

so far isolated among the 'finds' from the 'Thousand Buddhas,' of a manuscript roll which takes us to a religion and literature originating even farther away in the West. This is a neat little book-roll, about four inches broad but close on fifteen feet long (Fig. 192, 2), written with great clearness in that peculiar form of Syriac or Estrangelo script which, since Professor F. W. K. Müller's brilliant discoveries among the finds of the German expeditions to Turfan, has been recognized as the characteristic writing of the Manichaeans.

The followers of Mani and his creed, that strangest of all syncretistic religions of the East, in which elements of Christian belief, Zoroastrian tenets, and Buddhist metaphysics were fused in an extraordinary medley, were widely spread through the whole of Central Asia and even into China during the later part of what in Eastern Turkestan may conveniently be designated as the Buddhist period. From Chinese historical sources we knew that Manichaeism counted many followers among the Uigurs, that Turkish tribe which, after the downfall of Chinese control over Eastern Turkestan at the close of the eighth century A.D., and the withdrawal of Tibetan occupation half a century later, established its power from westernmost Kan-su to the north-east of the Tarim Basin.

Turfan was for more than two centuries the main seat of Uigur power. It is therefore appropriate that the ruins there should have been the first to yield relics, both in Middle Persian and early Turkish, of that Manichaean literature which, until Professor Müller's discovery, was thought to have completely vanished. They apparently justify the belief that Manichaeism and Buddhism existed peaceably side by side among a population mainly Turkish, which, with a tolerance characteristic of the race, was ready to give a hearing to more than one system of salvation. It was probably much the same also on Chinese ground at Tun-huang; and thus we can account for the strange fact that, among sacred texts and relics deposited in a Buddhist shrine, there should have survived a manuscript of that church of Mani which had its chief ecclesiastical centre in Babylon and which, as plentiful