THE ASCENT OF ANNAPURNA SOUTH PEAK (GANESH)

By SHOICHIRO UYEO

(*Four illustrations: nos. 59–62*)

In 1962 the Kyoto University Alpine Club sent its first Himalayan expedition to the Punjab Himalaya, India, and the expedition achieved the first ascent of Indrasan (6,221 m.) and the ascent of Deo Tibba (6,001 m.).[1] On the basis of this experience, together with that of the West Irian (New Guinea) expedition, 1963, which made the ascent of Mount Sukarno,[2] the Club planned to send its second Himalayan expedition to Nepal in the post-monsoon season of 1964. Dhaulagiri IV (7,640 m.), a possible route on which from the south was found by J. O. M. Roberts in 1962,[3] was selected as the objective since it was a high mountain, of an attractive shape, and offered a comparatively easy approach for a party having no experience of expeditions in Nepal.

After application for permission to ascend this mountain had been made to the Government of Nepal, we were informed that permission to attempt it had already been given to a British party for the pre-monsoon season of 1965, and that J. O. M. Roberts was a member of the party. Out of regard for his pioneer work on the mountain, we changed our objective to Annapurna South Peak, or Ganesh, (7,256 m. or 7,196 m.) in the Annapurna range.

Annapurna South Peak, officially so-called according to Dr. T. Hagen,[4] is also named Ganesh[5] or Moditse,[6] and is very well seen from Pokhara airport. In 1957 two members of the British Machapuchare expedition reconnoitred the peak from the east side and reached a height of about 19,500 ft. They reported that the peak looked possible.[7]

Our expedition consisted of six members, including a professor as leader, a graduate student and four undergraduate students who took the initiative in planning the expedition. The members were:

Dr. Haruo Higuchi, leader, age 35.

Shoichiro Uyeo, deputy leader, age 26, a member of the successful Saltoro Kangri expedition of the Academic Alpine Club of Kyoto in 1962.

[1] K. Onodera: *H.J.* xxiv, 90–95.
[2] T. Kato: *Sangaku*, lix, 15 (in English); 178 (in Japanese).
[3] J. O. M. Roberts: *A.J. 68*. 188.
[4] T. Hagen: *Nepal*, 72–3.
[5] W. Noyce: *Climbing the Fish's Tail*. p. 54.
[6] G. O. Dyhrenfurth: *A.J. 68*. 41 and *69*. 288.
[7] W. Noyce, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

Hiromichi Yoshino, age 23.
Kiyoo Shimada, age 22.
Masaaki Kimura, age 21.
Yutaka Ageta, age 20.

After our baggage had been shipped to Calcutta, the members left Japan in four parties, mainly by air, during August, 1964.

On August 18, Higuchi and Shimada arrived at Kathmandu to make official arrangements with the Government of Nepal and the Himalayan Society. Here Pasang Phutar III (Sirdar) and Mingma Tsering (Sherpa) joined them. Meanwhile, after an unexpectedly easy baggage clearance through the Calcutta customs followed by three days' railway journey, the other four members arrived at Nautanwa, on the Indian side of the frontier, with all the baggage on August 28, where our liaison officer, Captain Rana from Kathmandu, two Sherpas (Lakpa Tsering and Karma Sherpa), both from Darjeeling, had been waiting for us. On the same day they arrived at Bhairawa and on the next day all the baggage was cleared through the Nepalese customs, and the necessary foodstuffs and tobacco for the porters were purchased. Now we were ready to start, but it was not until September 8 that we could fly to Pokhara where the other members and Sherpas had been waiting for us, because of the bad condition of the airfield owing to rain.

