



Gheralta Massif, Koraro Spires, The Sharp One; Nebelet Spires, Slender Spire

Africa, Ethiopia, Tigray

Unclimbed, freestanding, multi-pitch desert spires are an ever-increasing rarity. For those seeking such treasure, the Tigray today likely inspires the same thrill as Fred Beckey's first glimpse of Moses Tower in the early 1970s.

My 2012 visit to Gheralta area was mostly a fact-finding mission. I returned in 2013 with enthusiastic Utah friends Erik Kelly and Peter Vintoniv. Our attention settled on an unfinished project I had started: a slender knife-like tower in the Koraro Spires, which the locals call Tewlihe, "The Sharp One." This was the last unclimbed, freestanding tower of the Koraro group. Featured, but with little in the way of continuous cracks, it became a labor-intensive project, and we enlisted the help of eager local boys to help carry our loads. [Other freestanding Koraro Spires include Sheba, Squatty Tower, and HCP, all of which have been climbed, some by multiple routes.]

We picked the wettest month of the year to visit: August—don't ask! Spectacular and scary thunderstorms arrived like clockwork almost every afternoon. On the fourth day we sat on the tower top and basked in the sunshine. We'd completed three long pitches of sandstone face climbing—mostly bolt protected and simply spectacular. We called the line Stealing Thunder (III 5.11d). We rappelled with two 70m ropes, and this line may prove to be the ideal route for travelers with little more than sport climbing gear.

Peter and I also visited the Nebelet Spires above the town of Nebelet, an hour's drive north of Hawzien, near the border with Eritrea. Lacking any information on previous visits, we chose to climb the southernmost tower, which we called Slender Spire. Two 70m ropes just made it back to the ground. Threatening weather thwarted a free ascent. Be aware that multiple names of formations have led to confusion in the area; it seems best to name things in correlation to the nearest town for clarification.

James Garrett, USA

Images



The Koraro Spires, from left to right: HCP, Squatty, Sharp One, and Sheba.



The locals help with the approach to the Koraro Spires.



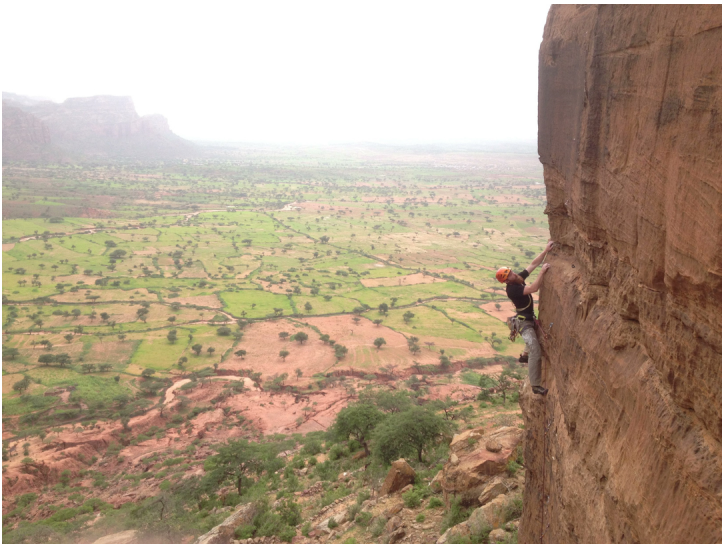
The Koraro Spires, enveloped in clouds during the wettest month of the year.



The view of the Koraro Spires from the base.



James Garrett visiting with the locals.



Face climbing on the Sharp One.



The new route on the Sharp One.



An unclimbed rock face north of the Koraro Spires.



The Nebelet Towers.



On the summit of the Sharp One.

Article Details

Author	
Publication	AAJ
Volume	56
Issue	88
Page	252
Copyright Date	2014
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions