



## AAC Publications

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### **Mt. Mizugaki, Moai Face, First Free Ascent**

Japan, Oku-chichibu Mountains

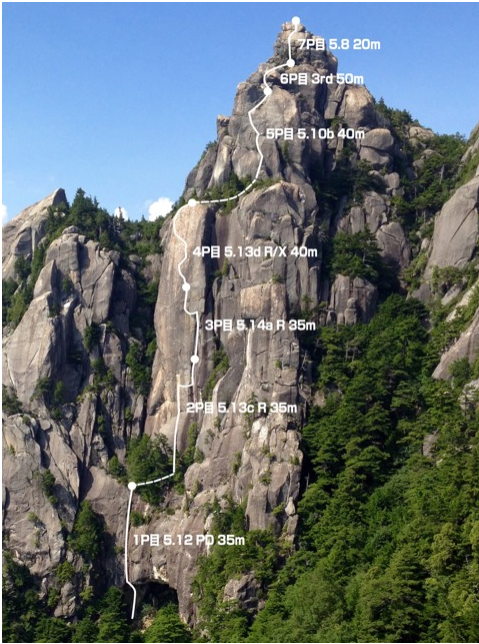
**The Moai Face is a smooth wave of granite that rises out of the pines at Mt. Mizugaki, one of Japan's premier traditional rock climbing crags.** The nearly blank, 110m headwall appeared to be stunning to climb but very hard to protect, and the traditional ethic is strong here. Thirty years ago, some strong climbers began to open free routes here without bolts. This cleanest style has been respected and performed in this area ever since. Nowadays, when someone plans to open a new route, they consider climbing style very seriously.

It was in this spirit that I began the quest for a ground-up ascent of the Moai Face last year with Yusuke Sato. However, I soon realized that a ground-up approach would require placing bolts to be safe. In order to maintain the traditional protection style, we changed tactics to a top-down, "headpoint" approach. With much practice over six months, we were able to climb each pitch free and discover the available protection—some pitches had as few as three pieces of gear. I managed to climb all the pitches without placing any bolts for protection and only using natural protection: cams, nuts, and skyhooks. I placed bolts only for anchors at natural stances, a ledge-to-ledge strategy.

On October 18, 2015, I attempted to lead the entire route. Some pitches required multiple attempts, however I succeeded in making a clean redpoint lead of all seven pitches. The crux pitches two through four are 5.13c, 5.14a, and 5.13d, respectively, all with substantial runouts. The hardest sequence, a 5.14a deadpoint move to a sloping hold, is 6m above the last gear. It took immense focus to execute these hard moves while exposed to big falls. The next day, Yusuke free climbed each pitch on lead as well. We were excited with this success, but the story of the route was not over. On April 23, 2016, we returned to the Moai Face to make a one-day continuous ascent from the ground, with no falls, climbing the route in the best style. We named the route Senjitsu-no Ruri (250m, 5.14a R/X). Senjitsu-no literally means "thousand days," and "ruri" is the jewel lapis lazuli. I compared "thousand days jewel" to a thousand days of precious experiences through climbing.

– Keita Kurakami, Japan

## Images



The Moai Face is located on Mt. Mizugaki in the Okuchichibu Mountains of Japan. Senjitsu-no Ruri (250 m, 5.14a R/X) ascends this face and includes three R-rated pitches of at least 5.13 difficulty.



Keita Kurakami traverses on knobs well above gear on pitch two (5.13c R).



Keita Kurakami deadpoints to a sloped hold at the crux move of pitch three (5.14a R).



Keita Kurakami sticks the 5.14a deadpoint after an eight-meter runout on pitch three (5.14a R).



The complete rack of protection for pitch four.



Keita Kurakami climbing the 20-meter runout on pitch four (5.13d R/X).

## Article Details

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