# THE MEDIEVAL GLOBE

8.2 | 2022

## THE MEDIEVAL GLOBE

The Medieval Globe provides an interdisciplinary forum for scholars of all world areas by focusing on convergence, movement, and interdependence. Contributions to a global understanding of the medieval period (broadly defined) need not encompass the globe in any territorial sense. Rather, *TMG* advances a new theory and praxis of medieval studies by bringing into view phenomena that have been rendered practically or conceptually invisible by anachronistic boundaries, categories, and expectations. *TMG* also broadens discussion of the ways that medieval processes inform the global present and shape visions of the future.

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## Practices of Commentary: Medieval Traditions and Transmissions

## Edited by AMANDA GOODMAN and SUZANNE CONKLIN AKBARI



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#### INTRODUCTION: COMMENTARY AT THE CROSSROADS

#### SUZANNE CONKLIN AKBARI and AMANDA GOODMAN

THE GLOBAL TURN in Medieval Studies requires something different from every historical subfield—be it literary, art, social, or intellectual history.<sup>1</sup> While certain methodologies lend themselves to a global perspective, those that are linguistically intricate are more difficult. How, for example, can we enable conversations across disciplines, language groups, and cultural formations that are distantly related? Commentary-the interpretive tradition centred on transmitted texts—offers us a way in: the visual layout of the manuscript page reveals assumptions about the relative status of text and gloss; interpretive prompts in the marginal or interlinear commentary tell us about the relationship of teacher and student. Beyond these, material evidence of use-whether lecture notes scrawled hastily in the margin, or vivid rubrication to highlight key points to be memorized—illuminates the practices of commentary found within premodern scholarly communities. By exploring the development of these practices in a range of specific local contexts, it becomes possible to get a better sense of the wider patterns in use. While the centre of gravity in this special issue is medieval commentary, the individual contributions reach backward into antiquity and forward into the early modern period in order to highlight the continuities and disjunctions that can be observed when we take a long view of—and a geographically capacious perspective on—commentary.

One of the most exciting aspects of a global approach to intellectual history is that it demands a collaborative approach among scholars working on different traditions and within different conversations. No one scholar—or even research team—is capable of writing a truly synthetic global history of commentary. What we have aimed to do in this issue instead is to draw on a variety of specialists to depict the rich history of exegetical practices as they appear from various angles. What does global history look like, for example, from the perspective of the commentary tradition on Sanskrit texts? What standard elements of the Qur'an commentary tradition are specific to Islamic cultures, and which are common to scriptural commentaries across confessional boundaries? Does the seemingly paradigmatic nature of the commentary traditions of Alexandria look quite so foundational when viewed from East Asia?

I The work of Sebastian Conrad, especially *What Is Global History?*, continues to be a touchstone in discussions of the broad implications of the global turn. On the impact of this global turn, some key texts include Heng, "The Global Middle Ages"; Davis and Puett, "Periodization and 'The Medieval Globe'"; Holmes and Standen, "Introduction"; Keene, "The World Beyond"; and Heng, *The Global Middle Ages*. As Sierra Lomuto points out in "Becoming postmedieval," the transformative potential of the field "depends on being more than just an expansion of geographic coverage. Even as it expands the traditional purview of medieval studies, the 'Global Middle Ages' will always risk bringing the world centripetally back to Western Europe" (509).

The initiative for this issue grew out of a research project that is hosted at the University of Toronto but extends beyond that institution, bringing together colleagues across North America and Europe who meet online twice a month for regular seminars as well as additional in-person gatherings. The project originated as an institutional working group hosted by the Jackman Humanities Institute but soon developed into a multiinstitutional network, "Practices of Commentary," supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (https://globalcommentary.utoronto.ca/). At times, this research initiative converged with similar initiatives elsewhere, including a productive set of collaborations with researchers at the Goethe University (Frankfurt am Main) and other German institutions. This phase of the project resulted in two collections of articles edited by Christina Lechtermann and Markus Stock.<sup>2</sup> We could, therefore, see this special issue of *The Medieval Globe* as a continuation of the body of work on global commentary that the project has generated so far.

For this special issue, however, we wanted to approach the topic in a different way: instead of simply inviting a variety of scholars to contribute articles that would illuminate commentary practices in their own particular corner of the academic world, we sought to generate self-reflective work on the practice of commentary itself. To this end, we encouraged contributors to collaborate in groups of two or three, not simply co-authoring a piece, but actually enacting the practices of commentary on one another's work. This more adventurous approach was successful in producing comparative insights that would not have been possible in more traditional article formats. It was also extremely difficult, and we as editors shared our contributors' sense of the significant challenges that come from producing commentary while simultaneously treating commentary as the subject matter under analysis. From this effort, we learned much about our own methodologies, and in particular about the constraints and modes of analysis that are proper to our various disciplines. Our disciplines, as it were, "discipline" us, signalling what is important and what is peripheral, what concepts are thinkable and which are virtually unthinkable, establishing hierarchies and binary oppositions, introducing terminological challenges, and so on. To work across disciplines in the joint study of commentary, therefore, requires more than mere knowledge sharing. It entails an elaborate dance of reconciliation, in which disciplinary norms are examined and, where necessary, adapted in order to open up the history of commentary in ways that are minimally impacted by—or which explicitly consider and address—the historical development of our individual fields.

By bringing together researchers working on highly specific and local commentary traditions, and encouraging the sharing of research findings across disciplines, language groups, cultures, and discourses, this special issue aims to produce a global account of commentary that derives its strength from the intensely local focus of individual traditions. In this respect, balancing the global and the local, this special issue on *Practices of Commentary* is in keeping with other projects in Global Medieval Studies. Some of the same collaborators working on the Practices of Commentary project (including the editors of this issue) also participate in a project on global book history, "The Book and

**<sup>2</sup>** See Practices of Commentary and Commenting and Commentary.

the Silk Roads" (https://booksilkroads.library.utoronto.ca/), which similarly emphasizes the relationship of—and tension between—the global and the local, situating the individual book or cluster of books at the centre of a circle of specialists, each of whom contributes domain-specific knowledge and analysis. Cross-cutting workshops link specific regions with a focus on writing substrates such as paper, parchment, or birchbark; on care and damage of manuscripts; or on the use of textiles in manuscript bindings. In each case, the centrality of material culture to the area of investigation mitigates the disciplinary barriers to collaboration. The tension of the global and the local in the Practices of Commentary project is somewhat different, however, because the shared field of study is intellectual history rather than material culture, with all the additional linguistic challenges that this brings. These collaborations have revealed the ways in which our individual disciplines were not shaped for us to do this kind of work. In some fields of study, the terminology pertaining to commentary practices is underdeveloped; in other cases, the terminology is so elaborately developed as to be overdetermined. Can (and should) the terminology pertaining to commentary developed in one region of the world be exported to others? If not, how to develop terminology that permits comparative and synthetic work across fields? This is a challenge that the Practices of Commentary group continues to reckon with.

In conceiving of this special issue, we began with a set of questions: How might the decentring of commentary studies from its Greco-Roman and Eurocentric norms change our scholarly practice? What might it disrupt? What might it reveal? Both unique insights and unexpected challenges arose as we incorporated the learned traditions, local histories, and linguistic particularities of interpretive communities that have not yet been accounted for in influential studies of commentary. This expansion of scholarly horizons not only requires new archives of premodern sources to think with, but also contemporary conversations with scholarly voices from outside the Anglocentric and Eurocentric worlds. What happens when the commentarial traditions at the centre of our inquiry are based in, say, a medieval Tibetan monastery, a Central Asian scriptorium, or a Chinese imperial library? Stepping further back, we might ask additional questions, especially those arising from terminology and concepts that are fundamental to the practices of commentary. For example, does the status of 'the text' shift as we move around the global map? Does the definition of 'the page' depend on the format of 'the book' in which it appears? Does a difference in script result in a difference in reading practices? Is there such a thing as a 'global gloss'? By taking a global perspective on the modes of commenting established in the past, we have the opportunity to reconsider the future of our fields of study, making room for new questions, new methods, and new research results.

Some articles in this special issue offer a survey of their field, such as Walid Saleh's survey of the Sunni Qur'an commentary tradition (*tafsīr*) or Isabelle Ratié's account of autocommentary in Sanskrit sources. Others present a tightly focused case study in its manuscript context, such as Roland Betancourt's analysis of a Byzantine mathematical manual or Meghan Howard Masang and Amanda Goodman's account of a multilingual Buddhist text from Dunhuang. Fedde M. de Vries' study of the ninth-century commentator Chengguan does both, providing a case study of one scholar's corpus that illuminates

the wider world of Sui-Tang Buddhist scholasticism. Some contributions are singleauthored studies, others a collaboration that juxtaposes two distinct but related fields, as in Lorenza Bennardo and Kenneth Yu's study of Greek and Roman commentary traditions. Still others draw in multiple perspectives, such as the reflection on the practices of oral commentary and scholastic debate in Sanskrit by Elisa Freschi, Jonathan Peterson, and Ajay Rao, or the consideration of multilingual Ottoman manuscripts by Aslıhan Gürbüzel, Sooyong Kim, and Jeannie Miller. In devising a logical order for the contributions, we sought to balance the case studies against the field surveys, and to make sure that the diversity of fields represented was complemented by a set of conceptual through-lines that would reappear throughout the articles. These include metacommentary and autocommentary; translation and multilingualism; and materiality and embodiment.

It is paradoxical but true that commentaries have the potential both to repress and to transgress. Sometimes they limit the scope of interpretation, while at others they expand the scope of what can be imagined, as Walid Saleh illustrates in his synoptic history of Sunni traditions of *tafsīr*. Metacommentaries and autocommentaries illustrate canon formation in action, as key texts are reinscribed at the heart of the interpretive tradition—whether to stabilize established knowledge or to generate new questions. Simultaneously, by reformulating canonical texts and revisioning traditional interpretations, commentaries have the capacity to generate new knowledge that leads to cultural transformation. Autocommentaries, where the author adds a gloss (sometimes more than one) to their own text, are particularly intriguing examples of the interpretive mode. As Isabelle Ratié shows, some autocommentaries are less an effort on the author's part to elucidate a difficult text than an opportunity to add on an additional layer of complexity to the original work. The same commentator might produce multiple versions of the autocommentary, each providing different levels of exegesis and meant for beginning, intermediate, or advanced readers.

A core element of commentary is its translational function, of making a text meaningful within a different time, place, or community. This is most apparent in multilingual commentary traditions, which have often done the heavy lifting in mediating the exchange of knowledge and intellectual practices across linguistic, temporal, and geographic boundaries. Thus we encounter a Chinese text with Tibetan annotations, as in the Buddhist manuscript studied by Meghan Howard Masang and Amanda Goodman, or a multilingual Ottoman community of readers that generated commentaries in Turkish on Arabic and Persian literary classics, as explored by Aslıhan Gürbüzel, Sooyong Kim, and Jeannie Miller. Multilingual commentaries raise questions about cultural contact within structured environments of teaching and learning, especially with regard to the role of translation—both literal and metaphorical. They also offer evidence regarding the historical relationship of scholarly and vernacular languages and discourses. And since commentaries are a key vehicle of pedagogical instruction, they reveal the social practices that govern the relationship of master and student. By seeking to understand the scholarly communities that deployed commentary, we discover both common practices and striking differences not only within the written commentaries themselves, but also in the power relations, institutional structures, and disciplinary formations that the genre of commentary reveals.

The material conditions of commentary reveal much about the intellectual practices of a given time and place, or of a particular interpretive tradition, and provide a rich environment for the study of commentary. This includes not only the physical object of the book but also the visual layout of the page. From the parchment, paper, or leaf on which the manuscript is written, to the inks and pigments that adorn the page, plus the visual logic of commentary and gloss, this aspect of commentary foregrounds the interplay of matter and form in what is all too frequently treated mainly as an abstract textual tradition. The manuscript containing Chinese text with Tibetan annotations studied by Meghan Howard Masang and Amanda Goodman, for example, features an elaborate spatial layout and visual prompts that contribute substantially to the commentarial effect on the reader—and point to a locally adapted system of signs used to render the text legible. Similarly, the two Byzantine texts accompanied by images and diagrams analyzed by Roland Betancourt—a manual of siege warfare, followed by a short mathematical treatise—are interconnected through the practice of commentary. The main siege text is glossed by the short work on mathematics that follows it, while both are further explicated by the accompanying schematic aids in what Betancourt describes as a "narrative arc." Here, text and image participate equally in the didactic function of commentary, mediated through the material text of the manuscript page.

Yet the materiality of the manuscript is only part of the story: The materiality of the reader—that is, the condition of embodiment—is also a crucial element in the practice and experience of commentary. Visuality is, of course, mediated through the reader's experience of the page; the aurality of commentary, however, might be mediated through various channels, ranging from oneself reading aloud from the commented text to hearing commentary as uttered by a teacher. Moreover, that teacher might themselves either be reading from a commented text or explicating commentary in a more spontaneous, dynamic way. In order to convey this latter aspect of aurally mediated explication, Elisa Freschi, Jonathan Peterson, and Ajay Rao take a methodologically innovative approach in their account of how oral commentary practices are deployed in the teaching of South Asian philosophy. In addition to drawing on textual sources, they illustrate how pandits today make use of oral commentary to guide their students, communicating through the digital medium of Zoom. Here, the aural experience of commentary is both traditional, mediated through the Sanskrit language, and intensely modern, enacted through what the authors call "digital commentarial experience." Fedde de Vries also brings out the powerful effect of orally mediated commentary in his study of Sui-Tang Buddhist traditions, illustrating how oral transmission is reflected in the written texts. De Vries draws a comparison between the refrain-like use of lists and conceptual themes in the commentary and the appearance of motifs and themes in improvisational music, extending the oral mode of commentary beyond the scope of language to embrace other forms of meaning making.

Finally, beyond the productive tension of the global and the local that underpins this volume as a whole, and the specific thematic aspects highlighted above—metacommentary and autocommentary; translation and multilingualism; materiality and embodiment—we aim to invite our readers to think about commentary in transhistorical terms even while our centre of gravity remains in the premodern. What might modern practices of commentary tell us about premodern ones? And what might premodern commentary reveal about our own discursive world? Here, the exploration of "digital commentarial experience" considered by Elisa Freschi, Jonathan Peterson, and Ajay Rao might be extended into the at times all-encompassing domain of digital commentary to which we all are subject. Through social media and more broadly through web-based content, we are continuously swimming in a sea of commentary. How do our ways of navigating that environment help us to understand practices of commentary in the premodern world? Can our understanding of the many forms of premodern commentary help us to understand our present-day experience? The communities that are created by practices of commentary are both intellectual and affective, persisting over time, linking past and present.<sup>1</sup> The articles contained in this issue mark a bold step in exploring the nature of these continuities, as well as their undeniable disjunctions.



I On the generation of affective community by emoji commentary on Slack, see Evalyn et al., "One Loveheart at a Time."

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Abstract How might the decentring of commentary studies from its Greco-Roman and Eurocentric norms change the scholarly practice of doing intellectual history? What might it disrupt? What might it reveal? This special issue takes a global approach to commentary studies by bringing together researchers working on highly specific commentarial traditions to consider the learned traditions, local histories, and linguistic particularities of interpretive communities that have not yet been accounted for in influential studies of commentary. While the centre of gravity in this special issue is medieval commentary, the individual contributions reach backward into antiquity and forward into the early modern period to highlight the continuities and disjunctions that can be observed when we take a long view of—and a geographically capacious perspective on—commentary.

Keywords practices of commentary, intellectual history, global commentary studies

## GRAECO-ROMAN COMMENTARY BEYOND ALEXANDRIA: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

#### LORENZA BENNARDO and KENNETH W.YU

THIS ARTICLE EXAMINES practices of commentary in Graeco-Roman antiquity and their dominant receptions in modern and contemporary scholarship. We consider philological activity based primarily in Alexandria and Rome from the third century BCE to the fifth century CE and concentrate on the so-called Alexandrian mode of commentary, especially that associated with Aristarchus of Samothrace (ca. 216-ca. 145 BCE), which has occupied a preeminent place in studies of ancient commentary. In the process, we highlight alternative commentarial modes that have been relegated to the margins in mainstream accounts, precisely for their departure from the chief strategies associated with Alexandrian literary critical practices. We contend that both ancient scholars and modern classicists have, for debatable reasons, privileged these Alexandrian (or Aristarchan) practices of commentary while perpetuating the suppression of other styles of scholarship that circulated in antiquity, late antiquity, and the medieval period. Our aim is to illuminate some of the processes and prejudices that have informed these scholarly choices and to investigate the conditions under which understandings and practices of commentary became so centred around Alexandria. Interrogating one of the most tenacious master narratives about ancient Greek and Roman commentary will uncover the norms and categories of analysis that have long guided understandings and practices of commentary in Classics and in adjacent fields.

#### Graeco-Roman Commentary: An Overview

Classicists have construed the philological activity of the Alexandrian scholars as the pinnacle of ancient classical scholarship, as well as the *fons et origo* of modern literary criticism in its ideal form. As Franco Montanari observes: "Although much progress still remained to be made, and Wolfian scientific philology, the modern critical edition and the scientific commentary were still in the distant future... a nodal step had been taken in the period from Zenodotus to Aristarchus."<sup>1</sup> The preeminent historian Peter Fraser, moreover, remarks that "the main feature of post-Aristarchean scholarship is the enormous influence which Aristarchus' work continued to exert."<sup>2</sup>

I Montanari, "*Ekdosis*," 672: here referencing the "founder" of modern philology, Friedrich August Wolf (1759–1824). Such views were long anticipated by Grube, *Greek and Roman Critics*, 132: "The great scholars of Alexandria, and Aristarchus in particular, made a lasting contribution to the development of both exact scholarship and literary criticism"; and Sandys, *A History*, 135: "He was the founder of scientific Scholarship [*sic*]."

**<sup>2</sup>** Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 468 and 465–67: "He epitomizes the whole Alexandrian school of criticism, and when we find a grammarian described as *Aristarcheios* (for example Didymus and Aristonicus) he is so called because he is a product of the Alexandrian tradition.[...] No other scholar left so clearly on the history of scholarship the stamp of his own standards."

Alexandria's reputation as the centre of erudition *par excellence* has rested on the fame of its library, which operated under Ptolemaic patronage and attracted intellectuals across the Greek-speaking world who wished to gain access to its scholarly community and vast collections of books.<sup>3</sup> The copying, correcting, interpreting, and canonizing of Greek literature, not only of Homer but also of other archaic and classical writers (ca. seventh to fourth century BCE), received the greatest attention there. The concerted effort to preserve Greek literature and to explicate its nuances and complexities was motivated in part by the fact that, by the beginning of the Hellenistic period (ca. 323 BCE), Homeric Greek as well as the Attic dialect—the dialect in which much of Greek literature was performed and written down—were increasingly difficult to comprehend for later Greeks, who spoke the simpler *koine* ("common") Greek dialect.

Ancient literary criticism, especially of Homeric epic, was already widespread in the pre-Hellenistic period, as exemplified by piecemeal Homeric interpretations by such early philosophers and critics as Theagenes of Rhegium (sixth century BCE), Xenophanes of Colophon (sixth century BCE), and Plato (fifth century BCE).<sup>4</sup> If philological self-awareness and practices of commentary were already operative in the archaic and classical period, then what distinguished the activities of the Alexandrians as novel, and an advance on those of their predecessors? First, the bookish culture of the Hellenistic period and the technologies that it furnished institutionalized commentarial practices in unprecedented ways. For example, the systematization of commentarial discourse in Alexandria was part and parcel of the development of notable interpretive strategies and practices, chief among them the use of the hypomnema (the technical term for continuous commentary on an ancient Greek text; pl. hypomnemata) as a specific textual form. Hypomnemata were almost always written in a scroll separate from the one containing the original text. Readers could navigate between the two scrolls line-by-line, by the use of lemmata and by a set of critical lectionary signs (semeia) that the Alexandrians invented and standardized to facilitate philological research and to justify certain textual and exegetical choices: for example, the obelos (a horizontal stroke or em-dash invented by Zenodotus [third century BCE] to signal questionable words and phrases that had intruded into the text), the *diple/antilambda* (a horizontal caret to denote anything textually remarkable), and the asteriskos (a star-shaped symbol to flag lines considered to be erroneously repeated or misplaced).

Second, the philological tasks of the Alexandrian *grammatikoi* (grammarians) became increasingly standardized: intralingual translation and word-by-word paraphrases; rigorous historical research to clarify mythological details; issues of accentuation and orthography; and the weighing of variant readings for the purpose of creating *ekdoseis* (editions) of canonical texts. The consistent deployment and continuous transmission of these and other scholarly practices in pedagogical settings over generations crystallized commentary as a mode of thought and practice in third and second-century

**<sup>3</sup>** On the Alexandrian library and recent scholarship reconsidering aspects of its history, see Bagnall, "Library of Dreams"; Johnstone, "A New History"; and more generally, König, Oikonomopoulou, and Woolf, *Ancient Libraries*.

<sup>4</sup> For an effective synopsis of pre-Alexandrian commentary, see Hunter, "Rhetorical Criticism."

BCE Alexandria. On a more conceptual level, the objectives of Alexandrian commentators were both to clarify canonical texts (to this extent, commentary is analytical and descriptive) and to defend the legitimacy of a text and its author by offering solutions to the apparent textual problems and obscurities of the work (which betrays the normative dimension of ancient commentary).

Eleanor Dickey opines that the subsequent displacement of Alexandrian scholars following a political persecution by Ptolemy VIII (r. 169–116 BCE) had an "enormous influence" on Rome's cultural life.<sup>5</sup> Ancient sources testify to the countless number of Alexandrian scholars living and working in Rome.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, Alexandria continued to be the point of reference for collecting books and conducting research among the Romans.<sup>7</sup> Roman writers from Varro to Ovid regarded Aristarchus of Samothrace as the quintessential *philologus* and literary critic.<sup>8</sup>

While the impact of Alexandrian erudition on Roman scholarly practices is undeniable, its extent and centrality have recently been reassessed by James Zetzel, who has shown that Roman interest in textual exegesis reaches back to at least the early second century BCE, thus predating the main influx of Greek scholars and the diffusion of Greek scholarly practices in Rome.<sup>9</sup> Early evidence, appearing around the last third of the second century BCE and therefore concomitant with the production of the first known works of Latin literature,<sup>10</sup> shows that Roman exegesis originated from the necessity of clarifying legal and religious texts: this complicates the mainstream view that the emergence of Roman textual criticism was entirely dependent on Alexandrian scholarship. Early Roman commentators were therefore lawyers, not grammarians, and their goal was to facilitate continued access to, and understanding of, often old and obscure texts. For instance, the Tripertita, the earliest known commentary on a Latin text, was written by the consul of the year 198 BCE, Sextus Aelius Catus Petus, and contains explanations of the fifth-century BCE legal code known as the Twelve Tables. Indeed, it is not uncommon to see Roman jurists of the second century BCE debating linguistic questions and using a variety of tools for their analyses, from the study of vocabulary and syntax to close reading of the text and to allegory. These legal texts were perceived by early commentators as sacred and unalterable: therefore, early Roman attitudes towards texts of

**<sup>5</sup>** Dickey, *Ancient Greek Scholarship*, 6–7. Zetzel, "The Bride of Mercury," 51–54, complicates this picture and highlights the differences between the original aims of ancient Greek and Roman textual criticism and commentary.

**<sup>6</sup>** See, for example, Strabo, *Geographica* 14.5.15: "[Rome] is full of Tarsians and Alexandrians." Cf. also Suetonius, *De grammaticis et rhetoribus* 25.2 for the deliberation, in 161 BCE, by the Roman Senate, banning "Greek philosophers and rhetoricians" active in Rome: Kaster, *Suetonius*, 272; and Culpepper Stroup, *Greek Rhetoric Meets Rome*, 28–29.

**<sup>7</sup>** Suetonius, *Domitian* 20, writes that this emperor "provided for having the libraries, which were destroyed by fire, renewed at very great expense, seeking everywhere for copies of the lost works and sending scribes to Alexandria to transcribe and correct them."

<sup>8</sup> For a survey of references to Aristarchus in Roman literature, see Delvigo, "L'emendatio," 101-10.

<sup>9</sup> Zetzel, Critics, passim.

<sup>10</sup> On the chronology of early Latin literature see Goldberg, "The Early Republic," with bibliography.

cultural and legal significance were rather conservative. This conservativism remained a dominant feature in the history of Roman philology.

Although the word *commentarius* is used to indicate these early "literary commentaries."<sup>11</sup> we possess rather little information about the actual format of such works. We have, however, a clearer idea of the interests of their writers: to establish the chronology of earlier authors, to compile lists of their works, and to deal with problems of attribution and authenticity. Fragments show that they were also concerned with the explanation of individual words (often through etymology), orthography, and the study of the alphabet (for example, they note the use of double consonants or the disappearance of certain letters). Toward the end of the first century BCE, the interests of Roman scholars shifted from early authors to contemporary or near contemporary poetry. At the time, this was not seen as an obvious development: a case in point is Caecilius Epirota, a freedman and grammarian who opened a school at the end of the century and who made a great impression on the Roman audience of his time when he decided to teach the works of his contemporary Virgil. Roman exegesis of this period survives in fragments, but we gather that Roman critics displayed an eclectic approach, combining historical or mythological exegesis, allegorical interpretation, and stylistic and rhetorical analysis to discuss a text.

Roman commentarial practices became more uniform and organized through the first century CE as a result of the sustained practice of exegesis and its eventual incorporation into various educational settings, such as the school of the *grammaticus* (elementary schoolteacher) and the more advanced schools of declamation. Anecdotes from the second century CE on, such as those preserved by Fronto and Gellius, illustrate how scholars of this period were interested in searching for reliable manuscripts and in debating the transmission of texts. Extant works from the fourth and fifth century, such as Servius' commentary on the *Aeneid* of Virgil, are largely the result of such scholarly practices: line-by-line lemmatized explanations that address morphological, stylistic, and antiquarian problems, and that take into account literary models and the opinions of earlier scholars. The eclecticism of the Roman tradition, however, persists: as an example, we can point to Macrobius' commentary (early fifth century CE) on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* (The Dream of Scipio), which is effectively a work of Neoplatonic philosophy.<sup>12</sup>

#### **Complicating the Alexandrian Model**

As noted above, Alexandrian styles of commentary represent only a fraction of the commentarial practices available to ancient scholars and critics, but they have been given disproportionate attention in modern studies. Modern practices of commentary have long sympathized—indeed identified—with Alexandrian philology, while *nolens volens* 

**<sup>11</sup>** For example, the first-century BCE author Varro (*De lingua latina* 7.39) tells us that a Cornelius and a Vergilius, both otherwise unknown, produced *commentarii* on the epic poem *The Punic War* (*Bellum Poenicum*) of Naevius (second century BCE). For a comprehensive survey of the term and its complexities, see Vallette, "*Commentarii*."

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Zetzel, Critics, 122–23.

obscuring a vast range of other reading and interpretive methods. For instance, allegorical exegesis represented another quite dominant commentarial approach that differed in important ways from the Alexandrian style.<sup>13</sup> Allegorical interpretation in ancient Greece has a complex and rich history dating to as early as the sixth century BCE. In general terms, an allegorical interpreter claimed to have discovered the deeper and systematic meaning of a poetic text by employing interpretative categories and hermeneutic strategies that are often perceived as belonging to the interpreter's own philosophical or religious tradition, rather than to the context of the original poet. The fifth-century BCE philosopher Metrodorus of Lampsacus, for example, interpreted Homeric poetry through an allegorical framework in which the Greek gods and heroes were understood as physical substances (e.g., liver and bile) and natural phenomena (the sun, moon, and so on).

Ancient critics such as Varro (first century BCE), and also modern scholars, have associated the exegetical mode with Crates of Mallus (second century BCE), a contemporary of Aristarchus and beneficiary of Eumenes II of Pergamum; consequently, allegory has become almost synonymous with Pergamene interpretation, especially in Homeric scholarship. In reality, of course, allegorical interpretation was not limited to this school: for example, allegoresis is represented in the Derveni papyrus, one of the oldest and most significant papyri to survive from Greek antiquity. Found in a cultic context in Macedonia, dating to the mid-fourth century BCE, this document preserves fragments of an allegorical commentary on a theogony ascribed to Orpheus, who "speaks in sacred language (hierologeitai) from the first word to the last" (col. 7, vv. 7-8) in order to prevent the information contained therein to reach the ears of "the many" (col. 9, vv. 2-4).<sup>14</sup> The commentator purports to assist authorized readers in elucidating the veritable meaning of Orpheus' words, knowledge of which promises an enriched life and afterlife. We cannot delve into the details here, but let it suffice to emphasize how one of the earliest extant Greek commentaries differs radically from the interpretive premises of Alexandrian commentary. First, the Derveni commentator does not adopt a strictly scholarly and technical ethos but perceives his exegetical task as imbued with profound ethical and salvific consequences. Second, this commentary furnishes strong evidence that exegetical activity transcended purely scholarly settings, and that it was adopted by ancient readers whose investments differed from those of literati in Alexandria and other sites of learning. In sum, the Derveni commentator is preoccupied with transmitting ancient wisdom for improving the intellectual and ethical life of the exegete, not conducting a diorthosis (editorial correction) in order to produce a standard edition of a text.

The allegorical method remained a powerful exegetical tool well into the post-classical period, in both non-Christian and Christian contexts, as exemplified by the exegesis of the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 BCE–ca. 50 CE); the *Homeric Problems* of the allegorist Heraclitus (1<sup>st</sup> century CE); various works of the early Christian

**<sup>13</sup>** For a general discussion of the history and contours of this interpretive method in classical scholarship, see Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian*.

**<sup>14</sup>** On the function of obscurantism to prevent outsiders from accessing esoteric knowledge, see Sluiter, "Obscurity," 39–40.

theologian Origen of Alexandria (ca. 185-ca. 253 cE); and many treatises on Homeric passages by the Greek philosopher Porphyry (ca. 234-ca. 305 CE), such as The Cave of the Nymphs. But ancient and modern classical scholarship has not looked favourably on this method, which is deemed to exploit canonical texts in order to put forward arguments that go beyond the text's original claims. The allegorical method has often been viewed as an esoteric, if not suspicious, hermeneutic activity, eclipsing the intended meaning of the text and privileging the values or intentions of the interpreter rather than those of the original author. Thus, the regnant view in Classical scholarship submits that the Alexandrians appealed to procedures of allegoresis sparingly and instead endeavoured to preserve the original text as faithfully and literally as possible by using philological and historical approaches: for example, "Clarifying Homer through Homer," a phrase of Porphyry's to describe the Aristarchan principle of interpretation.<sup>15</sup> It is not accidental, therefore, that texts such as the Derveni papyrus, however groundbreaking and revelatory as a specimen of pre-Alexandrian, and indeed pre-Aristotelian, poetic commentary, rarely appear in modern scholarly discussions of ancient Greek commentary per se. Instead, the papyrus has featured as an object of interest primarily among scholars of Greek religion and philosophy.<sup>16</sup>

This association of technical philology with the Alexandrians and the allegorical mode with Pergamene commentators pervades both ancient and modern scholarship and has been marshalled to assert the hermeneutic superiority of the Alexandrians who, it has been argued, did not exploit the prestige of Homer to legitimate their own idio-syncratic cosmological views, but expounded (and sometimes reconstituted) passages of a text by disambiguating obscure lexemes and syntax according to the author's pre-sumed intentions. But these differences have been overstated, as Richard Hunter and others have noted.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, it is our contention that the image of the Alexandrians as purely "scholarly" or "technical" and unmotivated by extratextual matters is a construct that originated in antiquity and was inherited by modern scholars who used it, more or less intentionally, to legitimize modern philology as a scientific enterprise. Ample evidence suggests instead that Alexandrian scholiasts could advance normative claims in their commentaries on Homer which transcended literary criticism and broached valueladen issues related to politics, religion, and ethics.<sup>18</sup>

**<sup>15</sup>** Nünlist, "Poetics," 737: "The prevalent view among modern scholars is that there was a sharp contrast between Alexandria on the one hand and Pergamon on the other: Aristarchus strongly objected to a method that was practised by his Pergamene 'rival' Crates of Mallos. The picture may not be as clear-cut as that. In any case, Alexandrian criticism paid little tribute to allegorical interpretation."

**<sup>16</sup>** Exceptionally, Most, "Allegoresis." The *editio princeps* is that of Tsantsanoglou, Parássoglou, and Kouremenos, *The Derveni Papyrus*. For a scholarly overview of this document, see Laks and Most, *Studies*.

**<sup>17</sup>** Hunter, "Rhetorical Criticism," 678; Montana, "Hellenistic Scholarship," esp. 148–53; Blank, "Varro's Anti-Analogist"; and Nelson "Attalid Aesthetics." Sextus Empiricus' grouping together of Crates and Aristarchus, along with Aristophanes of Byzantium, as founders of the art of grammar (*Adversus Mathematicos* 1.44) is evidence that, even in antiquity, the hard distinction typically drawn between these interpretive "schools" was put into question.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Bouchard, "The Problem."

Moreover, modern scholarship has also inflated the influence of the Alexandrian school on Roman exegetical practices: Edward J. Kenney, for example, states that "Roman scholars took over the traditions of Alexandrian literary scholarship along with the rest of Hellenistic culture," and represents the first-century CE critics Hyginus and Probus as "heirs to the Alexandrian tradition."<sup>19</sup> According to Mario Geymonat, Roman grammarians explicitly adopted the concepts and language found in Alexandrian exegesis, while limiting themselves to Latin texts.<sup>20</sup> The evidence on which modern scholars base their assumptions of a seamless continuity between Alexandrian and Roman practices of commentary is, however, problematic. For example, among the various sources that preserve information about M. Valerius Probus, active in Roman literary circles in the second half of the first century CE,<sup>21</sup> Suetonius' On Teachers of Grammar and Rhetoric (De grammaticis et rhetoribus)<sup>22</sup> and the so-called Anecdoton Parisinum<sup>23</sup> have been used to claim that Probus edited Latin texts in Alexandrian fashion: multa exemplaria emendare ac distinguere et adnotare curavit, according to Suetonius.<sup>24</sup> This has been construed to argue, in particular, that the verb emendare ("to correct") indicates that Roman critics adopted the Alexandrian practice of correcting a text based on the comparison of various manuscripts.<sup>25</sup> Modern critics also emphasize the fact that, in the *Anecdoton*, the name of Probus is associated with the discussion of critical signs invented by the Alexandrians, such as the *asteriscus*, the *asteriscus cum obelo*, and the *diple aperistiktos*. Finally, their argument depends on a short and partially corrupt passage stating that Probus used critical signs to annotate the texts of Latin authors such as Virgil, Horace, and Lucretius, in the same way that Aristarchus had annotated Homer's text.<sup>26</sup>

Hence, these scholars have concluded that Probus produced "veritable *ekdoseis*, that is, critical editions in the Alexandrian style."<sup>27</sup> Other scholars, however, observe that the

25 See, for example, Delvigo, "L'emendatio," 99-101.

**26** As cited by Jocelyn, "Annotations (II)," 153: "his solis in adnotationibus † hennii lucii † et historicorum usi sunt † uarrus hennius haelius aeque † et postremo Probus, qui illas in Virgilio et Horatio et Lucretio apposuit, ut Homero Aristarchus."

**27** Delvigo, "L'emendatio," 81. Jocelyn, "Annotations (I)," 468 believes that Probus produced "the first philological 'editions' of the new classics." By "new classics," Jocelyn refers to the authors listed

<sup>19</sup> Kenney, "Books and Readers," 27–28.

<sup>20</sup> Geymonat, "I critici," 117.

<sup>21</sup> On the sources for Probus' life and works, see Kaster, Suetonius, 243–50.

**<sup>22</sup>** Suetonius, *De grammaticis et rhetoribus* 24. For an introduction to Suetonius (ca. 69–after 122 CE), see Kaster, *Suetonius*; and Wallace-Hadrill, *The Scholar*.

**<sup>23</sup>** The text known as the *Anecdoton Parisinum* is an excerpt from an eighth-century grammatical manuscript from Monte Cassino (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 7530, fols. 28r, line 1 to 29r, line 6) containing two lists of critical signs (*notae*), the first of which is apparently modeled after Greek lists of Aristarchus' lectionary signs. See Jocelyn, "Annotations," "Annotations (III)," and "Annotations (III)."

