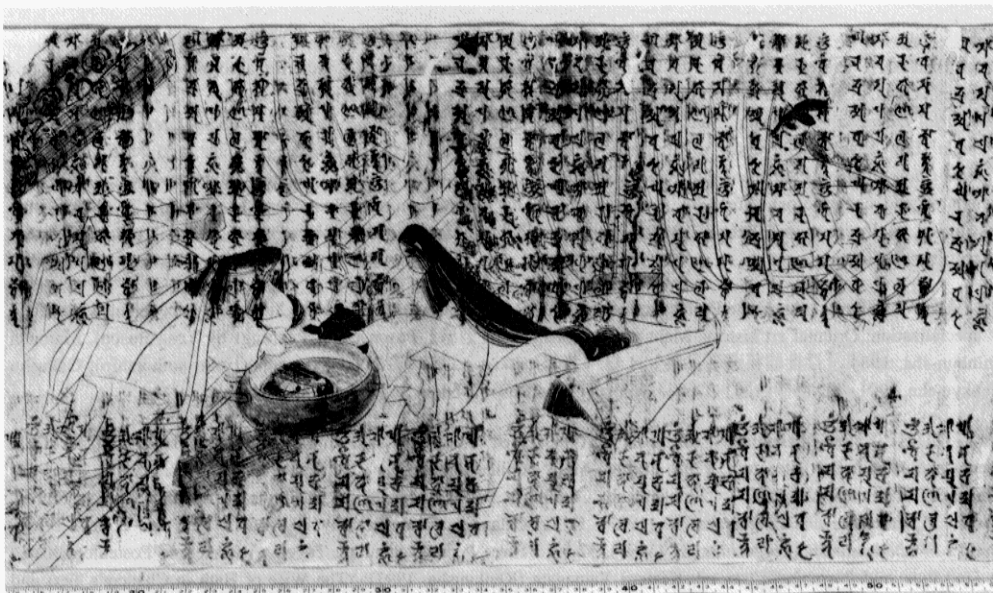


## Explanation of the Cover

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## Explanation of the Cover



### SANSKRIT SUTRA PRINTED OVER SCENES FROM THE *ISE-MONOGATARI*

Kamakura Period, 13th century

Handscroll, ink on paper with woodblock overprinting

21.9 × 188.9 cm.

The Museum Yamato Bunkakan, Nara

The photograph on the cover is an enlarged detail from a sutra dating about 750 years ago. Originally this was a section from a handscroll depicting a scene from the *Ise monogatari* (Tales of Ise), drawn with ink lines in a method known as *hakubyo* (white drawing). The *Ise monogatari* belongs to a literary genre known as *uta monogatari* (poem-narrative), which developed in the first half of the Heian period (794-1185). It is a collection of short tales centered on *waka* poems, with approximately 125 romantic episodes involving the passionate, handsome protagonist Ariwara Narihira. Along with the *Genji monogatari*, the *Ise monogatari* became a favored subject in Japanese painting. No works survive from the Heian period, making this *hakubyo* handscroll the oldest known example. The scroll has been cut into sections and presently is divided among several collections.

The cover illustration depicts a sorrowful scene from episode twenty-seven, “Mizu Kagami” (Water Mirror), where a woman who has been forsaken by a man looks at the reflection of her face in a basin of water. The front and back of this *hakubyo* handscroll have been printed with text from the *Komyo shingon bonji kyo*. The sutra was probably overprinted on this handscroll after the person who had treasured it had died, as a kind of memorial offered with the wish that the deceased person’s soul become a Buddha.

If a special feature of Heian-period handscrolls is the thick application of color (*nosai*), then it can be said that Kamakura-period scrolls are characterized by delicate drawing. The contrast of the white *washi* paper and the black ink in this scroll is marvelous, and while the painted lines and the printed Sanskrit characters have a simplicity, the delicacy of the linework is extraordinary.

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