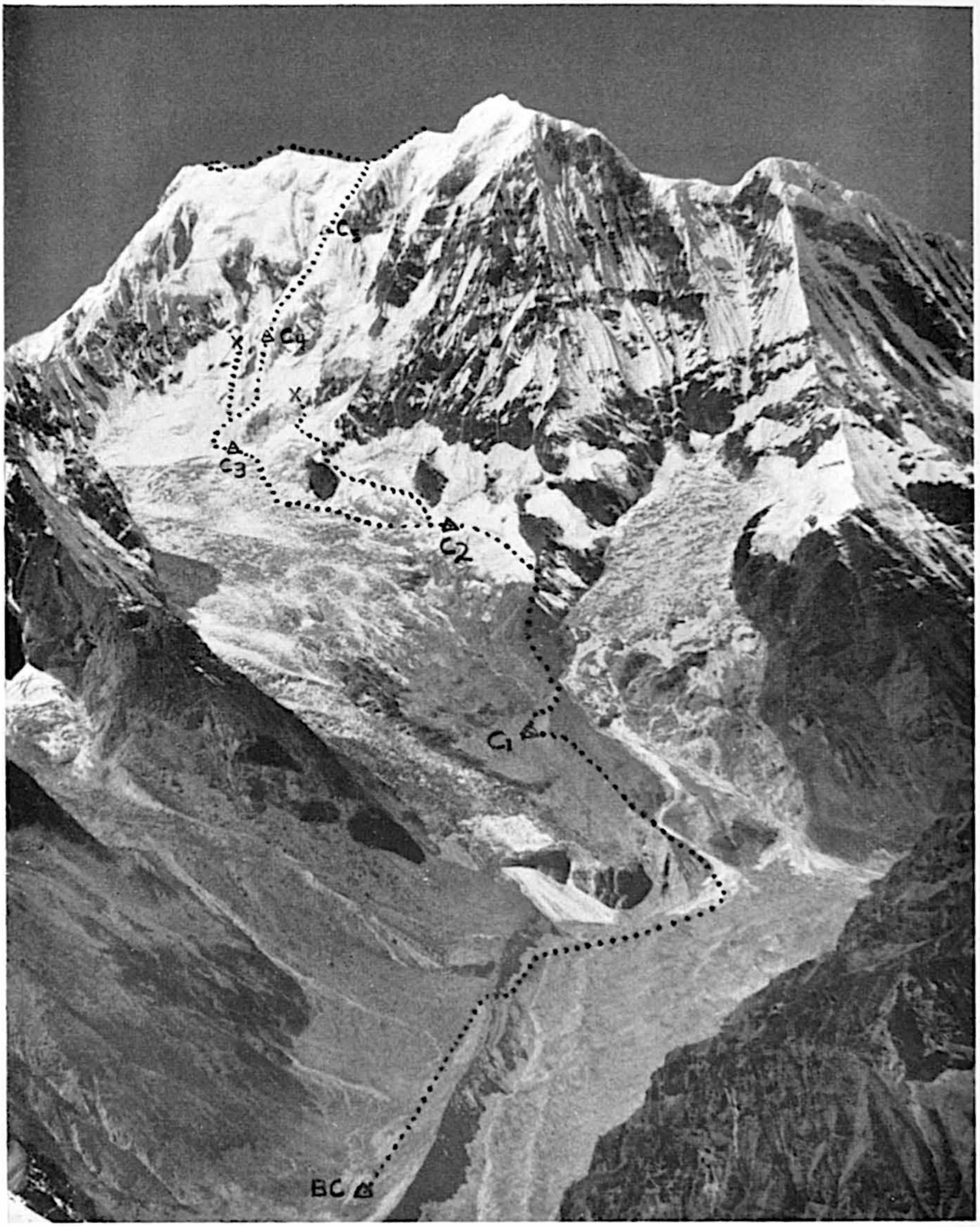
Although the remaining hours of that day were wet, we had a very busy time rearranging the baggage into loads of the proper weight and deciding the total number of porters and their wages. On September 9, the next day, our caravan, consisting of six members, a liaison officer, four Sherpas and fifty-four porters carrying a load of about 40 kg. each, started from Pokhara airfield.

After three days we arrived at Ghandrung without any trouble. Ghandrung, a Gurkha village, is one of the biggest villages in Nepal, with a population of six thousand according to a school-teacher living there. An old Gurkha surprised us by speaking some Japanese which he learned during the last war in Burma.

From this village our mountain was seen to be very massive in comparison with Machapuchare. The local people of Ghandrung call the mountain 'Daulasiri', a name which is known even in Pokhara.

One and a half days later, we passed Chomrong, the last village of the Modi Khola valley. The path along the Modi gorge to the Base Camp was quite unpleasant at this season (cf. Noyce's description of it early in the monsoon), and many leeches welcomed us at every halt.