**<sup>24</sup>** "[Probus gathered] many copies [of works by ancient authors], which he took care to correct, punctuate, and mark with critical signs" (translations throughout from Kaster, *Suetonius*). On the relevance of this passage for the characterization of Probus as Aristarchan, see, for example, Delvigo "L'emendatio," 80; Jocelyn, "Annotations (I)," 468 and *passim*.

evidence is problematic and that there is very little in our ancient sources that justifies the representation of Probus' work as reproducing textual techniques attested in Alexandrian philology.<sup>28</sup> In particular, the validity of Suetonius' testimony has been questioned, as it appears to contradict information contained in other sources,<sup>29</sup> raising doubts as to whether the use of technical terms like *emendare* can be linked to Alexandrian practices at all.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, what was entailed in Probus' idea of *adnotare*, and whether he authored lemmatized commentaries similar to Alexandrian *hypomnemata*, are hotly disputed matters.<sup>31</sup> The materials contained in the *Anecdoton*, however, demonstrate that, probably not very long after Probus was active in Rome,<sup>32</sup> an established tradition equated him to Aristarchus as the Roman representative of Alexandrian philology.

The debate around Probus' scholarship shows the degree to which the model of Alexandrian erudition has influenced both ancient and modern characterizations of Roman exegesis. The case of Lucius Annaeus Cornutus, perhaps a lesser-known figure than Probus, further demonstrates how a rigid categorization of Roman scholarship has limited our understanding of philological practices that diverged from the Alexandrian mold. Cornutus,<sup>33</sup> active in the second half of the first century CE, authored a treatise on orthography, "books on Virgil,"<sup>34</sup> and a philosophical work on Greek theology that employs allegory and displays Stoic influence. Scholars of Latin literature have approached Cornutus' various areas of expertise in isolation, treating him mainly as one of the earliest commentators on Virgil and relegating his philosophical interests to the margins. Sebastiano Timpanaro, for instance, describes him cautiously as "a second-rate Stoic philosopher with a firm mind."<sup>35</sup> As a commentator, Cornutus stood out for his outspoken criticism of Virgilian style, a relatively rare attitude in antiquity that led select modern scholars to judge him incapable of fully understanding Virgil's poetry.<sup>36</sup> Such a

**31** For earlier stages of the dispute over the meaning of *adnotare* with reference to Probus, see, for example, Jocelyn "Annotations (I)," 468–70, with bibliography.

**32** See Jocelyn "Annotations (II)," 153–61, and especially 153: "Despite the corruptions and confusions now present, this material reveals the hand of at least one writer going back to the first or second century."

33 See Boys-Stones, Cornutus, 2-36.

**34** Cornutus' *libri de Vergilio* were probably monographs studying certain aspects of the text through the analysis of selected passages: cf. Zetzel, *Critics*, 292–93, with references.

35 Timpanaro, Virgilianisti antichi, 32.

in the passage of the Anecdoton cited above, n. 26.

**<sup>28</sup>** Zetzel, *Critics*, 71–72, with bibliography; 312.

<sup>29</sup> See the discussion in Kaster, Suetonius, 241–69 passim.

**<sup>30</sup>** Scholars cite Varro's definition of *emendatio* (the action of correcting, *emendare*) as "the removal of errors made in writing or speech" (Varro, F 236 Funaioli: *emendatio est ... recorrectio errorum qui per scripturam dictionemve fiunt*), and Quintilian's statement that "before the explanation of a text comes corrected reading (*emendata lectio*)" (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 1.4.3). Based on these sources, they argue that *emendare* encompasses broader practices than philological correction and that it is tied to linguistic usage more than to textual criticism: see, for example, Zetzel, *Critics*, 18–20.

**<sup>36</sup>** See, for example, Timpanaro, *Per la storia*, 71; Timpanaro, *Virgilianisti antichi*, 32.

siloed approach has recently been challenged by George Boys-Stones, who advances a more holistic reading of Cornutus' scholarship, showing that his interests in literature, rhetoric, and mythology should be understood within a framework of philosophical dialectic.<sup>37</sup> What is important to underscore is that modern expectations for ancient grammarians to conform to the Alexandrian model—that is, to deal mainly, if not exclusively, with the technical aspects of language and textual criticism— have induced scholars to misinterpret Cornutus' contributions as a reader and critic. It is our view that relinquishing such expectations for conformity to Alexandrian standards will allow for more balanced and complex assessments of ancient Roman literary criticism.<sup>38</sup>

The excessive focus on Alexandrian scholarship and on the specific form of hypomnemata—that is, continuous written commentaries—has also curtailed discussion of other exegetical practices. For example, a plurality of oral practices of commentary preceded, accompanied, and stimulated the production of texts that we might designate as commentaries in the strict sense. Although we no longer possess direct evidence of these knowledge practices, it is clear that in the Peripatos (the school of Aristotle) and in other pedagogical settings, literary problemata ("problems") formed the core of oral debates between teachers and students, as well as between scholars and their rivals.<sup>39</sup> Problemata—variably called appremata, zetemata, and appriat (or, in Latin, guaestiones)—circulated widely in both educated and popular circles in antiquity, such as in symposiastic contexts and in public demonstrations of medical and anatomical knowledge.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, the third-century CE philosopher Porphyry tells us that scholars at Alexandria deployed *problemata* to spark live debate and discussion.<sup>41</sup> The precise workings of these oral commentarial practices are of course difficult, if not impossible, to reconstruct, and their significance has been further obfuscated by the stereotyped image of Alexandrian scholars as solitary readers poring over texts and writing hypomnemata. Oral practices of exegesis, within and beyond instructional settings, were clearly also central to Roman culture.<sup>42</sup> Our sources capture scenes of both Greek- and Latinspeaking scholars lecturing in public settings before large audiences. Aulus Gellius, for example, tells us about a cartoonish "professor" of the Latin language (quispiam linguae Latinae litterator) whom the people of Brundisium invited from Rome to deliver public lectures on Virgil's Aeneid. Gellius' account details how the litterator performed "oral

**<sup>37</sup>** Boys-Stones, *Cornutus*, especially 14–28, assesses Cornutus' attitude towards Virgil in a constructive way: for example, he argues that Cornutus' much disputed statement that Virgil invented details of his stories (*de nihilo fabula fingit*) is not intended to denigrate the poet's work but represents "a moment of continuity between Cornutus as researcher of ancient wisdom and as commentator of Virgil" (page 27). Before Boys-Stones, Bellandi also believed that Cornutus' criticism of Virgil was expressed "in uno spirito, nello stesso tempo, di solido apprezzamento e senza indulgenze": Bellandi, *Dai verba togae*, 141n237.

**<sup>38</sup>** Timpanaro himself eventually acknowledges that Cornutus belongs to a restricted group of critics who deserve more attention: *Per la storia*, 72.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Blair, "The Problemata."

<sup>40</sup> See Mayhew, Aristotelian Problemata; and Keyser, "The Peripatetic Problems," especially 88–92.

**<sup>4</sup>** Cf. Porphyry on *Iliad* 9.682–83 and 10.252.

**<sup>42</sup>** For an introduction to orality in Roman culture, see Dominik-Hall, *A Companion*.

commentary," fielding questions from the audience during his lectures and responding to them with *impromptu* exegesis.<sup>43</sup>

In short, a rather fixed understanding of commentaries as scripted *hypomnemata* has led scholars to overlook the various exegetical products that surround, permeate, and evade the *hypomnema* itself: grammars, lexica, glossaries, *hypotheseis*, rhetorical handbooks, and kindred scholarly resources that are often taken to be merely ancillary to the commentary proper. A more capacious approach to practices of Graeco-Roman commentary should take into consideration all of the written and oral practices that informed and contributed to the making of the *hypomnema per se*.

#### How Did Classicists Become Alexandrian?

If practices of commentary in ancient Greece and Rome were more varied than those typically associated with Alexandrian exegesis, then how, when, and in whose interest did our understanding of Graeco-Roman commentary become so Alexandrian? In what follows, we survey a combination of ancient and modern factors that have contributed to this entrenched outlook, showing that various scholarly narratives from antiquity to the present day have validated commentarial practices based on an "Alexandrian standard" and simultaneously suppressed alternative exegetical modes. Closer examination and contextualization of the key ancient passages that perpetuate this idea will yield significant results for understanding and revisiting our own philological and commentarial commitments: a first step in complicating sources that have long oriented certain widespread convictions, which we hope will motivate others to pursue further research along these lines.

As in the case of Probus discussed above, references in Suetonius' *On Teachers of Grammar and Rhetoric* have been enlisted by scholars of Latin literature to support claims regarding the "Hellenized" history of Roman scholarship in antiquity.<sup>44</sup> Suetonius briefly sketches the Greek foundations of Roman grammar, tracing it back to the influence of the Pergamene scholar Crates of Mallus, who visited Rome around 167 BCE.<sup>45</sup> He describes Crates as *Aristarchi aequalis*, "a contemporary of Aristarchus," and claims that he was "the first person to introduce the study of grammar to the city."<sup>46</sup> Through frequent lecturing, Crates influenced Roman intellectuals who, to a certain extent, began following his practices and "carefully reviewed poems that had as yet not been widely circulated—the works of dead friends, or of any others they approved—and by reading and commenting on them made them known to the rest of the population as well."<sup>47</sup>

- **45** Suetonius, *De grammaticis et rhetoribus* 2.
- **46** Suetonius, *De grammaticis et rhetoribus* 2.1: "Primus igitur, quantum opinamur, studium grammaticae in urbem intulit Crates Mallotes, Aristarchi aequalis."
- 47 Suetonius, De grammaticis et rhetoribus 2.2: "hactenus tamen imitati, ut carmina parum adhuc

**<sup>43</sup>** Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 16.6.1–12; cf. Suetonius, *De grammaticis et rhetoribus* 2.

**<sup>44</sup>** These scholars do not normally acknowledge the problems associated with using Suetonius as a source, such as his frequent errors of fact or interpretation, or his tendency "to pass along data that are at least deeply suspect on their face [...] or to generalize broadly from data that are too few or too little pondered": Kaster, *Suetonius*, xlii.

Suetonius' account of events is more emblematic of Aristarchus' scholarly authority than it is historically accurate, suggesting that Suetonius himself tendentiously recalls the distinguished image of Alexandrian scholarship to legitimize the origins of Roman grammar. For example, he opens his list of Crates' imitators with the name of Caius Octavius Lampadio, a late second-century BCE grammarian who was responsible for dividing Naevius' (now fragmentary) epic poem *Bellum Poenicum* into seven books.<sup>48</sup> As Kaster notes,49 "Lampadio's division [...] so far from 'imitating' any of Crates' known scholarship [...] most closely resembles the division of the Homeric poems ascribed to Aristarchus," thus suggesting that Suetonius was inviting his readers to associate Crates with Alexandrian exegetical practices. Crates, moreover, is introduced and defined (as seen above) by means of his chronological relationship to Aristarchus, with the latter clearly serving as a reference point. Finally, as is typical of Suetonius, the whole passage is organized following a loose chronology<sup>50</sup> which ignores the fact that Greek scholars were present in Rome in great numbers before Crates' alleged visit. By oversimplifying the picture Suetonius reinforces one tendentious narrative about the 'Alexandrian' past of Roman scholarship.

By contrast, those distinguishing features of Crates' scholarship which departed from Alexandrian models appear to have been effaced, disregarded, or even mischaracterized in order to magnify Crates' associations with vaguely Alexandrian activities.<sup>51</sup> Suetonius himself was repurposing a trope that had originated in the Hellenistic period: Athenaeus (fl. ca. 200 CE) preserves a Greek epigram that thematizes a polemic between Herodicus of Babylon, who endorsed Crates of Pergamum, and the "students of Aristarchus."<sup>52</sup> Another crucial piece of ancient evidence fueling the image of a strong polarity between the philological traditions of Crates and Aristarchus is contained in a *scholion* on the *Iliad* that presents Aristarchus as an anti-allegorist.<sup>53</sup> Whatever the truth of these testimonies, it is evident that there was already a deliberate attempt on the part of ancient Greek scholars predating Suetonius (and Varro) to amplify the supposed opposition between Aristarchus and the Pergamenes.<sup>54</sup>

If we turn our attention to modern scholarship, it is striking how routinely classicists recapitulate this ancient proclivity to give primacy to Alexandrian practices of commen-

divulgata vel defunctorum amicorum vel si quorum aliorum probassent diligentius retractarent ac legendo commentandoque etiam ceteris nota facerent etc."

**<sup>48</sup>** Suetonius, *De grammaticis et rhetoribus* 2.2. Lampadio's division of Naevius' poem was a well-known fact of Roman scholarship in antiquity: see, for example, Zetzel, *Critics*, 21 for the sources.

<sup>49</sup> In the commentary on Suetonius, *De grammaticis et rhetoribus* 2.2.

<sup>50</sup> On Suetonius' often problematic chronology, see, for example, Kaster, Suetonius, xli.

**<sup>51</sup>** See Zetzel, *Critics*, 23–24. As Zetzel observes (page 21), "the vagueness [of Suetonius' passage] has allowed modern scholars to create very different images of Crates' influence."

**<sup>52</sup>** Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 5.222a. For discussion of this epigram, see Nünlist, "Some Further Considerations."

**<sup>53</sup>** For a summary of the debate over these scholia (schol. D *ad ll.* 5.385), see Montana, "Poetry and Philology."

<sup>54</sup> See also Sextus Empiricus, Adversus Mathematicos I.79, on the scholarly opposition.

tary, and consequently, to minimize the import of other commentarial styles. A survey of historical accounts of ancient commentary, for instance, reveals the preponderance of rather hagiographic genealogies of the famous ancient Hellenistic scholars, including Zenodotus of Ephesus, Aristophanes of Byzantium, and Aristarchus of Samothrace.<sup>55</sup> This narrative structure, highlighting the legacy of the Hellenistic luminaries and their intellectual accomplishments, tends to underscore the continuity of Alexandrian exegetical practices and the stable evolution of ancient literary criticism among their successors. The history of Graeco-Roman commentary is therefore framed as stages of development, centred on the Alexandrians, that implicitly culminate in modern classical scholarship.<sup>56</sup> Two examples will illustrate the point. Montanari writes, for instance: "We must recognize that we owe to the Alexandrian grammarians an idea of text philology aiming to establish a good text, to restore the correct text, freeing it from errors and damages. From the age of Zenodotus onward, progress was gradually made in refining the method, which achieved its highest accomplishment with Aristarchus."57 Dickey likewise remarks: "The real beginning of Greek scholarship in our sense of the term, however, occurred with the foundation of the library and Museum at Alexandria in the early third century BC."<sup>58</sup> Curiously but tellingly, she refers to non-Alexandrian modes of commentary only in passing, in the miscellaneous section "Other Sources of Ancient Scholarship."

These somewhat tendentious perspectives on ancient commentary continue to guide modern practices of commentary in Classics. For instance, modern commentaries on Homer tend to refer to the opinions of Alexandrian or Alexandrian-inspired commentators, whether in agreement or dissent, to justify modern editorial decisions; the views of those who pursued allegorical readings are rarely cited. Glenn Most offers an insightful assessment of the situation: "At least within the galaxy of humanistic studies in the West, allegoresis and etymology seem to inhabit completely different and noncommunicating planets."<sup>59</sup> Thus, modern commentators implicitly or explicitly acknowledge inspiration from Alexandrians, who are not only perceived as progenitors of modern textual criticism but, more importantly, as worthy interlocutors in modern scholarly debate.<sup>60</sup> Richard Janko, in a revealing statement in his volume of the authoritative four-part Cambridge commentary to the *Iliad*, opines: "Like his predecessors, Aristarchus reasoned like a good nineteenth-century scholar."<sup>61</sup>

- 55 A classic example is Sandys, A History, 114-36 et passim.
- **56** E.g., Dickey, Ancient Greek Scholarship, 4–6.
- **57** Montanari, "From Book to Edition," 43.
- 58 Dickey, Ancient Greek Scholarship, 3.
- 59 Most, "Allegoresis and Etymology," 60.

61 Janko, The Iliad, 27. Cf. also Stray, "A Teutonic Monster," 42.

**<sup>60</sup>** Exceptionally, Marrou, *History of Education*, 164: "Of far greater importance than Alexandrian scholarship was, in my opinion, the work of the Stoic school, which, especially after Chrysippus, was very much concerned with teaching the study of Homer [...] Crates of Mallus and Panaetius are more worthy of a place in the gallery of great classical teachers than Aristarchus." Montanari, "From Book to Edition," 41–42, also offers a more balanced view.

Another datum in the history of literary criticism further buttresses our argument about the partiality for Alexandria in ancient and modern classical scholarship. In addition to the Hellenistic references to a supposed competition between students of Aristarchus and followers of Crates discussed above, the Roman scholar Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 BCE) preserves information about a specific scholarly guarrel between Aristarchus and Crates as the representatives of the Alexandrian antiquarian-philological tradition and allegorical exegesis respectively.<sup>62</sup> Scholars of enormous learning from Rudolph Pfeiffer<sup>63</sup> to Peter Fraser<sup>64</sup> have accepted the historicity of this debate and have even amplified its supposed consequences for the development of Greek commentarial practices, commonly favouring and identifying with Aristarchus. In his magisterial book on Ptolemaic Alexandria, Fraser contends that "it is not surprising that the theory of Crates had no lasting influence in the world of scholarship; he is never quoted in the Aristarchean Homeric scholia and left little or no trace on the text of Homer."<sup>65</sup> Francesca Schironi's more recent appraisal is equally instructive: "Even if Crates was a skilled scholar and his etymologies were as polished and plausible as those by Aristarchus [...] the differences in approaches between the two scholars is immense and shows how much more 'scientifically grounded' Aristarchus' application of etymology was."66 Other scholars, however, have argued that the ancient evidence for this debate, two meagre and knotty passages in Varro's On Latin Language, should be reexamined.<sup>67</sup> While it is beyond the scope of this paper to reevaluate the details of this controversy, it is important to note that many scholars have accepted the reality of this Alexandria-Pergamon conflict as a matter of fact, have picked sides in the conflict, and have exaggerated its perceived outcomes in our narratives of Graeco-Roman textual criticism. As a result, a mere anecdote has served as a convenient pretext for maintaining the prominence of Aristarchus and his methods against his supposed rivals.

In reality, the approach and interpretive techniques of both scholars were likely much more complex and multivariate than this narrative suggests. And yet, the deep-seated segregation of Alexandrian philological methods and Pergamene allegorical exegesis

**<sup>62</sup>** Aristarchus and Crates have also been taken to adopt different theories of language: traditionally, Aristarchus is represented as defending the analogist approach, according to which language is ordered by precise rules; the anomalists, supposedly led by Crates, argued that language was fundamentally dependent on common usage rather than on grammatical rules.

<sup>63</sup> Pfeiffer, History, 237-40.

**<sup>64</sup>** Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 463–65. Lesky, *A History*, 789, also takes the ambiguous descriptions of this rivalry at face value.

<sup>65</sup> Fraser, Ptolemaic Alexandria, 466.

<sup>66</sup> Schironi, The Best of the Grammarians, 375.

**<sup>67</sup>** Varro, *De lingua latina* 8.63–68 and 9.1 describe Crates and Aristarchus in disagreement about the nature of language, commonly referred to as the anomaly-analogy debate. This rivalry between Aristarchus and Crates resurfaces in Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 2.25. See Schironi, *The Best of the Grammarians*, 587, on the unreliability of Varro on this matter, as well as Ax, "Disputare in utramque partem"; Broggiato, "Cratete di Mallo" and *Cratete*; Blank, "Varro's Anti-Analogist." For a more synoptic discussion of the debate, Matthaios, "Eratosthenes, Crates and Aristarchus," especially 33–46, which includes a comprehensive bibliography; and Porter, "Hermeneutic Lines."

has endured into modern scholarship. For instance, the term "allegory" does not have an entry in the index of Dickey's important book on Greek scholarship.<sup>68</sup> What is more, Christina S. Kraus and Christopher Stray's otherwise illuminating introduction to their volume on classical commentaries reinforces the subordination of allegorical exegesis because "its primary aim is other than elucidating the poet's meaning, and its method decidedly designed to argue a position rather than to focus attention on the 'sourcetext'."69 One could equally argue that this adjudication is animated by modern criteria according to which allegory, in contrast to scholarly Alexandrian philology, represents an aberrant form of commentary, an idiosyncratic interpretive mode promulgated by the philosophically-invested, such as the Stoics or Neoplatonists—or, indeed, medieval Christians. Conceivably, such exegetes as Metrodorus, Theagenes, Heraclitus, and Porphyry perceived their interpretations, however allegorical, as also elucidating the real meaning of Homeric poetry. Indeed, Robert Lamberton has convincingly shown that the allegorical mode was commonly taught in ancient classrooms.<sup>70</sup> Nonetheless, classical scholarship, with its inordinate propensity for Alexandrian philology, has conceived of allegoresis and allegory as undeserving of inclusion in the arsenal of the modern commentator, "serving instead, if at all, only as a term of abuse," in the words of Most.<sup>71</sup>

The normative narrative that we have been tracing, which identifies Alexandrian scholarship as the touchstone of philology, took root in Hellenistic Greece and became a reified idea in the Roman period, to be reclaimed by the discipline of Classics in its modern form as the philological standard. The various choices of rhetoric, styles of analysis, and practices of citation that we have unpacked in modern statements about Alexandrian criticism show that certain of these commentators (consciously or reflexively, as part of their training) continue to uphold these Alexandrian ideals and the Aristarchan ethos of "objectivity."

#### Conclusions

If Alexandrian models of commentary represent only one among many practices of reading, interpreting, and canonizing ancient texts, then there are important consequences for historiographies of ancient commentary as well as for modern practices of commentary in Classics. First, destabilizing the traditional position of Alexandrian (and especially Aristarchan) scholarship as normative would result in a more nuanced and historically accurate picture of the variety of reading and interpretive habits in classical antiquity. As a corollary, it would be misleading to speak of a single, internally coher-

**<sup>68</sup>** Although Schironi, "Greek Commentaries," 433–36, acknowledges the importance of allegorical exegesis, she devotes only a short discussion to it at the end. See, for contrast, Hunter, "Rhetorical Criticism," 675–78, who integrates the allegorical tradition into his history of ancient Homeric scholarship.

<sup>69</sup> Kraus and Stray, "Form and Content," 3.

**<sup>70</sup>** Lamberton, "Homeric Allegory," especially 201–5.

**<sup>71</sup>** Most, "Allegoresis and Etymology," 60. See also the insightful comments in Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*, esp. 7–17.

ent "classical tradition" of ancient commentary based on Alexandrian philology that spans and unites Greek and Roman scholarly contexts. Second, decentring Alexandria as the primary site of ancient commentary would displace Alexandrian assumptions about the relationship of text to reality in which, for instance, the text constitutes an enclosed universe with its own organizing principles independent of the extratextual world. Other configurations of text and reality would be equally valid, such as the one to which proponents of allegoresis subscribe(d), wherein a text refers and is subordinate to facts outside of the literary object itself. Third, scholars of commentary would distinguish more clearly between practices of commentary as they actually operated in Greek and Roman antiquity and the *representations* of them as constructed and sustained by different authors, both ancient and modern, for variegated purposes. A comprehensive approach to ancient commentary ought to account for both the empirical realities of ancient practices of commentary and the idealized self-perceptions of commentators and scholars, as the one must have informed the other.

Finally, the esteemed status traditionally conferred upon Greek and Roman commentary should be reimagined in the context of other, more global, exegetical traditions. For if the Alexandrian pedigree has been chiefly sustained by ancient and modern constructions, then we can no longer presume a unified and stable classical commentarial tradition, encompassing both Greece and Rome, on which late antique, medieval, and early modern practices of commentary and exegesis were supposedly based. A critical historiography of classical Graeco-Roman commentary that accounts for the varieties of ancient commentarial modes thus remains to be written. Moving beyond the entrenched traditional narrative will allow us to reposition Graeco-Roman commentary in the context of global exegetical traditions and to develop alternative understandings of commentary as a scholarly mode.

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**Abstract** Alexandrian scholarship is accorded a place of special eminence in historical accounts of Graeco-Roman exegesis and still exerts influence in the field of Classics. We argue that this image of Alexandrian literary excellence is tendentious, partly constructed by Roman receptions of Hellenistic scholarship and sustained in modern commentarial practice. Uncovering the diversity of ancient commentarial modes, many of which did not conform to the norms of Alexandrian or Aristarchan exegesis, will allow us to reposition Graeco-Roman commentary in the context of global exegetical traditions.

**Keywords** Alexandria, Aristarchus, allegoresis, Hellenistic commentary, Roman philology, ancient exegesis, literary criticism, history of scholarship, global commentary, Classics



## FOR PRIVATE AND NON-COMMERCIAL USE ONLY

# FROM PLANE TO SPACE: THE NARRATIVE ARC OF A BYZANTINE MATHEMATICAL MANUAL

# ROLAND BETANCOURT

THE PARANGELMATA POLIORCETICA (or Instructions for Siegecraft) is a midtenth-century treatise on how to lay siege to enemy cities and how to defend from such attacks. The text was composed for high-ranking military officials in the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire, most likely during the reign of Romanos I Lekapenos (r. 920–944) and Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (r. 913–959).<sup>1</sup> The *Poliorcetica* surveys, excerpts, and glosses a host of ancient and late-antique texts on siegecraft, artillery, and other military technologies with the aim of translating this material into a more succinct and comprehensible format, also updated in response to contemporaneous Byzantine practices and newly developed technologies.<sup>2</sup> At the end of the treatise, there is a short manual on mathematical calculations, known as the *Geodesia*. While both texts date to the mid-tenth century, the extant archetype of their manuscript tradition is found in an eleventh-century copy, now in the Vatican Library, which features extensive illustrations of the siege machines and concepts elucidated in the text.<sup>3</sup>

In their stated methodology, the anonymous author of both texts demonstrates an intent to make obtuse military and mathematical principles accessible, representing them here with more simplified and clear language than the ancients and ensuring their legibility to most readers without expert knowledge. A critical aspect of this accessibility is the manuscript's extensive use of illustrative images that are meant to readily communicate the most inscrutable aspects of these technologies.<sup>4</sup> For the *Poliorcetica*, this largely means that the images are three-dimensional representations of the weaponry described, rather than the diagrammatic line drawings of similar ancient texts, which took a more schematic approach to the representation of machinery.<sup>5</sup>

While the same impetus is found in the text of the *Geodesia*, the difficulty of depicting geometrical models and mathematical calculations presents a fascinating challenge to

I On the Parangelmata Poliorcetica, see Sullivan, Siegecraft, 1–23.

**<sup>2</sup>** On the sources of the *Poliorcetica*, see Blyth, "Apollodorus of Damascus," 127–58; Lacoste, "Les Poliorcétiques d'Apollodore de Damas," 230–81; Lammert, "Zu den Poliorketikern Apollodoros," 304–32; Lendle, *Texte und Untersuchungen*; and Müller, "Handschriftliches," 454–63. For a study of the manuscript tradition and its authorship, see Dain, *La Tradition du texte*, 41–51.

**<sup>3</sup>** Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS gr. 1605. The manuscript comprises fifty-eight folios. The text of the *Poliorcetica* spans fols. 1r-42r and includes twenty-eight illustrations. The *Geodesia* covers fols. 42r-57v and is itself illustrated with fourteen sets of diagrammatic and mathematical illustrations. The manuscript closes on fol. 58r with a (somewhat) unexpected and unaddressed image of the zodiac.

**<sup>4</sup>** On the use of images in the *Parangelmata Poliorcetica*, see Betancourt, "Bellicose Things," 160–77. See also Betancourt, "The Colors of Metalworks," 157–84.

**<sup>5</sup>** On this matter, see Betancourt, "Extended in the Imagination," 105–24.

the text's author and illustrator. One critical aspect to keep in mind is that the *Geodesia* is hardly a standalone treatise, but is instead meant to serve as an appendix to the *Poliorcetica*: the text presents itself as an explanatory tool to better articulate its concepts and surveying practices. Specifically, in this context, the *Geodesia* serves as a user's guide for a *dioptra*, a surveying device akin to a modern surveyor's theodolite.<sup>6</sup> In the opening passage, the author underscores the need for siege towers that are "equal in height" to the walls they seek to scale and platforms "commensurate" with the widths of the rivers they wish to cross. The author observes that many have built machines larger or smaller than necessary, precisely because they were "led astray by thoughtless perception and estimation" ( $\alpha i \sigma \theta \eta \sigma \epsilon i \alpha \lambda o \gamma i \sigma \tau \omega \epsilon i \kappa \alpha \sigma i \alpha \pi \alpha \rho \alpha \pi \epsilon i \sigma \theta i v \tau \epsilon c)$ , which demonstrates the need to qualify and guide the constructions and tactics outlined in the previous treatise.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the *Geodesia* is commenting upon the teachings found in the *Poliorcetica* to nuance and clarify how to undertake the constructions delineated within its pages.

# The Geodesia as Commentary: A Note on Methodology

As an interpretive construct, I here analyze the *Geodesia* as if it were a marginal scholion on the *Poliorcetica*: a commentary around the earlier treatise rather than a separate text. This approach foregrounds the function of the *Geodesia* as modifying the teachings of the *Poliorcetica* regarding the scale and size of the siege machines being built. Through this interpretive approach, I wish to ask: What are the limits of commentary? How can or should we recognize a text or visual program as such? And how does this approach to a given text or image set, as commentary, alter how we understand its lessons and methods?

In Byzantium, as in other spaces, exegetical texts can be interlaced throughout the primary text to which they respond, or they can be reproduced independently as singular or compiled treatises. For example, commentaries on ancient philosophy (like the writings of Plato and Aristotle) throughout the late antique and Byzantine period were largely produced as standalone treatises, citing passages and phrases in the source text.<sup>8</sup> Fragments, longer extracts, or full-length commentaries could also be reproduced alongside the primary text as brief marginal scholia, commenting on a particular line of text, or becoming elaborate marginalia that frame the entirety of the text. For example, we can witness the latter in the manuscript history of Byzantine Octateuch, containing the first eight books of the Bible. There, the Old Testament texts are framed by the marginal commentary.<sup>9</sup> As we can witness in the *Vatican Octateuch* (Vat. gr. 747), this marginal *catena* (or "chain" of excerpts from various commentators) wraps around the pri-

**<sup>6</sup>** See Schöne, "Die Dioptra," 91–103. For an overview, see Dilke, *Roman Land Surveyors*, 75–79. On the history of geodesy in Byzantium, see Rossikopoulos, "The Geodetic Sciences."

<sup>7</sup> Geodesia, 1.12–13, ed. and trans. Sullivan, Siegecraft, 114–15.

**<sup>8</sup>** For an overview of commentaries and scholia on ancient philosophy, see Dickey, *Ancient Greek Scholarship*, 43–55.

**<sup>9</sup>** For a catalogue, see Parpulov, *Catena Manuscripts*. On the Vatican Octateuch, see Lowden, *The Octateuches*.



Plate 3.1. Old Testament text with catena commentary and marginal notations: *Vatican Octateuch* (Vat. gr. 747), fol. 30v.

mary text in a smaller script, filled with annotations and notations to help guide the reader across the two texts and images (Plate 3.1).<sup>10</sup>

The expansive practices of medieval commentators often placed them in relation to central texts, while still seeking to expand,

nuance, or clarify meaning. I propose that we look at the *Geodesia* as we would consider a homily given after the recitation of the day's Gospel reading. After elaborating on the various tools, machines, and techniques of siegecraft, the *Geodesia*'s lessons expand upon the practices elaborated in the *Poliorcetica* while commenting on the practical considerations that any commanding general must work with to produce siege engines of adequate scale and commensurate with the realities of his army, the terrain, and the battlefield. Of course, the *Geodesia* does not look like such a commentary in its visual form or delivery. However, by looking at the *Geodesia* as a commentary on the *Poliorcetica*, we are able to foreground the conceptual work that that this latter treatise is doing, in order to ground in a spatial reality the various machines described in its source.

At the same time, this article will also be asking how we understand the use of images and diagrams themselves as a form of commentary upon the *Geodesia* itself. My proposition here is that these exhibit their own conceptual progression, development, and methodological approach that define a "narrative arc" from the two-dimensionality of mathematical plane toward spatiality.<sup>11</sup> As a discursive framework, this allows us to

**<sup>10</sup>** The catena of the Octateuch is derived largely around Theodoret of Cyrrhus's *Quaestiones in Octateuchum*, yet possessing its own selection of texts with notable omissions and abbreviations. For a succinct survey of these matters, see Lowden, "Illustrated Octateuch Manuscripts," 110n15.

II In part, this argument is inspired by the text Flatland (1884) by Edwin A. Abbott. In this social

perceive how the author of the text and its illustrator sought to articulate the practicality of the *Geodesia*'s mathematical lessons, while also deploying the established conventions of diagrams in mathematical treatises. In the *Poliorcetica*, the author had critically advocated for the use of representational images, revising the more two-dimensional and diagrammatic figures found in earlier versions of such texts, to ensure their easy comprehension. Given the *Geodesia*'s still more didactic mathematics, the author is always cognizant that this geometric knowledge must be demonstrated and applied in practice on the ground. This places an onus on the author and the illustrator to successively articulate geometric concepts as they apply to three-dimensional space on land, and even in the heavens.

Across the text and its illustrations, this narrative arc moves the reader from geometric line drawings to more three-dimensional representations of forms and concepts, through clarifications and interjections of real-life situations and with reference to specific sites in Constantinople. My goal in sketching out this arc is to demonstrate how moving from conceptual diagrams to representational drawings, from shapes to volumetric depictions, constitute critical shifts that undergird the very methodological goals of the manuscript itself.<sup>12</sup> This, in turn, highlights the function of this commentary as a narrative structure that charts the iterative development of the concepts and geometries it seeks to elucidate. These dual sensitivities to the *Geodesia* as commentary and to the progression of the diagrams and images allow us to appreciate the strategies that make this manuscript a generative site for considering commentary in its various definitions and dimensions, and through its grounding in the material practices of a manuscript tradition.

#### "With Plain Linear Method": Line Drawings and Planar Diagrams

Referencing the use of diagrams in the opening passage of the *Geodesia*, the author explains that this text is meant to readily communicate the complexities of geometric calculations used for land surveying, so that these techniques may be advantageous to those tasked with the construction and design of aqueducts, walls, harbours, and, of course, siegecraft.

satire, the protagonist, a square from Flatland, travels to Lineland where points are unable to recognize his two-dimensional form. Then, being visited by a sphere from Spaceland, the square is unable to perceive the three-dimensional sphere, only a contracting and expanding circle as it moves up and down his two-dimensional plane of existence. Written by a schoolteacher, this text is heavily impacted by the diagrams and figures found in textbooks on Euclidean geometry, which have their roots in the practices of medieval illustrations. The narrative also deploys similar illustrations to convey its narrative progression and the encounter between the variously dimensioned forms. On *Flatland* and nineteenth-century Euclidean geometry, see Henderson, "Math for Math's Sake," 455–71. On a comparison between ancient mathematical diagrams and their modern critical editions, see Saito and Sidoli, "Diagrams and Arguments."

**<sup>12</sup>** While such manuscripts have often been studied exclusively for what they offer military history and how they convey the realities of military knowledge and practice, more recent scholarship has also begun to understand their rhetorical function as literary works: see Chatzelis, *Byzantine Literary Manuals*. Further work, however, is still needed on this matter.

