

not know PRSHEVALSKIY'S discoveries and great parts of his central Kwen-lun were merely hypothetical, and his theories have, in many details, since then proved to be wrong.

Considerable length, old age and homogeneity are the principal characteristics of this system. Geologically it is independent, and the foldings of later epochs have not influenced it. In China, south of the Kwen-lun, the S. W. to N. E. stretching folds never cross it or form knots with it, but avoid it, as it were, turning E. N. E. and east, leaving it alone. On the northern side the N. E. stretching folds turn to the west. All folds in its neighbourhood have been formed after the upheaval of the Kwen-lun. Richthofen regards this system as one of the oldest features in the building up of the earth's crust.

In the east it is the mere ruin of an originally much higher mountain. The peaks have disappeared, only the great bulk or mass of the system is left. The peaks may have been much higher than those of the much younger Himalaya.

Even the name Kwen-lun is one of the very oldest in eastern Asia, dating from the mythical history of China. Later on it is generally said that the Kwen-lun was situated near the sources of the Yellow River. During the Han dynasty the myth arose that the source of this river was situated south of Khotan, from where the river went to Lop-nor, and thence flowed underground to reappear in the Hsing-su-hai or Star sea, where PRSHEVALSKIY found, if not its real source, at least something very nearly approaching it.¹ Thus Kwen-lun was regarded as partly south of Odontala. The name Kulkun, or Kurkun of Mongolian extraction, is much younger and has to disappear from modern maps.

Richthofen divides the Kwen-lun into three parts, of which he regards the western, between 76 and 89°, as a single, but broad, range. In its central part the system becomes very broad. The eastern or Chinese part we do not need to consider. Humboldt was the first to understand the orographical importance of the Kwen-lun. But he was wrong in connecting it with the Hindu-kush and making it continue as one range the whole way to Asia Minor, as the ancients had done. He regarded it as the water-parting between the Tarim and the Indus. Ritter adopted his views. Both placed a plateau-land between the Himalaya and the Kwen-lun. They could not suspect the existence of a tremendous mountain system between these two boundary systems. These appeared only by and by in the course of continued exploration. It was, as I have mentioned above, the merit of the SCHLAGINTWEITS to have proved that the Kara-korum was a separate system, independent of the

¹ On the presumed connection between the Tarim and the Hwang-ho cp. the excellent article of Dr. ALBERT HERRMANN: *Die alten Seidenstrassen zwischen China und Syrien I*, in *Quellen und Forschungen zur alten Geschichte und Geographie*. Herausgegeben von W. Sieglin. Heft 21. Berlin 1910, p. 65 *et seq.* Cf. also Vol. VIII of the present work.