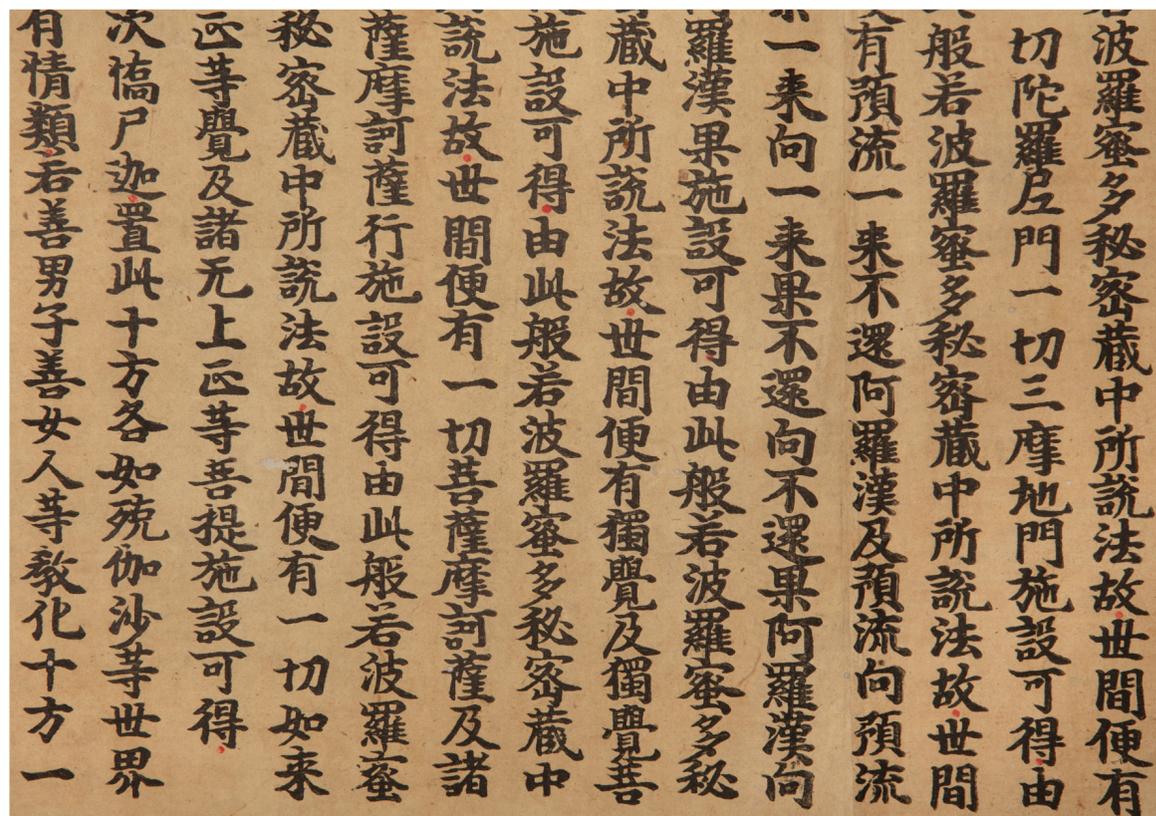


(Really) Early Printing



A Woman's Gift

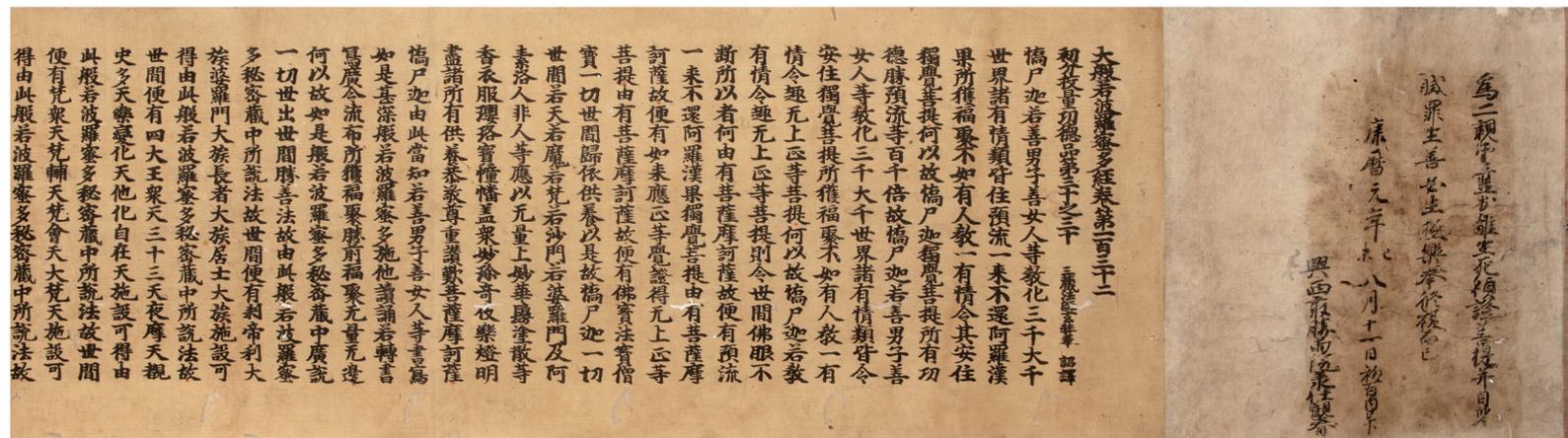
1. **SUTRA OF PERFECTION OF WISDOM: KAROKU-BAN SCROLL (KASUGA-BAN).** Block-printed scroll of Vol. 132 of the *Sutra of Perfection of Wisdom or Mahaprajnaparamitasutra*, text starting “Daihannya haramitta kyo...”. 20-23 columns per sheet, 17 characters per column (column height 203-04 mm.), printed on 21 joined sheets (263 mm. high, sheet lengths ranging from 374 to 443 mm., total printed length 9105 mm., with endpaper at beginning 9290 mm.), carefully backed in recent times, attached at end to a wooden roller. [Nara: 1222-27].

\$17,500.00

A rare early printed sutra, part of the Karoku-ban edition printed in 1222-27. It has been printed on high-quality thick paper (*gampi*, or mulberry fibers) in bold, thick strokes, using black sumi ink, typical of Kamakura and

Muromachi *kasuga-ban* printings (*kasuga-ban* is a general term for publications of the Nara monasteries).

The *Mahaprajnaparamitasutra* is a massive compilation of scriptural literature said to have been preached by the Buddha in four different places to 16 discrete assemblies. It includes seminal works such as the *Prajnaparamita in One Hundred Thousand Lines* and the *Diamond Sutra*. “This recension of the scripture is only extant in a Chinese translation made in six hundred rolls by Xuanzang and his translation team between the years 660 and 663. Xuanzang’s recension is by far the largest of all the prajnaparamita scriptures in the Chinese Buddhist canon... The *Mahaprajnaparamitasutra* also often holds pride of place as the first sutra found in many traditional East Asian Buddhist scriptural canons.”—Buswell & Lopez, eds., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, p. 505.