Hence, having collected the simpler [material] from earlier and most learned [writers], we have planned to define the rational potential of dioptrics and its great usefulness in [daily] life in many matters, with plain linear method, and to create proofs on the basis of a few diagrams, so that standing outside the range of the enemy, we may be able truthfully [and] without error to compute heights and lengths and intervals.<sup>13</sup>

Here, we get a concrete understanding of the role that visual tools are intended to play in elucidating difficult concepts.<sup>14</sup> This echoes the *Poliorcetica*'s own prologue, which states that the author has rewritten the ancients with greater clarity and simplicity, while also embellishing the text with "precisely-defined drawings" (σχήμασιν άκριβῶς διορισάμενοι) that readily communicate the complex elements of design and construction.<sup>15</sup> But in the *Geodesia*, the term used to describe its own illustrations is not drawings, but diagrams.<sup>16</sup> These διαγραμμάτα, as the author tells us, create their own "proofs" (ἀποδείξεις) for the reader, parallel to the self-evident reality of the "welldefined" (ἀκριβῶς διορισάμενοι) illustrations in the *Poliorcetica*. Lexically, the same verb is used in the *Geodesia* to articulate the power of these visual tools, "defined by plain linear method" (ψιλαῖς ἐφόδοις γραμμικαῖς διορίσαι).<sup>17</sup>

For all its methodological parallelism with the *Poliorcetica*, this is a critically distinguishing feature of the *Geodesia*. The former sought carefully to translate the line-drawings of other ancient textual transmissions into three-dimensional, representational depictions. In this later treatise, the need to communicate the clarity of mathematical concepts themselves runs up against the utility of representational images, which would not be able to depict the more abstract nature of mathematical concepts. Yet the author retains and parrots the same goals in this prologue. Throughout the text, in fact, we shall see here how the *Geodesia* struggles with the impossible task of essentially spatializing geometrical thinking. As the author writes a few sentences later, the goal is not only to simplify and familiarize the language of ancient authors, but also to pare down the breadth of mathematical proofs and to "bring down to a low and more sensible level

<sup>13</sup> Geodesia, 1.13–19, ed. and trans. Sullivan, Siegecraft, 114–15: "ὄθεν ἐσκεψάμεθα τὴν μετὰ λόγου δύναμιν τῆς διοπτρείας καὶ τὸ ἐν πολλοῖς αὐτῆς βιωφελέστατον πράγμασιν, ἐκ τῶν προγενεστέρων καὶ πολυμαθεστάτων τὰ ἀπλούστερα συλλεξάμενοι, ψιλαῖς ἐφόδοις γραμμικαῖς διορίσαι καὶ ἐπ' ὀλίγων διαγραμμάτων τὰς ἀποδείξεις ποιήσασθαι, ὅπως, ἐκτὸς βέλους τῶν πολεμίων ἑστῶτες, δυνώμεθα ὕψη, μήκη τε καὶ διαστήματα πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ἀψευδῶς καταριθμεῖν."

<sup>14</sup> Linda Safran has recently addressed the dearth of scholarship on diagrams in Byzantine art, notably their extensive use across military and other manuscripts: "A *Prolegomenon*" and "Byzantine Diagrams" (with additional relevant chapters in the same volume). See also Lazaris, "Scientific, Medical, and Technical Manuscripts," 55–113. For a contextualization of siegecraft manuscripts, including Vat. gr. 1605, within the context of scientific learning in Byzantium, see Salmon, "The Byzantine Science," 429–63.

**I5** *Parangelmata Poliorcetica* 1.37–40, ed. and mod. trans. Sullivan, *Siegecraft*, 28–29. For a discussion of this parallel prologue, see Betancourt, "Bellicose Things," especially 162; Betancourt, "Extended in the Imagination," especially 111–12.

**<sup>16</sup>** On the critical importance of the terms *schema* and *schematismos* in the *Poliorcetica*, see Betancourt, "Bellicose Things," esp. 163–65. See also Sullivan, *Siegecraft*, 8–14.

**<sup>17</sup>** The term "linear" (γραμμικαῖς) is alternatively translatable as "geometrical." Diggle et al., *Cambridge Greek Lexicon*, I:314.

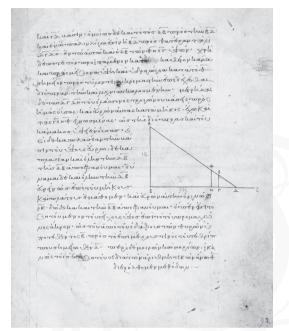


Figure 3.1. Measuring the height of a wall: *Geodesia* (Vat. gr. 1605), fol. 43r.

the height of their theory concerning these concepts."<sup>18</sup> Here, "sensible" (αίσθητικώτερον) not only refers to intelligibility but also to a more visceral, sensorial perceptibility made possible through the use of line-drawings and, more theoretically, by the

realization of these geometric proofs through concrete, physical examples.

The primary way in which the author concretizes the use of the *dioptra* and its calculations for the reader is by grounding exemplary measurements in the spaces of Constantinople. In the opening chapters, the author walks the reader through several basic calculations, such as measuring the height of a wall from afar (Figure 3.1).<sup>19</sup> While a missing section of the text makes it impossible to fully appreciate the context, repeated mentions of certain architectural elements demonstrate that the author is using the Hippodrome as a case study: reference is made of the tower carrying the quadriga (2.14–15), the gates from which the chariots started (2.15; cf. 3.15), the quadriga itself (2.16), and various parts of the *spina* (3.6–10).<sup>20</sup>

# The Marginal Scholion: A Narrative Shift toward Spatialization

Throughout the first five chapters, the text's author is limited to that "plain linear method" outlined in the opening passage, repeatedly grounded in the space of the Hippodrome. In chapter six, however, there is a change from the measurement of heights and intervals to the measurement of the area of rectilinear surfaces. This means that the author focuses

<sup>18</sup> Geodesia, 1.28-30, ed. and trans. Sullivan, Siegecraft, 116-17: "καὶ τὸ ὑψηλὸν τῆς περὶ τὰ νοήματα θεωρίας ἐπὶ τὸ ταπεινὸν καὶ αίσθητικώτερον κατενεγκεῖν."

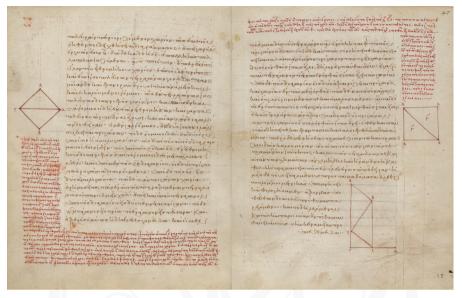
**<sup>19</sup>** N.B. While the treatises discussed here are not numbered by chapters in the manuscript, I am using the chapter numbering offered in the critical edition and translation (Sullivan, *Siegecraft*) to help guide the reader through the manuscript.

**<sup>20</sup>** On the measurements taken by the author in the Hippodrome, see Sullivan, *Siegecraft*, 275–81.

on more conventional discussions of geometry, rooted in shapes and their principles, and less so on more practical metrological concerns. As the commentary turns to focus on polygons and triangles, the lack of a clear and pragmatic example appears to trouble the text's scribe and illustrator, most likely the same person. In the opening spread containing the majority of chapter six, we find an extensive marginal scholion that winds its way down the left-hand folio and onto the right, as if tying together the various diagrams (Plates 3.2a-b). After explaining how to find the area of a square and oblong quadrilateral by multiplying the height and width, the author applies a similar method to find the area of a rhombus and the scribe provides a marginal image. The scholion is attached with a + to the word "measurement" ( $\dot{\alpha}\nu\alpha\mu\dot{\epsilon}\tau\rho\eta\sigma\nu$ ) and provides further instructions for the calculations for rhomboids. The ink used in the text for the + is the same as that used for the dark, carmine ink of the diagrams. However, it differs from the brighter, thicker red used for the marginal scholion itself, suggesting that perhaps the marginal text is of a later date. Yet, it is evident that the scribe had intended here to include a clarificatory note at this point, given that images are never cited with a cross or other mark in the text. Therefore, we may surmise here that the scholiast shared the author (and also the scribe's) concerns about the difficulty of representing these concepts clearly and felt the need to ground the text in a practical, pragmatic example.

Beyond the succinct captions added to some illustrations in the *Poliorcetica*, there is no other instance in the *Geodesia* where marginal commentary is deployed.<sup>21</sup> The scholion is written in a carmine ink, notably brighter and richer than the duller red used for the geometric line drawings, which has almost translucent quality to it. This is also the same shade of red used for captions across the *Poliorcetica*. The cross in the body of the text, above the word "measurement," is notably in that same dull ink. This suggests that the cross for the scholion (in the main body of the text) was written by the original scribe but was completed at a later time. It is also unlikely that the cross was meant to refer to the diagram, given that no images are referenced in this manner in the whole manuscript. Therefore, it is likely that the marginal scholion was provided by a different scribe, possibly at a later time, but that its inclusion was intended from the very start. The script and layout of the scholion itself resembles that of marginal commentaries, as can be seen in mid-eleventh-century Old and New Testament catena manuscripts, as discussed earlier (Plate 3.1). Lexical similarities between the scholion and the texts of

**<sup>21</sup>** In the *Poliorcetica*, a scholion of this kind appears once, on fol. 3v, tied to the discussion of "longlasting rations" to supply expeditions that require filling and nutritious food that preserves well yet also does not cause thirst. The scholion proceeds to give a meticulous description of how to make this cited ration, comprised of boiled squill (*Scilla*), sesame, poppy seeds, and honey. It goes on to give a recipe for another variation. This example differs from the one in the *Geodesia* since it merely clarifies a term cited in passing in the text, rather than seeking to justify the importance or efficacy of the concepts being explained. However, the hand and ink are the same for the *Poliorcetica*'s marginal scholion as for the one in the *Geodesia*, so both marginal scholia were written by the same hand and using the same ink. Furthermore, the asterisk-like footnote in the *Poliorcetica* matches the hand and ink of the marginal scholion that it cites (unlike in the *Geodesia* where the cross in the text differs from the cross in the marginal scholion). The similarity in inks is made evidently clear by the identical smudging patterns seen with this particular ink across the two examples: the asterisk in the text is also highly smudged. See *Poliorcetica*, ed. and trans. Sullivan, *Siegecraft*, 32–34.



Plates 3.2a–b. Folios with marginal scholion, including diagrams of a rhombus with two isosceles triangles, a quadrilateral divided into two triangles, and the calculation of areas: *Geodesia* (Vat. gr. 1605), fols. 46v–47r.

the *Poliorcetica* and *Geodesia* further suggest that this marginal insertion comes from the text's own author but was most likely added by a later annotator.<sup>22</sup>

What is most striking about the scholion, however, is its content. While one might expect it to clarify or expound on the mathematical elements discussed here, it instead explains why the calculation of a shape's area is useful for a military commander to know.<sup>23</sup> Its author reasons that being able to calculate this allows him to properly understand the required size of an army and how many troops can be placed in this formation. Similar discussion of infantry formations can be found in other contemporaneous military treatises, notably the eleventh-century copies of the tenth-century *Syntaxis armatorum quadrata* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 2442; and Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, gr. 1164).<sup>24</sup> The conceptual work done by the scholion is explanatory, not by clarifying a confusion in the text, but by providing a practical and spatial application to help the reader comprehend the abstract concepts. The marginal

**<sup>22</sup>** Sullivan, *Siegecraft*, 259–60, following Barocius, *Heronis Mechanici*, 58. However, further study of these marginal scholia must be undertaken, with close comparison of the work's manuscript tradition, in order to ascertain the details of this addition.

**<sup>23</sup>** The text is composed of a pastiche of ancient tactical authors, including most notably Asclepiodotus. Sullivan, *Siegecraft*, 260.

**<sup>24</sup>** See McGeer, "The *Syntaxis armatorum quadrata*," 219–29. See also Betancourt, "Bellicose Things," 168–69.

scholion leads the reader away from the treatise itself to demonstrate what they should take from it. Its dedicated pragmatism echoes quite clearly the tone of the *Geodesia* and *Poliorcetica*'s opening (and closing) passages; an excerpt of the first and last lines of the scholion captures the character of the overall passage.

For the judgment of the size of areas from afar, regarding measurement and representation, customarily provides tactical knowledge for generals on both siege warfare and direct combat. For the commander of armies knows, in terms of the sizes of square and rectangular areas, how many hoplites in infantry order and light-armed troops and targeteers or mounted spear carriers and bowmen the areas will receive per phalangarchia (master phalanx).[...] And knowing these things the leaders of expeditions, selecting from local topography by form and size from a distance, will make their marches in good order and steadfastly, prevailing over the enemy in sieges and direct confrontations.<sup>25</sup>

The scholion fills and animates the two-dimensional, empty shape of the rhomboid as well as the vacant margins of the text, encouraging the reader to think of such figures as spaces for the subdivisions of troops moving through a real landscape.

Just as this scholion shatters the two-dimensionality of the diagrams provided thus far, the *Geodesia* now takes a spatial turn away from line drawings and toward threedimensional representations. On the right-hand folio, we begin to see this shift in the text, when the author observes that every triangle is "able to be conceived in reality  $(\alpha i\sigma\theta \eta \sigma\epsilon i)$  and imagination  $(\phi \alpha v \tau \alpha \sigma i \alpha)$ ,"<sup>26</sup> going on to observe—and to illustrate— that in every quadrilateral there are two triangles.<sup>27</sup> By these means, the author is teaching the reader to understand that geometric concepts can be found in the world, not just in this abstract discussion. This is made explicit in the concluding statements of chapter six, found at the end of the same folio.

But we, wishing to motivate those being introduced to mathematics, have culled suggestions on measurement, furnishing starting points for the subjects to promote eagerness (εύπρόθυμον). And we have assumed as a basis the proverbial saying "they learn pottery on the pot (έν πίθω μανθάνειν αύτοὺς τὴν κεραμείαν)."<sup>28</sup>

**<sup>25</sup>** Geodesia, 6.13 [marginal scholion], ed. and modified trans. Sullivan, Siegecraft, 124–25. "Τὰ γὰρ πρὸς ἀναμέτρησιν καὶ σχηματισμὸν πόρρωθεν κατὰ μεγέθη ἐπιγινωσκόμενα χωρία στρατηγικὴν ἑπιστήμην πρὸς πολιορκίαν τε καὶ μάχης ἀνιπαράταξιν τακτικῶς ἑφοδιάζειν εἴωθε· καὶ γὰρ ὁ τῶν στρατῶν ἑξάρχων πρὸς τὰ τῶν τετραγώνων ἡ ἑτερομήκων χωρίων ἑπιστήσας μεγέθη, ὀπόσους ὑπλίτας κατὰ πεζικὴν τάξιν ψιλούς τε καὶ πελταστὰς ἡ δορατοφόρους τε καὶ ἀκροβολιστὰς ἰππέας κατὰ φαλαγγαρχίαν είσδἑξονται [...] ταῦτα συνιἑντες οἱ τῶν στρατευμάτων ἡγούμενοι, τὰς δὲ τῶν τόπων θέσεις κατὰ σχῆμα καὶ μέγεθος ἑκλεγόμενοι πόρρωθεν εὐτάκτως τε καὶ ἀνεπισφαλῶς τὰ πορείας ποιήσονται, ἕν τε πολιορκίαις καὶ ἀντιπαρατάξεσι τοὺς ἑναντίους καταγωνιζόμενοι."

**<sup>26</sup>** "όθεν καὶ πῶν τὸ αίσθήσει τε καὶ φαντασία καταληφθῆναι δυνάμενον." *Geodesia*, 6.36–37, ed. and trans. Sullivan, *Siegecraft*, 126–27.

**<sup>27</sup>** For a survey of *phantasia* in Byzantium, see Betancourt, *Sight, Touch, and Imagination in Byzantium*, 128–68, 284–325.

**<sup>28</sup>** Geodesia, 6.42–46, ed. and trans. Sullivan, Siegecraft, 126–27: "ἡμεῖς δέ, τοὺς είσαγομένους πρὸς τὰ μαθήματα ἐρεθίζειν βουλόμενοι, μετρικὰς ὑπομνήσεις ἡνθολογήσαμεν, ἀφορμὰς ὑποθέσεων διὰ τὸ εὑπρόθυμον παρεχόμενοι· καί, τὸ δὴ λεγόμενον κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν 'ἐν πίθῳ μανθάνειν αὐτοὺς τὴν κεραμείαν' προϋπεθέμεθα."

This well-known proverb, featuring a long history reaching back to antiquity, would have been readily understood by any well-educated reader.<sup>29</sup> In Photios's ninth-century *Lexicon*, the learned patriarch of Constantinople, defines it as "a proverb on those who go beyond the primary lessons but attain the greater ones" (παροιμία έπὶ τῶν τὰς πρώτας μαθήσεις ὑπερβαινόντων, ἀπτομένων δὲ τῶν μειζόνων).<sup>30</sup> Here, this proverb neatly marks a turning point in the manuscript, which in these two folios has sought to spatialize the lessons of the text not simply by bringing in real world examples, like the Hippodrome, but by projecting outward into the world the lessons it has been teaching. Significantly, this is also the last instance of planar line drawings in the manuscript, which henceforth give way to three-dimensional depictions of volumetric objects.

# The Volumetric Turn: Drawing a Circle and Figures in Space

The next section of the text is dedicated to finding the diameter and circumference of a circle with a *dioptra* that has been placed in the centre of said circle: rather than measuring from afar, this technique requires the outward projection of a shape onto the natural landscape. In the first illustration, the edges of the shape accordingly spring with life and colour, with green plants and flowers rimming the circle, punctuated by craggy boulders (Plate 3.3). All previous line drawings in the *Geodesia* had avoided such allusions to representational space; even the diagrams grounded in the Hippodrome are wholly abstract. A folio later, where the vegetation and boulders are gone, the illustrator has inserted a human figure (Figure 3.2a): the only such figure in the whole of the *Geodesia*.

Here, the author is explaining how to measure a circle without the use of the *dioptra* when only a rope is available, thus highlighting the human actor's kinesthetic movements as the instruments of measurement. Occupying nearly a full folio, this image comes before the introduction of three-dimensional shapes and thus advances the shift

<sup>29</sup> Denis Sullivan, in his study of the Geodesia, has assessed two possible inclinations for the meaning of the proverb. One can be traced to Plato's Gorgias, where it is a warning to those who undertake complex tasks without learning the basics. Whereas another possible reading, attributed by Zenobius to Dicaearchus, refers to the act of learning by experience, though some believe that this understanding misses the full meaning of the phrase as being somewhat tonguein-cheek. Both these readings seem to be commensurate with our author's goals: on the one hand, they want to ensure that the reader can readily execute the complex calculations on the battlefield without having to undertake a full curriculum in geometry and other metrological sciences. However, there is no negative connotation to this practice as being dilettantish, but rather practical. On the other hand, there is a sense that the author's concrete examples are intended to give the reader an understanding of the concepts through their own lived experience. In the Geodesia, we can understand the proverb's impact as being somewhere between these two, taking on an almost phenomenological force, whereby we comprehend that one first learns pottery through one's visceral understanding of the pot itself as an object in one's life with various uses, precarities, and material dimensions. This echoes the sentiments of the study of the triangle, which teaches its geometric precepts through the fundamental realization of the triangle's presence in the world and one's tacit understanding of its logic in the imaginative faculty through that experience. See Sullivan, Siegecraft, 261. See also Plato, Gorgias, 514e; ed. Dodds, 355.

**<sup>30</sup>** Photios, *Lexicon*, epsilon, 746, ed. Theodoridis, *Photii patriarchae lexicon*.

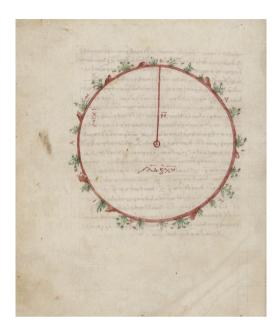


Plate 3.3. Measurement of a circle with the *dioptra*: *Geodesia* (Vat. gr. 1605), fol. 48v.

from two-dimensional line-drawings to three-dimensionality. The opening of chapter eight is explicit about this shift.

Solid figures, unlike the previously discussed planes, will be viewed not in two dimensions only, but

necessarily in three—in as much as every body is extended in three [dimensions], having length, width, and thickness or, to say the same thing, depth or height—for [it is necessary] to calculate solid figures by multiplying the square number derived from the length and width by the third dimension of height.<sup>31</sup>

Beside this text, we find the depiction of a cube (Figure 3.2b), solidifying the transition from planar diagrams to three-dimensional form that we began to see on a conceptual level in the marginal scholion. On subsequent folios, cylinders, cones, prisms, and pyramids are all depicted spatially, as volumetric forms. The cylinder depicted as emerging from the two-dimensional space of the page, helping the viewer to conceptualize how a foundational knowledge of circles can be applied to understanding volume (Figure 3a). Similarly, the cone is depicted as a circle that casts a receding shadow (Figure 3b), visually echoing its description as a "solid figure constructed from a circular base to a single point above."<sup>32</sup> The drawings of prism and pyramid emphasize their multi-planed surface by using differences shading, varying slightly from one facet to another in order to indicate volume and shadow (Figure 3c).

This volumetric elaboration culminates in chapter nine with a return to real-world examples, applying knowledge of these various forms to calculate the contents and flows

**<sup>31</sup>** Geodesia, 8.1–7, ed. and trans. Sullivan, Siegecraft, 130–31. "Τὰ δὲ στερεὰ τῶν σχημάτων οὐχ ὡς τὰ ῥηθέντα ἐπίπεδα πρὸς δύο μόνον θεωρηθήσεται διαστάσεις, ἀλλ' ἀνάγκη ἐπὶτρεῖς· ἐπεὶ καὶ πᾶν σῶμα τριχῆ ἐστι διαστατόν, μῆκος ἔχον πλάτος τε καὶ πάχος, ταὐτὸ δὲ εἰπεῖν βάθος ἡ ὕψος· τὸν γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ μήκους καὶ πλάτους γινόμενον ἐπίπεδον ἀριθμὸν ἐπὶ τὴν τρίτην τοῦ ὕψους ποιοῦντας διάστασιν, τὰ στερεὰ τῶν σχημάτων ἀπαριθμεῖν."

**<sup>32</sup>** Geodesia, 8.85–86, ed. and trans. Sullivan, Siegecraft, 136–37. "Κῶνος δέ ἐστι σχῆμα στερεὸν ἀπὸ βάσεως κυκλικῆς πρὸς Ἐν σημεῖον μετέωρον συνεστώς."

πτι · αίστα αίστα το διαθήστο σχάμου παιρλέφου αρά ρητα · μ΄ τι τη που μιά κ. συδιατικά το στο το το το το Rill tha Chimoto (παρο · μαι) - το ποτορι οχόμι adt a to ba to portuare porto to a proportion -wit-wood a - up or Svous vous + O tome + Oh of aid raga ) of c. affan yelch bar - pol c. Swisha man Co was - posh Noh-mbion :to say aroy. whice chop - whater to haim naurods for qu. un l'in tor. rouge 6krou uh here hai - and and o Mouth of the - ad Soprafi Quer. turintan mintan main der more som mar & uman 141. Anateria raporte mainapamaper Quely. hai mp 0 Topoppet point le ux ou ogli parso hav apte proto KYBOS Netala Stario jos + manufrapistadas an . Ko op-water of operation . 60 Trankaspaie riby IB . Var pian C Stop taich la bar abda 5.6p rpioidiaga 61 Karinantura obasso utron . a Byliaire oas papikaro bio utani utai ota wasara aniligo etertairerourouder & provologli paroe. appropriation Tophiusphiopopa Jopato. rodbirovoglimar there is depthotan inac. Gitaphinaolo in TWH hunov popadoop KH harafelikocan no pairoof hailana mparoc tras hair opos to sous as nacdt rough Kow KH to i rai novarano. הנו זל ידי דאים עמה ה ד ל נסו ינטל לם אי. עו אימל ש איל בי על Triz. leairouro wallep to in rairou to co KA would marta John om do hay hohag an grambiar

Figures 3.2a–b. Measurement of a circle with a rope and diagram of a cube: Geodesia (Vat. gr. 1605), fols. 49v–50r.

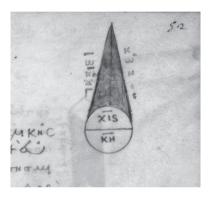
of water into two different cisterns, Aetius and of Aspar, in Constantinople.<sup>33</sup> Accompanying these calculations is a miniature cistern, depicted by fine red lines simulating brickwork or stone masonry, filled with delicately waved lines conveying its aqueous contents (Figure 3.4).

A similar approach is found in the next image, several folios later, depicting the flow of water from a spring that has been tapped for the construction of an aqueduct (Figure 3.5). In thin red lines, drawn with a compass, a spring ( $\pi\eta\gamma\dot{\eta}$ ) runs into a channel ( $\sigma\omega\lambda\dot{\eta}\nu$ ) that flows into an irrigation ditch ( $\tau\dot{\alpha}\phi\rhoo\varsigma$ ), all clearly labelled. These details illustrate the text's instructions on how to construct the tap, using a quadrangular lead pipe at the lower part of the spring (10.7–13). The reader is also told how to properly gauge the size of the pipes and ditches needed to contain the flow of the spring. Moreover, these calculations here are nuanced by the text's treatment of climatological and environmental concerns: the rain patterns, winter run-offs, and drought conditions that will all affect the productivity and flow of a given spring (10.3–7). In order to explain this, the author must move beyond the earthly world, into the heavens, advising that one should monitor how much water is discharged per hour and tabulate its hourly variations using a sundial (10.19–29). From there, the text goes on to describe the hours of the day and various forms of timekeeping, while also alluding to the variations in water flow across the seasons.

**<sup>33</sup>** Janin, "Les citernes," 85–115.



Figures 3.3a-c. Various depictions of volumetric forms: (a) sphere and cylinder, (b) cone, (c) prism and pyramid: *Geodesia* (Vat. gr. 1605), fols. 51v, 52r, and 52v.



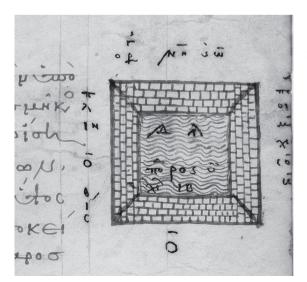


Figure 3.4. Measurement of a cistern: *Geodesia* (Vat. gr. 1605), fol. 53r.



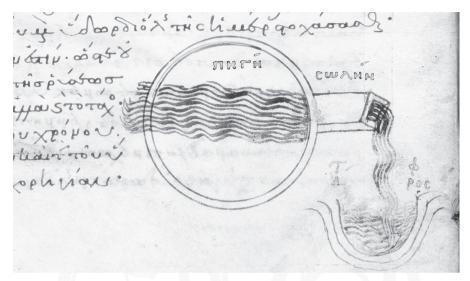


Figure 3.5. Spring with channel and irrigation ditch: Geodesia (Vat. gr. 1605), fol. 54v.

#### On to the Heavens: Time, Stars, and the Zodiac

In the *Geodesia*'s ultimate spatializing shift, the author begins moving the reader from considerations of volume to questions of speed and timing that necessitate celestial observations and the deployment of other tools, from the use of the sundial to a knowledge of equatorial time ( $\check{\omega}\rho\alpha$  ionµερίας χρόνους), seasonal hours (καιρική), and the solar day (or "day-night" cycle: νυχθήμερον).<sup>34</sup> This subsequently shifts his concerns to astronomical phenomena, despite there being no previous indication that the discussion would be heading in this direction: that the text's narrative arc would move from planar geometry to heavenly bodies.

Since therefore we have discussed in what precedes the promised dioptric applications on the earth, we shall be ready to be led up also to contemplation of the heavens through the usefulness of such a dioptra.<sup>35</sup>

From here, the author explains how to use the *dioptra* to determine the magnitude of celestial bodies, namely the sun and the moon, and to measure the distances between stars and planets. What follows is a walkthrough of these calculations, reminiscent in style and tone to the various calculations undertaken in the Hippodrome, with a pronounced focus on the kinesthetics of the *dioptra* as it pivots and bends to make various

**<sup>34</sup>** *Geodesia*, 10.29–32, ed. and trans. Sullivan, *Siegecraft*, 144–45. On these various timekeeping distinctions, see Grumel, *La chronologie*, 163–65.

**<sup>35</sup>** Geodesia, 11.1-7, ed. and trans. Sullivan, Siegecraft, 144-45. "Έπεὶ οὖν τὰς ἐν τῇ γῃ ἑπαγγελθείσας διοπτρικὰς ἀνωτέρω διεξήλθομεν χρείας, δι' εύχρηστίαν τῆς τοιαύτης διόπτρας ἰκανοὶ ἐσόμεθα καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν τῶν οὐρανίων ἀναχθῆναι θεωρίαν."



Plate 3.4. Zodiac: *Geodesia* (Vat. gr. 1605), fol. 58r.

measurements. References to the regions of the zodiac orient many of these movements, as the author points out various constellations.

At times, this final section of the text reads more like a report of observations made in real time than a summary of ancient learning. For instance, the author explains at one point, in the first-

person singular, how they had to wait several hours and take numerous measurements before they could finally arrive at the correct calculation (11.63–80). This casual, immediate tone differs markedly from the stenographic pastiche of the preceding *Geodesia* and *Poliorcetica*. Its intimacy is perhaps best captured by a passage where the author describes using the *dioptra* in a very particular Constantinopolitan setting, presumably on a balcony overlooking the Sea of Maramara and within the space of the Imperial Palace. Here, the author describes the setting up and alignment of the instrument, noting that they had carved longitude and latitude lines on the terrace in order to aid in the observation of the heavens: "These lines lie engraved by us on the green architraves [?] in the admirable imperial terrace balcony [?] which faces south near Boukoleon's."<sup>36</sup> This is arguably one of the most intriguing lines in the commentary, not only because of its candidness and the suggestion of its author's high degree of imperial access, but also because it poses many questions about the architectural design and purpose of this terrace.<sup>37</sup> Suddenly, nearing the end of the treatise, the reader finds themselves deep within an imperial space and encounters a first-person narration of astronomical measurements that have taken the *dioptra* well beyond its ideated geometries and its practical applications to siegecraft.

<sup>36</sup> Geodesia, 11.36–39, ed. and trans. Sullivan, Siegecraft, 146–47. "Αὐται δὲ αὶ γραμμαὶ ἐν τῷ ἀξιαγάστῷ βασιλικῷ πρὸς νότον παρακυπτηρίῷ <ἐν> τοῖς Βουκολέοντος ὑφ' ἡμῶν ἐγχαραχθεῖσαι ἑπὶ τῶν πρασίνων ἕκκεινται κοσμηταρίων."

**<sup>37</sup>** On the Boukoleon in this context, see Sullivan, *Siegecraft*, 269–71. On the Boukoleon Palace, see Mango, "The Palace of the Boukoleon," 41–50.

The study of the heavens continues in this personal manner for several paragraphs until the author abruptly closes the treatise by taking us back to where their digression began, noting cursorily that the study of the heavens will allow the user of the *dioptra* to "also know in advance the conditions and irregularities of the air, good and bad atmospheres, understanding these through the annual indication of the stars."<sup>38</sup> The manuscript then closes with a logical, if somewhat unexpected, full-folio coloured depiction of the zodiac (Plate 3.4), meticulous in detail and apparently intended to be used alongside the preceding astronomical observations.

This image is unacknowledged in the text, leaving some question as to whether the image itself is a later addition; and certainly, the Latin tituli date to after the manuscript's arrival in Italy.<sup>39</sup> Yet the image is in keeping with the tradition of zodiacal illustration derived from Ptolemy's *"Handy Tables"* (*Procheiroi kanones*), a text that the author would have certainly used for the various astronomical calculations described thus far.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the final word of the treatise is "prognostication"—in the future indicative verb form, "they will know in advance" ( $\pi \rho o \gamma v \dot{\omega} \sigma o v \tau \alpha I$ ). The author thus deliberately makes this verb the last word for rhetorical emphasis, with the result that one confronts the zodiac on the opposite folio. At its centre, the word for "Earth" (CH) visually rearticulates this cosmic shift from earth to the heavens, from plane to space.<sup>41</sup>

**<sup>38</sup>** Geodesia, 11.105-7, ed. and trans. Sullivan, Siegecraft, 150-51: "άλλὰ καὶ ἀέρων καταστήματα καὶ ἀνωμαλίας, δυσκρασίας τε καὶ εὐκρασίας, διὰ τῶν κατ' ἔτος γινομένων ἐπισημασιῶν τῶν ἀστέρων συνιέντες, προγνώσονται."

**<sup>39</sup>** The library's catalogue suggests that this image dates to the fourteenth century, copied from a Greek model: Giannelli, *Codices Vaticani graeci*, xxv, 260–61. The Latin inscriptions around the zodiac support this hypothesis, but they are obviously later additions. However, the handling of the granular gold ink used throughout the image, especially its armature and the central inscription, "Earth" (ГН), is commensurate with the illustrations found throughout the rest of the manuscript. While I do not rule out the possibility that aspects of this image may be of a later date, I do believe that various elements are contemporaneous with the rest of the manuscript. On the manuscript's afterlife and the Latin inscriptions on the zodiac folio, see Acerbi and Vuillemin-Diem, *La transmission*, 164–65.

**<sup>40</sup>** The court culture associated with the use of the *Handy Tables* has been well documented: see, for example, Anderson, *Cosmos and Community*, 106–43. See also Janz, "The Scribes," 159–80; Tihon, "Les *tables faciles*," 61–64; and Wright, "The Date," 355–62.

**<sup>41</sup>** In Ptolemy's *Handy Tables*, one expects to find a depiction of Helios and his chariot in this central position, not a representation of Earth. This peculiarity demands further attention along with other aspects of the text and its image program, which are deserving of their own extended study. For instance, it has been proposed that the final paragraph is actually attempting to reference to the "Handy Tables" ( $\pi \rho \delta \chi \epsilon \rho o \iota \kappa \alpha v o v \epsilon \varsigma$ ) rather than "the handy sight-rod" ( $\pi \rho o \chi \epsilon \rho o \iota ... \kappa \alpha v \delta v o \varsigma$ ) as it is rendered in the manuscript, which is potentially a scribal error. The editor notes that it would be unusual for "Handy Tables" to be written in the singular, though he agrees that this suggestion might well be valid: Sullivan, *Siegecraft*, 274, ll. 103–4. Further work must be done to clarify this matter and to reconsider the relationship between the text and the zodiac, as well as the zodiac's iconographic oddities.

### **Conclusion: From Plane to Space**

As an accessory commentary to the *Poliorcetica*, the *Geodesia* works diligently to differentiate itself from the standalone treatise; its author presents it as an ancillary text intended to advance the goals of siegecraft. And yet, undergirding its geometric concepts, ancient sources, and practical instructions is a rhetorical infrastructure that moves the reader along, while emplacing them within its dynamic shift from planar line-drawings to three-dimensional and heavenly spatialization as an interpretative tool for enlivening the reader's understanding. While such commentaries have often been treated as staid and charmless treatises, compiled from classical pastiche and with dubious (if not, at times, erroneous) calculations and observations, the literary and art historical approach undertaken here allows us to better appreciate the workings of this text and its illustrations as both rhetorically and practically efficacious, as well as dynamic and intriguing.

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**Abstract** The *Geodesia* is a Byzantine mathematical treatise intended as an appendix to a guide on siege warfare. Looking at the use of diagrammatic illustrations in the manuscript (BAV, Vat. gr. 1605), this article argues that the progression from two-dimensional drawings onto three-dimensional representations follows the "narrative arc" of the text from abstract mathematics to their application for siegecraft.

Keywords mathematical illustrations, siegecraft, diagrams, Byzantium, geodesics



# PERIODIZATION IN THE SUNNI QUR'AN COMMENTARY TRADITION: A CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF A GENRE

# WALID AHMAD SALEH

PERIODIZATION, DESPITE ALL the inherent problems attending any segmentation of historical developments, is unavoidable.<sup>1</sup> It is as much a statement about our present as about the importance we confer on the past. Periodization is usually the result of a lineage of scholarship and disciplinary legitimacy. Turning points, cleavages, chasms, new beginnings, restorations are all embedded in the seemingly sterile timeline of any discipline. A timeline is history distilled. Even constant complaints about the inadequacy of periodization act to entrench the status of the concerned field, by forcing more refinement on the picture. This past, periodization declares, is worthy of reflection and delineation. Periodization is thus, ironically, the most profound site of interpretative historical reflection. A genre or a discipline with no historical landmarks is hardly an entity, even if it is historically undeniable. Behind all this effort lies a more ideological framework, a developmental notion of history, not just the absence of stasis, but the marching of history to a certain fulfilment.

