

north side of Aroudan (3359m), there are three kilometers of crags up to 800 meters in height. The nearby area just south of Taghia is equally impressive. A number of routes, up to ED VI A3, are described in *Le Maroc: Les Plus Belles Courses et Randonees*, by Bernard Domenech. Considerable further potential almost certainly exists.

Further east, new route potential exists on an extensive and somewhat more accessible 300-meter crag on the north side of Irhil ou Abbari, near Sidi Yahia ou Youssef in the Jbel Masker range. Here, too, French climbers were active in earlier decades.

The limestone escarpments and wooded hills of the Middle Atlas offer little at this scale, but do have the allure of frequent rock outcrops with no visiting climbers. Unfortunately, most of the crags turn out to be of poor quality. Exceptions include single-pitch routes in the Fom Kheneg Gorge on the Azrou-Midelt road near Timahdite, and limestone bouldering off the Ifrane-Dayet Hachlaf road. The former yields a wealth of well-protected natural lines best approached outside the nesting season. Also worth investigating are sizeable steep limestone crags near the Sources de l'Oum-er-Rbia and the possibility of short ice climbs near the summit of Jbel Tichchoukt.

Other ranges worthy of investigation include the granite of the Anti Atlas near Tafraoute, visited by British climbers since the early 1990s, and the rocky summits of the Eastern end of the Jbel Sahro massif. In Morocco in general much potential remains, especially for those with the time to invest in penetrating well beyond the reach of the tarmac road.

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MALI

Hombori Mountains, Various Ascents. It was reported that a number of climbs went up on or near Le Main de Fatima in the winter of 1997-'98. On the Grimari Dagana Massif, on December 13, B. Regien and C. Dumont d'Ayot put up *Vendredi XII* (6a, 250m) on the north pillar of Wambe Ballo. Salvador Campillo and B. Marnette established *Soleil Noir* (TD/TDsup, 160m) on the east summit of the Ciseaux de Grimari on January 28. On Taganagategue in the Boni-Loro Massif, Campillo and Marnette put up the 180-meter *Khili-Khili* (6a A1). In the Bani-Kani area on the Fifth Tower of the North Dyoude Massif, Campillo and Marnette put up a 220-meter TDinf. route via its northwest spur.

The Hand of Fatima, Harmattan Rodeo. For many years, my regular gang of climbing partners—Todd Skinner, Bobby Model, Andy deKlerk, Ed February, Scott Milton, Bill Hatcher and Peter Mallamo—and I were intrigued by photos we had seen in Spanish magazines of Le Main de Fatima (“The Hand of Fatima”), a lovely grouping of giant pinnacles resembling the hand of the prophet Mohammed’s favorite daughter that rises from a parched landscape of massive quartzite towers and walls in Mali. From mid-December to mid-January, 1997-'98, we found ourselves living below and on these beautiful towers. To ensure we were choosing the finest climbing objective, we spent two days hiking around many of the area rock formations. The team unanimously agreed upon the region’s most outstanding challenge: a new route up a severely overhanging outside corner of a 1,400-foot spire called Kaga Pamari, the little finger of Fatima’s hand.



Day after day was spent climbing a little higher. Each night, we would rappel fixed ropes to try to converse with local tribesmen visiting our Base Camp. Sobered by the need to redpoint numerous formidable pitches in a limited time, we held council while dangling from anchors halfway up the spire. Scott, Todd and I thought we might have bitten off more than we could chew, but the quartzite-wise South Africans, Ed and Andy, just smiled. Taking South African confidence as counsel, we decided to risk glorious failure trying to accomplish a resplendent goal rather than settle for success on a lesser objective. We continued to work our way up the spire and our quartzite savvy strengthened. After ten days, we began our final push, a free climb from bottom to top.

Ed led the first pitch. Climbing all day, we arrived beneath a giant roof 750 feet above the base. We suspended our portaledge camp under this roof, which conspired with a weather front and the natural *venturi* effect caused by the chimney between the two towers to nearly blow us off the planet. The Harmattan is a winter wind which, like the broom of Allah, sweeps southward from Algeria across the Sahara. While sculpting dunes, it chokes the air with a settling rouge. All night long, the Harmattan tattered us like torn sails. Our two-man ledges were repeatedly lifted and dropped, while suspended haulbags, heavy with water, were blown upward and dropped, smashing against us as we lay. In the morning, almost all of the maillon screw links securing the webbing to the portaledges had come unscrewed. When Ed's ashen face gazed out of his sleeping bag, he said, "Last night was absolutely bloody amazing. . . a Harmattan Rodeo!" He had just named our route.

