

A NOTE ON TIEROKO (TIBESTI MOUNTAINS)

By P. R. STEELE

THE Tibesti mountains lie in the centre of the Sahara Desert, seven hundred miles south of Tripoli and the same distance east of the Hoggar mountains. They constitute a large volcanic area with several distinct and impressive groups of mountains, the most interesting being called Tieroko.

In 1957 an expedition from Cambridge University visited Tibesti with the object of carrying out various research projects. There were three mountaineers in the party, W. W. Marks, R. F. Tuck and P. R. Steele. It was hoped that a second visit later would furnish further information for completion of a map of Tieroko. This visit was not forthcoming, and hence the delay in publication of the original sketch map, which is now reproduced. An account of the expedition can be read in *Cambridge Mountaineering 1958*, pp. 8-13, which gives details of the climbing. This area of the Tibesti had not been explored before and there are no maps or detailed references to it.

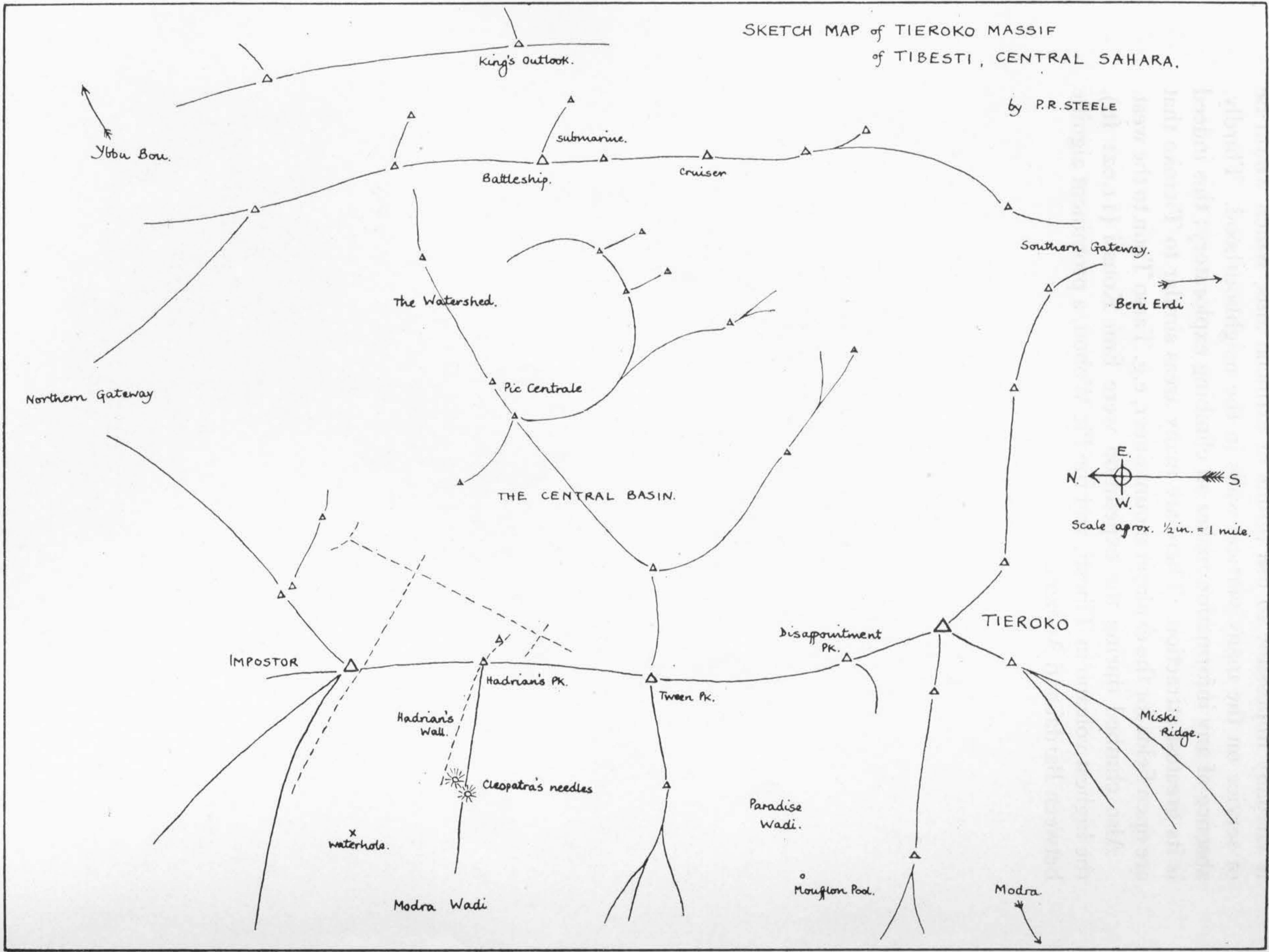
Tieroko was seen from a distance by Thesiger several years previously, and described by him as 'probably the most beautiful peak in Tibesti'. It is the highest of this particular group of volcanic peaks, which rises from the desert south of Ybbu Bou. This oasis was our starting point, where we hired camels and guides for the three-day journey which is the easiest approach.

We spent a week exploring the southern flank of the mountains, and climbed 'The Imposter' and 'Hadrian's Peak' from our camp in Modra Wadi. From 'Paradise Wadi' we attempted Tieroko, reaching within 200 ft. of the final summit cone (c. 10,500 ft.) where we were turned back by vertical, crumbling rock.

The problems of mountaineering in the desert were manifold. Firstly, lack of water. Waterholes are scarce and often stagnant when found by the help of native knowledge. We were fortunate in having a good local guide, Angerké, who found such a pool in Modra Wadi. We chanced upon running water in Paradise Wadi, and this would be the most ideal site for a base. Secondly, the nature of the rock. It is friable and volcanic, with large stones embedded in conglomerate fashion. They appear to be ideal footholds but are treacherously insecure. It

SKETCH MAP of TIEROKO MASSIF
of TIBESTI, CENTRAL SAHARA.

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is virtually impossible to use pitons or artificial aids, which would be of service on the many vertical walls in the neighbourhood. Thirdly, absence of any information makes all climbing exploratory; this indeed is its greatest attraction. There are many areas similar to Tieroko that are open fields for the explorer mountaineer, e.g. Tarso Toon to the west.

Also climbed during the expedition were Emi Koussi (11,021 ft.), the highest volcano in Tibesti, and the Pic Wobou, a prominent aiguille between Bardai and Aouzou.