Xuanzang (600/02-64), Chinese monk, pilgrim, and patriarch of the Chinese Yagara tradition, was one of the two most influential and prolific translators of Indian Buddhist texts into Chinese, along with Kumarajiva. Xuanzang made an epic journey to India in 629, where he studied Sanskrit, and returned to China in 645 with a quantity of scriptures in his luggage for study and translation.

The Karoku-ban edition was published from Jouo 1 (1222) to Karoku 3 (1227). For a brief discussion of this edition, see Nobuko Inagi, “The Printing and Circulation of Buddhist Scriptures during the Kamakura Period: With Special Attention to the Kasuga Edition of the Sutra of Great Wisdom (Daihannyakyo)” in *Bulletin of the National Museum of Japanese History*, Vol. 72 (March 1997), pp. 34-35.

PROVENANCE: On the endpaper at the beginning (which has been completely remargined), it states (in trans.): “1379 August 11th...Saishouin Temple...*Joji* [a sort of chamberlain and precentor responsible for the operations and collections within the temple] Kanshun [his first name].” On the final printed sheet, we find a manuscript addition: “Ganshu Tachibana Otome” (“The Gift of Otome Tachibana”). We know of other printed sutras with this woman’s name and at least one of them is dated “1285.”

A very good copy, preserved in a modern box. Some minor worming, carefully repaired by the modern backing.

§ K.B. Gardner, “Centres of Printing in Medieval Japan: late Heian to early Edo period” in *British Library Occasional Papers 11. Japanese Studies* (ed. by Yu-Ying Brown), London: 1990, p. 159—“The term *Kasuga-ban* became used more loosely, in a wider sense, to denote publications of the Nara monasteries in general, not only of the Kofukuji. The printing of *Kasuga-ban* in this broader sense flourished throughout the Kamakura period and up to the end of Muromachi ca. 1570.” Mizuno, *Buddhist Sutras. Origin, Development, Transmission*, pp. 178-79.

