



AAC Publications

Taka Mountains, New Routes

Africa, Sudan

In eastern Sudan there lies a great collection of large granite domes situated above the town of Kassala with a few existing routes and plenty of impressive lines and potential first ascents (see AAJ 2014).

Jonny Baker (U.K.) and I arrived in Kassala on December 25, 2019, for a 20-day stay. We spent the first day exploring the many domes for new and existing lines. Previous information was very patchy and confusing with regard to names and locations. The towers don't appear to have individual names but are grouped under two names: Jebel Totil and Jebel Taka. The first climbing was done in 1939 by some Brits, gaining the main summit of Jebel Taka. Some Czechs visited in 1981 and put up a few routes, French came in 2003 and put up about three lines, and two Americas did a new route in 2013. Later some Brits came for a few visits, establishing several shorter lines on the smaller features and doing some bouldering.

Our first new route was up the north face of Middle Jebel, a previously unnamed dome in the center of the massif, and the only dome one can walk up. We established the route Jebel Rebel (320m, 6a+). We climbed ground up, and bolts were placed on lead. The route offers some great climbing and only gets a few hours of morning sun.

We then went to climb the south face of Jebel Totil, thinking we were doing a new route but finding bolts on the second pitch. This was not surprising as it's by far the easiest way to the summit. We climbed three pitches separated by some scrambling and made the summit in about two hours, rappelling the same way. The route gets full sun, so an early start is essential.

From the summit of Jebel Totil, we spied a dike line on the west face, and we spent the next four days bolting and cleaning the line from the top down. This line gives some amazing climbing on steep terrain, following a continuous feature the whole way. The rock quality on the higher pitches was outstanding, with interesting and fun climbing on positive holds. We named the route False Prophet (340m, 7c). We then flew our paragliders from the summit and were greeted by hundreds of children from the small village where we landed.

After this, we climbed the existing routes Khawadja (300m, 6b+, see AAJ 2003) on Jebel Taka North and the original 1939 route on Jebel Taka. We flew again from both summits.

The last new route we established was on the north face of Jebel Totil. We climbed Bat Shit Crazy (230m, 6c) ground up with bolts placed on lead. It starts with several slab pitches to gain a higher crack system that leads to the summit. This route gave some nice climbing on varied terrain.

Kassala offers potential for many more new routes. The hot temperatures make it very difficult to climb on the south faces, but most of the best rock faces more to the north. We were fortunate to get many days with temperatures in the mid-20s Celsius, giving pleasant conditions in the shade. There are many cracks, but most are discontinuous and will require bolts to link them. The faces have very featured, surprisingly solid granite. We found the local people to be most friendly and helpful; they didn't seem to be bothered by our climbing on the rocks but were naturally puzzled as to why we had come so far to do this.

– **Chris Warner**, Australia

Images



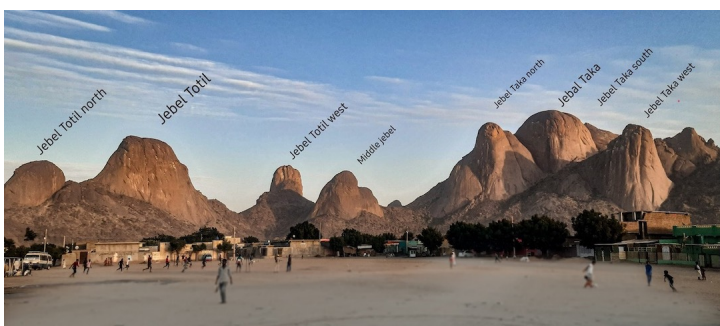
Chris Warner following a featured slab pitch during the first ascent of Bat Shit Crazy (230m, 6c) on Jebel Totil, in the Taka Mountain of Sudan.



Chris Warner coming up a steep section featuring a streak of the route's namesake during the first ascent of Bat Shit Crazy (230m, 6c) on Jebel Totil, in the Taka Mountain of Sudan.



Chris Warner following a steep pitch during the first ascent of False Prophet (340m, 7c) on Jebel Totil, in the Taka Mountain of Sudan. The route follows the prominent dike system that's visible below.



A view of the Taka Mountains massif from the village of Kassala, Sudan. Jonny Baker and Chris Warner climbs three new routes here in late 2019 and early 2020—two on Jebel Totil and one on Middle Jebel.



Chris Warner preparing to fly his paraglider from the summit of one of the summits in the Taka Mountains of eastern Sudan. Warner and Jonny Baker climbed three new routes, and flew from the top of three peaks during their trip in late 2019/early 2020.



Sunset over the village of Kassala and the Taka Mountains in eastern Sudan.



Jonny Baker liebacking a steep section during the first ascent of Bat Shit Crazy (230m, 6c) on Jebel Totil, in the Taka Mountain of Sudan.



The north face of Jebel Totil in the Taka Mountains of eastern Sudan, showing the line of Bat Shit Crazy (230m, 6c). Jonny Baker and Chris Warner climbed this new route ground-up in early 2020.

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