

## HIMALAYAN NOMENCLATURE

**T**HE following letter, dated October 1, 1936, and addressed to the Hon. Secretary, Himalayan Club, has been received from Brigadier H. J. Couchman, D.S.O., M.C., Surveyor-General of India :

' As you are perhaps aware the question of the entry of names invented by explorers and others for peaks and other features of the mountain systems to the north of India on maps published by the Survey of India, is one on which there has been occasional controversy.

' The practice of the Survey of India in the past has been that no names should be entered on its maps, of areas for which it considers itself responsible, unless they have been found to be of local or at least indigenous origin. It has admittedly departed from this practice in the case of Mount Everest, but it will be generally agreed that the highest mountain in the world is entitled to special treatment, especially when the result was so euphonious. In the absence of a local or indigenous name, the old practice was to allot a symbol, usually a letter and a number. This practice has, however, been abandoned on our maps for many years except in the case of K. 2 which, as probably the second highest mountain, is perhaps also entitled to special treatment.

' This practice has had two results, one favourable, the other unfavourable. The favourable result is that there has been no temptation to give personal names to peaks, the embarrassment of selection of the person to be so honoured has been avoided and the situation, not unknown, of the name of a peak being changed because the reputation of its owner had lessened, has not occurred.

' The Survey of India will always be grateful to its predecessors for this result.

' The unfavourable result is that owing to absence of local or indigenous names in these sparsely inhabited areas our maps are undoubtedly deficient in names. With the ever-increasing growth of Himalayan travel this defect is becoming of increasing prominence.

' The position has therefore been examined and it has been decided that the embargo on invented, other than personal, names should be removed.

' Invented names will be accepted by the Survey of India for its maps taking into consideration the following points :

- (i) Lack of local names in the vicinity.
- (ii) Suitability of the names.
- (iii) When applicable, the degree of currency among climbers and explorers that they have already obtained.
- (iv) Personal names will *not* be accepted.

'Suitability is difficult to define, but entirely fanciful or humorous names will not be acceptable. Well-known English names of peaks, such as those in the Karakoram and the Sikkim Himalaya, will be considered for adoption at once.

'You will no doubt agree that this change in policy should be brought to the notice of travellers and I would request your assistance in doing so either by publication of this letter or by a reference to its contents.

'The Survey of India will be grateful to past, present and future explorers for any suggestions they may care to make. As regards the language of the names we should prefer that English names be confined to the more popular climbing centres. In the lesser known regions explorers are requested to suggest names freely after consultation with their local guides or coolies. Nalas, cols, glaciers and peaks may be named after some local pasturage or other existing name or may be invented with reference, say, to shape, colour or some other distinctive feature. Such names should normally be given in the local vernacular and should be pointed out to the local people so that they may the more rapidly gain currency. English names should be given sparingly in areas which are likely to be unimportant from a mountaineering point of view.

'Explorers are requested to report their proposed names with sketches or annotated copies of Survey of India maps to me either direct or through you. In sending in reports full details should be given of the reasons for the proposed names, with meanings in English, and the local language adopted.'