

goes still farther in his »Älteste chinesische Beziehungen zu Innerasien».¹ He identifies the fire-mountain *K'un*, mentioned in the *Shu-ching*, with the *K'un-lun*, and believes to recognize it in an earlier volcano north of Kucha, that is to say in the central part of Tien-shan; and as the name *K'un-lun* is already mentioned in the *Yü-kung*, the oldest Imperial Geography of the Chinese, Conrady removes their knowledge so far back as to the 20. or 22. century B. C. However, he cautiously adds that this supposition holds good only in case that the Chinese tradition is authentic. HERRMANN, on the other hand, denies decidedly that the Chinese have had any positive knowledge whatever regarding the *Tarim Basin* and the mountains of Central Asia before the second century B. C. Lower down in this volume he tries to prove that the oldest China, as it is described in the *Yü-kung* in reality did not reach so far as to the threshold of Central Asia at *Tun-huang*, but only to *Ning-hsia* on the great bend of the *Huang-ho* and to the source of the *Wei-ho* in *Eastern Kansu*; further that the supposed *K'un-lun* Mountain in reality was a tribe, the *Kun-lun* 昆侖, though not in *Tibet*, but in the district of *Ordos*, to which the phantastically depicted expedition of the above-mentioned king Mu in reality was directed, — or, in a word, there is nothing that indicates a mountain of Central Asia before the second century B. C.²

It seems, as if the term *Ts'ung-ling* during different periods of China's history, and even to different travellers of the same period, has had a different meaning. Sometimes one even gets the impression that the Chinese writer himself has not been quite sure of what he meant with the term, and that he was not able to point out the physical boundaries of the *Ts'ung-ling*.

It must be regarded as a most fascinating task within the domains of historical geography to try and find out how far the Chinese information of the *Kara-korum* reached, and what they, during different epochs, really meant by the Onion Passes of classical fame. To approach the solution of this problem we have consulted, as we hope, nearly all those passages of the Chinese literature — partially translated here for the first time — where the *Ts'ung-ling* is mentioned. When reading those old narratives and chronicles one cannot but admire the determination and perseverance with which the Chinese travellers have penetrated this region, so difficult of access, and once a *terra incognita* even to them. One feels astonished at their objectivity, their truth, their self-restraint, their calmness, their patience, their courage, and that perfect lack of boasting or exaggeration that characterises their narratives. The fables they tell belong to their time, their creed and their religious superstition. But their geography is conscientious and in most cases correct and if their statements in mathematical exactitude cannot be compared with what nowadays is demanded by European scientific explorers, they are, at any rate, by far superior to the European travellers of the Middle ages, nay, to many modern explorers, and to the information brought together by any other Oriental nation.

In the time of the emperor WU-TI (B. C. 140—87) of the *Han dynasty*, the Chinese got their first knowledge of the existence of great civilised nations in the west. In B. C. 125 CHANG CH' IEN 張騫³ returned from his expedition to the countries at the Yaxartes and

¹ A. CONRADY, Die chinesischen Handschriften- und sonstigen Kleinfunde Sven Hedins in Lou-lan, Stockholm 1920, p. 150 et seq.

² Cf. Part II of this Vol., Kap. III: Die Wen-wang-Karte, cf. also Pl. III: The Kun-lun, a Hunnic tribe in the remotest antiquity. The name *K'un-lun* is written in the European literature according to the English transcription *Kwenlun*: we use further this word for the mountain-system of Central Asia to emphasize the distinction from the Chinese *K'un-lun* as the source of the *Huang-ho*.

³ All the Chinese names are brought into accordance with WADE's system of transcription, corresponding to the modern *Mandarin-dialect*. An attempt to restore the old pronunciation of the foreign geographical names from