



## AAC Publications

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### Cashan Oeste, Northeast Face, El Pájaro y el Potrillo

Peru, Cordillera Blanca

**In July 2019, Nicolas Secul (Chile) and I headed into the Rajucolta Valley in the Cordillera Blanca.**

The Pou brothers from Spain had tipped us off about their first ascent of the huge granite northeast face of Cashan Oeste earlier in the same summer (see AAJ 2020), and that we could likely find another line up the face.

After a typical, rattly ride in a beat-up taxi, we set off on our approach to the north side of Cashan Oeste (5,686m; 9°33'36.66"S, 77°22'12.63"W). After establishing a base camp in the moraine below the northeast face, we hiked our gear up to the base of the wall and climbed two pitches out of pure excitement and curiosity.

Before sunrise the next day, we reclimbed the two pitches and quickly reached a crack system. This brought us to the Gray Dihedral, a huge, 50m corner that we had seen from the base of the wall; it seemed to lead into a series of cracks that would keep us on the right-most edge of the vertical northeast face instead of spitting us onto the longer-angled west ridge. From the dihedral, we climbed a series of bouldering-style pitches, including a crux overhanging crack that ranged in all sizes from fingers to fists; this was too difficult for onsight free climbing in the oxygen-deprived air. A few easier pitches brought us to the upper west ridge, where the leader used a piton hammer as a makeshift ice axe to kick steps into the corniced snow and ice leading to a foresummit on the ridge.

This tower was completely caked in verglas and snow, and we jammed cracks with our mittens and climbing shoes up two mixed pitches to its summit. It is important to note that is not the true summit of Cashan Oeste; there is another summit tower approximately 10–15m higher and 300m southeast along the ridge. This higher summit seemed too dangerous for us to bother climbing, a castle of rotten granite blocks all stuck together with rime ice and old glacial snow that is rapidly melting at this altitude in the Cordillera Blanca.

The northeast face of Cashan Oeste, showing (1) Richey-Rugo, 1993. (2) Andean Kingdom, 2019. (3) Pelletti- Secul, 2019. (4) Cabaza-Fernández, 2011. Photo by Sebastian Pelletti

[Editor's Note: This foresummit is the same one reached by the 2019 route Andean Kingdom. The route described in this report is entirely to the right of the Spanish route apart from the last section of ridge climbing to reach the foresummit. In 2011, Carlos Cabaza and Diego Fernández climbed a route up the north ridge, stopping below this foresummit (see AAJ 2012). The difficulties of reaching the main summit are highlighted by Barry Rugo in AAJ 1994 in a report on the route he climbed with Mark Richey that finished up the northeast ridge and may have been the second and last successful climb to the summit of Cashan Oeste.]

We descended directly from the western foresummit back to our base camp using a rappel route left by the 2019 team, completing the climb in 15 hours round trip. We named the route El Pájaro y el Potrillo (700m, 6b M3 C1) after two friends of ours who unfortunately lost their lives in a nearby valley in the weeks prior to our climb. The route is long with just one section of easy clean aid to overcome the overhanging crack crux—highly recommended!

– Seb Pelletti, Australia

## Images



The 2011 line climbed by Carlos Cabeza and Diego Fernández on the north ridge (450m, TD/TD+) of Cashan Oeste. The two descended from the top of the rock ridge.



The northeast face of Cashan Oeste, showing (1) Richey-Rugo, 1993. (2) Andean Kingdom, 2019. (3) PellettiSecul, 2019. (4) Cabaza-Fernández, 2011.



Mark Richey below the northeast ridge, which was the second and, possibly, last successful climb to the summit of Cashan Oeste.



Nicolas Secul begins the first pitch of El Pájaro y el Potrillo (700m, 6b M3 C1) on the northeast face of Cashan Oeste.





Nicolas Secul leading pitch five of El Pájaro y el Potrillo (700m, 6b M3 C1) on the northeast face of Cashan Oeste.



Nicolas Secul (front) and Seb Pelletti (back) on the western foresummit of Cashan Oeste after climbing El Pájaro y el Potrillo (700m, 6b M3 C1). Huantsán is the prominent peak in the background.

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