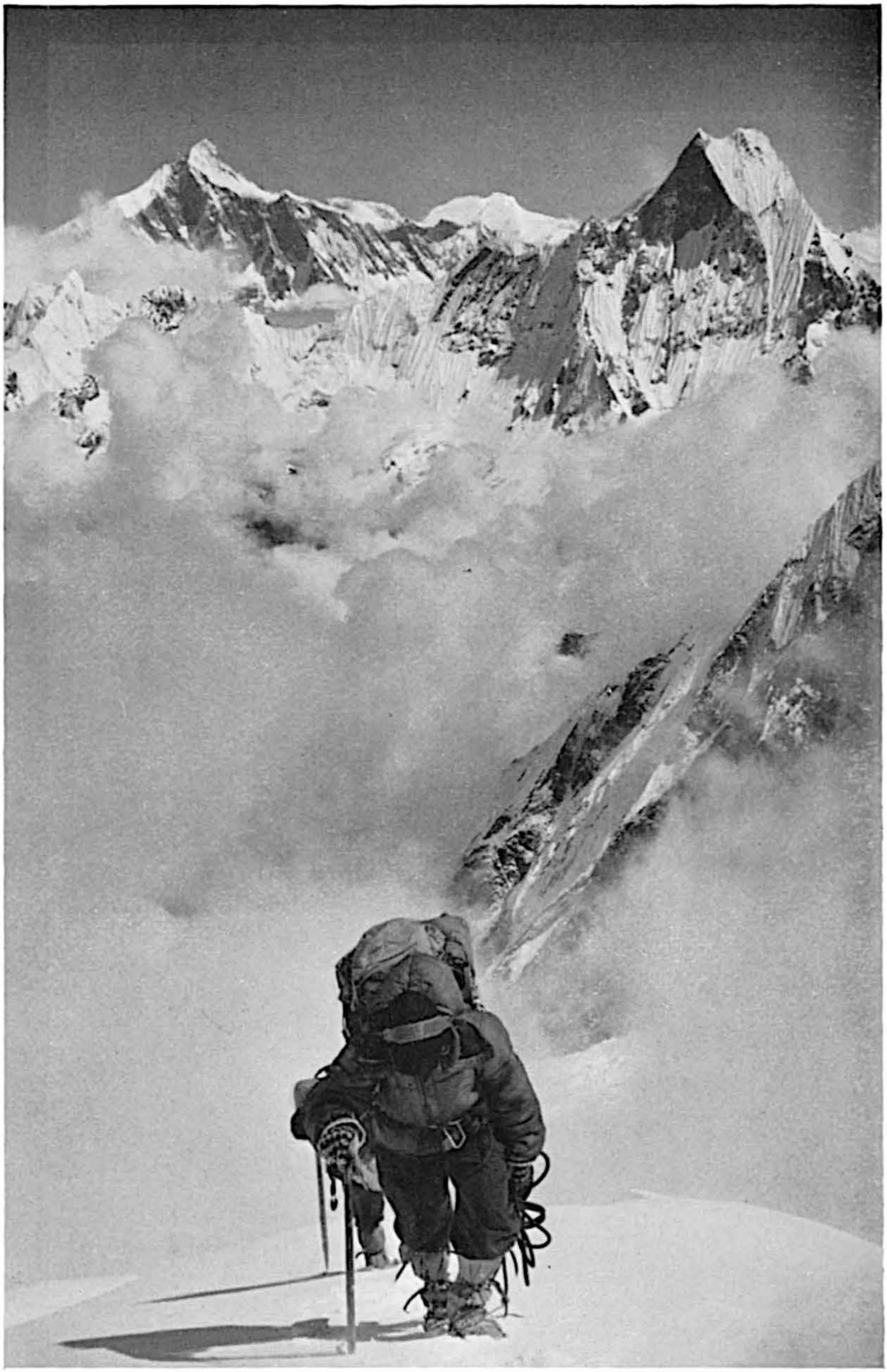
On the 15th, we established Base Camp in heavy rain, in the ablation valley of the South Annapurna glacier at 4,000 m. Our camp was located in a very beautiful place, covered with green grass and pretty flowers. Sheep were seen on the upper part of the valley. One day later another



Expedition photo]

COMPLETE VIEW OF ANNAPURNA SOUTH PEAK (GANESH) AS SEEN FROM C. 5,500 M. ON THE 'GABELHORN'.

(No. 59)



Expedition photo]

SHERPAS BETWEEN CAMPS IV AND V WITH MACHAPUCHARE (*Right*) AND ANNAPURNA II AND IV (*Left*) IN THE BACKGROUND.