Qur'an commentary tradition is a peculiar discipline in this regard. It has a bipolar history, a periodization that is concerned with two ends: its origins at the beginning of the written religious history of Islam; and its current modernity, after the encounter with modern Europe. Of the vast middle we know considerably less. The vast middle, however, is an ocean, made up of more than a millennium of writing. More significantly, the absence of a grand narrative encompassing this millennium makes any statement about any exegete or commentary untethered. One has no grid to use as reference, or to rebel against. This article attempts to chart a periodization of the genre of Qur'an commentary that reflects the archival material and the disciplinary history of its production.<sup>2</sup> The argument is simple: without a periodization, the study of the history of Qur'an commentary will remain fragmentary, for its very lack creates historical vacuums that leave any study truncated and historically ungrounded, no matter how meticulous. Periodization is, *mirabile dictu*, both the end result of scholarship and the beginning of scholarship. One needs a narrative to understand the particular. So unless we offer a tentative outline of Qur'an commentary's periodization, we will continue to misjudge each and every phase or development. The monographic approach, the foundation of serious scholarship, paradoxically reconfirms the segmentation of a field into discrete disparate names and titles. Even a flawed narrative is better than this state.

I On periodization in Islamic history, see the special issue of *Der Islam* 91, no. 1 (2014). See also especially the articles of Hirschler and Savant, "Introduction"; and Donner, "Periodization."

**<sup>2</sup>** For a discussion of periodization in global history as an example of the assumptions that periodization entails, see Pomeranz, "Teleology."

The aim of this article is not only to offer an outline of the genre, but also to reposition the absent middle of the story firmly in the foreground. Medieval Qur'an commentary was one of the most vibrant of fields, producing some of the most enduring masterpieces of Islamic religious tradition. These commentaries were part of the general cultural landscape, both shaping and being shaped by intellectual currents. Unless we chart this middle more deliberately, we will fail to understand the genre as a whole and, more importantly, how the genre developed in the modern period. The periodization offered here is the result of more than three decades of developments in research in the field. It is also based, not only on my own previously published work, but more importantly on the insights of modern Arab historians who are my main interlocutors. This is perhaps the most important aspect of this article—the reaffirmation of pioneering scholarship from the Arab world when it comes to Qur'an commentary tradition.

# Periodization in North American Scholarship

There have been thus far two approaches to categorizing the field of Qur'an commentary tradition in the Western academy. The first is a generic and sectarian division of the history of the broader genre. This approach was pioneered by Ignaz Goldziher in his 1920 monograph, a work which ushered in the study of the Qur'an commentary tradition.<sup>3</sup> Goldziher wrote in his first chapter of early beginnings, and in his last chapter of modern trends: a framing that appears to be chronological but was in keeping with his generic understanding of the tradition as composed of traditional, rationalist, sectarian, mystical, and theological works. This was a characterization that would prove to be impossible to escape later on, even when a purely chronological schema was presented. This generic categorization of Qur'an commentary was also eventually used as a default periodization, with "traditionalism" at its inception; theology in the middle, representing a mature tradition; and modernity at the end, representing a coming-to-terms. This would have been effective if only it had been detailed. Yet the trouble with this approach is that it obscured periods that we (hitherto) knew nothing about. It also obviated the necessity, if not the imperative, to edit unpublished works and investigate new eras, and was completely dependent on which medieval texts Muslim and Arabophone scholars edited.

Thus, when new works were discovered, or edited, or studied, they were slotted into a generic paradigm and not a historical narrative, which resulted in ever-increasing examples of subgeneric forms of Qur'an commentary—but not a historical narrative of its development. Ironically, Goldziher, who was a pioneer in the field and who used manuscripts extensively in his earlier works, decided to depend solely on printed works in his last book, a decision that influenced the field for generations. Somehow, printed works stood for the whole tradition. The influence of Goldziher's understanding of how to categorize Qur'an commentary tradition can still be seen in the articles on Exegesis in *Encyclopaedia Iranica.*<sup>4</sup> These articles present an amplification of the sectarian categories of Goldziher and elaborate on various Shi`ite traditions (Zaydī, Fātimid, and

<sup>3</sup> Goldziher, Die Richtungen.

<sup>4</sup> Bar-Asher, "Exegesis ii"; Keeler, "Exegesis iii"; Lawson, "Exegesis vi."

Bahā'ī). The internal chronology of the Shi`ite Qur'an commentary tradition is, however, far more detailed in the articles of *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, where a clear timeline is presented. This is because of the limited number of works in the Shi`ite tradition and the ability to plot these works on a timeline that corresponds to dynastic developments in Islamic history.<sup>5</sup> The Sunni tradition, however, is far more intractable and too vast for the same treatment as the Shi`ite tradition.

The first appearance of an explicitly articulated chronological division of the Sunni Qur'an commentary genre came rather late in the Western academy, in the year 2000, via the entry "Tafsīr" in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.<sup>6</sup> Its author, Andrew Rippin, divided the tradition into "formative, classical, mature, and contemporary." Rippin immediately added that the "separation is artificial, particularly fuzzy at the edges and certainly in need of refinement."<sup>7</sup> This was a division that was intuitive. It reflected the scholarship available on *tafsīr*, which was mostly on the formative and modern period. But Rippin's periodization was hardly indicative of transformations. It also faintly echoed the division of Islamic history into early Islam, Abbasid, medieval, and modern periods. It is not clear, for example, what differentiates the "classical" from the "mature"—if, by "classical," we mean the works of al-Ţabarī (310 AH/923 CE) only.

A refinement of sorts came in 2002, in the two entries on "exegesis" in the Encyclopaedia of the Our'an. The first entry was entitled "Exegesis of the Our'an: Classical and Medieval," while the second was titled as "Early Modern and Contemporary."<sup>8</sup> The first entry, by Claude Gilliot, attempted to clarify some decisive developments in the early formative period. Gilliot gave dates to these developments and tied them to exegetes and commentaries. The early period, according to Gilliot, is marked by three transitions: the first he called "beginnings," which stretches from the beginning of Islam to 207 AH/824 CE. The exegesis of this period, which can be characterized as paraphrastic, ended with the rise of a grammatical phase with the work of Abū 'Ubaydah (d. 210/825). The period that followed was one of intensive philological activity that culminated with the work of al-Tabarī. However, the penetrating analysis of the pre-Tabarī period dissipates for the subsequent periods in Gilliot's entry. The "classical" period becomes a list of names again, with generic analysis taking over; thus we read about "legal" exegesis, "dialectical/speculative theologians," "Khārijite and Shi`ite exegesis," and "mystical" exegesis. A sustained chronological division thus silently disappears from Gilliot's entry: that is to say, we are not told why, for the later period, there are no moments of transition. A nagging sense of stagnation is unavoidable, even when major works are presented. History, it seems, had ceased to take turns.

The periodization offered in these schemas by Gilliot reflected the scholarship in the field at that time. Hence, we have detailed studies of the early period, bordering on

**<sup>5</sup>** The histories of specific sub-genres in the Shi`ite Qur'an commentary is thus much easier to chart, given the limited number of works.

<sup>6</sup> Rippin, "Tafsīr," 83-88.

<sup>7</sup> Rippin, "Tafsīr," 85.

<sup>8</sup> Gilliot, "Exegesis"; Wielandt, "Exegesis."

obsession, studies that have given us a rather comprehensive picture of how the genre developed. These studies seem to stop with the arrival of al-Ṭabarī. More significantly, the narrative of development and transformation seems to disappear after his arrival. Yet even this early period is not fully understood; the massive work of al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944), who is as significant as al-Ṭabarī, is hardly used in our reconstruction of it.<sup>9</sup> A continuous causal narrative is missing, and even the figure of al-Ṭabarī disappears— how was he received and what influence did he effect on the genre?—only to reappear suddenly in 1905, the year his work is first published in print. The canonization of al-Ṭabarī is thus the result of internal Islamic developments in the twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> Our knowledge of the modern period has meanwhile improved tremendously in the last few years. It is also important that the study of the modern period has shed a fundamental conflation with modernization theory. The field has now stopped equating "modern" with modernization and, as such, the whole spectrum of the output of the modern period is now being studied, including that of conservative camps that insist on using medieval paradigms for Qur'an interpretation.<sup>11</sup>

There are several disadvantages that arise from the failure to take periodization seriously in the history of the Qur'an commentary. The first glaring shortcoming, I believe, is the failure to understand that the genre of Qur'an commentary was produced by a professional class of exegetes who understood themselves to be hermeneuts. They stood in a tradition and were both shaped by it and reshaped it. Unless we take these exegetes as scholars who were cognizant of the tradition, we will not understand what they were trying to achieve when they wrote a commentary. Intentions matter. At the heart of this narrative are scholars—not only works—and their outlook is hardly presented in our current narratives. The generic narrative of the tradition also fails to address new medieval formats of composition and, as such, has managed to ignore the most important development in the medieval Islamic Qur'an commentary tradition: the development of professorial glosses on Qur'an commentary, the *hāshiyah*. The gloss was a new type of commentary writing which, at its base, used not the Qur'an directly but a few selected Qur'an commentary.

The complete absence of this subgenre in the current scholarship is an astounding failure, since it has managed to persist this long. It is not only that seminary colleges arose in the twelfth century CE, but that these colleges irreversibly transformed the craft of commentary.<sup>12</sup> I am thus claiming that, by insisting on a generic approach, we unjustifiably allow ourselves to leapfrog historical periods, either by completely ignoring them or by designating a published work as the main representative of a particular period.

**<sup>9</sup>** For a reassessment of the place of al-Māturidī in the early period, see Saleh, "Rereading al-Ṭabarī."

**<sup>10</sup>** For the role of the print culture in the elevation of al-Țabarī in modern scholarship, see Saleh, "Preliminary Remarks."

II Saleh, "Contemporary Tafsīr."

<sup>12</sup> For the significance of the gloss, see Saleh, "The Gloss."

Historical analysis is thus obviated, and a tally of what was written, and when, seems to be an insignificant question.

For a while now, we could have easily addressed this problem of periodization. For instance, Arab scholars have been offering their own periodization of the genre for some time. It is of course unwise to adopt their schema unquestioningly, but it is also counterproductive to ignore it and not build on it. A possible solution, then, is to turn to their work and refine it.

#### The Periodization of Qur'an Commentary Tradition in the Arab World<sup>13</sup>

The dismantling of the Islamic legal system and the seminary educational apparatus that operated it, along with the sudden decline of traditional theology whose epistemological premises were pointedly challenged by modern science, allowed for a meteoric rise of the Qur'an as the site of what was "Islamic" in the colonized Islamic world.<sup>14</sup> The Qur'an became the bearer of Muslim identity instead of a comprehensive legal and indigenous rule, and with the new-found centrality of the Qur'an, its marginal traditional science—the Qur'an commentary tradition—suddenly became one of the most important of Islamic disciplines. Muslims, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, were thus turning to Qur'an commentaries both to understand the Qur'an anew, and to build on the genre in their new mode of articulating a modern identity. A history of Qur'an commentary thus became a necessity.

But even in the early modern period, before the encounter with industrial and imperializing Europe, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Muslim scholars began to offer a historical narrative of the tradition. Hence, we have the first biographical dictionary of exegetes, one authored by the famous al-Suyūtī (d. 911/1505).<sup>15</sup> This dictionary, a *tabaqāt* work, heralded the articulation of a new conscious identity on the part of its practitioners: a "who's who" of scholars was the manner in which the Islamic tradition canonized any genre.<sup>16</sup> It is important to note that Qur'an commentary tradition was the last (and exceedingly late) Islamic religious discipline to get a biographical dictionary in Islamic religious scholarship. This reflected the ambiguous position of this particular discipline. Not long after al-Suyūtī died, the standard dictionary of exegetes of the premodern Islamic Arabic tradition was authored by al-Dāwūdī (d. 945/1539).<sup>17</sup> This massive two-volume work remains the standard reference work on the names of exegetes in the Arabic language tradition. Together, these two biographical dictionaries solidified the tradition of Qur'an commentary as a fully independent discipline, constituting a register of every exegete ever to write (or such was the claim of the authors). Yet this was not the history of a discipline that modern sensibility craved.

**<sup>13</sup>** For a detailed analysis of the Arabic tradition historiography on Qur'an commentary, see Saleh, "Preliminary Remarks."

<sup>14</sup> See Saleh, "Contemporary Tafsīr."

**<sup>15</sup>** al-Suyūțī, *Țabaqāt al-mufassirīn* (1976). The work was first published in Leiden, in 1939.

<sup>16</sup> On Țabaqāt work (biographical dictionaries), see al-Qādī, "Biographical Dictionaries."

<sup>17</sup> al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufassirīn*.

The first to offer a periodization of the Qur'an commentary tradition was Muḥammad al-Dhahabī, in his magisterial work, *al-Tafsīr wa-al-mufassirūn* (Qur'an Commentary and Commentators, 1989).<sup>18</sup> This was a clearly European mode of history writing, insofar that Goldziher was the model, having been translated into Arabic already. Nevertheless, it was still harkening back to a biographical/bibliographical approach of the *țabaqāt* genre. Still, this history was to occasion a turning point in the Islamic world's conception of Qur'an commentary. It came on the heels of the spread of a traditionalist, puritanical understanding of Islamic history and only after a bitter battle over who gets to speak about the Qur'an in Cairo.<sup>19</sup> As a result, Muḥammad al-Dhahabī enshrined in this history the previously marginal notion that the Prophet was an authority in interpreting the Qur'an, a claim that was both unpopular among exegetes and ineffectual as a hermeneutical tool. By elevating the Prophet, every other exegete was turned into a narrator of meanings and not an originator of meanings.

If this was a reconfiguring of what hermeneutics was, it also served as a consecration of the first generations of Muslim exegetes. As such, al-Dhahabī offered a strange chronology: there was the age of the Prophet and his immediate followers (thus Muhammad did more than proclaim the Qur'an; he was its interpreter also), the age of the second generation of the followers of Muhammad (those who followed the first generation), then the documentary age (or written record age, that is to say, the remaining thirteen hundred years of Islam). This reconfiguration of hermeneutics by al-Dhahabī consists of ideology overwhelming history. Like Goldziher, al-Dhahabī fell back on generic division of the corpus of Qur'an commentary, declaring traditional inherited interpretation (*al-tafsīr bi-al-ma'thūr*) to be the bedrock of the Qur'an commentary tradition, so that exegetical works were measured by how far they strayed away from this ideal.

This cultural transformation in the Arab world during the twentieth century meant that a new understanding of the history of Qur'an commentary was propagated as the normative narrative, one that completely distorted this very history. It displaced the mainstream hermeneutical tradition and presented a new set of authors as the standard-bearers of the genuine tradition. The transformation was so drastic and widespread that it is hard to convey the depth of this distortion; in less than two generations, a new hierarchy of texts was presented, and the whole scholastic medieval tradition was not only displaced but mostly disappeared. A lone dissenting voice from the periphery crept through, however. A small booklet published in Tunis, by al-Fāḍil ibn `Āshūr, the scion of a scholastic family, gave what is the most historically penetrating rendition of the tradition of Qur'an commentary.<sup>20</sup> This work, *al-Tafsīr wa-rijāluh* (Qur'an Commentary and Its Men), a title that bares the gendered nature of the field, remains one of the most fascinating works of intellectual history written on Qur'an commentary.<sup>21</sup> The work does not offer a fixed chronological periodization, but it does something more important: it offers a developmental story of the field, not an unusual approach, but it sees the cul-

<sup>18</sup> al-Dhahabī, al-Tafsīr wa-al-mufassirūn.

<sup>19</sup> See Saleh, "Preliminary Remarks."

<sup>20</sup> On this history, see Saleh, "Marginalia."

<sup>21</sup> On the study of gender and Tafsīr, see Geissinger, Gender and Muslim Constructions.

mination of the tradition not in al-Ṭabarī but rather in al-Bayḍāwī (d. 719/1319). The author, moreover, asserts that, with the Qur'an commentary of al-Bayḍāwī, we have a universal text, both a commentary and a textbook that unified the Islamic world on the meaning of the Qur'an.

This insight—that we can locate the appearance of a universally accepted textbook for the genre—is fundamental in charting a periodization of the field. The chronology of al-Fāḍil ibn `Āshūr, however, was wrong; it was not al-Bayḍāwī who had this honour first, it was al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144). The desire to see al-Bayḍāwī as the universal author was understandable, however, for by the time our Tunisian historian was writing, al-Bayḍāwī had been the hegemon for over four centuries, and the memory of the early phase in which al-Zamakhsharī was dominant had substantially faded, especially since he was literally replaced by al-Bayḍāwī.<sup>22</sup> Any periodization of the Qur'an commentary tradition has to take into account that moment of universalism—the moment when a text becomes the standard reference in the whole of the Islamic world. This honour belonged to *al-Kashshāf* of al-Zamakhsharī.

The final scholar whom I will discuss in this section is Ibrāhīm Rufaydah and his book al-Nahw wa-kutub al-tafsir (Grammar and the Qur'an Commentary Tradition).<sup>23</sup> Rufaydah offers, to the best of my knowledge, the first and only detailed periodization of the Qur'an commentary tradition. He divides its history into six distinct periods, each starting with a famous scholar and representing a certain philological or ideological trend.<sup>24</sup> Refreshingly, Rufaydah does not seem concerned with the early period, which extends until al-Tabarī. The second period extends from al-Tabarī to al-Zamakhsharī. The third period is what he calls "the encyclopedic phase," when commentaries became massive voluminous works, although it is not clear how this stage is any different from the second. The third phase ends with the appearance of Abū Hayyān al-Gharnātī (d. 745/1344). Just as al-Baydawi represented the apogee of the tradition to the Tunisian scholar (Ibn `Āshūr), the apogee of the tradition according to Rufaydah was Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāțī—after whom the tradition descends into a stagnation represented in the rise of the glosses (the fifth stage) which, according to Rufaydah, starts with the year 803/1401 and ends with the year 1250/1834 with the rise of modern trends, ushering in the sixth period.

This periodization has two major insights: that al-Zamakhsharī was a turning point in the tradition, and that the advent of the gloss was a period deserving of recognition (although, in this case, recognized as a degenerate period absent of originality). It is clear that this paradigm mimics the narrative of decline, popular in intellectual histories of the Islamic world, with the gloss seen as reflecting a period of stagnation. This is, however, a periodization that can easily be defended; and insofar as it recognizes the major trend of glossing, albeit negatively, it is a periodization that should be used until we have a new consensus on what to replace it with. Rufaydah's approach is also nationalist—that is, Arabic as a language is the measure of the tradition, and not Islam as a

<sup>22</sup> On the rise of al-Baydāwī, see Saleh, "The Qur'an Commentary."

<sup>23</sup> Rufaydah, al-Naḥw wa-kutub.

**<sup>24</sup>** Rufaydah, *al-Naḥw wa-kutub*, 1:563–69.

religion. It is, however, not surprising to see an Arab nationalist offering a periodization. National histories always rest on the telos of history and of historical development, and the mindset of the Arab nationalist thinkers was therefore decisive in offering periodizations for many other Arabic literary forms (such as poetry, the novel, and so on).

It is clear that we have a problem with the narrative history of Qur'an commentary. Beyond al-Ṭabarī and al-Zamakhsharī, we have few points of intersection between different narratives. It is, moreover, astounding that the only real intellectual history of this genre, the one that sees the arc of the tradition, where the religious tradition of Islam as a whole is evaluated, remains the work of the aforementioned Tunisian scholar Ibn `Āshūr. He rightly sees in Qur'an commentary an integrative discipline that came into full fruition with the maturity of other disciplines, recognizing a causal relationship between the development of other Islamic religious disciplines and Tafsīr. But even Ibn `Āshūr, reformist that he was, wanted to see in the modern Egyptian Islamic reform movement a telos of Islam, and so was blind to the radical new reality in the twentieth century, when Salafism reconfigured the tradition.

# **A New Periodization**

Had Western academia taken notice of the two works by Ibn `Āshūr and Rufaydah, we would have then had two grand frameworks within which we could conceive of the tradition. Either of the two, notwithstanding their shortcomings, would have worked, and could still work. I could have easily adopted either one of them myself; but they are already outdated, and the opportunity to offer a more inclusive periodization, which takes the two into account, encourages us to replace both. Moreover, the periodization that I offer here rests on the combined efforts of the two academic worlds. The main aim of my new periodization is to tilt the significance away from origins to the middle. I am also aware that any periodization starts with an overreach, an exercise in the sacrifice of details. The goal, however, remains to offer a narrative of development, continuity, and disruption. I will use authors as markers of division in my periodization but move away from the one-author paradigm to a constellation of authors. I will also highlight regionalism.

The generic narrative of Qur'an commentary in modern scholarship is flawed because it fails to offer a historical narrative. Thus, something as complicated as the use of theology in Qur'an commentary, which is currently presented as something that came a tad later in the tradition, needs to be reassessed in light of the fact that theology was already being utilized at the birth of Qur'an commentary. The Mu`tazilites, with their theologizing approach, were pioneers in Qur'an commentary, and their works are forgotten because they were lost.<sup>25</sup> Yet even a work like al-Māturīdī's (d. 333/944) was as theological as the work of al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), and to claim that al-Rāzī is a new phase because of the centrality of theology in his hermeneutics is unfounded. Grammatical works did not cease to be written with the coming of encyclopedic works. The tradition was not one river but many streams, flooding, intersecting, drying, then exploding again.

<sup>25</sup> On early Mu`tazilite works and al-Māturīdī, see Saleh, "Rereading al-Ṭabarī."

There were marginal trends that were mocked by the mainstream, only to become victorious and sweep the ground as if a new creation had been enacted.

#### The First Period—Origins

The real beginning of hermeneutical theory in early Islam is hard to reconstruct, yet this first period is usually presented without mentioning the most fundamental revolution in early Arabo-Islamic civilization: the invention of a scientific theory of Arabic grammar. This revolution curtailed any non-grammatical reading of the Qur'an and, when mystical interpretations were admitted, they would always be downgraded by a professional class that saw philology as the measure of theological interpretation. Thus Sibawayhi, the founder of Arabic grammatical theory, and al-Khalīl, the founder of the first Arabic lexicon, were as important as the first exegetes. The second important aspect of the first period is the rise of exegetes as professional scholars. They were not professional grammarians, but they were soon to realize that they would have to be experts in grammar in order to establish their credibility. Thus, by the time the first period produces its master in Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. 150/767), we have a field that is in the midst of a deep cultural war. Grammarians would take over the field of Qur'an commentary, causing a major crisis. Their argument was that if the Qur'an is Arabic, it is a human language spoken by God, and as such comprehensible with grammar. Consequently, the tension between grammarians and exegetes would remain a constant element in the history of Qur'an commentary.<sup>26</sup>

# The Early Classical Period

The time between Muqātil ibn Sulaymān and al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944) saw the rise of all the classical forms of commentaries that would remain active for over a millennium. Here, one aspect of the Qur'an commentary must be highlighted: no sub-genre once invented will disappear: it might lose centrality for a while, but it usually came back at a certain moment for some cultural reasons. It is during this period that the grammatical philological paradigm became the default hermeneutical theory in Qur'an commentary. This did not mean that other forms disappeared, but rather a hierarchy of methods was established early on, and grammatical analysis stood as the winner. This period also has to cease to be seen through the lens of al-Tabarī (d. 311/923): hence, he has been included in this period, but not as its culmination. His work is neither unique, nor unmatched. As noted above, this period came to be seen as the apogee of the tradition in the twentieth century, with al-Tabarī as the author of its masterpiece. More historically fallacious is the notion that his commentary remained a classic from the moment it was written, as if it stood over the tradition, always accessible and unsurmountable. That was not the case. Al-Tabarī's work was overtaken in less than a hundred years, and was soon forgotten, resurrected periodically, but never given the centrality we have given it. It is also in this period that two fringe hermeneutical modes were perfected: the radical Sunni hadith-oriented mode, and the Shi`ite sectarian (*ghulāt*) form of interpretation.

<sup>26</sup> The literature on the origins of Tafsīr is massive; for an update, see Görke, "Criteria."

These modes would continue to act as revolutionary wells, forgotten for centuries, and remembered only occasionally, but with drastic impacts on the history of hermeneutics.

# The Classical Period

Sunni central authorities were replaced by Shi'ite dynasties and authorities, and Nishapur in the eastern part of Iran became the centre of Sunni intellectual activities. A new school of Qur'an commentary arose, which I called the Nishapurī school of Tafsīr.<sup>27</sup> The significance of this period lies in the fact that it produced the first dominant school in the eastern parts of the Islamic world. The authors from Nishapur, notably al-Tha`labī (d. 427/1035) and al-Wāhidī (d. 468/1078), became the most important authors of this period. A far less researched Sunni nexus, in North African and Muslim Iberia, was also active, but about which little is known so far. A grand resolution between the philological approach and other modes was achieved that became the mode for subsequent centuries. There are two aspects of this Classical period. First, it was a diffused period of various centres of activities, with Sunnism pushed over to the sides, and Shī'īsm solidly established in the central lands. Second, forms of writing that were devised in this period would remain models for centuries to come; as such, this period never ceased to exist. Thus, the classical model of Qur'an commentary was perfected in this period, and the ideal model of how a Qur'an commentary should look was also derived from this period. Al-Tabarī was never the model: al-Tha`labī was (d. 427/1035).<sup>28</sup> The works from this period were attractive and remained popular across the centuries because they perfected a harmony between theology, philology, and mysticism. It was also in this period that the classical canonical Shi`ite Qur'an commentaries were written based on al-Tha`labī's work and the Mu`tazilite tradition.

# **The Rhetorical Period**

One problem with the standard understanding of the history of Qur'an commentary is that it fails to recognize that a new mode of hermeneutics overtook the grammatical approach. This new mode, which can be characterized as rhetorical, became the "high style" of commentary and, not only did it become the competing paradigm, it almost replaced the Classical mode. Thus, this period, which I am calling the Rhetorical period, should be seen as the most important transition in the Qur'an commentary tradition. It happened in the wake of a literary revolution spearheaded by the critic Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078).<sup>29</sup> Thereafter, the exegete and literary critic al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144) wrote a Qur'an commentary, *al-Kashshāf*, utilizing the new science of rhetoric that would completely revolutionize the field.<sup>30</sup> It rested on two foundations: the achievements of the Nishapurī School and the new rhetorical theory of al-Jurjānī, melding them, and producing a new form and approach for interpreting the Qur'an.

<sup>27</sup> See Saleh, "Nishapuri School."

<sup>28</sup> See Saleh, "Hermeneutics."

<sup>29</sup> On al-Jurjānī see Harb, Arabic Poetics.

**<sup>30</sup>** Dr. Shuaib Ally is working on this connection. I owe this information to him.

Over time, this commentary became the standard, the measure of things. Not long after it was published, *al-Kashshāf* was used as the basis of new commentaries and pedagogy in seminary settings. Its adoption as *the* textbook to teach Qur'an commentary in seminaries thus completely altered the genre. Major exegetes, like al-Rāzī (d. 604/1207), al-Bayḍāwī (d. 719/1311), and many others, would go on to use *al-Kashshāf* as the model for Qur'an commentary. We have now, during this Rhetorical period, the first universal Qur'an commentary in the Islamic world and it was impossible to overlook. And paradoxically, this was a Qur'an commentary that was written by a Mu`tazilite on the eve of the death of his sect and which would go on to be adopted by the Sunnite majority. Hermeneutics won over sectarian divisions. Professional exegetes rose above their loyalties. The field of Qur'an commentary now had an undeniable masterpiece. Sunnites, Shi`ites, and grammarians could now read from the same Qur'an commentary.

#### The First Gloss Period

The appearance of the first popular gloss on al-Kashshāf by Ibn al-Munayyir (d. 683/1284) heralded a new age in Qur'an commentary. Never before was the Qur'an approached this obliquely, through the layer of another commentary. Soon after, every major intellectual was penning a gloss on al-Kashshāf. These became massive independent works, like that of al-Tībī (d. 743/1342). More importantly, al-Kashshāf replaced even the Nishapurī school as the model for Qur'an commentary among the more ambitious. The reign of al-Zamakhsharī had thus spread over the Islamic world, and the supremacy of his work meant that it remains one of the most important ever written in the Islamic religious tradition.<sup>31</sup> The gloss, however, was a major threat to the exegete as an authority. It undermined the semblance of access: to read the gloss, you needed to be a professional scholar, part of an elite. The gloss was a demanding form that separated the Qur'an even further from the believer. Glossing was a scholastic mode of interpretation, learned, annotated, and bound by a tradition, where each generation of glossators followed in the steps of previous glossators. This was also a seminary-bound tradition, since all the glossators were professors in the madrasa systems. This scholastic hegemony did not go unanswered, and a countermovement took hold. Yet the gloss, because of its institutional ties to the madrasa and the professorial elites, remained the dominant form of writing until the end of the nineteenth century. That the gloss has never been mentioned or studied in the Western academy is clearly one of the major failures of the field.

#### **The Anti-Gloss Movement**

Not all professors of exegesis were happy to see the field succumbing to the gloss as the dominant mode of Qur'an commentary. The counter-reaction came from a new centre of the Islamic world, Mamluk Cairo. The professor who led this resistance was Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī (d. 745/1344). What Abū Ḥayyān managed to do was to have a group of scholars who reasserted the role of grammarians as the sole authorities in exegesis, and as such undermined the theologians who preferred to use the gloss as a mode of writing.

<sup>31</sup> See Saleh, "The Gloss."

He saw a perversion in the gloss format, and was determined to go back to the classical/ rhetorical mode of writing. He could not turn back the clock completely, and he used *al-Kashshāf* as one of his two main sources. Yet he not only refused the encroachment of theology into exegesis (or any other science that was not related to language) but also that of the radical Sunni puritans who promoted a hermeneutical model of the Prophet as the sole interpreter of the Qur'an. Abū Ḥayyān, a pioneering linguist, was the first to write a grammar of Turkish and Persian languages, and he insisted that an exegete is the sole and supreme authority in the interpretive act. Another achievement of this countermovement was that it reunited the Sunni exegetical tradition by incorporating works from North Africa on an equal footing with eastern Iranian works.

#### The Second Gloss Period, or Baydawi Period

Although al-Baydāwī (d. 719/1319) wrote his commentary in the last phase of the Rhetorical period, and modeled his commentary squarely on al-Kashshāf of al-Zamakhsharī, it was not picked up till much later when, in 880/1475, al-Suyūtī (d. 911/1505) started teaching the work and writing a gloss on it. The Islamic world was looking for a replacement for *al-Kashshāf*, and a cohort of scholars started using the work of al-Baydāwī as the preferred option. Soon the work would be adopted in the Ottoman empire as *the* textbook for teaching Qur'an commentary.<sup>32</sup> This process was the last phase in a universalizing trend in Islamic religious sciences, in which classics were picked as textbooks and adopted across the length and breadth of the Islamic world. This period lasted until the end of the nineteenth century; and still, to this day, al-Baydāwī's work is used in the Islamic world to teach Qur'an commentary in the seminaries.<sup>33</sup> So dominant was its influence that Muslim historians projected its prominence back to the moment when it was authored, which was never the case. By demarcating a phase for the dominance of al-Baydāwī, we also enable a focus on new centres of Islamic learning: Istanbul, Mughal India, and Safavid Iran. The Qur'an commentary of al-Baydāwī, Anwār al-tanzīl, was even popular in Shi`ite Safavid Iran, and the history of its purging from the curriculum in Iran has yet to be written. The Salafi revolution in modern Islam was thus a wholesale rejection of the entire tradition from the Baydāwī period. The hermeneutical mode it adopted chose to resurrect a minor hermeneutical trend from the early Classical period.<sup>34</sup>

#### The Modern Period

I am in full agreement with Ibn `Āshūr that the beginning of the modern period starts, ironically, with one of the last major Classical commentators in the nineteenth century, al-Alūsī (d. 1270/1854). Recognizing this will allow us to include the Salafi revival as part of this transformation. Demarcating a Modern period does not, and should not, mean that the seminary tradition or the Classical period ended. Genres were resur-

33 On al-Baydāwī, see Saleh, "The Qur'an Commentary."

**<sup>32</sup>** Two articles on this period have pioneered the study of Ottoman Tafsīr: Gunasti, "Political Patronage"; and Naguib, "Guiding the Sound Mind."

<sup>34</sup> Saleh, "Ibn Taymiyya."

rected through editions and popularizations. A fierce, contentious fight over the right to interpret the Qur'an has been part of modernity, and the pre-Modern past has been effectively used by all parties to argue their case. Yet the Modern period is one of such complexity that to treat it on an equal footing with the previous periods is untenable. This phase should become a new field, one that is independent from the pre-Modern tradition. It is, however, counterproductive to work on this period without a solid understanding of the pre-Modern—and yet the tools used to study the pre-Modern period are woefully inadequate to studying the Modern. Thus, this periodization is also a call for a bifurcation of the field.<sup>35</sup> If Arabic was central to the pre-Modern period, it is no longer central or important to understanding the Modern period. Regional and national languages have since become the media of interpretation, and Islamic languages are fully independent now in the field of Qur'an commentary.

#### Conclusion

In 1987, an Arab research institution in Amman, Mu'asasat Āl al-Bayt, published a twelve-volume index of all the known titles of Qur'an commentary manuscripts culled from published catalogues of all known collections in the world. This index, *al-Fihris al-shāmil li'l-turāth al-'Arabī al Islāmī al-makhṭūṭ, 'ulūm al-Qur'ān: makhṭūṭāt al-tafsīr*, remains a landmark in the study of the genre of Qur'an commentary to this day.<sup>36</sup> As I have already stated, this is the essential reference tool for studying the genre of Qur'an commentary.<sup>37</sup> For a while now, we have had a century-by-century indexing of all the surviving works from this genre and a real measure of what was produced in the history of the genre which the previous decades of scholarship do not reflect. Yet even this index is unprocessed material; there is no narrative to comprehend its scope.

The periodization proposed in this article reflects the data from this index, such that we can use both to direct our studies for the future. The field needs a narrative, one that makes a causal connection among different works and their contexts of production, and allows for a measure of reference beyond a specific work. The first urgent area to study is the First and Second Gloss Periods. By designating two phases in the tradition of the gloss, this new periodization makes it impossible to hide the fact that we have no studies of this subgenre. It is also a reflection of the massive number of glosses written over six centuries. The second area to compel our attention is the emergence of regional centres, and in particular the Ottoman and the Mughal empires. We know next to nothing about the activities and production of these two empires, a remarkable oversight that points to a complete disregard of any meaningful historical concerns in the field. Finally, by acknowledging the singularity of the Modern period, and conceptually insisting that this is a new period in radical ways—and not because of modern Europe but because of national and regional Islamic languages.

<sup>35</sup> For a detailed study, see Pink, Muslim Qur'ānic Interpretation.

**<sup>36</sup>** *al-Fihris* (1987). This work was updated and reissued in two volumes in 1989.

**<sup>37</sup>** Saleh, "Preliminary Remarks," 17.

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**Abstract** The literature of commentaries on the Qur'an is one of the most extensive of genres in Islam. This genre, called *tafsīr* in Arabic, has no agreed upon narrative of historical developments. The article offers a new periodization that reflects the recent scholarship and the internal archival evidence. The article places the gloss at the centre of this periodization.

**Keywords** Qur'an, Qur'anic interpretation, Qur'an commentary, *tafsīr*, gloss, periodization, ḥāshiyah



# FOR PRIVATE AND NON-COMMERCIAL USE ONLY

# ON THE PRACTICE OF AUTOCOMMENTARY IN SANSKRIT SOURCES

# **ISABELLE RATIÉ\***

COMMENTARIES HAVE PLAYED a crucial role in the development of South Asia's religious and intellectual history.<sup>1</sup> Although many are lost, they have come down to us in impressive numbers; they are sometimes said to constitute up to three-quarters of the Sanskrit written tradition.<sup>2</sup> They explain texts of an astounding variety, including scriptures, poetry, and treatises bearing on a wide array of topics, from grammar to veterinary science, and many a commentary (or subcommentary) had a more considerable impact than independent works. These facts are certainly to be understood in relation to the presupposition, prevalent among Sanskrit writers, that an assertion unsanctioned by antiquity is suspicious; and to their efforts to present innovations as mere expressions of an eternal truth handed down by an immemorial tradition.<sup>3</sup> Even authors of independent works often presented themselves as mere exegetes of more ancient formulations, and many commentators tended to disguise their own novel ideas as mere clarifications of the text on which they were commenting. This "noveltysmuggling strategy"<sup>4</sup> was often implemented by distinguishing an obvious but superficial meaning from a hidden, more profound one that they claimed to uncover, and by inventing various hermeneutical devices so as to force into the texts that they were

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>\*</sup> Many thanks are due to the anonymous reviewers of this article for their insightful remarks, and to Whitney Cox, who shared an unpublished paper on the history of Sanskrit autocommentaries. Discussing it with its generous, open-minded, and learned author was a lovely experience, and if our perspectives and aims often differ, the present essay (which I wrote while keeping in mind Cox's important hypothesis, cited below) is but a continuation of our conversation.

