

CHAPTER I.

THE TS'UNG-LING IN ANTIQUITY.

1. THE FIRST CHINESE KNOWLEDGE OF MOUNTAINS IN CENTRAL ASIA.

To European knowledge the *Kara-korum* became recognized as a mountain system, or at least as a part of a mass of mountains, nearly hundred years earlier than the *Trans-himalaya* and it took a century to model out of this mass the separate ranges which are members of the *Kara-korum* system, a work that is still going on, and that is far from being completed.

But to the Chinese the *Kara-korum* was known, to a certain extent, some 1500 years ago. They did not visit the western regions as we do, as naturalists or explorers. They travelled either as pilgrims or as conquerors, and if their aims were not religious, they went for practical objects. Therefore they avoided the most difficult parts, and as comparatively practicable roads were at their disposal they had no interest in braving the dangers of the snow-passes and glacier cols. Of the great *Kara-korum* with the majestic peaks, amongst which the highest one until lately carried the famous name of Godwin-Austen, they had therefore only somewhat negative information. Still they were familiar with the existence of the snowcrowned giants of which European explorers have found out that they give birth to the greatest glaciers of the earth, outside the polar regions.

The Chinese had no special name for the *Kara-korum*. To them the enormous agglomeration of mighty mountain ranges forming a boundary wall to the Western countries and more especially to *Eastern Turkistan*, and including the western *Tien shan*, the *Pamirs*, the *Kara-korum*, the North-western *Himalaya* and eastern *Hindu-kush* was known since the first century B. C. under the common name of *Ts'ung-ling* 葱嶺 or the Onion Passes.

It has been a question open to discussion whether the *Tarim Basin* or *Eastern Turkistan* together with the surrounding mountain systems, including the *Kara-korum*, were not known to the Chinese at a much earlier epoch. TERRIEN DE LACOUPERIE¹ believes in a passing knowledge during the year 985 B. C. in which king MU 穆, who was praised in a special romance, is said to have undertaken an adventurous journey to the *K'un-lun Mountains* 崑崙山 and the *Hsi-wang-mu* 西王母, *i. e.* the Royal Lady of the West.² According to HIRTH the king proceeded so far as to the region of Khotan.³ CONRADY

¹ Origin of Early Chinese Civilisation, London 1894, p. 265 et seq.

² See Part II of this Vol., Kapitel IV, 4: Hsi-wang-mu in der Geschichte, Sage und Kartographie.

³ F. HIRTH, The ancient history of China to the end of the Chou Dynasty, New York 1908, p. 145. Cf. E. J. EITEL, China Review, Vol. XVII, pp. 223, 247.