

FROM TWO JAPANESE MANUSCRIPTS: 1, a Buddhist MS. of the 14th Century; 2, a copy of the Ise Monogatari. The former (the narrow, yellowed leaf) is from a volume of the Buddhist Canon, and bears the Japanese date corresponding to A. D. 1395. It is written in pure Chinese characters, and the brushwork of the scribe though not notable is scholarly. The paper, made from plant fibres (probably the bark of the mulberry tree), is still tough, and with care likely to endure another five centuries. ¶ The almost interminable length of the Buddhist scriptures as compared with the Christian is evidenced by the fact that this leaf is taken from Book 434, which is by no means the last. "There is not in the world", writes Captain Brinkley, "any literary production of such magnitude as the Chinese scriptures of the Mahayana. The Canon is seven hundred times the amount of the New Testament". ¶ Japan came under the cultural sway of China through the influence of Confucianism, but the bond was greatly strengthened by the rapid spread of Buddhism, which by the 7th Century had become the dominant religion. With Chinese culture came the Chinese language, to be literally grafted on the Japanese. Although a syllabary was later devised, or rather two syllabaries, known as Kana, and inflections introduced, Chinese character symbols have reigned supreme to the present day. ¶ The second example (the broader leaf) is from a 17th Century copy of the Ise Monogatari, one of the most famous of the Japanese classical romances. This is written in the Oiye or Court script, a cursive hand that flourished throughout the Tokugawa period. The red circles and other marks indicate proper names, quotation marks, &c. The contrast in the quality of the paper in these two examples is apparent, but in one respect all Chinese and Japanese papers have remained unchanged till very recent times, viz., they are usually without sizing, hence very porous, which prevents writing or printing on both sides of the sheet.



波羅蜜多善現是菩薩摩訶薩有方便善巧  
故不壞諸法不見諸法有增有減常不遠離  
布施波羅蜜多乃至般若波羅蜜多相應正  
行常不遠離諸佛世尊及諸菩薩摩訶薩衆  
從一佛國趣一佛國欲以種種上妙供具供  
養恭敬尊重讚歎諸佛世尊及諸菩薩摩  
訶薩等隨意能辦亦能於彼諸如來所種諸  
善根令速圓滿是菩薩摩訶薩隨受身處不  
離母腹胞胎中生心常不興煩惱雜住亦曾  
不起二乘之心是菩薩摩訶薩常不遠離殊







