

## MOUNTAIN NAMES ON THE INDIAN BORDER

THE seventh chapter of Major Mason's report on the exploration of the Shaksgam Valley and the Aghil Ranges ('Records of the Survey of India,' Volume XXII) discusses the nomenclature of the Karakoram, and makes certain suggestions which are criticized by Sir Sidney Burrard in the article which follows this note. Major Mason not only proposes that the Karakoram shall be called the Karakoram-Himalaya, the Karakoram Range the Muztagh-Karakoram, the Aghil Range the Aghil-Karakoram, and the Kailas Range the Kailas-Karakoram, but he uses these names in his report, which seemed to imply that they had been accepted by the Survey of India, hitherto regarded by us as the ultimate authority on questions of nomenclature along the Indian border. If in rare cases we ventured to adopt the spelling of a high

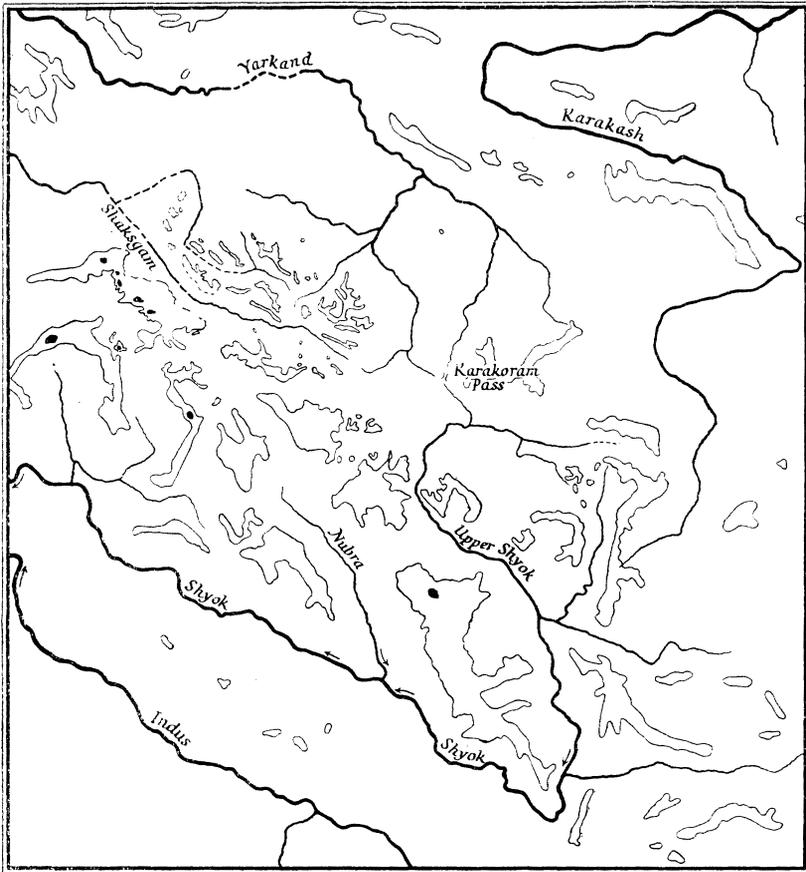


Fig. 1. The Karakoram, from Survey of India 1/1 Million "India and Adjacent Countries," Sheets 52 Leh, 1916, and 51 Yarkand, 1923, with additions from Major Mason's map of the Shaksgam and Upper Yarkand Valleys 1/253,440, 1928. The contour shown is at 20,000 ft., and the small areas above 25,000 ft. are in solid black

authority rather than of the highest, as in writing Kangchenjunga rather than Kinchinjunga, it was always with some virtuous apprehension.

In his preface to this volume of the Records, dated 17 November 1928, the then Surveyor-General, Brigadier E. A. Tandy, finds it quite clear that "the Karakoram Range" is really a misnomer which has arisen through a series of misunderstandings at a time when the geography of the range was practically unknown, which is Major Mason's main contention; he refers to the "minor questions" of names for the ranges, Aghil-Karakoram, etc., and proceeds:

"I do not consider that this department should decide questions which depend so much on international usage. We can only assist by publishing the suggestions of our best experts, and then hope the Royal Geographical Society, which includes all the principal geographers and explorers interested, will find an early opportunity of discussing these suggestions and arriving at decisions, in which case we shall be happy to accept them and incorporate them on our future maps."



Fig. 2. The Range Lines and Names proposed by Major Mason in his *Shaksgam Report*, *Records of the Survey of India*, vol. 22, superposed on the outline of Fig. 1, for comparison of the ranges defined by their geology, with the visible relief of the country

This high and unexpected compliment comes at a season when nothing can be done at once to initiate any formal discussion. But the delay gives a welcome opportunity of inviting preliminary expressions of opinion in the *Journal*; and the contribution of Sir Sidney Burrard, offered and accepted before the important rôle proposed for the Society had been realized by the Editor, makes an authoritative statement of the case against the changes proposed by Major Mason. We shall welcome argument on either side.