I Studies of commentarial practices in Sanskrit sources include Alsdorf, "Nikṣepa"; Bronkhorst, "Vārttika"; Balbir, "Jaina Exegetical Terminology"; Brückner, "Bewahren und Erneuern"; von Stietencron, "Typisierung und Sitz im Leben"; Dundas, "Somnolent *sūtras*"; Chenet, "Le commentaire en Inde"; Grimal, "Pour décrire un commentaire traditionnel"; Slaje, "Der Sanskrit-Kommentar"; von Hinüber, "Buddhistische Kommentare"; Tubb and Boose, "Scholastic Sanskrit"; Preisendanz, "Text, Commentary, Annotation"; Ganeri, "Sanskrit Philosophical Commentary"; Jyväsjärvi, "Retrieving the Hidden Meaning"; McCrea, "Poetry in Chains"; Pollock, "What was Philology?"; Ratié, "For an Indian Philology"; and Lubin, "Brāhmaņa."

**<sup>2</sup>** The estimate, often repeated in secondary literature, apparently originates from a 1999 oral presentation by Ashok Aklujkar: see von Hinüber, "Buddhistische Kommentare," 99.

**<sup>3</sup>** See, for example, Biardeau, "Philosophies de l'Inde," 83–107; Halbfass, *India and Europe*, 349–68; Pollock, "The Theory of Practice" and "Mīmāmsā." This presupposition, while dominant, was not unanimous: see McCrea, "Standards and Practices," and Cuneo, ""This Is Not a Quote," on the different attitude of some poeticians. Resistance to this conservative paradigm is also found in philosophico-religious literature: the tenth-century Śaiva Utpaladeva, for instance, claims to have invented a "new" soteriological path (see the section below headed "Appropriating, Defying, and Creating Tradition"; cf. the passing remark in Halbfass, *India and Europe*, 363).

**<sup>4</sup>** The expression is borrowed from Cuneo, "'This Is Not a Quote," 225.

supposed to explain some ideas that were blatantly alien to them.<sup>5</sup> Numerous Sanskrit words designate these commentarial works, but much research remains to be done before we can understand the fluctuating history of these terms<sup>6</sup> and their changing meanings according to the tradition in which they were used.

The present essay is not concerned with this complex history of Indian commentaries and their names, but only with the intriguing phenomenon of "self-commentaries" or "auto(-)commentaries." Both terms, while conspicuously absent from the English dictionaries that I could consult, are widely used nowadays in secondary literature, the former being favoured in research on Western works whereas the latter is common in South Asian studies.<sup>7</sup> In Sanskrit, such texts are usually designated by prefixing *sva*- ("self-"/"auto-") or *svopajña*- ("self-invented") to one of the numerous terms used to denote commentaries.<sup>8</sup> The practice of composing commentaries to explain one's own works was widespread among Sanskrit-writing authors; yet it remains hardly studied to date.<sup>9</sup> In a cultural world where novelty was deeply mistrusted, the success of the commentarial genre as a whole is by no means surprising, as it enabled to cultivate the truth contained in older texts—and to bestow the latter's authority upon new ideas; but why set out to comment on one's own words? And why write two sometimes even three—distinct texts, rather than one single, self-explanatory work?

### Autocommentaries on Poetry (kāvya) and Normative Treatises (śāstra)

Sanskrit autocommentaries are appended to texts that belong to two main genres:  $k\bar{a}vya$ , that is, belles-lettres or poetry (understood in a very broad sense as texts that primarily pursue aesthetic goals and include drama and prose narrative works) and  $s\bar{a}stra$ , normative or didactic treatises. The European "Renaissance" associated with late-medieval Italian humanists also witnessed a burst of autocommentarial creativity (albeit to a lesser extent and for a shorter period) and, in the latter case, autocommentaries seem to have occurred mostly on the side of belles-lettres.<sup>10</sup> Dante Alighieri, Giovanni Boccacio, Lorenzo de' Medici and others were primarily concerned with writing about their own poetry. In India, some autocommentaries were also composed

**<sup>5</sup>** One such very common trick consists in interpreting the presence of the connecting particles *ca* ("and") or *api* ("as well as") as implying additional items that are not explicitly mentioned (*kaṇthokta*) in the text: see, for example, *Padārthadharmasangraha*, 10, on *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* 1.1.5.

<sup>6</sup> See Slaje, "Der Sanskrit-Kommentar," 71.

**<sup>7</sup>** I therefore tend to use "autocommentary" here, confessedly out of habit rather than as a rationally motivated choice; according to Roush, *Hermes' Lyre*, 8, the term *autocommento* was coined in the nineteenth century by Italian poet Giosuè Carducci.

<sup>8</sup> See below in the section headed "Appropriating, Defying, and Creating Tradition."

**<sup>9</sup>** To my knowledge, the only article entirely devoted to it is Cox, "A Fragmented History," which remains unpublished.

**<sup>10</sup>** On European autocommentaries, and for further bibliographical references, see Roush, *Hermes' Lyre*, and Venturi, ed., *Self-Commentary*.

by poets,<sup>11</sup> but they are scant and late in comparison with the vast number of *śāstras* that have been transmitted with a commentary purported to be by their very author; most autocommentaries on poems were composed in the sixteenth century or later,<sup>12</sup> and however murky the history of Sanskrit autocommentaries, it seems at least clear that they postdate by a considerable margin the appearance of autocommentaries attached to treatises. Many autocommentaries on *śāstras* were composed during the first millennium CE (although as explained below, the authorship of the earlier ones is often problematic) and many are Buddhist,<sup>13</sup> but the practice of explaining one's own

**II** They have received very little scholarly attention to date. Bronner, *Extreme Poetry*, 156–57, briefly discusses the phenomenon (see also 299n3, and Appendix 1), citing among others Cidambarakavi's seventeenth-century *Pañcakalyāṇacampū* or Haradatta Sūri's eighteenth-century *Rāghavanaiṣadhīya*. Dundas, *History, Scripture*, chapter 2, contains an insightful analysis of Devavimala Gaṇin's commentary on his seventeenth-century *Hīrasaubhāgya*. See also Rāmacandra's sixteenth-century *Viṣṇuvilāsa*, "apparently written by Rāmapāṇivāda himself" (according to Lienhard, *A History*, 211) was shown not to be an autocommentary by P.K. Narayana Pillai in his introduction to the 1951 edition of the text, 20–22. Prologues to Indian dramas (where poets often have much to say about their own work and its reception) are not taken into account here because they lack many features that are characteristic of standard commentaries and are found in the texts seen by South Asian authors themselves as belonging to the category of autocommentaries.

**<sup>12</sup>** Śāstrī, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, 1, presents the commentary on Sandhyākaranandin's eleventh-/twelfth-century *Rāmacarita* as "probably by the author himself," and Bronner, *Extreme Poetry*, 269, as "possibly by the author himself." Majumdar, Basak and Banerji have argued against this authorship (Introduction to the *Rāmacarita*, vi) on the grounds that "the commentator has often explained a word in more ways than one" (an argument of little weight, as many autocommentaries offer several interpretations: see below in the section headed "Are Autocommentators Worried about Not Being Understood?") and by pointing out the commentary's mention of "a variant reading" (*pāţhāntara*) under 1.22. The latter point is considered decisive in Brocquet, *La Geste*, 19–20. One could object that other so-called "variant readings" are discussed in works explicitly identified as autocommentaries by their authors (see section below, just referenced); yet, as far as I can see, Haraprasād Śāstrī offers no argument whatsoever *in favour* of an attribution to the poem's author either in *A Descriptive Catalogue*, or in the Calcutta edition of the text.

**<sup>13</sup>** Such Buddhist works include the alleged autocommentaries on the *Vigrahavyāvartanī*, *Śūnyatāsaptati* and *Pratītyasamutpādahṛdayakārikā* by Nāgārjuna (ca. 200 CE; on issues pertaining to their authorship see, for example, Seyfort Ruegg, *The Literature*, 21n45; Lindtner, "Adversaria Buddhica," 172 and *Nagarjuniana*, 31 and 70n105); the *Abhidharmakośabhāşya* (see below, n. 32) and *Vimśikāvrtti* by Vasubandhu (ca. 350–430); the *Ālambanaparīkṣāvrtti* and *Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti* by Dignāga (ca. 480–540, see below, nn. 27–28); Bhāviveka's sixth-century *Tarkajvālā* on the *Madhyamakahṛdayakārikā* (see below, nn. 25–28); Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttikasvavṛtti* and *Sambandhaparīkṣāvṛtti* (ca. 600); Candrakīrti's seventh-century *Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya*; Śāntarakṣita's eighth-century *Madhyamakālankāravṛtti*. On Śankaranandana's mostly unpublished tenth-century autocommentaries, see Krasser, *Śankaranandanas Īśvarāpākaraṇasankṣepa*; and Eltschinger, "Latest News."

texts is also found in Brahmanical and para-Brahmanical,<sup>14</sup> Jain,<sup>15</sup> and Śaiva sources,<sup>16</sup> as well as in fields, such as poetics, that extend across religious divides.<sup>17</sup>

# Hypotheses on the Practice's Origin(s)

The origins of this practice in India are obscure. Since, however, the earliest preserved Sanskrit autocommentaries on  $\dot{sastras}$  appear to be Buddhist, it is very tempting to consider, with Whitney Cox, that the format originated in Buddhist monastic circles

**15** Śvetāmbara Jains ascribe to Umāsvāti (ca. 400?), the author of the *Tattvārthādhigamasūtra*, the *Bhāşya* that explains these aphorisms; but the attribution, defended by some modern scholars (see, for example, Ohira, *A Study*) seems problematic (see Bronkhorst, "On the Chronology," 163–71). Other relatively early Jain autocommentaries include the *Viśeṣāvaśyakabhāṣyavṛtti* by Jinabhadra (ca. 600), Akalaṅka's eight-century *Laghīyastrayavṛtti* and *Siddhiviniścayavṛtti*, Haribhadra's eight-century *Yogaśataka-vṛtti* or *-țīkā* and *Anekāntajayapatākāvṛtti*, Vidyānanda's tenth-century *Āptaparīkṣālaṃkṛti*, Hemacandra's twelfth-century commentaries on his *Yogaśāstra*, *Śabdānuśāsana*, *Pramāṇamīmāṇṣā*, *Deśīnāmamālā* and *Kāvyānuśāsana* (see sections below headed "Appropriating, Defying, and Creating Tradition" and "Addressing Different Categories of Readers"), or Hemacandra

**16** On the debate over the autocommentarial status of the *Vrtti* on the ninth-century *Spandakārikā*, see the section below headed "The Authority of Alleged Autocommentaries." Undisputed Śaiva autocommentaries include Utpaladeva's two commentaries (a *Vrtti* and a *Vivrti* or *Ţīkā*) on his tenth-century *Īśvarapratyabhijñā* (see sections below headed "Appropriating, Defying, and Creating Tradition" and "Addressing Different Categories of Readers") as well as *Vrttis* on his *Sambandhasiddhi* and *Īśvarasiddhi* (he may also have written a lost *Vrtti* on his *Ajadapramātŗsiddhi*); Kşemarāja's eleventh-century *Pratyabhijñāhrdayavrtti*; the *Mahārthamañjarīparimala* by Maheśvarānanda (ca. 1275–1325); or Bhāskarakaṇtha's *Ţīkā* on his eighteenth-century *Cittānubodhaśāstra*. The autocommentary on Somānanda's tenth-century *Śivadṛṣți*, sometimes mentioned in secondary literature, is likely never to have existed (see Nemec, *The Ubiquitous Śiva*, 14n25). Sanderson, "The Śaiva Exegesis," 299–300, convincingly argues that the Sanskrit commentary on the Old Kashmiri *Mahānayaprakāśa/Mahārthaprakāśa* is not an autocommentary, as was thus far assumed.

**17** See Cox, "A Fragmented History," which mentions two influential ninth-century autocommentaries, Vāmana's *Kāvyālankāravŗtti* and Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyālokavŗtti* (on which see below, n. 33), followed by several works that were composed from the ninth to the eleventh centuries using the twofold structure of verses and prose autocommentary: Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's *Hrdayadarpaṇa*, Kuntaka's *Vakroktijīvita*, Mahima Bhaṭṭa's *Vyaktiviveka*, and Kṣemendra's *Aucityavicāracarcā*. The practice was also adopted by authors of lexica (see, for example, Manka's twelfth-century *Tīkā* on his own *Kośa*), etc.

<sup>14</sup> The Yogabhāşya (fourth-fifth century CE) comments on the Yogasūtra authored or compiled by Patañjali and is often ascribed in later sources and secondary literature to an author named Vyāsa; but Bronkhorst, "Patañjali," and Maas, "A Concise Historiography," have argued that it is in fact Patañjali's own commentary, as many medieval authors believed. The authorship of the oldest commentary on Bhartrhari's fifth-century Vākyapadīya has also been debated in recent times (see below, n. 19), although again, medieval authors had no doubt that it was an autocommentary. One could also mention, for instance, the prose parts (explicitly described as [auto]commentaries) on the verses by medieval commentators: see Acharya, Vācaspatimiśra's Tattvasamīkṣā, 48ff, in the Brahmasiddhi, Sphoṭasiddhi and Vidhiviveka by Maṇdanamiśra (ca. 660–720); the prose parts in Sureśvara's eight-century Naişkarmyasiddhi (ascribed to Sureśvara himself by later commentators, see Hiriyanna's Introduction to the Naişkarmyasiddhi, xxxi); the Vākyārthamātrkāvrtti by Śālikanātha (ca. 900); Bhāsarvajña's tenth-century Nyāyabhūṣāṇa on his Nyāyasāra; or Udayana's eleventh-century prose commentary on his Nyāyakusumāñjali.

and was adopted at a later stage by non-Buddhist authors who had thus far taught the meaning of their own works orally;<sup>18</sup> although the hypothesis seems bound to remain somewhat speculative given the great amount of lost Sanskrit treatises and the considerable problems of authorship regarding many early instances of alleged autocommentaries. Cox rightly points out the debated authorship of the fifth-century Brahmanical *Vākyapadīyavŗtti*;<sup>19</sup> however, not to mention that other texts (notably the *Yogabhāṣya*)<sup>20</sup> may also have been early non-Buddhist autocommentaries, from an emic point of view at least, the hypothesis needs to be nuanced: whoever really composed the *Vākyapadīyavŗtti* or *Yogabhāṣya*, those who adopted the practice of autocommentary from the eighth or ninth century onwards had no doubt that these works were genuine autocommentaries,<sup>21</sup> so that they at least probably did not consider that they were borrowing a Buddhist literary device. In any case, Jonardon Ganeri's assertion that Buddhist authors only "play" with the "basic" genre exemplified in Brahmanical works and "adapt it to their own purposes"<sup>22</sup> seems problematic in that the Brahmanical examples adduced<sup>23</sup> are all much later than known Buddhist ones.

It also seems highly plausible that, on both Buddhist and Brahmanical sides, the first autocommentaries were composed in a teaching environment, as they usually explain an aphoristic root-text (*sūtra*—a "thread") often versified and easy to memorize, but difficult to understand due to its extreme brevity, and therefore in need of further explanations (often provided in prose). This twofold structure had the great pedagogical advantage, highlighted by several authors of autocommentaries,<sup>24</sup> of enabling the exposition "both in a nutshell and at length" (*saṅksepavistara*) that is said to befit proper teaching.

It also seems obvious that, in a teaching environment, orality was a major mode of transmission, and at least some of the earlier so-called autocommentaries may in fact have been originally constituted of notes taken by students while the teacher was explaining the meaning of his own work. Thus Helmut Krasser has argued that some famous Buddhist autocommentaries, such as Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti* or Bhāviveka's *Tarkajvālā*<sup>25</sup> (the authorship of which is debated),<sup>26</sup> are indeed autocom-

<sup>18</sup> See Cox, "A Fragmented History."

**<sup>19</sup>** On this debate see in particular Biardeau, *Bhartrhari*; Subramania Iyer, *Bhartrhari*, 16–35; Aklujkar, "The Authorship" and "Once again"; Bronkhorst, "Études"; Houben, "Bhartrhari's *Vākyapadīya* and the ancient *Vṛtti*" 1, 2 and 3.

<sup>20</sup> See above, n. 14.

**<sup>21</sup>** On medieval opinions regarding the *Yogabhāṣya*, see Bronkhorst, "Patañjali," and Maas, "A Concise Historiography"; regarding the *Vākyapadīyavrtti*, see, for example, Subramania Iyer, *Bhartrhari*, 21ff.

<sup>22</sup> Ganeri, "Sanskrit Philosophical Commentary," 199.

<sup>23</sup> Namely Bhāsarvajña's, Udayana's and Annambhațța's.

**<sup>24</sup>** See, for example, Rāmacandra and Guņacandra's *Nāţyadarpaņa*, 26, or Maheśvarānanda's *Mahārthamañjarī*, 2.

**<sup>25</sup>** This title, commonly used in secondary literature to designate the commentary, seems to have originally belonged to the root-text: Krasser, "How to Teach," 50n1; van der Kuijp, "Further notes," 306.

<sup>26</sup> See Lindtner, "Adversaria Buddhica"; Seyfort Ruegg, "On the Authorship"; Eckel, Bhāviveka,

mentaries, but stemming from the author's "mouth" rather than "pen."<sup>27</sup> This could explain, for instance, discrepancies between the preserved Tibetan translations that cannot be accounted for simply by assuming corruptions in the transmission of a single Ur-text.<sup>28</sup> On the Brahmanical side as well, some early commentaries traditionally purported to be autocommentaries have been suspected of being the work of a direct disciple, in particular the *Vākyapadīyavṛtti*.<sup>29</sup>

# Self-Effacing Self-Commentators, The Split of the Authorial Self, and the Resulting Headaches for Historians Concerned with Authorship

The task of historians who set out to ascertain whether a given text is indeed, as tradition claims, an autocommentary, has been considerably complicated by a feature of Sanskrit autocommentaries that is akin to the phenomenon described as a split of the authorial self<sup>30</sup> by scholars studying Western autocommentaries—namely, the propensity of autocommentators to create distinct authorial personae: the interpreted writer versus the interpreting reader. Although some Indian authors (particularly later ones) explicitly present their work as autocommentaries, many, while engaged in explaining their own root-text, only refer to themselves in the third person, with recurring expressions such as "he says" ( $\bar{a}ha$ )<sup>31</sup> or even "the master says" ( $\bar{a}c\bar{a}rya \ \bar{a}ha$ ),<sup>32</sup> as if they were someone else. Furthermore, the author of the aphoristic root-text ( $s\bar{u}trak\bar{a}ra$ ) and the author of the commentary ( $vrttik\bar{a}ra$ , etc.) are often treated as if they were altogether different individuals by subcommentators, even when the latter are demonstrably aware that a single author composed both the root-text and commentary.

This practice has led to much confusion and prompted some historians to wrongly accuse medieval commentators of providing inconsistent testimonies.<sup>33</sup> It has also

- 29 See Houben, "On the Syntactic and Stylistic Evidence."
- 30 Venturi's Introduction to Self-Commentary, 20.

**31** On this ubiquitous formulation see, for example, Mookerjee, "A Dissertation," 181; Bronkhorst, "Two Literary Conventions," 224–25; Tubb and Boose, *Scholastic Sanskrit*, 229.

**32** This has been noticed in particular with respect to *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, introduction to 1.3 (Qvarnström, *Hindu Philosophy*, 21n1; Bronkhorst, "Two Literary Conventions," 225), but as pointed out in Seyfort Ruegg, "On the Authorship," 64, in this case the expression is used because the author is portraying an interlocutor raising a question that he addresses to the "master." It sometimes occurs outside such a context, however, in works that have been doubted to be autocommentaries (e.g., the *Tarkajvālā* and *Vākyapadīyavrtti*) but also in texts whose autocommentarial status is not doubtful, such as Haribhadra's *Anekāntajayapatākāvrtti*, 1:2 (cf. the almost identical passage in his *Yogaśatakavrtti*, 1) or Hemacandra's *Pramāṇamīmāṃsā*, 1.

**33** Thus Ānandavardhana's single authorship of the verses and *Vrtti* constituting the treatise known today as the *Dhvanyāloka* has been doubted since Bühler's 1877 "Detailed Report," 65, mostly because of Abhinavagupta's repeated use of phrases such as "the author of the verses" and "the author of the *Vrtti*" (cf. Kane, *History*, 162–99). Mookerjee, "A Dissertation," and Krishnamoorthy,

<sup>21-23;</sup> Krasser, "How to Teach," 60ff.

<sup>27</sup> Krasser, "How to Teach," 63.

**<sup>28</sup>** See Krasser, "How to Teach" and "Dignāga on Air," 158–75. This view is adopted, for example, in van der Kuijp, "Further Notes," 323.

forced them to use a wide array of criteria when trying to determine whether a commentary was written by the author of a root-text, including the syntactic interdependence of the root-text and commentary, the consistency of their respective contents, the absence of mention of variant readings or of a benedictory (mangala) initial verse in the commentary; and unfortunately, these criteria have often turned out to be of limited use. Thus some standard commentaries may create, on purpose, the impression of a syntactic interdependence of the root-text and explanation.<sup>34</sup> Yet consistency in contents is not always easy to assess; and the mention of a plurality of interpretations cannot be considered proof that a commentary is not authorial, as autocommentaries often highlight several meanings.<sup>35</sup> As for the absence of benedictory verses, it is rarely conclusive (their use has fluctuated over time and across genres,<sup>36</sup> and some autocommentaries have one);<sup>37</sup> while the absence of mention of any variant reading does not prove that a commentary is authorial, and yet its presence does not necessarily rule it out either, as some authors appear to have considered alternative phrasings for their own text (and the same expression, *pāţhāntara*, probably designated at times not only a variant reading in the philological sense of the term, but also a suggested alternative phrasing).<sup>38</sup>

But why is it that, as Madhusudan Kaul once put it, autocommentators (as well as their subcommentators) write "in such a way that the reader is often misled into thinking that the author of the text is different from that of the gloss"?<sup>39</sup>Ashok Aklujkar has suggested that authors designate themselves as "the master" when referring to a specific passage in the work that they are commenting on, and when "attempting to spare the readers the trouble of going through the commentandum text as well as the commentary text," which is "an understandable need in the age of circulation of a text in manuscripts, in which pagination and text divisions could not remain the same."<sup>40</sup> This explanation does not seem satisfactory, however, as in many cases such references do not regard a distant passage that the reader would need to locate. One certainly ought to

- 35 See section below headed "Appropriating, Defying, and Creating Tradition."
- 36 See Minkowski, "Why Should We Read," 4–10.

40 Aklujkar, "Authorship," 221.

*Dhvanyāloka*, have convincingly shown, however, that there is no good reason to question this authorship (cf., for example, McCrea, *The Teleology*, 100n4), and that nowhere does Abhinavagupta express any doubt about it, despite his distinguishing Ānandavardhana's goals as the author of the verses and as the author of their commentary. The remark in Ingalls' "Introduction," 26, that arguments on both sides are "inconclusive" because "Abhinavagupta is so inconsistent" therefore seems unwarranted.

<sup>34</sup> See Bronkhorst, "Two Literary Conventions."

**<sup>37</sup>** One of Utpaladeva's autocommentaries on his *Īśvarapratyabhijñā* treatise, the *Vrtti*, has no benedictory verse of its own, but the other autocommentary (the *Vivrti*) does; Abhinavagupta explains this by pointing out that the *Vrtti* was composed at the same time as the verses, whereas the *Vivrti* was composed later (*Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivrtivimarśinī*, 1:2–3; see Torella's Introduction to *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā*, xli).

<sup>38</sup> See section below.

**<sup>39</sup>** Introduction to *Siddhitrayī*, 10.

consider among other factors the fact—also obvious in Western traditions<sup>41</sup>—that selfcommentaries, being composed while taking as their model the structure of standard commentaries, tend to replicate the latter's distance between author and commentator; and as far as South Asian literature is concerned, another important factor is probably that authors, whether writing autocommentaries or not, are usually expected to talk about themselves in the third person rather than the first. This is famously pointed out by Medhātithi as he defends the view that the *Manusmrti* is Manu's work, even though Manu is mentioned there in the third person.

In general, authors express their own thought as if it were someone else's [by writing, for example, ] "with respect to this *he* says [the following]," [or] "*they* refute this [as follows]," rather than [presenting it] thus: '*l*, being questioned by them, [reply as follows].<sup>42</sup>

The rationale for this may have been, as pointed out by P. V. Kane, "to avoid looking too egotistic"<sup>43</sup>—or rather, to suggest greater authority by implying that the author is above all egoistical concerns. In any case, the rule is often (although by no means always) complied with, and the use of the third person in autocommentaries has been interpreted as a mere variation of this practice;<sup>44</sup> self-commenting, it seems, had to appear as a selfless activity.

But how should we explain that subcommentators, too, tend to distinguish several authorial personae, even when they are aware that a single author composed both works? Cox has suggested that Abhinavagupta's distinction between the author of the Dhvanyāloka's verses and that of their Vrtti betrays a lack of habituation to the autocommentary, which was relatively novel in the field of poetics: according to him, it shows that "the protocols of reading hadn't yet adjusted themselves to the autocommentary format"45 It seems doubtful, however, whether Abhinavagupta lacked familiarity with the latter: he displays elsewhere a remarkably precise knowledge of Buddhist works many of which include autocommentaries composed several centuries before his timeas well as of Bhartrhari's Vākyapadīya and Patañjali's Yogaśāstra, two works that he explicitly takes to include autocommentaries. He also composed two lengthy commentaries on Utpaladeva's *İśvarapratyabhijñā* (which comprises two autocommentaries) while distinguishing the authorial voices just as he does in the case of Anandavardhana's work. This distinction is clearly a fossilized remnant of the exegetical tradition of standard commentaries by subcommentators; but there must have been reasons for conspicuously maintaining its use when explaining authorial commentaries.

As pointed out by Satkari Mookerjee and Keralapura Krishnamoorthy, foremost among these reasons was certainly the need to express a difference in the texts' respective *functions*,<sup>46</sup> any commentary being theoretically limited to explaining the root-text

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Roush, Hermes' Lyre, 5.

**<sup>42</sup>** Manubhāşya, 1:7: prāyeņa granthakārāḥ svamataṃ parāpadeśena bruvate, atrāha, atra pariharantīti naivam ahaṃ taiḥ pṛṣṭa iti. See Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra, 90.

<sup>43</sup> Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra, 90.

**<sup>44</sup>** See, for example, Krishnamoorthy, *Dhvanyāloka*, 52, and Bronkhorst, "What Was Śaṅkara's *śāstrārambha*?," 125n7.

<sup>45</sup> Cox, "A Fragmented History."

<sup>46</sup> Mookerjee, "A Dissertation," 180; Krisnhamoorthy, Dhvanyāloka, 55.

without straying from the latter's boundaries (a fault called *utsūtravyākhyāna*), so that its author, even if he also happened to be the author of the root-text, was expected to perform this specific task, and therefore had to be distinguished in this capacity from the author of the root-text. It has been rightly objected that autocommentators often take great liberties with their own root-texts, as do their subcommentators;<sup>47</sup> and it is true that there is often a glaring gap between the exegetical etiquette and the reality of commentarial practices. Yet Mookerjee and Krishnamoorthy make the important point that this is at least an ideal which authors of Sanskrit works claim to be important. Autocommentators and their subcommentators seem to insist on different authorial personae precisely because they are distinguishing the specific tasks that each of them has to perform, as is made clear by Abhinavagupta. Thus, on the one hand, he specifies in various instances that Utpaladeva is the single author of the *İsvarapratyabhijñā* work as a whole  $(qranthak\bar{a}ra)$ : that is, of the verses and the two commentaries respectively called Vrtti and Vivrti or Tika;48 on the other hand, he often distinguishes the author of the verses (kārikākāra), that of the Vrtti (vrttikāra) and that of the Vivrti or Tīkā (vivrti-/  $t\bar{t}k\bar{a}$ -kāra), as if they were three distinct individuals, depending on the respective functions of these texts, as in the following passage:

And the author of the *Vrtti* has not taken the trouble of [getting into] such a [detailed] explanation [as the one just given here] because [he was only concerned with] explaining the [verses'] overall meaning; this is stated [in the *Vivrti*, according to which the *Vrtti*'s] 'function ( $vy\bar{a}p\bar{a}ra$ ) is merely to explain the [aspect of] the verses' teaching that is concealed.' And this has not been touched upon by the author of the *Ţīkā* either, [since] he intended to explain the sole *Vrtti*.<sup>49</sup>

Abhinavagupta even describes this paradoxical status of the author becoming multiple without ceasing to be one by saying that he assumes the different theatrical roles  $(bh\bar{u}mik\bar{a})^{50}$  of the  $k\bar{a}rik\bar{a}k\bar{a}ra$ ,  $vrttik\bar{a}ra$  and  $t\bar{\iota}k\bar{a}k\bar{a}ra$ —those being, as Raffaele Torella has put it, "almost three different persons, capable of dialoguing and disputing with each other, and yet remaining within the higher unity of the *granthakāra*."<sup>51</sup>

### The Authority of Alleged Autocommentaries and Some Ways of Undermining It

Before examining the reasons why some South Asian writers thus chose to compose commentaries on their own works, it is worth considering a little longer the issue of the actual authorship of some texts traditionally regarded as autocommentaries; for

**<sup>47</sup>** See Kane, *History*, 174; Seyfort Ruegg, "On the Authorship," 60–61.

**<sup>48</sup>** See, for example, *İśvarapratyabhijñāvivrtivimarśinī*, 1:2, 3, 14, etc.

**<sup>49</sup>** Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī, 1:22-23: iyati ca vyākhyāne vrttikrtā bharo na krtas tātparyavyākhyānāt, yad uktam samvrtasautranirdeśavivrtimātravyāpārāyām iti. ţīkākāreņāpi vrttimātram vyākhyātum udyatena nedam sprṣṭam. See Pandey, Abhinavagupta, 133-34; Krishnamoorthy, Dhvanyāloka, 54; Ratié, Utpaladeva, 7-8.

**<sup>50</sup>** *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivrtivimarśinī*, 1:2.

**<sup>51</sup>** Torella, Introduction to *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā*, xlii.

with respect to most of the works mentioned above, the question has not only been raised by historians in recent times, but in fact such debates were not unknown in the Middle Ages. Thus the relationship between the ninth-century series of aphoristic verses known as the Spandakārikā and its prose commentary (Vrtti) was a matter of dispute at the turn of the second millenium. Ksemarāja (ca. 1000–1050) ascribed the verses to Vasugupta<sup>52</sup> (to whom the  $\hat{S}ivas\bar{u}tras$  were allegedly revealed)<sup>53</sup> and only attributed the commentary to Vasugupta's pupil, Kallata, against a thus-far prevalent opinion: Bhāskara<sup>54</sup> (ca. 925–975), Utpalavaisnava/Bhāgavatotpala<sup>55</sup> (ca. 950–1000), and Rāma<sup>56</sup> (ca. 950–1000) all held the *Spandakārikā* and its *Vrtti* to be Kallata's work. Both Ksemarāja and Bhāgavatotpala seem to have gone so far as to insert an additional verse within the *Spandakārikā* to support their respective positions in the dispute,<sup>57</sup> and a verse at the end of the Vrtti that could be read as ascribing the verses to Vasugupta has long been suspected of being a later addition as well.<sup>58</sup> A majority of modern scholars hold that Kallata was indeed the author of both texts, because several early commentators are of this opinion; but also, as pointed out by Alexis Sanderson, because nothing in the commentary indicates a different authorship and because the commentary "lacks its own initial benedictory verse."59 Whether one accepts these arguments as sufficient or not, the medieval dispute over the autocommentarial status of the Vrtti and the forgery of verses that it occasioned show how greatly this status mattered: it evidently endowed the commentary with exceptional authority. I have yet to find in a Sanskrit autocommentary a statement comparable to Lorenzo de' Medici's famous remark that no one is

52 Śivasūtravimarśinī, 3.

**53** On the varying accounts of this revelation see, for example, Chatterji, *Kashmir Shaivaism*, 26–29, and Sanderson, "The Śaiva Exegesis," 403–4.

54 Śivasūtravārttika, 2–3, vv. 4–5.

55 Spandapradīpikā, 83.

**56** In *Spandavivrti*, 165, he identifies "the master" to which the last verse is dedicated as Vasugupta, thus indicating that he believes the verses to be by his disciple Kallata, as pointed out in Dyczkowski, *The Stanzas*, 22.

**57** Gnoli, *Testi*, 14, adopts Kṣemarāja's view without discussing these verses. Rastogi, *The Krama Tantricism*, 114, notes that "amusingly," each verse is only found in the text read by the exegete defending the authorship proclaimed in the verse (a point already highlighted in Pandey, *Abhinavagupta*, 155), but stops short of accusing Kṣemarāja and Bhāgavatotpala of being responsible for the insertions. Pandey sides with Kṣemarāja on the dubious grounds that the later *Mahārthamañjarī* (demonstrably influenced by Kṣemarāja) quotes the verse only found in his recension. Pandit, *History*, 21, and Dyczkowski, *The Stanzas*, 22, make the reasonable assumption that both verses are later additions. Sanderson, "The Śaiva Exegesis," 405–7, remains silent on this issue while discussing the authorship of the *Spandakārikā*. Bansat-Boudon, "Enjeux," 224–29, discusses the adjunctions without any reference to prior secondary literature on the topic.

58 Chatterji, Kashmir Shaivaism, 27–28n2; Sanderson, "The Śaiva Exegesis," 406–7.

**59** Sanderson, "The Śaiva Exegesis," 406. According to Bansat-Boudon, "Enjeux," 178n1, Sanderson, "The Śaiva Exegesis," 418 presents Kallața as the author not only of the *Spandakārikā* and their *Vrtti* but also of the *Śivasūtra*. This, however, is a misunderstanding on Bansat-Boudon's part (Sanderson merely remarks on that page that the date of Kallața, and hence that of the *Śivasūtra* said to have been revealed to his master, can only be ascertained from a quotation by Utpaladeva).

better suited to understand and explain a text than its author himself.<sup>60</sup> But Kṣemarāja was probably acutely aware that most readers tend to presume as much, as it can be no coincidence that, while being the only Kashmirian author to have explicitly denied the authorial status of the *Spandavrtti*,<sup>61</sup> he also happened to be fiercely critical of some of its explanations.<sup>62</sup>

Yet undermining the authority of an autocommentary by denying its alleged authorship was not the only strategy adopted by those who disagreed with such texts: the Buddhist Sanghabhadra, while accepting on the whole Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakośakārikā, wrote two works to criticize the commentary (Bhāsya) on it ascribed to Vasubandhu himself.<sup>63</sup> The verses and their alleged autocommentary contain numerous striking doctrinal differences, as the former sum up the doctrine of the Kashmirian Vaibhāsika Buddhists, while the latter defends many views unacceptable to Vaibhāsika orthodoxy;64 yet Sanghabhadra, who undertakes to purge the commentary from its doctrinal deviations, nowhere insinuates that the *Bhāşya* might not be by Vasubandhu himself.<sup>65</sup> As pointed out by Ganeri, he rather creates what amounts to "a rival Bhāsya."66 Sanghabhadra and Vasubandhu appear to have been contemporaries, so that denying the latter's authorship was probably not an option for the former; still, this is indeed "a rather dramatic example of the point that the author has no special authority over the commentator in reading meaning from the text"<sup>67</sup>—or rather, that some doctrinal features were of such importance to medieval South Asian commentators that they were prepared to deny at times this otherwise unchallenged "special authority."

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, Roush, Hermes' Lyre, 72; Venturi's Introduction to Self-Commentary, 1.

