The whole world is now obsessed with the writing of memoirs. It might seem that this circumstance would be an advantage for the future historian. But is it going to work that way? When you begin to compare different memoirs dealing with the same events, you are struck by their discordances. If this is so to-day one may ask what the situation will be like when there are only reminiscences. We are apt to think that large encyclopedias and reference books are the most reliable. I take up the Encyclopedia Britannica which has passed through many editions. I find errors in it relative to myself and Tibet. If such mistakes exist in matters one is familiar with, then how many mistakes will be found in other sections? We cannot assume that errors appeared simply in this case. The position of the historian is thus made very difficult. Before him lie thick volumes which are considered to carry authority yet the facts contained in them are often contradictory. One can imagine how chronicles and annals of the past were distorted in passing from lip to lip. When you travel through Central Asia and listen to all the stories picked up by the long Asiatic ear, then you can picture the past when classic historians had to deal with exactly the same sort of information. There were no sources save the oral transmission of travellers. It thus happens that along with sound facts there is much fiction and it is this which amazes you in the accounts of travellers and story-tellers. It is said that in the course of time history sifts out the truth.

On the mountain trails to Khotan we saw several caves which once served as retreats for Buddhist anchorites. To reach them from the heights above would be a very complicated undertaking. In caves lower down one finds the remains of murals which the Moslems and the campfires of the Kara-Kirghiz have not succeeded in destroying. Besides fanatics these murals have met with enemies in the form of scientists, who "for the sake of science" have cut out whole sections of these frescoes. One large figure of a Boddhisattva, for example, was so cut up that one portion went to London, another to Delhi, while the boots took shelter in Khotan. Besides these enemies, there were the mice. In the cellars of the Berlin Museum many frescoes of which the plaster was made with straw, were devoured by mice. The problem is whether divide up such monuments among museums, or find means to preserve them just as their creators left them. Who knows whether the desert may not again become a dwelling place? No epithet is too strong to stigmatise those who destroy such monuments. It is sad
to see these plundered half-burned wall decorations in the cave temples. These frescoes were not only valuable as art, but were documents showing the fusion of Indian and Iranian art touched with Chinese influences. The contemplation of such ruins fills one with sadness. One feels that if they had been left alone such monuments would have been an important store in Kharahoto. We recall how one explorer, baffled by many contradictory indications stopped in despair on the site of an ancient city and decided to try his luck there, with the result that he made a most valuable discovery. Here in the Kulu Valley are said to be hidden some very ancient manuscripts. The tradition is deeply rooted and coincides with the historic iconoclasm of Lang-dharma. What lucky "chance" may lead to their discovery? According to the accounts of Chinese travellers there were once fourteen monasteries in this valley. Where are they to-day?

Lasted to our time and given us a perfect picture of the flowering of art in those places which the hand of man has turned into barren deserts. The murmur of underground streams reminds us that lifegiving moisture has not yet forsaken these spots and that it can be brought forth again so as to make fruitful these barren sands. The ruins of a cave monastery near Kuchar particularly impressed us. Through a narrow gorge we fell, as it were, into a broad amphitheatre in the sides of which were many temples and monastic cells. One realized the great antiquity of this place, through which had passed Buddhists, Nestorians and Manichaeans. The frescoes were almost all broken off or defaced, yet one felt how rich the originals must have been. It is not possible now to enter all these caves. When you walk through the upper caves you gather from the hollow sound there must be other compartments beneath. It would require much careful engineering to avoid a destructive rockslide. Besides the murals there are many sculptured figures which adorn this onetime monastery. Now there remain only a few pedestals which sometimes display fragments of feet. Here in a spacious cave was a representation of Paranirvana, and on the narrow cornices between the caves a row of statues. Below are seen scattered rubble and pieces of building materials. Yet here through the rubbish peeps a small fragment of frescoes. You feel that this place was once magnificent, filled with people, and adorned with love. The dying out of such a center must have been accompanied by many dramas. More than one hostile invasion must have fallen on it. It is fascinating to tap the walls and floor and speculate about hidden retreats. There are probably whole libraries yet to be discovered. One recalls how in Tun-Huang a monk discovered quite by chance a number of valuable manuscripts.