The fundamental question appears to be whether a mountain system shall be described in ranges or in regions. There is now general agreement that the Alps are conveniently divided into regions bounded by rivers and passes; and a scheme put forward by a Commission of the Italian Geographical Society was favourably reviewed by Mr. Freshfield in the *Journal* for January 1928. The natural name of a region is then composed of a generic name *Alps* and a descriptive adjective, as *Bernese*. The system has obvious advantages in that the foothills and outlying features find natural places in the border regions, and there is no need for discussion whether geographical or geological considerations shall rule the division into ranges, or whether indeed it is possible to divide the mountain complex into ranges, in the geographical sense: which is, we suppose, a series of mountains arranged more or less in a line, not necessarily straight, standing out from their surroundings, and having a sort of unity as a structure.

At the meeting of the British Association at Southport in 1883 Colonel Godwin-Austen delivered the Presidential Address to the Geographical Section, and devoted a part of it to the Mountain Systems of the Himalaya and neighbouring Ranges of India (*Proc. R.G.S.* 1883, p. 610). In the following year he published a short paper with the above title (*Proc.* 1884, p. 83) to amplify his argument, with a map that is, we may hope, the most illegible map ever published by this Society. The legend under its title reads thus: "An attempt to make the orography more accordant with the Geological structure, and thus lead to the introduction and use of a common nomenclature in Geography and Geology."

The geological structure is indicated by long lines overprinted in red, of which the principal are numbered from north to south, and labelled I. Kuen Lun; II. Mustakh; III. Ladak; IV. Himalaya; V. Outer Himalaya; and VI. Sub-Himalaya. The orography, represented in the old hairy-caterpillar style, has pretty successfully resisted the attempt to make it accordant with the geological structure shown by the red lines; yet the "common nomenclature" requires the geographer to recognize the *Ladak* range as covering 18° of longitude, from somewhere west of Chitral to a point north of Tinki Dzong familiar to the Mount Everest expedition.

To the *Mustakh* Colonel Godwin-Austen gives less extension, but only because at that time nothing was known of the geology eastward. He takes it to 79½° E. in solid symbol, and to nearly 83° in dotted; and it is clear enough from the map that he would have been happy to go on eastwards if he had had any material to support him.

These ideas of Godwin-Austen dominated the Survey of India for the next forty years. The diagram of ranges in Burrard and Hayden's 'Geography and Geology of the Himalaya' is on the same general lines. They take the Kara-

koram range east to  $79^\circ$  definitely, and after a slight break continue it eastwards.

In the map of *Tibet and Adjacent Countries*, on the scale  $1/2\frac{1}{2}$  M, published in 1914 by the Survey of India, the name Karakoram Range is actually written between  $72^\circ$  and  $92^\circ$  E.; that is to say, it extends east of Lhasa. But on the same map published in 1920 in a second edition with a new name *Map of the Himalaya Mountains and the surrounding Region*, the name Karakoram range is removed, as are some other range names. But in the margin is a diagram of the ranges based on that in Burrard and Hayden, in which the Kailas and Ladakh ranges extend eastward as before to  $92^\circ$ , but the Karakoram is cut short at  $80^\circ$  E.

It may appear from all this that there is a much larger question to be discussed than whether the Karakoram Pass is on the Karakoram range. To geographers, and still more to climbers, the *Karakoram* has a pretty definite and limited meaning. They would not allow it, we think, to extend east of the Upper Shyok. Should they be obliged to allow the name *Karakoram Range* to be carried right away east of Mount Everest because geologists are ready to identify the sequence of rocks observed in Eastern Tibet with that observed in Ladakh?

These are matters on which opinion may differ widely, and will not easily be reconciled. The Editor of the *Geographical Journal* will be happy to receive the judgments of those interested.

## THE MOUNTAINS OF THE KARAKORAM: A DEFENCE OF THE EXISTING NOMENCLATURE

By COLONEL SIR SIDNEY BURRARD, F.R.S.

THE Survey of India has recently published a report by Major Kenneth Mason, R.E., on his exploration of the Shaksgam Valley, a valley situated to the north-east of the Karakoram Range. Incorporated with his report are proposals to make fundamental changes in the nomenclature of the Karakoram region. I ask to be allowed to explain my reasons for preferring our old inherited nomenclature to that now proposed.

The area triangulated by the Survey of India has included the two highest mountain ranges of the world. By good fortune two names of distinction have been handed down to us, a Sanskrit name Himalaya for the Indian range, and a Mongol (Turki) name for the range of Western Tibet. To appreciate this good fortune we have only to consider how many mountains in Asia are without names, and how many are named only snow mountain. Geographers had to name the range on the east of the Pamirs the Kashgar Range from a city in the plains, because it had no name of its own. The two different ranges of mountains that follow the two coasts of India have the same name, the undistinctive one of Ghats. If moreover we look at maps of continents where mountain names have had to be invented, we realize the value of two such names as Himalaya and Karakoram.