**<sup>61</sup>** According to Rastogi, *The Krama Tantricism*, 114, and Dyczkowski, *The Stanzas*, 23, Kşemarāja's master, Abhinavagupta, was also of the opinion that the author of the *Spandakārikā* was Vasugupta. It is debatable, however, whether any of the quotations from the *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivrtivimarś inī* adduced so far to establish this point is conclusive. In particular, the one from 2:199, where (according to Dyczkowski, *The Stanzas*, 320n28), Abhinavagupta introduces quotes from the *Spandakārikā* "with the remark that 'this is what the author of the *sūtras* said'" must be rejected, since the *sūtrakāra* mentioned here is Utpaladeva, not Vasugupta (Abhinavagupta's point is that in *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* 1.5.14, Utpaladeva sums up what is already said in various other sources, including the *Spandakārikā*).

**<sup>62</sup>** The latter point is emphasized in Pandit, *History*, 21; Dycskowski, *The Stanzas*, 22; Bansat-Boudon, "Enjeux," 228.

**<sup>63</sup>** See in particular Cox, *Disputed Dharmas*.

**<sup>64</sup>** This has led Bronkhorst, "Two Literary Conventions," 222–25, to question the *Bhāṣya*'s authorship, although none of the arguments adduced seems decisive.

**<sup>65</sup>** In the extant Chinese version of the *\*Nyāyānusāra*, Vasubandhu is even called *chin-chu*, *"sūtra* master," which, according to Cox, *Disputed Dharmas*, 56, must translate *sūtrakāra* given the quotation of this text found in Sthiramati's Sanskrit commentary. This appears to be an explicit acknowledgement of Vasubandhu's double authorship (unless, as Cox wondered in *Disputed Dharmas*, 56, the term was "used with sarcasm, suggesting Vasubandhu's lack of familiarity with Buddhist scripture"; but the latter option seems less likely).

<sup>66</sup> Ganeri, "Sanskrit Philosophical Commentary," 200.

<sup>67</sup> Ganeri, "Sanskrit Philosophical Commentary," 200

# Are Autocommentators Worried about Not Being Understood or of Being So Too Easily?

Now, why did South Asian authors set out to comment on their own works? The first answer that comes to mind is that they were simply eager to be better understood. As noted above, the twofold structure of aphorisms and their explanation was seen as a powerful mnemotechnic and pedagogical tool, and the rare instances when authors themselves justify commenting on their own works usually mention teaching as at least one reason for undertaking such a task. Śālikanātha specifies having undertaken his explanation out of compassion, as a favour to those who do not fully understand the meaning encapsulated in his stanzas.<sup>68</sup> Maheśvarānanda, for his part, first indicates as a motive his desire to enjoy again his own work or—the words seem to have both meanings here—to enjoy again the understanding of the/his own self ( $\bar{a}tman$ ),<sup>69</sup> but he then adds that it was done "for the sake of the delight that it will bring to the minds of those in need of instruction,"<sup>70</sup> and finally presents it as an offering to the god Śiva.

If the reasons why the autocommentary format spread from didactic treatises to poetry remain unclear, according to Yigal Bronner this phenomenon must be understood in relation to the development of the "extreme poetry" of *śleṣakāvya* (which tells different stories simultaneously: that is, with the same verses read differently), as a tool developed to help the reader overcome the considerable difficulties of double meaning (*śleṣa*); and it betrays these poets' "growing anxiety[...]about being fully understood. Poets are often concerned about getting their message through, but *śleṣa* writers, it seems, were twice as worried."<sup>71</sup> Yet one often wonders, while reading South Asian autocommentaries, if such texts were not rather meant to quell, at least in part, a rather different (albeit perhaps not incompatible) fear—that of being too transparent, too simple, too easy to grasp. Admittedly, some authors advertise their autocommentaries as par-

70 Mahārthamañjarīparimala: vineyajanacittacamatkriyārtham (transl. Cox, Modes of Philology, 120).

**<sup>68</sup>** Vākyārthamātrkāvŗtti, 376: gambhīravitatam artham vācā samksiptayā nibaddham api | na vindanti ye samagram kṛpayā tadanugrahaḥ kriyate. || Although the brief text [of the stanzas] encapsulates a profound and far-reaching point, [some] do not fully grasp it; [this commentary] is made [as] a favour to them, out of compassion."

**<sup>69</sup>** *Mahārthamañjarīparimala*, 2: *svakriyāyā api vyākhyām svayam eva prayuñjmahe* | *upary apy āt masamrambhasambhogāmredanotsukāḥ*\* || [\*°*kāḥ* my correction; °*kaḥ* in the edition]. Cox, *Modes of Philology*, 120, detects "a passing note of apologia" here, and translates: "Though it is my own work, I myself now undertake the commentary upon it, eager to repeat yet again the consummation of my own undertaking." *Ātmasamrambha* can indeed mean one's own activity; but *samrambha*, which can be used as a synonym for *vimarśa* (the dynamic aspect of consciousness in nondual Śaivism and a fundamental notion in Maheśvarānanda's work) also designates the conscious act through which one grasps/understands something; cf. the end of the commentary, where just as here, the author is said to have explained his own work both "out of an eagerness to grasp the/his self, and also because he was urged [to do so] by disciples" (*svavimarśakutūhalāt* | *śiṣyānām api nirbandhāt*, from *Mahārthamañjarīparimala*, 199; for a somewhat different interpretation of the latter passage see Cox, *Modes of Philology*, 117). As for the "self" mentioned here, it can be understood both as Maheśvarānanda's and as the ultimate reality of the universe (the principle of personal identity being equated in his tradition with the single universal consciousness manifesting the universe).

<sup>71</sup> Bronner, Extreme Poetry, 157.

ticularly easy and straightforward;<sup>72</sup> but in fact, in *śāstra* as well as *kāvya*, autocommentaries often create a sense of depth in the text on which they comment by highlighting hidden meanings beyond the straightforward ones, and they tend to cultivate equivocity instead of dispelling ambiguities.<sup>73</sup> Utpaladeva often offers two or three different interpretations (some of which could be considered rather far-fetched) for a single word of his;<sup>74</sup> and as pointed out by Cox, Maheśvarānanda similarly explains his own verses "through a series of vertiginous commentarial operations, pointedly ignoring the verses' patent meaning."<sup>75</sup>

It is also possible that some autocommentaries, among which are Bhāsarvajña's *Nyāyabhūṣaṇa* or Utpaladeva's *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛti*, almost disappeared while their root-texts were successfully transmitted because they were deemed too difficult, or rendered the root-text itself too difficult<sup>76</sup>—in India too, autocommentaries were sometimes, in Sherry Roush's words, "maddeningly unhelpful"<sup>77</sup> in that they highlighted the work's complexities instead of solving problems, and opened interpretive possibilities rather than restricting them. This was also true in diglossic contexts, often associated with autocommentaries:<sup>78</sup> as shown by Cox, Maheśvarānanda, far from providing "a single authoritative interpretation" in his Sanskrit commentary on his own Prakrit verses, developed an "auto-philology" concerned with unpacking the multiple meanings that were allowed according to him by the "indeterminacy" of Prakrit.<sup>79</sup>

Besides, autocommentators themselves sometimes admitted that their goal was not only to explain their work but also to add "new" elements to them;<sup>80</sup> and authorial com-

**74** See, for example, Ratié, "Some Hitherto Unknown Fragments," on the three interpretations in his *İśvarapratyabhijñāvivrti* of the word "there" (*tatra*) used in *İśvarapratyabhijñāvirti* 1.7.11.

75 Cox, Modes of Philology, 129.

**76** On the former see Preisendanz, "Text, Commentary, Annotation," 613; on the latter, Ratié, *Utpaladeva*, chapter 1.

77 Roush, Hermes' Lyre, 10.

**79** Cox, Modes of Philology, 126–32.

**80** See, for example, Hemacandra's Kāvyānuśāsanaviveka, 1: vivarītum kvacid drbdham navam samdarbhitum kvacit | kāvyānuśāsanasyāyam vivekah pravitanyate || "[I] am composing this detailed analysis of [my] Kāvyānuśāsana so as to explain in some cases what has been strung together [in the latter]—and in [other] cases, in order to string together something new."

**<sup>72</sup>** Devavimala, who entitled his autocommentary on the *Hīrasaubhāgya* "Easy Understanding" (*Sukhāvabodha*), says at the beginning of the work: *svopajňahīrasaubhāgyakāvyasyāvyāsaś ālinīm* | *kurve vrttim vidagdhānām jhagityarthavibodhikām* || "I am composing on the poem *Hīrasaubhāgya*—which is of my own invention (*svopajňa*)—a commentary that is free of prolixity and will enable learned [people] to swiftly understand [the poem's] meaning."

**<sup>73</sup>** This phenomenon renders the presence of alternative explanations a particularly fragile criterion when assessing whether a text is an autocommentary or not: the argument has been invoked, for example, with respect to the *Vākypadīyavṛtti*, see Bronkhorst, "Études," 112ff.

**<sup>78</sup>** Cf., for example, Hemacandra's *Deśīnāmamālā*, devoted to Prakrit "regional" terms (on this notion see, for example, Ollett, *Language of the Snakes*, 156–57), and in which Prakrit verses are explained in a Sanskrit commentary. It is striking that "the legitimation of vernacular languages across Europe" is seen as one of the factors contributing to the development of the autocommentary genre there: see Venturi's Introduction to *Self-Commentary*, 4

mentaries sometimes seem to suggest changes in the very text of the work that they explain. Thus Phyllis Granoff has noted with some surprise that although Devavimala Gaṇin, the author of a poem entitled *Hīrasaubhāgya*, explicitly claims authorship of its commentary, the latter "occasionally mentions variant readings, which seems odd for an autocommentary."<sup>81</sup> It is indeed odd, all the more since the mention of variant readings is often invoked today as proof that an allegedly authorial commentary was in fact written later by someone else.<sup>82</sup> It might cease to be odd, however, if we consider that expressions such as *pāṭhāntara*, usually translated as "variant reading," seem to have been used by commentators to designate not only alternative readings that they had actually encountered in manuscripts, but also alternative or "more pleasing" (*ramy-atara*) turns of phrase that they offered as improvements on the commented text when they saw it as lacking grammatical, social, or aesthetic propriety.<sup>83</sup> It is quite possible<sup>84</sup> that Devavimala, while commenting on his own poem, envisaged a number of potential improvements, while preserving and explaining the original version, as standard commentators often do.<sup>85</sup>

# Appropriating, Defying, and Creating Tradition

Paul Dundas<sup>86</sup> has also pointed out that Devavimala, in his autocommentary on the *Hīrasaubhāgya*, quotes other poets, and refers in particular to "around two hundred turns of phrase which he has borrowed from Śrīharṣa," the twelfth-century author of the celebrated *Naiṣadhīyacarita*. These "openly recorded borrowings" draw a complex intertextual web meant to highlight the various appropriations (*haraṇa*)—deemed legitimate by treatises of poetics such as Rājaśekhara's *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*—of famous

**84** Devavimala explains at the end of his work (v. 21 in the *granthapraśasti*) that his poem was entirely "revised" (*samaśodhyata*) by Dhanavijaya, disciple of Kalyāṇavijaya (and then implores his learned readers to make further corrections if additional mistakes are spotted); one could therefore also consider the possibility that the commentary was "revised" as well and that some additions were made in the process.

**85** The tenth-century commentator Vallabhadeva, for instance, while suggesting a number of improved "readings" in the poems of Kālidāsa, is usually careful to transmit the readings that he deems faulty or vulgar (*asabhya, Kumārasaṃbhavaṭīkā*, 79 on 3.41); see, for example, Pollock, "What Was Philology," 121, on "suggested revisions" without actual alterations of the text. This did not prevent such "improvements" from having a great influence on the transmission of texts, as some scribes revised the text they were copying against commentaries (see Goodall and Isaacson, *The Raghupañcikā*, xxxii and n. 49).

86 Dundas, History, Scripture and Controversy, 62–63.

**<sup>81</sup>** Granoff, "Mountains of Eternity," 38n17. See, for example, *Hīrasaubhāgyavyākhyā*, 757, which first explains *campakaḥ puṣpapītaḥ* in verse 15.16, before adding *campako'smin sapuṣpa iti pāṭhe* and proceeding to explain this other "reading."

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, above, n. 12.

**<sup>83</sup>** On such "improvements" by commentators see, in particular, Goodall and Isaacson, *The Raghupañcikā*, xxxi-xl; and Goodall, "Retracer la transmission." Pollock, "Sanskrit Literary Culture," 112, quotes a verse from the twelfth-century *Pṛthvīrājavijaya*, complaining about the tendency of commentators to emend poems.

poems of the past. As Phyllis Granoff puts it, while discussing Devavimala's depiction of the Jain holy mountain Śatruñjaya: "The commentary[...]explains the source of these images: it is always other poetry;" and by systematically pointing out this indebtedness, it makes clear that "the poet responds not to nature but to the descriptions of nature provided by his predecessors."<sup>87</sup> This considerable attention devoted to intertextuality,<sup>88</sup> which no doubt was seen as enhancing the poet's prestige, is but one aspect of the strikingly ambivalent attitude of autocommentaries to tradition.

For autocommentaries attempted to connect the work on which they commented with existing traditions by systematically highlighting its intertextuality, as Devavimala does; but *śāstric* autocommentaries in particular were also certainly seen as *defying* tradition—at least insofar as instead of commenting on an older text, they explained a freshly composed one. They thereby gave the latter the prestigious, foundational status of *sūtras*, claiming to consecrate this oxymoronic reality: a new tradition. In this respect it is of interest that the Sanskrit compounds meaning "autocommentary," commonly prefixed by *sva* ("one's own"), were not understood as meaning "*one's own* commentary," but rather, "a commentary *on one's own* [*work*],"<sup>89</sup> the latter being often described (even though quite late)<sup>90</sup> as "self-invented" (*svopajña*)—an expression usually employed disdainfully to distinguish mere individual opinions from views properly sanctioned by tradition and scripture.<sup>91</sup> In an interesting discussion staged at the beginning of Hemacandra's *Pramāṇamīmāṃsā* to justify its form (that of aphorisms accompanied by a commentary), what Hemacandra's interlocutor criticizes is precisely the fact that he has produced aphorisms of his own instead of commenting on traditional ones.

[—Objection:] But if these aphorisms on the Jaina doctrine are yours, then before you, what or whose were they? [—Answer:] You have [just] asked about far too little! You should also ask about this: what were the aphorisms of grammar, [prosody, Vaiśeşika,] etc., and whose were they, before Pāṇini, Piṅgala, Akṣapāda and the [other renowned composers of aphorisms]? These sciences are in fact beginningless, [but we] talk about them as [if they were] ever new, and as belonging to this or that author, according to whether the intention [in a given work] was to [present them] in brief or at length;

#### 87 Granoff, "Mountains of Eternity," 38.

**89** See, for example, Vāmana's *Kāvyālankārasūtravṛtti*, 1, where the work is described as "a commentary on his own *Kāvyālankāra* aphorisms" (*kāvyālankārasūtrāņām sveṣām vṛtti*ħ); Hemacandra's *Yogašāstra*, 1:1: "a commentary on the specific meaning of my own *Yogašāstra*" (*sva yogašāstrārthavišeṣanirṇayaħ*); *Pramāņāmīmāmsā*, second introductory verse: "a commentary on my own aphorisms on the Jaina doctrine" (*jainasiddhāntasūtrāņām sveṣām vṛtti*ħ), etc.

**90** Monier-Williams, *Dictionary* (s.v.) traces the compound back to Hemacandra, without providing any precise reference. Later authors use it (e.g., Devavimala, see above, n. 72); it appears in many late colophons and is widely used in printed editions and secondary literature.

**91** See, for example, its repeated use in Jayaratha's *Tantrālokaviveka*, as in the introduction to *Tantrāloka* 1.243: *etac ca na svopajñam api tu sarvatraivāgameşūktam*... "And this is not a mere individual opinion (*svopajña*); rather, it is stated absolutely everywhere in the scriptures...."

**<sup>88</sup>** It is in fact already found in some standard commentaries, although usually not to the same extent: see, for example, Pollock, "What Was Philology," 126–27, on the fourteenth-century commentator Aruṇagirinātha, for whom making sense of Kālidāsa's *Kumārasaṃbhava* "meant above all embedding it in a set of intertexts."

have you not heard [the maxim]: 'The world never becomes different'? Or have a look at the *Tattvārthasūtra*, this jewel crowning all treatises, composed by the greatest of all authors! [—Objection:] If so, why have [you] not undertaken only a [single] work (*prakaraṇa*), such as Akalaṅka's, Dharmakīrti's and so on—why this pretension to be an author of aphorisms (*sūtrakāra*)? [—Answer]: Please do not talk like this: the present writer is [simply] of a different inclination, so since there is no public or royal decree going against his own free will, [your objection] amounts to naught!<sup>92</sup>

The opponent insists that the format unduly endows the writer with the prestige of a *sūtrakāra*, and Hemacandra's reply is in some respects rather conservative, since he argues that nothing is new under the sun (thus presenting his own work as devoid of novelty) and grounds his endeavour in the Jain tradition by invoking the revered precedent of the *Tattvārthasūtra* (the *Bhāṣya* of which is believed by many Jains to be an autocommentary). Yet, not to mention that this enables him to place his own work at the same level as the venerable *sūtras* that he cites, he also firmly—and somewhat sarcastically—asserts his right to write as he pleases; and even his adversary's laudatory mentions of single works (as opposed to aphorisms with their gloss, it seems) might also be Hemacandra's way of making fun of his portrayed interlocutor: the two prestigious authors mentioned, Akalańka and Dharmakīrti, happen to have used the autocommentary format, their verses being explicitly depicted as *sūtras* in their respective traditions.<sup>93</sup>

This ambiguity with respect to tradition is also evident in Utpaladeva's  $\bar{l}$ *śvarapratyabhijñā* treatise, which contains, besides aphoristic verses, two autocommentaries: a short gloss, *Vrtti*, and a more detailed (and partly lost) *Vivrti*.<sup>94</sup> In a lost part of the latter that is discussed at length in Abhinavagupta's extant commentary, Utpaladeva had compared the three levels of his treatise (aphorisms, short gloss, and lengthy explanation) to the Veda's threefold division into *Rc*, *Yajus*, and *Sāman*, and discussed in detail the identification of the three textual layers of his treatise with the different levels into which the universal Speech is said to unfold while progressively manifesting the phenomenal universe according to Bhartrhari and various Śaiva sources.<sup>95</sup> He thus appropriated both Vedic and Tantric traditions, depicting his own *sūtras* as the most condensed and purest expression of reality, and likening his efforts to explain them in his short and detailed

**93** Karņakagomin repeatedly designates the verses in the *Pramāņavārttika*'s first chapter as *sūtras* and calls Dharmakīrti the *sūtrakāra* (see, for example, *Pramāņavārttikasvavrttiţīkā*, 8); Abhayacandra calls *sūtras* the verses in Akalanka's self-commented *Laghīyastraya* (see 14, 20, etc.).

**94** On the latter and for further references see Ratié, *Utpaladeva*.

**95** *Îśvarapratyabhijñāvivrtivimarśinī*, 1:14–16; the Sanskrit and its translation are given in Ratié, *Utpaladeva*, 8–18.

**<sup>92</sup>** Pramāņamīmāmsā, 1: nanu yadi bhavadīyānīmāni jainasiddhāntasūtrāņi tarhi bhavataḥ pūrvam kāni kimīyāni vā tāny āsann iti? atyalpam idam anvayunkthāḥ. pāņinipingalakaņādākṣapādādibhyo 'pi pūrvam kāni kimīyāni vā vyākaraņādisūtrāņīty etad api paryanuyunkṣva. anādaya evaitā vidyāḥ samkṣepavistaravivakṣayā navanavībhavanti tattatkartrkāś cocyante. kim nāśrauṣīr na kadācid anīdṛśam jagad iti? yadi vā prekṣasva vācakamukhyaviracitāni sakalaśāstracūdāmaṇibhūtāni tattvārthasūtrāņīti. yady evam akalankadharmakīrtyādivat prakaraņam eva kim nārabhyate, kim anayā sūtrakāratvāhopuruṣikayā? maivaṃ vocaḥ, bhinnarucir hy ayaṃ janaḥ, tato nāsya svecchāpratibandhe laukikaṃ rājakīyaṃ vā śāsanam astīti yat kiñcid etat. For a somewhat different translation see Mookerjee, Hemacandra's Pramāṇamīmāmsā, 1–2.

commentaries to the cosmic emanation through which the unitary, infinite consciousness of Śiva comes to manifest itself in the form of a differentiated world. Yet Utpaladeva also boldly insisted that his treatise constituted a "new" (*nava*, *abhinava*) soteriological path capable of leading its readers to liberation independently of the study of any scripture,<sup>96</sup> in effect creating a new tradition within nondual Śaivism.

### Addressing Different Categories of Readersand Creating a Multitrack Soteriological Path

That Sanskrit autocommentaries were often meant to reach a category of readers different from that to which the commented work was addressed is particularly clear in cases where a given text was commented upon twice by its author. Thus Hemacandra chose a threefold format (namely, aphorisms with two autocommentaries: a Vrtti or short explanation, and a Viveka or detailed analysis) for his treatise on poetics, the Kāvyānuśāsana, and it has been surmised that this choice was made while having in mind, as Rasklal Parikh has put it, "the needs of primary and advanced students," the detailed autocommentary being designed for the latter.<sup>97</sup> More recently, Gary Tubb has also argued that "the most likely explanation" for the treatise's tripartite structure is that while the sūtras were meant to be memorized, the Vrtti was written for students "at an intermediate level," and the Viveka, for an "advanced class" pursuing "higher reaches of scholarship while retaining the basic framework that they were already familiar with" from the study of the Vrtti.<sup>98</sup> We should keep in mind, however, that Śālikanātha, for instance, claimed to have written an autocommentary so as to help the readers who were not capable of understanding the root-text on its own; in other words, his more detailed explanation was designed for a less advanced readership, not a more expert one.<sup>99</sup> Besides, Hemacandra's adoption of this three-layered structure may have been influenced by Utpaladeva's *İśvarapratyabhijñā* treatise (on which Abhinavagupta, with whose works Hemacandra was familiar, has authored two commentaries); and whether he borrowed it from the Śaiva author or not, Utpaladeva, for his part, defined the respective readerships for the different levels of this work in a way that leaves no room for the presupposition that a more detailed commentary must address a more advanced readership.

Thus, traditional lists enumerating the various functions of Sanskrit commentaries,<sup>100</sup> such as the analysis of words and sentence structures, usually include as their last item "[stating] objections and refuting [them]" (*ākṣepapratisamādhāna*): that is, showing how a text anticipates and successfully answers all possible objections based on rival theories. But Utpaladeva seems to have split those lists, reserving their last function for

<sup>96</sup> See Ratié, "Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta," 438.

<sup>97</sup> Parikh, Introduction to Kāvyānuśāsana, cccxiii; cf. Athavale's note 1 on the text.

<sup>98</sup> Tubb, "Hemacandra," 63; cf. Tubb and Boose, Scholastic Sanskrit, 3.

<sup>99</sup> See above, n. 68.

**<sup>100</sup>** For a discussion of the available sources regarding these five- or sixfold lists and further references, see Ratié, *Utpaladeva*, 12–14.

his detailed *Vivrti*<sup>101</sup> while ascribing the tasks pertaining to word-by-word explanation to his much shorter Vrtti. In the lost introductory passage of his Vivrti, he had also made clear that the three levels of his work were meant for different readers and, as Abhinavagupta explains, he argued there that only the Vivrti "can be understood by everybody" (sarvajanapratipattiyogya), because only its dialectical method of examining all possible objections and responses can purify the minds that, being polluted by the erroneous views of "other religions" (*tīrthāntara*), are incapable of grasping the truths contained in the aphorisms and Vrtti. He argued, however, that those whose minds are not thus stained do not need the Vivrti to understand the aphorisms and Vrtti, the sūtras being even capable of bringing about liberation on their own in those already sufficiently advanced on the Saiva nondualistic path. The multi-layered structure of Utpaladeva's treatise therefore enabled him both to claim a universal readership for his treatise and to address his fellow Śaiva initiates as a privileged group of readers: he could compete with his Buddhist rivals by asserting that those fit to study his work (adhikārin), far from being restricted to male Brahmans, were simply "whoever is born," regardless of their caste, religious background and so forth,<sup>102</sup> and yet preserve a kind of soteriological fast lane for those belonging to his own religious tradition, since only non-Śaivas needed to go through the lengthy Vivrti in order to gain the liberating insight.

### By Way of Conclusion: On the Self-Awareness of Self-Commenting Authors

Studies on autocommentaries in Western traditions have pointed out that the genre appeared "at the time of heightened self-awareness that characterized the Trecento and Quattrocento" (that, is the fourteenth and fifteenth century in Italy); that writers had recourse to it so as "to construct or self-fashion a modern authorial identity"<sup>103</sup>; and that it has "received scant attention, partly because critics have taken an over-cautious approach to authorship after Roland Barthes famously proclaimed 'the death of the author'."<sup>104</sup> From this viewpoint, the case of Sanskrit autocommentaries seems strikingly different: whereas Barthes sees "the Author" as "a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages[...], it discovered the prestige of the individual,"<sup>105</sup> the works considered here were written in a culture where, as Marcel Mauss noticed long ago,<sup>106</sup> the individual self often stood accused of being a mental construct hiding a higher reality (whether the latter was understood as the presence of a transpersonal self, or as the actual lack of any enduring identity). And as seen above, not only are Sanskrit

**<sup>101</sup>** See *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivimarśinī*, 1:16–17, quoted and discussed in Ratié, *Utpaladeva*, 9–11 and 14.

<sup>102</sup> See Ratié, Le Soi et l'Autre, 8n13.

**<sup>103</sup>** McLaughlin, "Alberti's *Commentarium*," 28; on this see, in particular, Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, and Ascoli, *Dante*.

<sup>104</sup> Venturi's Introduction to Self-Commentary, 4.

**<sup>105</sup>** Barthes, *The Death of the Author*, 142–43.

<sup>106</sup> Mauss, "Une catégorie," 273.

autocommentaries usually devoid of any biographical element that might help delineate the writer's individuality, they go to great lengths to dissolve the writer's self into impersonal turns of phrases and to break it down into a multiplicity of functional roles (the "author of the aphorisms," etc.).

Yet we should not assume that, in South Asia, self-commenting and self-awareness or self-fashioning were fundamentally unrelated, if only because (as pointed out by Sanderson) Mauss's evolutionistic view of India as a culture where the notion of the person was prevented from fully emerging by metaphysical criticisms of the self is problematic in many respects<sup>107</sup>—and also because the spectacular split of the authorial self described above certainly helped autocommentators fashion themselves as selfless transmitters of an impersonal truth. Besides, Utpaladeva and Hemacandra, who both went so far as including in some of their treatises two distinct self-exegetical layers, seem to have found a singular voice in their autocommentarial practice, and their authorial individuality emerges at times in the very midst of their conspicuous attempts to suppress it. Utpaladeva, while ostentatiously effacing himself behind a transpersonal Speech, also happened to highlight the novelty of his threefold treatise (and the differentiated soteriological path that it made possible) in a fashion that must have appeared quite extraordinary in tenth-century Kashmir. Hemacandra, while denying the novelty of his own work, asserted his right to compose it by virtue of his free will.

Moreover, the Saivas at least explicitly linked their own understanding of the self and self-awareness with their autocommentarial practices. For nondual Śaivism sees as the true self (*ātman*) of every individual a single, all-encompassing consciousness identified as the god Śiva that manifests itself in the form of the infinitely manifold universe, playfully forgetting its own identity to enact the world's play, yet somehow remaining blissfully aware of it through an intuitive act of self-apprehension (*svavimarśa*)<sup>108</sup>—the very term that Maheśvarānanda uses to describe the first of his motivations for writing an autocommentary.<sup>109</sup> In the lost introduction of his *Vivrti*, Utpaladeva, for his part, had described the three textual levels of his treatise—entirely devoted to showing that any individual should recognize his-/herself as Siva—as the discursive unfolding of the ultimate consciousness's self-awareness, and his commentator Abhinavagupta felicitously depicts him as adopting the various theatrical "roles" of the sūtra-, vrtti- and *vivrti-kāras*: playfully becoming in turn the author of the verses, and those of the short and long commentaries, Utpaladeva prevents his readers from fully identifying him with any one of them, and suggests through the very format of his work that the paradoxical nature of the self is its fundamental plasticity, its ability to manifest itself in roles that do not exhaust its identity, and to appear as other, without ceasing to be itself.

<sup>107</sup> Sanderson, "Purity and Power," 190.

<sup>108</sup> On the Śaiva nondualistic definition of identity and otherness see Ratié, Le Soi et l'Autre.

**<sup>109</sup>** See above, n. 69.

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**Abstract** The practice of writing a commentary on one's own work has long been studied by historians focusing on the European Renaissance; but it was also very common in classical and medieval India. The article provides an overview of the phenomenon in Sanskrit sources while exploring hypotheses on its origins and goals.

**Keywords** commentaries, autocommentary, self-commentary, hermeneutics, India, South Asia; Sanskrit, Hemacandra, Utpaladeva

# ORAL COMMENTARIES AND SCHOLARLY DEBATES IN SANSKRIT PHILOSOPHY

# ELISA FRESCHI, JONATHAN PETERSON, and AJAY RAO

OVER THE FALL and winter of 2020–2021, students and faculty at the University of Toronto and the Manipal Academy of Higher Education in India came together to study with two renowned scholars of classical Sanskrit knowledge systems: Shree Vidyashreesha Tirtha (formerly Dr. D. Prahladacharya) and Dr. Mani Dravid Shastrigal.<sup>1</sup> As in many traditional learning contexts, these pandits used oral commentary in Sanskrit to guide students through philosophical texts. Unlike in most traditional learning contexts, however, this oral commentary was conducted entirely online via the Zoom conferencing platform. This paper highlights the continuities and disjunctures of this digital commentarial experience within the larger genre of Sanskrit philosophical commentaries and explores the relationship between written commentary and orality in this new media landscape.

The pandits taught sections of two influential works of philosophy and metaphysics: the *Nyāyāmṛta* (Ambrosia of Logic) by Vyāsatīrtha (fifteenth/sixteenth century) and a polemical rejoinder known as the *Advaitasiddhi* (The Success of Non-Dualism) written by Madhusūdana Sarasvatī (sixteenth century). In addition to being highly intertextual—incorporating excerpts and citations from a millennium of writings—these texts are highly technical and require expertise in several Sanskrit knowledge systems, making the oral exegesis of an expert all the more necessary for their study. The first part of this paper, attributed to Elisa Freschi, introduces Sanskrit philosophical commentaries in a broad sense. By showing how philosophical commentaries function through networks of inter-texts, Freschi explains how commentary was the *de facto* way of doing philosophy for Sanskrit intellectuals. The next section, attributed to Jonathan Peterson, contextualizes Vyāsatīrtha and Madhusūdana Sarasvatī within two influential (but mutually antagonistic) traditions of scriptural hermeneutics known as *Vedānta*. The third section, attributed to Ajay Rao, uses the sessions with Vidyashreesha to examine the relationship between textuality and orality in the context of Vedānta commentary.<sup>2</sup>

### **Commentaries as Networks**

What makes a text a "commentary"? The question, as Isabelle Ratié shows in this issue, requires a complicated answer. There is no single word for "commentary" in Sanskrit.

I Vidyashreesha Tirtha is the forty-second monastic head of the Vyasaraja Matha at Sosale, Karnataka. Mani Dravid Shastrigal is professor of Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta at the Madras Sanskrit College. A special thanks goes to Anusha Rao (Toronto) and Srinivasan Acharya (Manipal) for their work in coordinating these sessions.

**<sup>2</sup>** Discussing orality in the premodern Sanskrit cosmopolis goes beyond the scope of this article, but readers might consult Scharfe, *Education in Ancient India*.

Rather, there are several, each of which conveys different qualities and degrees of textual engagement. The *bhāṣya*, for instance, usually entails an extensive elaboration on a concise (often cryptic) root text: the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali is but one of many examples. A *vārttika*, on the other hand, often indicates a concise, laconic commentary—Kātyāyana's *Vārttika* on Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, for instance. Vārttikas need not be prose: Kumārila's influential *Ślokavārttika*—a commentary on Śabara's *Mīmāṃsābhāṣya*—was composed entirely in verse. Still others are prosimetric: Kumārila's *Tantravārttika* and many others use pithy verses to summarize long prose sections. The versatility and prevalence of the *vārttika* is captured in a popular Sanskrit maxim:

uktānuktaduruktānāṃ cintā yatra pravartate | taṃ granthaṃ vārttikaṃ prāhur vārttikajñā manīṣiṇaḥ ||

Wherever a person elaborates on what was said, not said, or simply poorly said, the people who know about commentaries call the resulting composition a *vārttika*.<sup>3</sup>

Yet Sanskrit commentators were hardly restricted to *bhāṣya* and *vārttika*. The terms *vyākhyā* or *vyākhyāna* (literally, "explaining") usually designate extensive sub-commentaries. A *țippaņī*, by contrast, tends to be a selective sub-commentary, focusing only on certain points of a text for elaboration.<sup>4</sup> These and many other words suggest (perhaps like the proverbial case of the many words for 'snow' in Inuit languages) a long familiarity among Sanskrit intellectuals with various commentarial practices and approaches to texts.<sup>5</sup>

Like most Sanskrit commentaries, philosophical commentaries coalesce around a root text (*mūlagrantha*). Yet it is misleading to suggest that what makes a philosophical commentary "philosophical" is the root text itself.<sup>6</sup> Rather, a philosophical commentary is recognizable as such because the writers (or speakers) structure their arguments around a root text using a set of common argumentative tools: for example, inner consistency, *reductio ad absurdum*, clash with mutually accepted texts or with other shared tenets, and so on. In other words, a premodern Sanskrit philosopher (in theory) would not reject another opinion simply because it belonged to a certain religious community, sect, or doctrine, but because the argument did not hold up to a set of shared rational or exegetical principles.<sup>7</sup>

- **6** There are numerous philosophical commentaries on root texts that were not philosophical: the case of Abhinavagupta's commentary on the *Paratrimśikā*, for instance.
- 7 In practice, a Sanskrit philosopher may indeed harbour biases against a given system or

**<sup>3</sup>** Quoted from the entry on *vārttika* in the *Śabdakalpadruma*, which attributes it to Hemacandra.

**<sup>4</sup>** These descriptions are merely indicative. Many more terms are employed, especially in later texts, often playing with the metaphor of light as knowledge ("Light on X," "The rising moon of Y," "Shining a lamp on Z"). More details can be read in Preisendanz, "Text, Commentary, Annotation" and Ganeri, "Sanskrit Philosophical Commentary."

**<sup>5</sup>** This is not unique to Sanskrit contexts. There are various Latin words, from *glossa* onwards, that are translated as "commentary." As this issue reveals, the ubiquity of commentaries in various cultural and historical contexts puts our contemporary emphasis on originality and innovation into sharp relief.

Although a Sanskrit intellectual might have spoken a vernacular language, they would have used a form of Sanskrit commentary to do philosophy. Indeed, Sanskrit commentary has been one of the primary ways of doing philosophy since the first millennium to today.<sup>8</sup> This long tradition of philosophical commentary allows us to make several observations about its characteristics.