(No. 60)



Expedition photo]

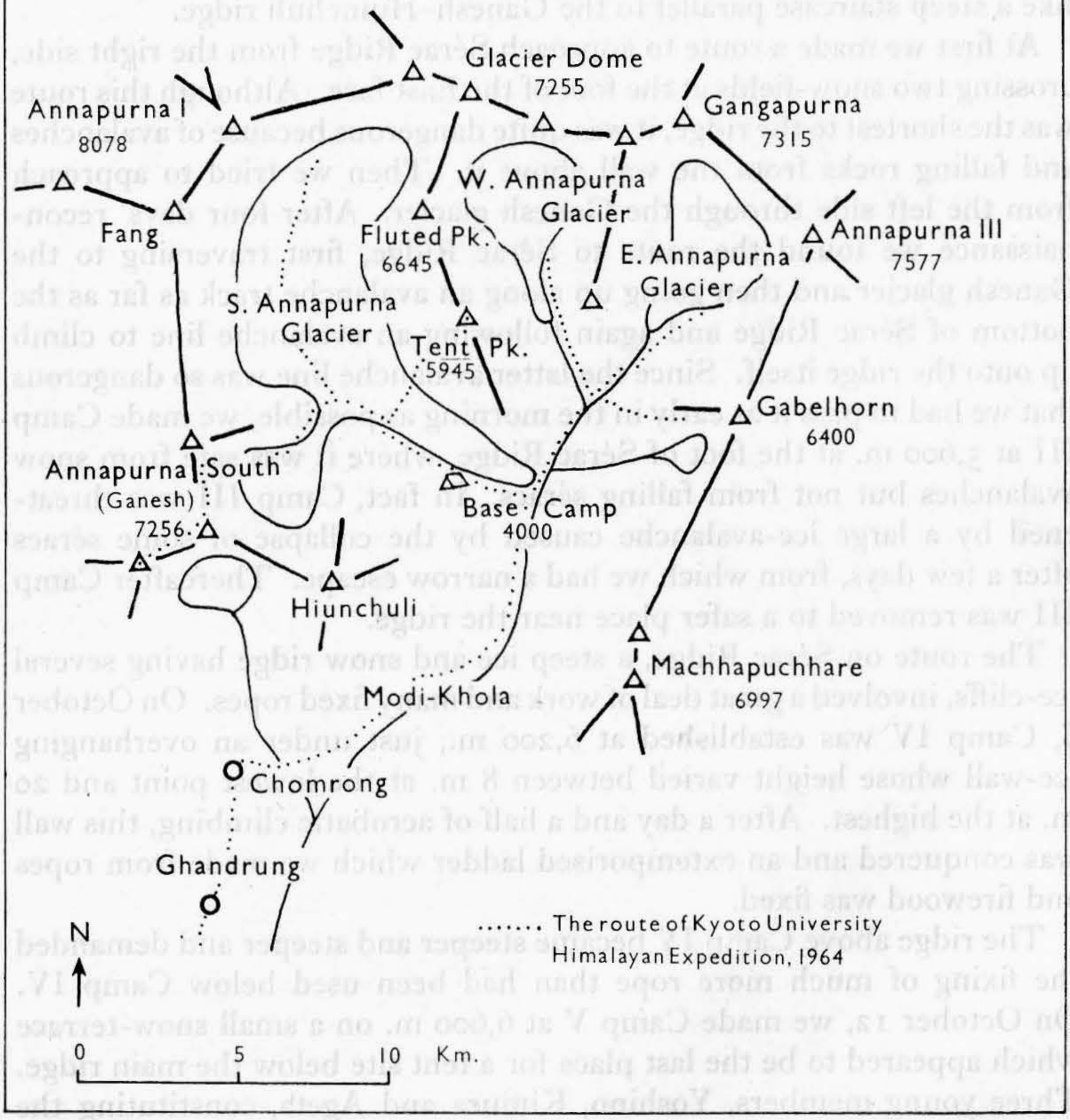
VIEW OF ANNAPURNA I AS SEEN FROM THE TOP OF THE SOUTHERNMOST SUMMIT OF ANNAPURNA SOUTH PEAK.

(No. 61)

Japanese expedition, heading for Glacier Dome (7,255 m.)[8] arrived and made its Base at 4,100 m. in the same valley. During these days the monsoon season was not yet over and our mountain could be seen only in the early morning.

The first reconnaissance for Camp I began on the 18th, and this camp was established at 4,600 m. on the 21st on a convenient moraine of the Ganesh glacier coming from the col between Ganesh and Hiun-

SKETCH MAP OF THE SOUTHWESTERN PART OF ANNAPURNA HIMAL



chuli (6,700 m.), where clean water was available at any time. On the way to Camp I we had to cross over a dangerous wide debris which came from an upper hanging glacier on the East face of Ganesh. Later on three members were just in time to escape being buried at this place.

[8] This party (leader, Dr. S. Shima) succeeded in scaling the peak on October 16.

On the 23rd, we opened the route to Camp II, climbing up on the side bank of the Ganesh glacier and then traversing to a small glacier hanging at the foot of the East face. The following two days were snowy, and we talked all day long with our Sirdar about the expeditions he had accompanied and our climbing in Japan.

