but due to lingering snow and ice, it is unlikely to ever dry out. 1-2 Ice screws are likely effective. We set up a belay point with a cam after exiting the ridge onto the west face.

p20

6a. 10m. Led by Suzuki.

The "Victory Road" from here to the true summit. Face climbing with a cam placed in a flake. It was wet during our attempt, so it would likely be more comfortable if dry. We looped a sling around the flake at the summit to create a belay point.