### **Original or Derivative?**

As others in this volume have shown, commentary is hardly derivative. For Sanskrit intellectuals, the formal constraints of commentary were not determinative of philosophical value. Innovation was often achieved through close engagement with the author's predecessors and opponents. For example, the fourth aphorism of the  $P\bar{u}rva$   $M\bar{n}m\bar{a}ms\bar{a}$  $S\bar{u}tra$  (dedicated to sense perception) consists of a single sentence. In most modern printed editions, Śabara's commentary extends for a number of pages, and Kumārila's (engaging both the root text and that of Śabara) extends for hundreds of pages (to say nothing of Kumārila's sub-commentators). In this sense, the aphorism is little more than a prompt for commentators to innovate new positions, albeit almost always under the aegis of establishing the true meaning of the aphorism itself.<sup>9</sup>

Additionally, theorizations of *arthāpatti* (a postulation based on cogent evidence) show a striking degree of innovation. In his commentary on the *Mīmāṃsasūtrabhāṣya* of Śabara, Prabhākara (eighth century) argues that *arthāpatti* is different from inference, and does so using stock cases of inferential awareness: fire (the *probandum*, or fact requiring proof), according to Prabhākara, is factually and ontologically impossible without smoke (the *probans*, a fact offered as evidence to prove another fact). In the case of *arthāpatti*, however, the *probans* (for example, Caitra's absence from home) is factually impossible without the *probandum* (for example, Caitra's being outside). Śālikanātha, Prabhākara's commentator, fiddles with Prabhākara's earlier formulation to suggest that *arthāpatti* is indeed different from inference, but only because it includes the intermediate step of doubt. In other words, Śālikanātha uses *arthāpatti* as the pretext for a radically new formulation of epistemic knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

For intellectuals like Śālikanātha and many others, then, a commentary is at once an act of humility and of hubris—he does not praise his innovations, but rather locates

community, but that bias is often channelled into showing how that system is not supported by rational inquiry.

**<sup>8</sup>** There are a small number of earlier aphoristic texts that do not present themselves as commentaries, but which often evoke other views and quote other authors. After Maṇḍana (eighth century), one also starts seeing monographs dedicated to specific topics. Still, even thematic monographs often take the form of verses/auto-commentary and they do not become the mainstream form of philosophy, since commentaries continue to build upon the overwhelming majority of philosophical texts.

<sup>9</sup> On innovations and their concealment in Sanskrit culture, see Bronner and McCrea, First Words.

**<sup>10</sup>** For more on Prabhākara and Śālikanātha, see Freschi, "Arthāpatti." The texts have been translated in Freschi and Ollett, "Prabhākara's Long Explanation" and "Śālikanātha's Straightforward and Lucid Gloss."

them in a tradition of exegesis of truths that were, in theory and with enough acuity and intelligence, always discoverable in the root text itself.

# Low Level or High Level?

Lower-level explanations of word-meanings, sentence syntax, and so forth are mixed with high-level elaborations. This means that even the most self-confident intellectual will not disdain the seemingly tedious work of providing word glosses and grammatical explanation. In reality, the two forms of commentarial labour are complementary. Higher-level analysis is often built on an edifice of granular grammatical and exegetical reasoning, and, as the next section will suggest, the intellectual commitments of Vedānta commentators often shape analysis at the word level.

# Past or Present Interlocutors?

Sanskrit philosophical commentary assumes the possibility of discussion with present and past interlocutors. The commentarial method of philosophy requires that intellectuals develop their work in dialogue with their predecessors. Unlike other philosophical traditions, Sanskrit philosophical commentaries typically involve a long series of dialogues among possible interpretations and positions.

# Marks of Textual Reuse?

Sanskrit philosophers will often explicitly refer to texts of opposing intellectuals or schools. But they will often silently reuse texts of their own school, since they consider these to be part of their own history and thus immediately recognizable to their audience.

# Fair or Biased Representation of Opponents?

Sanskrit philosophers usually represent opposing positions and interlocutors fairly. This is likely connected to a long tradition of institutionalized oral debate in which misrepresenting the view of an opponent is a debate-defeating mistake. Moreover, the arguments found in commentaries were probably enacted in debates. Hence, misrepresentation would make a person more vulnerable to an opponent's real arguments on the debate stage.<sup>11</sup>

# **Open-Ended or Final Word?**

Commentary allows for a never-ending play of possible interpretations. Abhinavagupta lists eighteen interpretations of the word *anuttara* (literally, "not-superior," presented in many different ways) in his *Parātriņśikāvivaraņa*; yet even then, Abhinavagupta stays within the theoretical horizon of possible exegesis. Indeed, Sanskrit philosophers, as a matter of course, assumed that the root text contained all the points that the philosopher wanted to make. In other words, the task of the commentator is to convince others that they are drawing arguments out of the text rather than foisting arguments upon the

**II** We owe this insight to Ernst Steinkellner.

text. A commentator could not simply read anything into the root text itself (although they sometimes did, as the next section details). While the target of interpretation might allow for a range of interpretations, in reality the field of possible interpretations is limited by the text as a whole. In short, a Sanskrit commentator will strive to make exegesis at the local level consistent with the text as a global whole.

From about the tenth century onwards, two further consequences are worth high-lighting.

### **Commentaries on Networks of Texts**

Commentators tend to engage networks of texts rather than a single text. This, at least in part, may have been a consequence of the commentarial genre itself: to comment on a single text would necessarily entail a familiarity with layers of commentaries and subcommentaries. Commentators tend to focus either on a single root text or a root text along with a chain of commentaries. Vācaspatimiśra's commentary on Uddyotakara's *Nyāyavārttika*, for instance, takes into account Vātsyāyana's *Nyāyabhāṣya* along with the root *Nyāyasūtra*s.

### **Comments as Appropriation**

As a consequence of the point immediately above, a commentator not only engages the texts of their own school, but also the influential texts of other schools. Take for instance Śańkara's commentaries on the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Upaniṣads*, or Abhinavagupta's commentary on the *Parātriṃśikā*. In both cases, a commentary plants a flag on the root text itself. Commentators might jostle over a single root text, each vying with the other to establish their own commentary as the definitive analysis. As the next section shows, this is particularly true of Vedānta commentators. Still later, this practice will allow for refutations written in the form of commentaries, like Madhusūdana's *Advaitasiddhi*.

### Vedanta and the Practice of Commentary

In its narrowest sense, the term *Vedānta* designates a body of scriptures also known as the "Vedānta" ("The End of the Vedas," that is, the *Upaniṣads*). But by the end of the first millennium CE, the term had become associated with several systems of theological hermeneutics based, in part, on the interpretation of the *Upaniṣads*. Theologians and philosophers of Vedānta in this later, broader sense understood the term to be teleological in two ways: "Vedānta" signals both the end of the Vedic corpus and the culmination of the *Vedas*' soteriological promise; and a progression from arcane ritualism to subtle instructions on the divine.<sup>12</sup> The *Upaniṣads* probably attracted oral commentary from their earliest composition and transmission in the last millennium BCE. But proponents of Vedānta living in the first and second millennia CE approached the *Upaniṣads* through newer commentarial lineages and through wider networks of texts, including the gno-

**<sup>12</sup>** Despite indicating the closing of the Vedic canon, the *Upanişads* were something of an open genre, with new *Upanişads* authored well into the modern era.

mic *Brahmasūtras* (*Vedāntasūtras*) of Bādarāyaņa (ca. third to fourth century CE) as well as popular literary and devotional works like the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Rāmāyaņa*.<sup>13</sup>

The three most influential frameworks for speculating about the true meaning of the *Upanişads* and other core Vedānta sources were those attributed to Śaṅkara (ca. eighth century), Rāmānuja (eleventh century), and Madhva (fourteenth century), each of whom would become associated with distinct systems of metaphysics, epistemology, ritual, and devotion: the non-dualist (Advaita) Vedānta attributed to Śaṅkara, the qualified non-dualist (Viśiṣiṣādvaita) Vedānta of Rāmānuja, and the dualist (Dvaita) Vedānta of Madhva . While these were the most popular, there were many others—the Vedāntas of Nimbarka (ca. thirteenth century) and Caitanya Mahāprabhu (fifteenth century), or the Sufi-inflected Vedānta of Banwālīdās Walī (seventeenth century) and other brokers of mystical Islam and vernacular devotion. The subjects of this paper, Vyāsatīrtha and Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, lived in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and promoted forms of Vedānta attributed to Madhva and Śaṅkara, respectively.

Vedānta intellectuals were, as a matter of course, commentators par excellence, and the work of doing commentary entailed both oral and written engagement with Vedānta texts. As highlighted above, forms of critical explication not only linked an interpreter to those in the recent and the distant pasts, but also to their contemporaries. For a student of Vedānta living in the sixteenth century, one's introduction to the world of textual commentary would have been through the oral instructions of a preceptor. This preceptor might have been the student's father or a close relative, and the teacher's house might have been the locus of instruction. In many cases, a student would study at a monastic college (*mațha*) and spend a decade or more learning from a prominent teacher and monastic head. In elite contexts—those largely restricted to Brahman boys and men the medium of instruction would have been Sanskrit, but occasional clarifications might have been offered in a shared local language.<sup>14</sup> Vedānta enjoyed a vibrant vernacular life as well. Indian libraries and archives are replete with Vedānta texts written in various regional languages.<sup>15</sup> The heterogenous and multilingual terrain of Vedānta commentary makes speaking of Vedānta in universal or totalizing terms impossible.

A Vedānta commentator's engagement with earlier sources was hardly the reflex of an unthinking traditionalism. While a commentary functioned to clarify meaning, it often did so as a pretext for brazen new projects. Lawrence McCrea has shown this in the case of the prolific scholar of Advaita Vedānta, Appayya Dīkṣita (ca. 1520–1593), who dredged from obscurity a moribund commentary on the *Brahmasūtras* in order to advance conclusions that occasionally seem at odds with the root text itself.<sup>16</sup> Proponents of all variety of Vedāntas embarked on bold re-readings of Vedānta texts,

**<sup>13</sup>** The abundance of deictic words in the *Upanisads*, as Patrick Olivelle has noted, suggests a culture of oral instruction and explication: see Olivelle, *The Early Upanishads*, 8.

<sup>14</sup> Edwin Gerow notes this in his study of Sanskrit education at the Mysore Sanskrit College: "Primary Education."

**<sup>15</sup>** Vernacularized Vedāntas are occasionally positioned against cultures of Sanskrit piety. See, for example, Novetzke, *The Quotidian Revolution*.

<sup>16</sup> McCrea, "Appayyadīksita's Invention."

and they often did so by passing their work off as the original purport of an older author, the kernel of truth that generations of intermediating commentators seem to have missed. In the context of the Mediterranean world, historian Ryan Spietzch has described this kind of commentarial project as doing exegesis "eisegetically," that is, a "manner of reading that inserts one's assumptions and biases into the process of interpretation."<sup>17</sup> For Sanskrit intellectuals, the success of even the boldest eisegetical project was often tied to a commentator's command over the technologies of interpretation, especially grammar (Vyākaraṇa) and hermeneutics (Pūrva Mīmāṃsā). Success was also tied to the kinds of sources a commentator used to make their case. Madhva Ācārya (ca. 1238–1317)—the progenitor of a unique brand of dualist Vedānta—brings into sharp relief how interpretation and canon could be massaged to promote new systems of philosophy and devotion. The backlash against Madhva and his followers also highlights the consequences of the perceived abuse of texts and their technologies of interpretation.

A Brahman from southwest India, Madhva was well-acquainted with the Vedāntas of Rāmānuja and Śankara. Hagiographers like Nārāyana (ca. fourteenth century) tell us that Madhva had been educated in the non-dualist Vedanta tradition of Śańkara but that he effectively abandoned Śańkara's Vedānta after having direct insights into the nature of God. Although direct (and experiential) knowledge of the divine is central to the soteriological methods of all the Vedāntas, Madhva (in an extraordinary moment in the history of religion in South Asia) bolstered his claims of epiphanic knowledge with a kind of messianic authority forged, in part, on the claim that he was an incarnation of the Vedic god of wind, Vāyu. Madhva further cemented his authority as a Vedānta commentator by drawing on a deep reservoir of proof texts, many of which were altogether unknown even to close contemporaries.<sup>18</sup> Madhva's commentaries are shot through with references to dozens of texts that his critics, both past and present, accuse Madhva of having invented. Madhva's use of both known and unknown sources in building his dualist Vedānta is profoundly important for histories of popular religion in South Asia. It was also the starting point for a volley of interreligious polemics that fundamentally reshaped the lives and interests of early modern Vedanta intellectuals.

It would be nearly two centuries after Madhva's death, in the early fourteenth century, before followers of other Vedāntas addressed his system explicitly. Several developments contribute to this delay. Although a marginal upstart movement at first, Madhva's Vedānta had attracted legions of followers by the sixteenth century, when the first overt anti-Madhva writings began circulating. Devotees and disciples effectively transformed the coastal village of Udupi, near Madhva's birthplace, into the central node of a vast network of monasteries and temples that extended throughout the Tamil

**<sup>17</sup>** Szpiech, "Introduction," 10. Szpiech recognizes that all interpretation is more or less eisegetical, but he uses the term to signify an almost deliberate stretching of a text well beyond what an ordinary act of explication might entail.

**<sup>18</sup>** Much has been written on Madhva's unknown sources, and I do not intend to make claims one way or the other about their historicity. My interest is in what his sources and their backlash can tell us about the assumptions and values early modern intellectuals brought to their study of texts.

country, coastal Karnataka, and the Deccan.<sup>19</sup> The prominence of Madhva's Vedānta in the sixteenth century was, in no small part, tied to the largesse of ruling elites, most notably patrons at the courts of the powerful Vijayanagara Empire and its vassals. The savvy political operator and scholar Vyāsatīrtha (ca. 1460–1539)—whose magisterial *Nyāyāmṛta* we studied with Vidyashreesha Tirtha—is arguably the apotheosis of a multi-generational project among Madhva's monastic elite to ingratiate themselves with power brokers in peninsular India.<sup>20</sup> Lastly, by the sixteenth century, several generations of learned commentators had disciplined Madhva's unruly and inconsistent writings into a highly sophisticated scholastic system from which to launch sagacious attacks against other Vedāntas. As a result, the emergence of an anti-Madhva backlash in the sixteenth century was fundamentally tied to both the discursive and material trajectories of Madhva's movement.

The sixteenth century saw a groundswell of sophisticated and acrimonious writings directed against Madhva and his followers.<sup>21</sup> Madhusūdana Sarasvatī wrote his enormously popular *Advaitasiddhi* (which we studied with Mani Dravid) in response to the *Nyāyāmṛta* of Vyāsatīrtha. Nṛsimhāśrama (ca. 1550s) wrote against Madhva in at least two of his most popular Vedānta writings.<sup>22</sup> And Appayya Dīkṣita wrote his truculent *Madhvatantramukhamardana* (Crushing the Face of Madhva's System) and auto-commentary, which inaugurated a series of brawling disputes that embroiled intellectuals for at least a century and a half.

One might be tempted to explain the anti-Mādhva backlash of the sixteenth century as the result of popularization alone. Madhva's Vedānta, the thinking might go, was simply too big to ignore. But if the rise of new religious movements and their popularization were enough to provoke the likes of Nṛsimhāśrama, Appayya, and others to scrawl their bitter denunciations, then why did these figures not write against Islam as well? The glaring absence of anti-Muslim writings in the Sanskrit archive has led some to speculate that the protocols governing Sanskrit philosophical debate were simply maladapted to engaging traditions of rational theology (no matter their sophistication and popularity) that operated under different commentarial conventions and modes of argumentation: a position that leaves open the possibility that Vedānta intellectuals found Islam to be a threat but simply lacked the tools to confront it.<sup>23</sup> A more likely explanation for the anti-Mādhva backlash of the sixteenth century was a combination of both popularization *and* proximity—Madhva and his followers were consummate insiders, and their

23 Minkowski, "Advaita Vedānta."

**<sup>19</sup>** Mādhva Vedānta figured in earlier doxographies of Śānkara Advaitins like Mādhava-Vidyāraṇya, but Appayya and Nṛsiṃhāśrama are the first to engage Mādhva Vedānta in a systematic way.

<sup>20</sup> See Stoker, Polemics and Patronage; and McCrea, "Freed by the Weight."

**<sup>21</sup>** Roque Mesquita has argued that scholars of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta like Varadaguru and Venkaṭanātha wrote against Madhva a generation after Madhva's death: Mesquita, *Madhva's Unknown Sources*.

**<sup>22</sup>** The *Advaitadīpikā* and *Vedāntatattvaviveka* both mention Madhva by name. They also mention the "New Mādhvas" (*navīnamādhva*). Nṛsimhāśrama also wrote the *Bhedadhikkāra*, which, although ostensibly analyzing the notion of distinction from the perspectives of Navya Nyāya, addresses certain Prābhākara-inflected Mādhva understandings of difference.

use of shared texts to advance doctrines and practices that were at cross-purposes with other Vedāntas pushed rival Vedānta commentators to put pens to paper and palm leaf.

The texts we studied with Vidyashreesha Tirtha and Mani Dravid Shastrigal emerged from this culture of oral and written debate. The sheer prevalence and durability of Vedānta texts (first in manuscript and later in print) make it all too easy to engage with Vedānta as a set of otherworldly ideas that somehow existed independently of history and its actors. Yet Vedānta texts (as both material and discursive events) belonged to, and shaped, the worlds of those who read, wrote, and taught them. A social history of Vedānta has yet to be written, but a critical turn towards the world of Vedānta sociality will necessarily include more thoroughgoing accounts of the institutions and practices of Vedānta knowledge production and pedagogy. To study texts of high scholasticism like the *Nyāyāmṛta* and *Advaitasiddhi* was, until relatively recently, an opportunity restricted to Brahman men. But the advent of new digital technologies has allowed students from different backgrounds, including women, non-Brahmans, and foreigners, to engage with Brahman intellectuals who continue to live and teach in otherwise restrictive spaces. The next section accordingly explores Vedānta philosophical commentary in this new digital environment.

### Vedanta Commentaries Across Media

Like all Sanskrit philosophical commentaries, Vedānta commentaries were composed in writing but preserve the markers of an oral culture that remained the theoretical ideal of scholastic discourse and, in practice, the predominant medium of pedagogical instruction. From the earliest period, Sanskrit philosophy retained an oral culture despite the widespread use of writing for both the composition and dissemination of texts. With the emergence of a Sanskrit manuscript culture in the first millennium CE, writing was increasingly required for philosophical writing in many genres. At the same time, the promulgation of the Vedic corpus, which itself makes no mention of writing, was entirely through oral transmission via an elaborate system of memorization. Because writing the Veda down was prohibited, the classic formulation of this position was articulated by Kumārila in the eighth century, asserting that the Veda loses its force entirely if learned by writing rather than from the mouth of a teacher.<sup>24</sup>

The dynamic relationship between writing and orality in Sanskrit philosophy is most clear in the context of traditional Sanskrit pedagogy, which is closely linked to the production of Sanskrit commentary. As mentioned above, there were a variety of institutional contexts for the study of Sanskrit in the second millennium, but the predominant locus for the teaching of Vedānta was the monastic college, which was usually associated with a temple. We have some historical evidence of Sanskrit instruction in these institutions, where it is apparent that texts were used as props by instructors during oral lectures. We know that manuscripts were expensive to produce and that citational practices indicate that texts must have been committed to memory.

**<sup>24</sup>** *Tantravārttika* 1.3.7. The Veda is no longer strictly oral, and the Veda was written down as early as the 11th-century in Kashmir.

More detailed evidence is available from ethnographies of contemporary Āgamic and Vedic pedagogical practices, enabling scholars to observe how students manoeuvre between printed texts and oral teaching.<sup>25</sup> While it would be a mistake to extrapolate from modern uses of printed texts to premodern uses of manuscripts, these ethnographies offer a glimpse of the prominent role memorization and recitation play in traditional Sanskrit pedagogy. In his study of Āgamic priestly institutions, C. J. Fuller shows how, unlike in the case of the Veda, memorization of Āgamic texts requires no special mnemonic techniques because orality and writing are interwoven at every stage.

Memorization involves two separable components: the memorization of the text in its printed form and the memorization of the sound of the text as articulated by the teacher, with special emphasis placed on the latter given the importance of correct recitation. Memorization in priestly institutions is also deeply communal and social: students repeat texts in two methods, one where they follow the articulation of the teacher and another where they gather together in groups. Subramaniam's and Knipe's studies of Vedic schools show even less reliance on printed texts for practices of memorization. The ethnographers note how memorization is viewed by students as engendering emotional attachment to the text memorized, which resonates with Charles Malamoud's analysis of how the text, memorialized through its expression in the throat, is incorporated in the person and rendered timeless.<sup>26</sup> While these relationships between the written text and oral discourse are evident in all genres of Sanskrit philosophy, they are especially apparent in commentarial writing. As ethnographers show, this remains the case in contemporary scholastic contexts.

The online lectures we organized bore all the hallmarks of traditional Sanskrit discourse, but they were also innovative. One way in which Sri Vidyashreesha Tirtha's lectures were traditional was that he inhabited the role of an exemplar of one of the two strands of modern Sanskrit scholarship, the pandit, as opposed to the professor.<sup>27</sup> The role of the professor developed from the 1850s, and this in turn influenced the modern category of the pandit, which remains an identity marker for many Sanskrit scholars. Oral culture is a critical part of what differentiates a pandit from a professor, since pandits memorize the texts that they teach and disseminate these texts to students orally. Moreover, pandits work from within a Sanskrit knowledge system and strive to avoid transgressing the foundational principles of the system.

In some ways, these online lectures resemble other examples of the mediatization of religion, whereby religious figures expand their relevance in a contemporary world in which people increasingly relate through digital media.<sup>28</sup> During the pandemic, other Sanskrit pandits in India also began offering Sanskrit courses online. The *Nyāyāmta* lectures in particular are an excellent example of how digital media can shape and trans-

**<sup>25</sup>** Subramaniam, *Brahmin Priest of Tamil Nadu*; Knipe, "Becoming a Veda"; Fuller, "Literacy and Memorialization."

<sup>26</sup> Malamoud, Cooking the World, 256.

<sup>27</sup> Deshpande, "Pandit and Professor."

<sup>28</sup> Hjarvard, "The Mediatisation of Religion."

form traditional cultural practices.<sup>29</sup> While the online medium did not significantly alter the formal aspects of Sanskrit discourse, there were very significant social differences, especially with regard to restrictions on those who are qualified to access Vedānta teaching. According to all Vedānta schools, knowledge of the Veda as an authoritative (revealed, "heard") body of discourse is only accessible to male members of the highest three castes (*dvijas*, or "twice borns"), and an elaborate theoretical discourse of social exclusion is built into discussions of qualifications for Vedic learning, extending to the discourse of Vedānta itself. In contrast, our lectures were open to all—women and men, Indians and foreigners (also excluded from traditional caste hierarchy). Vidyashreesha Tirtha graciously and openly engaged with female faculty and students and non-Indians throughout the series of lectures.

A brief analysis of a short excerpt from one of Sri Vidyashreesha's lectures illustrates the homologies between orality and commentary. Such lectures take an explicitly commentarial format, as they are structured around glossing and analysis of the root text; just as in commentary, the scholar quotes from the text, explains the meaning of words and phrases, and then provides contextualization and examples. The discussion below focuses on a passage in the *Nyāyāmrta*, a section of the commentary on that passage, and the lecture excerpt. The Nyāyāmrta itself is a highly technical text that covers an impressive range of topics in metaphysics and epistemology, including theories of perception and perceptual error, language philosophy, and the epistemic status of external reality. A work of the Dvaita Vedanta school, the Nyāyāmrta spawned a transregional debate that lasted several centuries, beginning with Madhusūdhana Sarasvatī's Advaita Vedānta rejoinder. The commentary on the Nyāyāmrta we are examining is the seventeenth-century Nyāyāmṛtaprakāśa of Śrīnivāsa Tīrtha. Given the complexity of these debates and their place within a long and dense history of Vedanta discourse, it will be impossible to do justice to the philosophical arguments here. Our focus instead is on the relationships between written commentary and orality evident in the text, commentary, and lecture.

The section of the *Nyāyāmṛta* we are examining involves a critical evaluation of the Advaita theory that the phenomenal world is false (*mithyā*). This theory is formulated as a logical inference: "the world is false because it is something merely experienced, just as silver in the case of nacre (*viśvam mithyā drśyatvāt śuktirajatavat*)." Nacre (also called mother-of-pearl) is shiny and metallic-looking, and can therefore be mistaken for the more precious silver. It has accordingly become a standard example of perceptual error in Sanskrit philosophy. Vyāsatīrtha restates the inference through the following question:

The opponent says that the phenomenal world is false. Here, there is a point of debate:

is or is not the phenomenal world other than brahman,<sup>30</sup> the counter-positive of a negation pertaining to the past, present, and future with reference to the substratum

<sup>29</sup> Campbell, Digital Religion.

**<sup>30</sup>** Here, *brahman* is the absolute reality, and the only one independently existing. Different schools of Vedānta understand *brahman* very differently, ranging from an impersonal absolute to a personal God.

that is apprehended, being sublated neither by that which is other than valid knowledge of brahman nor by standard qualified knowledge, and being differentiated from the unreal?<sup>31</sup>

Sureśvara Tīrtha's commentary and Vidyashreesha's lecture provide expansive explanations of each phrase of this short passage. Here is the analysis of one phrase.

"With reference to the substratum that is apprehended." The meaning is this: that which is apprehended as a substratum, with reference to it. The larger sense of the passage is that this qualification is to prevent over-extension to the unreal. For with the unreal there is no substratum which is apprehended.<sup>32</sup>

The explanation follows a pattern that structures both the commentary and the oral lecture, whereby each phrase in the *Nyāyāmṛta* restatement is justified as being required in order to avert defects in the inference. In this case, the defect in question is over-extension to the unreal (for example, a rabbit's horn), which for Advaitins along with the real (brahman) is separate from the world as false (*mithyā*). Sureśvara Tīrtha establishes this by first offering a concise gloss of the passage, marked by the turn of phrase "such is the meaning" (*ity arthaḥ*), which is followed by a slightly expanded explanation marked by the turn of phrase "such is the sense" (*iti bhāvaḥ*).

Vidyashreesha's lecture makes precisely the same point but with much more detail. We present here the translation of a transcription of three separate excerpts from a thirty-minute section of a two-hour lecture on this passage in the *Nyāyāmṛta*.

Here, "with reference to the substratum that is apprehended." "With reference to the substratum that is apprehended" means, when this silver is (erroneously) perceived, the actually existing nacre is perceived as silver. It is experienced there as "this is silver." Therefore, it is apprehended as the substratum for the superimposed silver. What is called 'substratum' is the locus. An illusory awareness arises, "here is silver." It is the nacre itself that is the substratum that is apprehended. The silver does not exist in the case of nacre in the past, present, and future. It was not, is not, and will not be. The silver was never there. It is not there now. And even in a future time it will not be. In this way, there is an absence of silver there in all the three times.<sup>33</sup>

Vidyashreesha presents an elaborate explanation of the concept of the substratum through the concrete example of the erroneous cognition of silver in nacre. Vidyashreesha continues:

In exactly the same way, because it is something merely experienced—an object of awareness—the phenomenal world is also the counter-positive of a negation pertaining

**<sup>31</sup>** nanu mithyaiva viśvam. tathā hi tatra vipratipattiḥ brahmapramānyena vā saprakāreņa vā abādhyatve sati asadvilakṣaṇatve sati brahmānyat pratipannopādhau traikālikaniṣedhapratiyogi na vā?

**<sup>32</sup>** "pratipannopādhāv iti." yasya yad adhisthānatvena pratipannam tatrety arthah. tucche ativyāptivāranāyedam višesanam. tatra pratipannopādher evābhāvād iti bhāvah.

**<sup>33</sup>** atra "pratipannopādhau." patipannopādhir nāma yatra idam rajatam pratīyate purato vidyamānā śuktir tatraiva rajatam pratīyate. idam rajatam iti tatra anubhavo jāyate. atah tasyāropitasya rajatasya upādhitvena pratipannah. upādhitvena nāma āśrayatvenātra vartate. atra rajatam astīti bhramo jātah. tatra pratipannopādhir bhavati śuktir eva. tasyām śuktau kālatraye 'pi rajatam nāsti. nāsīd nāsti na bhaviṣyati. tatra rajatam kadācid nāsīt. idānīm nāsti. bhaviṣyaty api kāle na bhaviṣyati. evamīrītyā kālatraye 'pi tatra rajataniṣedhaḥ vartate.

to the past, present, and future with reference to the substratum that is apprehended. In the case of the phenomenal world being perceived, it is in reality just as silver is perceived in nacre. For nacre is said to be the substratum. A substratum is a locus of superimposition. Where is the silver superimposed? In the nacre. Therefore, the nacre is the substratum since the silver is superimposed upon it. In the same way, this phenomenal world is superimposed. With reference to what is it superimposed? If one were to ask, what is the substratum? [The answer is,] the substratum is brahman.<sup>34</sup>

Here, Vidyashreesha explains how the example applies in the case of the world, the minor term of the inference. This careful, step-by-step approach guides the listeners through a series of densely woven textual arguments. Later in the lecture, Vidyashreesha closely follows Sureśvara when he identifies the defect in the inference.

The absolutely non-existent would also be included. The absolutely non-existent is other than brahman, and therefore that which is called unreal would also be included in the minor term of the inference. And this (the unreal) is also not the false. What is called the false, in the way just described, is falseness with reference to the substratum that appears. Now the absolutely non-existent is just the counter-positive of a negation pertaining to the past, present, and future. There is no substratum of appearance for that which bears this quality. The absolutely non-existent does not appear anywhere the way silver appears in nacre. Therefore, a substratum which is apprehended does not apply here.<sup>35</sup>

Through our brief analysis of these oral lectures and this particular example, we can see how contemporary oral commentaries in Sanskrit are at once contiguous with older traditions of philosophical exegesis while, at the same time, adaptable to new modes of transmission. The digital space has opened oral commentary to a much wider audience than the Sanskrit college or *matha* might typically allow. At the same time, the digital medium allows for a near-simultaneous textual engagement with oral commentary. In this context, the Zoom comments ("Chat") function became a kind of written tableau of the oral lecture, replete with questions, reflections, and banter. It is our hope that future discussions of Sanskrit philosophy engage more frequently with these and other dynamics of written and oral commentary.

**<sup>34</sup>** evam eva jagad api dršyatvāj jñānavišyatvāt pratipanopādhau traikālikanisedhapratiyogi. yatra idam jagat pratīyate vastuta idam yathā šuktau rajatam pratīyate. iti hetoḥ śuktir adhiṣṭhānam ity ucyate. yatrāropo bhavati tad adhiṣṭhānam. rajatasyāropaḥ kutra krtaḥ? śuktau krtaḥ. iti hetoḥ śuktir adhiṣṭhānam. rajatam hy āropitam. tadvad eva viśvam idam āropitam vartate. kutrāropitam? kim adhiṣṭhānam cet brahmaiva adhiṣṭhānam.

**<sup>35</sup>** atyantāsad api grahaņam bhavati. brahmānyad atyantāsat. yat tuccham ity ucyate tādršam api pakṣāntargatam bhavati. tatrāpi mithyātvam nāsti. mithyātvam nama idānīm uktarītyā pratipannopādhau traikālikaniṣedhapratiyogitvam mithyātvam. traikālikaniṣedhapratiyogitvamāt ram tāvad atyantāsato vartate. pratipannopādhir iti nāsty eva tatra tadviṣayi. yathā rajatam śuktau bhāsate tādršam atyantāsat kutrāpi na bhāsate. ataḥ pratipannopādhau tatra nāsti.

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**Abstract** Over the fall and winter of 2020–2021, students and faculty at the University of Toronto, Canada, and Manipal Academy of Higher Education, India, came together to study with two renowned scholars of classical Sanskrit knowledge systems: Shree Vidyashreesha Tirtha (formerly Dr. D. Prahladacharya) and Dr. Mani Dravid Shastrigal. As in many traditional learning contexts, the pandits used oral commentary in Sanskrit to guide students through Sanskrit philosophical texts. Unlike most traditional learning contexts, however, oral commentary was conducted entirely online via Zoom. This paper highlights the continuities and disjunctures of these commentaries with the traditional genre of philosophical commentaries in Sanskrit philosophy and explores the relationship between written commentary and orality in this new media landscape.

**Keywords** Sanskrit commentary, Vedānta, Vyāsatīrtha, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, orality, digital commentary, mediality



# FOR PRIVATE AND NON-COMMERCIAL USE ONLY

# ON THE NATURE OF CHINESE BUDDHIST SCRIPTURAL EXEGESIS: OBSERVATIONS ON THE COMMENTARIES OF CHENGGUAN, WONCHEUK, AND OTHER SUI-TANG EXEGETES

# FEDDE M. DE VRIES\*

THE TYPICAL PROJECT of a modern scholar working on premodern figures is to show their impact and importance, or at least their creativity and originality. The impetus for this, it seems to me, comes from our modern emphasis on the individual. Moreover, the imperative to make our own original contributions predisposes modern scholars to look for what is new and different. To date, much of the work on the great Chinese Buddhist exegetes has proceeded in this way. In this paper, however, I will take the opposite approach: I take the extensive commentarial works by the towering exegete Chengguan 澄觀 (738–839 CE) and show that his work was *not* original.<sup>1</sup> That is, I will take it as a case-study for thinking about the broader world of Sui-Tang Buddhist scholasticism. Paradoxically, once set in that context, Chengguan's genius and creativity come into view naturally.<sup>2</sup>

My aim in this article is to show the vast extent of the commonalities among the great Chinese exegetes.<sup>3</sup> In this way, we can bracket the somewhat anachronistic model

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>\*</sup> I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Max Brandstadt, Nick Constantino, Amanda Goodman, Eric Greene, Meghan Howard Masang, Jackson Macor, Jörg Plassen, Robert Sharf, as well as two anonymous reviewers for their feedback and helpful criticisms. Needless to say, I take full responsibility for any remaining faults and infelicities. Although I learned of its existence too late, readers of this article should be aware of the recent dissertation by Xiaoming Hou, whose perspective has significant parallels with that here developed, *Pratiquer le bouddhisme*.

I On Chengguan, see Hamar, A Religious Leader and his "Chengguan." See also Gregory, Tsungmi, 58–68. Chengguan's major works are the Da fangguang fohuayan jing shu 大方廣佛華嚴經疏 (Commentary on the Great and Expansive Buddhāvataṃsaka Sūtra; in Taishō daizōkyō 大正大藏經 [hereinafter abbreviated as T.] 1735) along with its subcommentary, the Da fangguang fohuayan jing suishu yanyi 大方廣佛華嚴經隨疏演義 (Proclamation of the Meanings of the Commentary on the Great and Expansive Buddhāvataṃsaka Sūtra; T. 1736) to which I henceforth refer as the Commentary and Subcommentary, respectively. Only a limited portion of the Commentary has thus far been published in English translation by the Buddhist Text Translation Society, accompanied by the modern Chinese master Hsuan Hua's commentary: see bibliography.

**<sup>2</sup>** The point that our modern emphasis on originality hinders our study and understanding of commentarial traditions is not original to me; that, in fact, commentarial creativity is possible not despite but *because of* tradition has been made by various authors: e.g., Holtz, *Back to the Sources*, preface; Cabezón, *Buddhism and Language*, 83–87; Kalmanson, "Philosophy as 'Commentary'," 1060, 1063–64; Saleh, "Quranic Commentaries," 1657; and, in a slightly different context, Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, 4–5, 29, 44–45; and Levin, "Preface" to Lord's *The Singer of Tales*.

**<sup>3</sup>** Herein, I see my work as contiguous with that of, for example, Mayer, "Commentarial Literature"; and Buswell, "Wŏnhyo."

that sees them as members of rival "schools" ( $zong \ R$ ).<sup>4</sup> I suggest that it is by seeing the exegetes, first and foremost, as participating in a shared scholastic world that their common ground comes into focus most clearly. In turn, this particular scholastic world can be fruitfully understood in the context of commentarial practices across the globe: elsewhere in the Buddhist world, as well in other traditions such as Confucianism, Christianity, and Islam. From such comparative work, we see certain regularities in the dynamics within which commentarial literature, such as the writings of Chengguan, arise. These dynamics are most aptly described by the term "scholasticism." As I use the term, it refers to the natural outgrowth of intellectual engagement with authoritative ("canonical") texts in the context of a tradition; thus the work of scholiasts is essentially exegetical in nature. This engagement will always be partly pedagogical, as it is concerned with the appropriate transmission of the canon, but may also be contemplative and/or polemical.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the knowledge transmitted through scholastic works and practices is not merely propositional content but also conveys the implicit understandings and interpretative skills that bind a given tradition together.<sup>6</sup>

Against this conceptual background, I offer a sketch of Sui-Tang Buddhist scholasticism and its textual genres. I then provide a synopsis of a major commentary by Chengguan. I use this case-study for two purposes. I first compare the topics treated by Chengguan with the work of other exegetes, thus showing the extent of the commonalities

<sup>4</sup> According to this model, Chengguan belonged to the so-called "Huayan school" (or "Avataṃsaka school;" *Huayan zong* 華嚴宗) and as such was a successor of the famous "Huayan patriarch" Fazang 法藏 (643-712). Their school (*zong* 宗) had two main rivals: the Tiantai school (*Tiantai zong* 天台宗), based on the teachings of Zhiyi 智顗 (538-597), who was based at Mount Tiantai, and later reinvigorated by Zhanran 湛然 (711-782); and the Dharma-characteristics school (*Faxiang zong* 法相宗), centred around the Yogācāra texts translated by Xuanzang 玄奘 (602-664) and promulgated by masters such as Kuiji 窺基 (632-682) and Woncheuk 圓測 (613-696). On the anachronism of this model in regard to Huayan, see the brief comments by Cook, *Hua-yen Buddhism*, 23-24; Liu, "The 'P'an-chiao' System," 10-11n2; Poceski, "Huayan," 342; and the discussion by Hammerstrom, *The Huayan University Network*, 30-46. For Tiantai, see Penkower, "Making and Remaking." For Faxiang, see Lee, "Redefining." For Esoteric Buddhism and Pure Land, see Sharf, *Coming to Terms*, 263-78, and "On Pure Land Buddhism." The relevant literature in the case of Chan is extensive; see, for example, Foulk, "The 'Ch'an School" and "The Ch'an Tsung"; Jorgensen, "The 'Imperial' Lineage"; and McRae, *The Northern School* and *Seeing through Zen*.

