

Samarkand and Bukhara. The Sogdian script is derived from Aramaic, and varieties of the same Semitic writing are used also in a series of manuscripts containing Turkish texts. Among these is a fine roll containing an early Turkish version of the confession prayer of the Manichaeans (Fig. 92).

Evidently Mani's church, which during T'ang times had carried its propaganda into China itself, had its worshippers also in Tun-huang. Its priests there, as elsewhere, could live peaceably by the side of Buddhist monks and would benefit by the attractions which the Thousand Buddhas presented as a popular pilgrimage place. But perhaps the most curious evidence of Manichaean presence is afforded by a complete little book (Fig. 92) in that oldest form of Turkish script which, from its resemblance to the Runic alphabets of Northern Europe, is known as 'Runic Turkish'. It is a book of stories composed for divination, and the late Professor Thomsen, the famous decipherer of that script, has characterized it as the "most remarkable, comprehensive and also best preserved" of the rare relics that have come down of that earliest Turkish literature.

With this curious relic of a race and language that have spread from the Yellow Sea to the Adriatic, I may close this brief account of all the strange links between the ancient East, South and West, which have come to light at that crossways of Asia that is Tun-huang.