The day's climbing progressed well. Toward evening, Scott danced up another crux pitch that ended on a boulder-strewn, guano-cushioned ledge on the lee side—a perfect wind-shadowed bivouac. Two days prior, Andy had punched a pencil-lead-sized hole in his shin. On the big ledge, his leg began to swell and throb. The next morning, he had chills and a titanic headache. A surly red streak took a poisoned path from his calf into his groin, but Andy insisted he was fit and keen to go higher.

The final two leads moved back onto the windy side of the tower. We climbed onto a windless summit, a dramatic and tiny island floating in an atmospheric sea of ocher dust. Feeling worse, Andy started down immediately, beginning the 1,400-foot rappel and the long slide down talus to Base Camp. Soon after, the rest of us began stripping the route of ropes and equipment. Then Peter, who was in the talus field, called us on the radio. While descending the talus, Andy passed out numerous times and Peter had carried him to camp. Andy was now unconscious.

We hired a Land Rover for the 1,000-mile, 20-hour drive to the nearest medical help in Mali's capital city, Bamako. Once in Bamako, Andy was treated at a French hospital with a massive regimen of antibiotic injections. His shin had developed a staph infection, causing phlebitis. The doctors told us that another day's delay would have cost Andy his leg and perhaps even his life.

While Ed and Andy recuperated in Bamako, we spent several days bouldering on Hueco Tanks-quality quartzite boulders in the Dogon country. There, we visited with a Dogon elder who told us to "climb with care; with the serene spirit of birds; and with an appreciation of the fellowship that climbing strengthens." The old man solemnly tapped his heart and said: "Understanding and brotherhood among all people is important above all other things."

Later, as we prepared to fly home, we reminisced about our magnificent new climb. Andy and Ed proclaimed our 14-pitch route one of the finest and most difficult quartzite climbs in the world. We had been lucky to visit the African Sahel (the drought-beset region below the Sahara that includes Mali, Chad, Niger, Senegal, et al.; the exact line of Sahel/Sahara is constantly moving south) and to live for a time among the unique cultures of the region. We were going home safely and as stronger friends. We vowed always to climb with the serene spirit of birds.

PAUL PIANA, *unaffiliated*

KENYA

Point Peter, Northwest Face. It was reported that on March 15, Ulf Carlsson, Nicolas Ganzin and Ian Howell made the first ascent of the Northwest Face of Point Peter (4757m), a sharp granite spire below the north face of Mt. Kenya. The team took a direct line to the summit via a series of cracks and corners roughly in the center of the face. Most of the climbing was moderate. The crux was the penultimate pitch, a strenuous and awkward corner that went at HVS 5a/b. This trio and others active in the area reported an alarming disappearance of ice in the north-facing couloirs and on the Diamond Glacier, which was reduced to almost half its size. (*High Mountain Sports* 197)

MADAGASCAR

Andringitra National Park

Tsaranoro Atsimo, Never the Same, and Various Ascents. In September, Italians Rolando Larcher, Marco Sterni, and Erik Svab established the 670-meter route *Never the Same* (V 5.13c/d A0) on the east face of Tsaranoro Atsimo. The 13 pitches of the route range from 35 to 60 meters each; 122 bolts were placed on the route, including 26 for the anchors. The team established the route and then worked it, freeing all the moves on the most difficult pitch (Pitch 8, 5.13c/d), which they climbed with one rest (but did not redpoint). On September 24, they made a one-day, eight-hour ascent of the route. Descent was made with double ropes. The route has obligatory moves of F7b (5.12b). Two other members of the team, Ermanno Francinelli and Mario Cavagnini, repeated five established routes on Tsaranoro, including *Gondwanaland* on Tsaranoro Be. A full report on *Never the Same* appears earlier in this journal.

Tsaranoro Massif, Various Activity. Last summer three different teams visited the Tsaranoro Massif in the Andringitra National Park. All the visiting teams, except Kurt Albert and Bernd Arnold, who had first visited the area some years before, used electric power drills to place bolts. All lines are bolted. Bolts are well-spaced and falls up to 20 meters are possible on most of the lines. All routes were opened ground up without previous rehearsal, except for *Tsac Tsac* (Gilles Gouthier and Alain Thiberghien), which was opened via rappel bolting. It's not described in this account.

In early April, Arnaud Petit and Stephanie Baudet (F) visited the area and made a repetition in two days (not one as claimed, since the second day was used to rappel 800 meters) of the longest route of the area, *Gondwanaland*. The route was climbed on-sight except the crux