On the 27th, we established Camp II at 5,200 m. on that small glacier. Here it became obvious that the ridge leading from the col between Ganesh and Hiunchuli to the top of Ganesh (the central peak) was quite impossible. It seemed that the only possible route might be found on an ice and snow ridge, which we called 'Sérac Ridge', which came down like a steep staircase parallel to the Ganesh–Hiunchuli ridge.

At first we made a route to approach Sérac Ridge from the right side, crossing two snow-fields at the foot of the East face. Although this route was the shortest to the ridge, it was quite dangerous because of avalanches and falling rocks from the wall above it. Then we tried to approach from the left side through the Ganesh glacier. After four days' reconnaissance we found the route to Sérac Ridge, first traversing to the Ganesh glacier and then going up along an avalanche track as far as the bottom of Sérac Ridge and again following an avalanche line to climb up onto the ridge itself. Since the latter avalanche line was so dangerous that we had to pass it as early in the morning as possible, we made Camp III at 5,600 m. at the foot of Sérac Ridge, where it was safe from snow avalanches but not from falling séracs. In fact, Camp III was threatened by a large ice-avalanche caused by the collapse of some séracs after a few days, from which we had a narrow escape. Thereafter Camp III was removed to a safer place near the ridge.

The route on Sérac Ridge, a steep ice and snow ridge having several ice-cliffs, involved a great deal of work and many fixed ropes. On October 6, Camp IV was established at 6,200 m., just under an overhanging ice-wall whose height varied between 8 m. at the lowest point and 20 m. at the highest. After a day and a half of acrobatic climbing, this wall was conquered and an extemporised ladder which we made from ropes and firewood was fixed.

The ridge above Camp IV became steeper and steeper and demanded the fixing of much more rope than had been used below Camp IV. On October 12, we made Camp V at 6,600 m. on a small snow-terrace which appeared to be the last place for a tent site below the main ridge. Three young members, Yoshino, Kimura and Ageta, constituting the first assault party, remained at this camp, and later on the same day they placed further fixed ropes above Camp V in order to facilitate the next day's climb.

On the 13th, they launched the summit assault early in the morning in fine weather. The ridge soon finished in the face, and they had to continue step-cutting until they reached a point just under the cornice



Expedition photo]

THE MEMBERS AND THE SHERPAS OF THE EXPEDITION AT THE BASE CAMP.

(No. 62)

of the main ridge. From below we had been very anxious about this cornice; but fortunately they found a comparatively reasonable route to surmount it where it was one to two metres wide. At 3 p.m. they stood on the main ridge and turned southward along the ridge without any delay. There was no particular difficulty except for a cold wind from the west. At 3.40 p.m. they reached the summit of the central peak, which seemed to be the highest point from the Base Camp. On the summit, however, which was entirely of snow, it became obvious that the other peaks both to the north and to the south were a little higher than that on which they were standing. Five hours or so seemed to be necessary to reach one of these peaks; no time was left for this.

It took a long time for a rope of three climbers to descend to Camp V. At 9.30 p.m. they returned to the camp under a full moon, after a long and arduous day. During the climb, close contact by wireless was maintained between the assault party and Camp IV, where the other members, Higuchi, Uyeo and Shimada and two Sherpas had stayed.

On the next day the occupants of the two camps changed places. Unfortunately Shimada, who had developed a painful complaint while struggling with the overhanging ice-wall, had to stay at Camp IV.

On the 15th, two parties, Higuchi and Karma, Uyeo and Mingma, tried respectively the peaks north and south of the summit previously reached. Following the same route as that of two days before, both parties arrived at the main ridge at 9 to 9.30 a.m.; then Uyeo's party went to the south, while Higuchi's party turned north.

Uyeo and Mingma continued over the central peak without a halt, and finally got to the top of the southernmost peak at 12.30 p.m. This was found to be the highest of all the peaks. It was a narrow, snow-covered point, and the two of us could not stand on it at the same time. In the meantime, Higuchi and Karma reached the top of a minor peak on the way to the northern summit, but the bad condition of the route and the shortage of time prevented them from carrying on to the northern summit itself. Both parties returned to Camp V at 4 p.m. The following four days were spent in dismantling the camps and carrying the equipment down to Base.

While waiting for porters to come up to Base Camp, we made short reconnaissance trips to the South Annapurna glacier, the West Annapurna glacier and the East Annapurna glacier, and also scaled Tent Peak (5,945 m.).

After four days' march we arrived back at Pokhara on November 3.