

## **The Dunhuang *Diamond Sutra*: It's Preservation History and 1<sup>st</sup> Phase of its Conservation**

Mark Barnard

(British Library, Conservation Dept.)

The world's earliest dated printed book of AD868 was one of a large number of paper and silk scrolls deposited in the British Museum in 1907 from M.A. Stein's second expedition to Central Asia.

The Diamond Sutra, along with other important documents, paintings and objects from this expedition were exhibited in the British Museum in 1914.

A photograph taken around this period clearly shows the heavy staining of the frontispiece and early (pre 1025AD) patch repairs. It was at this time that the frontispiece was separated and washed, the early patch repairs removed and the first lining added. This is most evident when comparing to the 1914 photograph with later images.

The scroll has been relined at least three times since then. The penultimate time, a wide border was added.

The ongoing conservation research projects on the Diamond Sutra were presented at the first International Dunhuang Conference in Sussex in October 1993. These laid the framework for the first phase in the conservation of the Sutra for its display in the British Library's major Silk Road exhibition, held between May and September 2004.

Conservation work to date has included

- removal of the heavy paper borders
- part of the first lining
- work on the original lacquer roller

The second of phase of its conservation will be outlined.