**<sup>5</sup>** See Dreyfus, *The Sound*, 7, 11, 98 ff., as well as Griffiths, "Scholasticism" and *Religious Reading*; Cabezón "Introduction," especially 4–7; and McGinn, *Thomas Aquinas*, 10–11. On the contemplative nature of exegesis, see Plassen, "Another Inquiry," 270, and "Exegesis," 72. On the commentaries in Sinitic Buddhism and Chinese commentaries in the classical tradition, see Gardner "Confucian Commentary," 406; more generally, see Kalmanson, "Philosophy as 'Commentary'." Polemic elements of commentaries are emphasized by Henderson, "Neo-Confucian Scholasticism." On the centrality of memorization in scholastic traditions, see Griffiths, "Scholasticism," 213–16, 219–20, and *Religious Reading*, especially 26, 46–54; Dreyfus, *The Sound*, especially chapter 4, as well as chaps. 5, 6, and 7; and Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*. Note that, in the European context, the term "scholasticism" refers not just to particular intellectual practices but also implies a particular institutional context, namely the university setting; the comparativist usage leaves aside the institutional aspect of the definition. I will explore this difference more in my forthcoming dissertation.

**<sup>6</sup>** Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 79–80, and "Scholasticism," 222–24; Heim, *Voice of the Buddha*, 103–4; and Pelikan, *The Vindication*, 34.

among commentators. Thereafter I consider some elements of their work that I believe come into clearer focus when we see these exegetes as scholiasts, as just defined. While many such elements could be highlighted, I focus here on stylistic aspects of their writings, as well as their use of doxography.

# Sui-Tang Buddhist Scholasticism: A Sketch

With that background, let me offer a sketch of what I have in mind when speaking of the Buddhist scholastic tradition during the Sui 隋 and Tang 唐 dynasties (581–618; 618–907). For the most part, these scholiasts were a subset of the male monastic community, although there were also nuns and some lay literati who participated in it.<sup>7</sup> A basic element of this world is that many, if not all, of these monks, having mastered basic elements of their monastic training, traveled from monastery to monastery, studying with a number of different teachers.<sup>8</sup> We can say for certain that young scholiasts-to-be would listen to lectures by these masters.<sup>9</sup> These lectures were also opportunities for debate and disputation which could, at times, get quite lively.<sup>10</sup> There is evidence of

<sup>7</sup> Zürcher, "Buddhism and Education," 28. In his topical history of Buddhism in China, the early Song Buddhist monk-historian Zanning 贊寧 (919–1001) describes the nun Daoxin 道馨 as the first, in 368, to start the tradition of nuns lecturing on sūtras in China (T. 2126: 54.239b14–18; translated in Welter, *Administration*, 225–26). See also her entry in the *Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳 (Biographies of Nuns; T. 2063: 50.936a27–b10) as well as other entries. One literatus, Li Tongxuan 李通玄 (635–730), wrote a large commentary on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. On this text, see Gimello, "Li T'ung-hsüan"; and Koh, "Li Tongxuan." Other literati of interest in this regard include Li Hua 李華 (ca. 710–ca. 767), Dugu Ji 獨孤及 (725–777), and Liang Su 梁肅 (753–793). On these figures, see Tien, "Discursive Resources." Liang Su wrote an essay introducing and summarizing Zhiyi's *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀 (Great Calming and Contemplating; T. 1911), the *Tiantai zhiguan tonglie* 天 台止觀統例 (Overview of the Tiantai Calming and Contemplating; T. 1915: 46.473c22 ff.).

**<sup>8</sup>** Zürcher, "Buddhism and Education," 35–36n63. The picture I paint in this paragraph is based mostly on biographies of the scholiasts. See, for example, Hamar's discussion of Chengguan's early training, *A Religious Leader*, 31–42. Compare this to Dreyfus' comments on the early phase of Tibetan scholasticism: "in the classical period of Tibetan scholasticism, at least up to the fifteenth century, monks paid little attention to sectarian affiliations. They would go from monastery to monastery to study with teachers of particular specializations regardless of their schools" (*The Sound*, 138).

**<sup>9</sup>** Note, however, that these lectures attracted a broad audience beyond the future generation of great scholiasts. See Plassen, "Some Random (and Very Preliminary) Notes," 599; and Mou, "Lun Ru Shi liangjia zhi jiangjing yu yishu."

**<sup>10</sup>** Besides the lecturer, a central figure at lectures was the so-called *dujiang* 都講 who was responsible for reading the text and simultaneously functioned as a discussant. See for example Yu, *Reading the Chuang-Tzu*, 172–78; and Plassen "Some Random (and Very Preliminary) Notes on Performative Dimensions," 601–3, esp. the intriguing anecdote recounted on page 601. In his history of Buddhism in China, Zanning's entry on the *dujiang* provides further insight into that position and the lively debates that could happen at lectures. Zanning laments that by his time, the *dujiang* is merely a prompter (see section 20 in T. 2126). For other comments on lectures and/or debates, see sections 15, 16, 18, 19, 33, 34, 39, 41 (translated in Welter, *Administration of Buddhism*). See also Mou, "Lun Ru Shi," 21–26. While the glimpses we get into the disputations of Chinese Buddhist scholiasts are scant, I think they are important to bear in mind. Given that debate was a central element in many scholastic traditions, it would be odd if it were absent from

note-taking at these lectures.<sup>11</sup> The teachers would also instruct their students to recite and/or memorize texts or specific passages.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, either under the instruction of these masters or at their own inclination, they would work through other texts on their own. These teachers had mastered and would lecture on a wide variety of canonical texts.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, many of them were also known as specialists in a field of study. Such fields consisted of the study of a canonical text, such as the *Lotus Sūtra*, or a group of canonical texts, such as the Three Treatises (*San lun*  $\equiv$   $\cong$ ); three Madhyamaka texts).<sup>14</sup>

This pedagogical context provides the background for the writings left to us by the scholastic culture of Sui-Tang Buddhism. Their form betrays their oral background. We should note, though, that the relation between the oral and written is not unidirectional. Jörg Plassen notes regarding the major genres of commentarial writing that they "evolved at the borderline of orality and literacy."<sup>15</sup> Plassen here is speaking specifically of two genres of commentarial writing: the first we might describe as thematic commentaries on a scripture; the second as commentaries that combine the thematic treatment with a line-by-line commentary on a scripture (I will call these "full-fledged commentaries").<sup>16</sup>

**13** There is clear evidence of this in the biographical materials: see, for example, the list of texts on which Chengguan lectured in Hamar, *A Religious Leader*, 32. More on this follows below, and this is also borne out by surviving scholastic writings, as a glance at the contents of the first volume of the selected works of Wŏnhyo 元曉 (617–686) will illustrate: Muller, Park, and Vermeersch, *Wonhyo*.

14 I use "canonical" here in a broad sense—that is, encompassing not only the scriptures that the tradition itself would term canonical, but also treatises and indigenous compositions that had become revered and authoritative objects of study. Sometimes they themselves became objects of commentaries: see n. 7, above. Zhanran, for example, authored a subcommentary on Zhiyi's *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀 (Great Calming and Contemplating; T. 1911), the *Zhiguan fuxing chuan hong jue* 止觀輔行傳弘決 (Notations on the Great Calming and Contemplating to Transmit it Widely and Rectify [Misunderstandings]; T. 1912).

15 Plassen, "Some Random (and Very Preliminary) Notes," 498.

the Chinese context. The presence of debate in Tibetan scholasticism is well documented: see, for example, Dreyfus, *The Sound*. See also the discussions of debate in Japanese Buddhist scholasticism during the Nara (710–794) and Heian (794–1185) periods by Sango, *The Halo*, chapter 2.

**II** See the article by Howard Masang and Goodman in this issue as well as Howard Masang, "A Translator," forthcoming. We also know that many of the received scholastic writings were in fact compiled by disciples of their purported authors based on lecture-notes: see Plassen "Some Random (and Very Preliminary) Notes," 498.

**<sup>12</sup>** Memorization, of course, was a key aspect in traditional Chinese education, as a glance through Lee's fascinating study of *Education in Traditional China* will show. For the Buddhist case specifically, see Zürcher, "Buddhism and Education," 31–35. Zürcher notes that some of the most commonly memorized texts seem to have been the *Lotus Sūtra*, the *Mahāyāna-Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, and the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*. Unfortunately, beyond this and the information we can glean from the exam requirements, we do not have very specific information on what texts were memorized and how. This, to me, seems a symptom of how much it was taken for granted. (Fish, as the cliché has it, are not aware of the water.)

**<sup>16</sup>** As noted, these terms are intended provisionally. I am hesitant to follow the scholarly convention of equating these two genres with writings called *xuan* 玄 and *shu* 疏, respectively, even though this is to some extent legitimate. On this topic see, for example, Plassen, "Some Random (and Very Preliminary) Notes," 598; and Kanno and Felbur "Sūtra Commentaries." While these

Instances of this latter type consist of a detailed commentary on a given text, preceded by a standardized number of sections dealing with higher-order discussions of that text— more on these below. Texts of the former type consist solely of such higher-order discussions.<sup>17</sup> Most of the other types of texts that emerged out of the above-described peda-gogical context are similarly related to a single canonical scripture. We find, for example, digests that give chapter-by-chapter summaries of a given sūtra.<sup>18</sup> Other types of writings that concern individual sūtras include texts that are somewhat like the thematic commentaries; instead of focusing on higher-level issues, these contain entries discussing terms and doctrines found in the sūtra, or pertinent to its study.<sup>19</sup> Yet another related type of text presents such entries in a question-and-answer format, spanning both higher-level and more specific issues.<sup>20</sup> In addition, we can broadly distinguish two types of texts that do not start from a single scripture: encyclopedic treatments of a broad range of terms and concepts salient to the tradition,<sup>21</sup> and separate treatments of doctrines.<sup>22</sup> But even these texts point to the pedagogical and contemplative background of all of these genres: the internalization and transmission of the tradition's scriptures.

## A Note on Periodization

I have been speaking of "Sui-Tang" scholasticism, but much of the relevant material predates the Sui. Indeed, much of my sketch also applies to the preceding period, and I consider them continuous. However, it seems to me that, by the Sui dynasty, with

terms are indeed regularly used in titles of the type of writing I have in mind, we also find other terms used instead—e.g., *zan* 讚, literally "praise." For useful comments on both of these genres, see Plassen, "Another Inquiry," 270–71, and "Exegesis," 76–77.

**<sup>17</sup>** Before the Sui, line-by-line commentaries generally did not include lengthy thematic discussions before the analysis of the text. These are generally referred to, both in the premodern and modern literature, as *zhu* 注. See Kanno, "An Overview"; Kanno and Felbur "Sūtra Commentaries;" and Plassen "Some Random (and Very Preliminary) Notes," 597–98.

<sup>18</sup> For example, see Chengguan's *Huayan jing gangyao* 華嚴經綱要 (Essentials of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra; in *Xuzangjing 續*藏經 [hereafter abbreviated as X.] 08, no. 240) and the *Huayan gumu* 華嚴骨目 (Essentials of the Avataṃsaka, or more literally "Bones and Eyes of the Avataṃsaka"; T. 1742) attributed to Zhanran.

**<sup>19</sup>** For example, the Huayan jing neizhangmen dengza kongmu 華嚴經內章門等雜孔目 (Miscellaneous Entries on the Chapters, Gateways, and So Forth in the Avataṃsaka Sūtra by Zhiyan 智儼 [602-668]; T. 1870).

**<sup>20</sup>** See for example the *Da Huayan jing lüece* 大華嚴經略策 (General Exposition of the Great Avataṃsaka Sūtra; T. 1737) by Chengguan (translated with an introduction in De Vries, "Against Simplicity").

<sup>21</sup> For example, see Zhiyi's Fajie cidi chu men 法界次第初門 (Step-by-Step Introduction to the Analysis of the Dharma Realm; T. 1925), Huiyuan's Dasheng yi zhang 大乘義章 (Essays on the Doctrines of the Mahāyāna; T. 1851), Kuiji's Fayuan yilin zhang 大乘法范義林章 (Essays on the Forest of Meanings in the Mahāyāna Dharma Garden; T. 1861).

<sup>22</sup> See for instance Chengguan's Wuyun guan 五蘊觀 (Contemplation of the Aggregates; X. 1004.58; translated in De Vries, "Against Simplicity"). Fazang's Huayan fa putixin zhang 華嚴發菩提心章 (Avataṃsaka Essay on Bringing forth Bodhicitta; T. 1878), and Huizhao's Quan fa putixin ji 勸發菩提心集 (Collected Exhortations to Bring forth Bodhicitta; T. 1862).

the three great exegetes Huiyuan 慧遠 (523–592), Zhiyi 智顗 (538–597), and Jizang 吉藏 (549–624), the tradition reached a distinctive degree of maturity as conventions regarding genre and authoritative sources stabilized, as did the institutional support for Buddhism.<sup>23</sup> After the Tang, many of the same elements persist as well. However, there are also some marked differences, such as the crystallization of the various schools. These shifts, too, had to do with major disruptions and changes in the institutional support of Buddhism.<sup>24</sup>

# The Program of This Essay

In order to at once substantiate my emphasis on the shared background of Sui-Tang exegetes and also to illustrate some of this scholastic world's salient aspects, I present a synopsis of the thematic discussion in Chengguan's full-fledged commentary on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. My summary includes all the thematic discussions up to, but not including, the line-by-line commentary.<sup>25</sup> Finally, I discuss a few notable themes to illustrate the thought-world and concerns of the Sui-Tang exegetes.

Scholars have noted before that commentaries like Chengguan's are divided into treatments of relatively standard topics.<sup>26</sup> The comparison below bears this out as well. But why might this be interesting? I should first emphasize that I do not believe that we need a special explanation for either the fact that Sui-Tang scholiasts divided their writings in this way, nor for the fact that these divisions are standardized to some extent. After all, we modern scholars also break our writing up into different sections: "acknowledgments," "introduction," and, after the body of the work, "conclusions" and "footnotes." Yet, we can still learn a lot from such regularities. First, we can see these

**24** These disruptions may have already begun in the late Tang, with the suppression of Buddhism during the Huichang 會昌 era (841–846). The institutional changes I have in mind here are the same that led to the emerging of Chan as a self-aware and institutionally grounded school. For relevant literature, see n. 4, above.

**26** Buswell, *Cultivating Original Enlightenment*, 34–35, and "Wŏnhyo," 140–41; Kanno, "Chinese Buddhist Sūtra Commentaries"; Kanno and Felbur, "Sūtra Commentaries"; Jin, "The Formulation."

<sup>23</sup> Much of this remains to be worked out further. The one area where we can be most confident is the stabilization of the commentarial genres: e.g., Kanno "An Overview," "Chinese Buddhist Sūtra Commentaries;" Kanno and Felbur, "Sūtra Commentaries." Zürcher, "Buddhism and Education," 23–28, considers some of the social dynamics that may lay behind this. Note that I use the word "maturity" here without implying either strict necessity or an evaluation; rather, I intend it in a manner similar to how we distinguish between a young forest and a mature forest. Things did not need to develop exactly the way they did, but the way they turned out is the result of a period of development. Note, in this regard, the opinion of the tenth-century Buddhist historian Zanning, who describes the genre of full-fledged commentaries as contiguous with that of the earlier line-by-line commentaries and takes the monk Dao'an 道安 (312/314–385) as the earliest author in the latter genre and hence the earliest Chinese Buddhist commentator (section 17 in T. 2126; translated in Welter Administration of Buddhism, 227–30). Eric Greene offers a fascinating look into the earliest phase of Chinese commentaries in his reading of a manuscript likely dating from the third or fourth century CE, "Reading Indian Literature."

**<sup>25</sup>** Providing a comparative treatment of illustrative passages in line-by-line commentaries goes beyond the scope this present paper. I do so in my forthcoming dissertation.

conventions as boundary markers between social groups; correct usage of them signifies that one belongs to the in-group. Second, they suggest the assumptions shared by those who follow these conventions. In this paper I focus on these shared assumptions.

These points can be illustrated with a brief consideration of the genre to which these commentaries belong. As described above, these commentaries focus on a single Bud-dhist scripture and contain, first, a series of thematic discussions followed by a line-by-line commentary. Many modern scholars have treated these thematic discussions as a preface or introduction.<sup>27</sup> I avoid those terms because the exegetes themselves do not mark these thematic sections as introductory. In fact, in their own outlines, they treat the line-by-line commentary section as on par with each of the individual thematic discussions. Indeed, as noted above, one genre of commentarial writing includes *only* these thematic discussions.<sup>28</sup> I have described scholasticism as being concerned with the transmission of (knowledge about) scripture, and these thematic discussions show us what the Sui-Tang exegetes considered to be *integral* knowledge in regard to the various scriptures. As such, the similarities across various commentaries reveal the extent to which these scholiasts lived in the same world. Inversely, insofar as we see writings that diverge significantly from these standards and assumptions, they suggest boundaries between social groups.

# Outlining the Outline: A Synopsis of the Thematic Discussions in Chengguan's Commentary

#### The Opening and Outline

Chengguan's *Commentary* opens with a brief preface (xu 序). With its refined literary Chinese, it partakes in the genre of prefaces found at the beginning of much of premodern Chinese elite writing. Next, Chengguan presents a verse of homage to the three jewels of Buddhism: Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha. He then outlines the ten divisions—or "gateways" (*men* 門) as he calls them—of his commentary.

In explaining the meaning of this sūtra, we will open up ten gateways:

**<sup>27</sup>** See, for example, Jin, "The Formulation"; Buswell, *Cultivating Original Enlightenment*, 34–35, and "Wŏnhyo," 140–41.

<sup>28</sup> In fact, several texts by Wŏnhyo survive in a format that suggests that in some way they were intended as full-fledged commentaries, but they lack the line-by-line commentary. The texts' opening outline includes reference to a final section "explaining the text," but that part is not included in extant witnesses. In one of them, his *Da huidu jing zongyao* 大慧度經宗要 (Doctrinal Essentials of the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra; T. 1697), the very last line reads "Section 6: Analyzing the text. The extensive explanation is as [given] in the *Treatise* [on the Great Perfection of Wisdom]" 第六消文, 依論廣釋 (T. 1697: 33.74a3). Given the preceding context, I take *lun* here as referring to the *Da zhidu lun* attributed by the Chinese tradition to Nāgārjuna. See also Wŏnhyo's *Fahua zongyao* 法華宗要 (Doctrinal Essentials of the Lotus Sūtra; T. 1725). Here and below, I use *pinyin* romanization to transliterate the titles of works by masters who were from Korea and participated in the broader Sinitic Buddhist world, such as Wŏnhyo and Woncheuk. While I recognize their unique and important place in the history of Korean Buddhism, the use of a single transliteration system seems most accessible to those who do not read Sinitic characters.

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- 1. the causes and conditions that gave rise to this teaching;
- 2. the basket and teaching to which it belongs;
- 3. the division of the doctrines;
- 4. the intended audience of this teaching;
- 5. the medium of the message from shallow to profound;
- 6. the purport and the intent, universal and specific;
- 7. the chapters and assemblies of the different versions;
- 8. the transmission and translation as well as miraculous responses;
- 9. a thorough explanation of the sūtra's title;
- 10. the line-by-line explanation of the meaning of the text.<sup>29</sup>

# Gateway I: The Causes and Conditions that Gave Rise to This Teaching<sup>30</sup>

The first topic is an exposition on the reasons why the Buddha taught the *Avatamsaka*  $S\bar{u}tra.^{31}$  In keeping with that s $\bar{u}$ tra's predilection for lists of ten, Chengguan gives ten primary causes and ten supporting conditions because of which the Buddha taught this scripture. Foremost among these is that it is simply the natural course of affairs that buddhas teach this scripture after their awakening (cause no. 1). More specifically, it is based on causes created when practicing as a bodhisattva in previous lives (no. 2), and it is how he naturally responds to the capacities of his audience (no. 3). Furthermore, he wishes to reveal the splendour of Buddhahood (no. 5), to expound the stages of practice (no. 6) and the excellence of practice (no. 7), and to help his contemporaries and those in later times (no. 10). The ten conditions are more concrete, including such aspects as the timing of the teaching (no. 1), the place of its delivery (no. 2), the type of Buddhabody that spoke it (no. 3), the different omens preceding each chapter (no. 5), and the requests made by the interlocutors (no. 9).

# Gateway 2: The Basket and Teaching<sup>32</sup>

In the second section, Chengguan discusses the place of the sūtra in the Buddhist canon and in relation to other Buddhist teachings. First, he offers a broad view of the entire Buddhist canon and the different ways of dividing it.<sup>33</sup> He primarily relies on four Indian Buddhist scholastic works: the *She dasheng lun* 攝大乘論 (Sanskrit: *Mahāyānasaṃgraha, Compendium of the Mahāyāna*), the *Dasheng zhuangyan jing lun* 大乘莊嚴經論 (*Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra, Ornament of the Mahāyāna*), the *Fodi jing lun* 佛地經論 (*Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abodes*), and the *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論 (*Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra*).<sup>34</sup> Chengguan notes that

**29** 將釋經義。總啟十門。一教起因緣。二藏教所攝。三義理分齊。四教所被機。五教體淺深。 六宗趣通局。七部類品會。八傳譯感通。九總釋經題。十別解文義 (T.1735: 35.503c6-9).

- **3**I T. 1735: 35.503c10-506c24.
- **32** T. 1735: 35.506c24.
- **33** T. 1735: 35.506c25–507c21.

**<sup>30</sup>** T. 1735: 35.503c10 ff.

<sup>34</sup> Readers may note that I treat the last of these four, the Da zhidu lun, as an Indian text. I am

the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, properly speaking, belongs to the *sūtra-piṭaka*, the "basket of discourses." But, he adds, we can also find elements that fit the other two traditional Buddhist "baskets" or collections of teachings: passages that emphasize ethical discipline, consonant with the content of the *vinaya-piṭaka*, and those that treat aspects of higher Buddhist learning, relating to the *abhidharma-piṭaka*.

When Chengguan locates the sūtra's teachings vis-à-vis other teachings found in the Buddhist canon, he takes us on a journey through a range of different doxographies proposed by various Buddhist masters. He cites a variety of opinions, grouped in a variety of ways, some anonymous and some named. For example, he gives the doxographies composed by Indian masters who had come to China, as well as those composed by Chinese masters.<sup>35</sup> He then dwells on two doxographies formulated by the Indian masters Śīlabhadra (Jiexian 戒賢, 529–645) and Jñānaprabha (Zhiguang 智光, dates unknown) offering, respectively, doxographies that place the Yogācāra teachings of the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*, or the emptiness teachings of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*, at the top.<sup>36</sup> Throughout this entire discussion, Chengguan provides citations from a variety of canonical texts as illustrations of different doctrines and/or to highlight problems with different doxographies.

After this thorough overview, Chengguan devotes a separate section to explaining in detail the fivefold doxography articulated by Fazang 法藏 (643–712). At the very outset of this discussion, though, he notes:

If one divides the teachings based on their doctrines, there are five types of teachings. This is [the system] established by Xianshou [i.e., Fazang] and is extensively explained in a separate text.<sup>37</sup> It is mostly the same as that of [Zhiyi of] Tiantai, but it adds the sudden teaching (*dunjiao* 頓教).<sup>38</sup>

35 The masters who came from India include Bodhiruci (Putiliuzhi 菩提流志, 572?-727), Kumārajīva, Dharmakṣema (Tanwuchen 曇無識, 385-433), and Paramārtha (Zhendi 眞諦, 499-569). The masters from China include Huisi 慧思 (515-577) and Zhiyi 智顗 (538-597), the hermit Liu Qiu 劉虬 (438-495), Guangzhai 光宅 (i.e., Fayun 法雲; 467-529), and Xuanzang 玄 奘 (602-664), as well as Fazang's disciple Huiyuan 慧苑 (673-743?). Chengguan also refers to Wŏnhyo 元曉 (617-686) as "Dharma Master Wŏnhyo from East of the Sea [i.e., Korea] of the early Tang" 唐初海東元曉法師 (T. 1735: 35.510a20).

**36** The first report on the doxographies of these two masters is by Fazang, who states that he learned it from an Indian scholar-monk Divākara (Rizhao 日照); see, for example, T. 1733: 35.111c8 ff.; T. 1826: 42.213a5 ff. Interestingly, Chengguan notes that these two doxographies correspond to what he refers to as the *Dharma-Nature School of Thought and the Dharma-Characteristics School of Thought* (T. 1735: 35.510b23–24).

**38** 以義分教。教類有五。即賢首所立。廣有別章。大同天台。但加頓教 (T. 1735: 35.512b15-16). I take *tiantai* 天台 here as a metonym for Zhiyi.

aware of the dispute regarding the origin of this text, including speculation that it originated in the circles of the translator Kumārajīva (Chinese: Jiumoluoshi 鳩摩羅什; 344–413). However, the important points in this context are, firstly, that the Chinese exegetes understood this text to be of Indian provenance and, secondly, that its contents are indeed for the most part consonant with Indian Buddhism. Note that, in his posthumously published study, Stefano Zacchetti takes its Indian origin as a given: see *The* Da zhidu lun (*\*Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*).

**<sup>37</sup>** This might also be read as plural, but it seems likely that it refers to Fazang's *Huayan wujiao zhang* 華嚴五教章 (Avataṃsaka Essay on the Five Teachings; T. 1866; translated in Cook, "Fa-tsang's Treatise").

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Chengguan is suggesting here that the choice for the fivefold scheme is somewhat arbitrary. This is echoed in the final part of his discussion of the doxographies. There, he shows that we can synthesize all the approaches.<sup>39</sup>

# Gateway 3: The Division of the Doctrines<sup>40</sup>

The content of the third gate is not clear from its title, which suggests a doxographical discussion. In a way, this section is a continuation of that topic. Chengguan here gives a more elaborate account of the highest teaching according to Fazang's fivefold scheme, the teaching which he takes the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* to exemplify.<sup>41</sup> He illustrates this with citations mostly from the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, but also from the *Mahāparinirvāņa Sūtra*,<sup>42</sup> the *Commentary on the Mahāyānasamgraha*,<sup>43</sup> and the *Treatise on the Ten Grounds Sūtra*.<sup>44</sup>

## Gateway 4: The Intended Audience<sup>45</sup>

In this short section, Chengguan lists a total of ten types of people: the first five are *not* the intended audience of the scripture; the second five are. While the latter list starts with a very limited audience consisting of those bodhisattvas who are at the level of the Perfect Teaching, it continues to include—in reverse order, making for a chiastic structure—all those who were listed in the former list of five. In this way, those who will end up slandering the text are listed as the first type of audience for whom the text is not intended. Yet, since having encountered the text will ultimately be a good influence on them in the long run, they are also listed as the tenth audience. In other words, the sūtra

**42** "The *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* says, 'Buddha-nature is the ultimate truth of emptiness. The ultimate truth of emptiness is wisdom.'" 故涅槃云。佛性名第一義空。第一義空名為智慧 (T. 1735: 35.514b8-9; the original passage is at T. 375: 12.767c18-19).

**43** "Therefore, the *Treatise* says, 'In a dream, a year might pass. / Awake, and it was but a moment. / So, though immeasurable time might be, / A mere *kṣaṇa* encompasses all." (A *kṣaṇa* is very brief moment of time. Some sources suggest that it is 1/65th of the duration of the snap of a finger.) 故論云。處夢謂經年。覺乃須臾頃。故時雖無量。攝在一剎那 (T. 1735: 35.517b24-26; the original passage is at T. 1598: 31.419a8-9).

**44** T. 1735: 35.516b12–13. This citation is most likely via Fazang. The original, worded quite differently, is in the *Shidi jing lun* 十地經論 (Treatise on the Ten Stages Sūtra) at T. 1522: 26.170 b19–20. Fazang cites this passage multiple times in the same form as Chengguan; sometimes he notes the source (e.g., T. 1866: 45.502b28–29). He cites this passage, too, in his commentary on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (T. 1733: 35.124b3–4). Since the context is here the same as Chengguan's, and because Chengguan echoes Fazang's subsequent comments nearly verbatim, it seems more than likely that Chengguan got this citation via Fazang's commentary.

**45** T. 1735: 35.517c21 ff.

**<sup>39</sup>** As he says himself, "even though we now establish the five [teachings], we can also combine the various explanations" 今雖立五,亦會取諸說 (T. 1735: 35., p. 513, a25).

**<sup>40</sup>** T. 1735: 35.514a4–5.

**<sup>41</sup>** This amounts to an exposition of the various ways to talk about the perfect teaching, to think about the relations between phenomena (*shi*事) and principles (*li*理).

is appropriate for everyone. Throughout this discussion, Chengguan finds quotations from the sūtra as prooftexts, notably for the elements in both lists.

#### Gateway 5: The Medium of the Message: From Shallow to Profound<sup>46</sup>

In this section, Chengguan gives an account of the "substance" (ti 體) of the teachings. This is not, however, a discussion of the teachings themselves—not, that is, a discussion of their philosophical essence. Rather, this section treats the medium through which the teachings reach us.<sup>47</sup> Chengguan's discussion consists, once again, of ten sections. The first few of these engage this issue quite concretely, using Buddhism's technical discourse, drawn from *abhidharma* and *śāstra* literature, to discussing the nature of language, meaning, text, and, more specifically, the nature of the Buddha's speech. This shifts with the fifth section, where Chengguan states that *all* phenomena are media for the Buddhist teachings—after all, they all exemplify its truths. In a similar vein, the sixth section takes on the issue from the perspective of idealist discourse found in Yogācāra sources, analyzing what it means to hear the teachings if everything, including the teachings, are present within one's mind to begin with. The remaining subsections continue, along similar lines, to engage ever more profound perspectives in the analysis of the nature of the teachings.

#### Gateway 6: The Purport and the Intent, Universal and Specific<sup>48</sup>

This section consists of two parts. In the first, Chengguan offers a tenfold doxography that outlines the purport of the entirety of the Buddha's teachings. The first four deal with different Hīnayāna schools, such as Pudgalavāda, Sārvāstivāda, and Mahāsaṃghika. In the second of these four he also refers to a text from the Indian philosophical Sāṃkhya school,<sup>49</sup> as well as Confucian and Daoist texts.<sup>50</sup>

In the second part, Chengguan focuses on the thrust of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* specifically. He first lists ten opinions of previous exegetes.<sup>51</sup> The tenth and final opinion

**48** T. 1735: 35.521a2 ff.

**51** For example, he cites Lingyu 靈裕 (518–605) as having held that the thrust of the text is to clarify the object of the buddhas' awakening: the Dharma-dhātu (T. 1735: 35.521c25–522a1). As far as I can tell, no texts by Lingyu have come down to us. He also cites the opinion of the Indian

<sup>46</sup> T. 1735: 35.518b9 ff.

**<sup>47</sup>** See Cho, *Language and Meaning*, for a treatment of this genre of discussions among Tang dynasty exegetes.

**<sup>49</sup>** He references in passing the *Jin qishi lun* 金七十論 (Treatise on the Seventy Golden Verses) at T. 1735: 35.521b19. That text (T. 2137), translated by Paramārtha, is a commentary on the *Sāṃkhya kārikā*.

**<sup>50</sup>** He says, after enumerating doctrines found in some of the Hīnayāna abhidharma-systems, that "in this land [i.e., China], the two teachings of the Confucians and the Daoists are also none other than this" 此方儒道二教亦不出此 (T. 1735: 35.521b3). He goes on to cite from the *Daode jing* (as the *Laozi* 老子/*Laozi* daode jing 老子道經) and the *Book of Changes* (as the *Zhou yi* 周易). In the *Subcommentary*, Chengguan expands on those comments and also cites from the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (see T. 1736: 36.103c2 ff.).

is that of Fazang, according to whom the intent is "the dharma realm, causal arising, absolute principle, and cause and effect."<sup>52</sup> Chenguan explains at length how Fazang came to this conclusion based on a critical comparison of the previous exegetes' various opinions.<sup>53</sup> Chengguan basically agrees with this account, but also offers a critical note, namely that Fazang does not clearly distinguish the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* from the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*. For this reason, Chengguan adds to Fazang's definition the adjective "inconceivable."<sup>54</sup> Having defined the essence of the sūtra, he then goes on to gloss all the elements thereof.

#### Gateway 7: The Chapters and Assemblies of the Different Versions<sup>55</sup>

This section consists of four parts. In the first, Chengguan discusses the *Avataṃsaka*'s (legendary) history, recounting different recensions found in the mythical realm of the dragons, as well as in India. He also discusses the text, expanding the meaning of "text" in various ways, such that it embodies its own teachings. In that vein, for example, all of the Buddha's teachings, all phenomena in fact, *are* the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*.<sup>56</sup>

In the remaining parts, Chengguan approaches the text in ways that feel familiar to the modern scholar as he shows his philological side. In the second part, he compares the number of assemblies that occur in the sixty- and eighty-fascicle translations of the sūtra.<sup>57</sup> In the third part, he lists a number of sūtras that exist as independent works in the canon but correspond to chapters of the full *Avataṃsaka Sūtra.*<sup>58</sup> He also mentions a number of related texts that do not have a corresponding chapter in the full version and

**53** It seems that the passage in Fazang's commentary is T. 1733: 35.120, a22–28.

monk Dharmagupta ([Damo]jiduo [達摩]笈多; ?-619) who was active as a translator in Chang'an during the Sui dynasty. He held that the thrust of the sūtra is the 42 stages of contemplative practice (T. 1735: 35.522a7–8). We also find the opinions of unnamed exegetes. Some, for example, held that the thrust is conditioned arising; others that it is consciousness-only (T. 1735: 35. 522a1–4).

<sup>52</sup> 十賢首以前各互闕故。總以因果緣起理實法界以為宗趣 (T. 1735: 35.522a12-13). The surrounding discussion makes clear that these terms are to be treated as four separate items, even if their relation is open to interpretation (and indeed are interpreted in multiple ways by both Fazang and Chengguan). Fazang gives this as the sūtra's thrust in his *Huayan jing tanxuan ji* 華嚴經探玄記 (Record of the Search for the Mysteries of the Avataṃsaka Sutra; T. 1733: 35.120a23) and *Huayan jing wenyi wangmu* 花嚴經文義綱目 (Outline of the Text and the Meaning of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra; T. 1734: 35.495a19-20).

**<sup>54</sup>** T. 1735: 35.522a22-b3.

<sup>55</sup> T. 1735: 35.523a6 ff.

<sup>56</sup> T. 1735: 35.523a23 ff.

**<sup>57</sup>** T. 1735: 35.523b22 ff.; the *Subcommentary* is much more extensive and detailed here: see T. 1736: 36.110c2 ff.

<sup>58</sup> T. 1735: 35.523c1-9. Modern scholars call these texts "proto-*Buddhāvataṃsaka*" based on the understanding that the larger text is the result of the coming together of various independent texts into the larger sūtra: see, for example, Nattier, "Indian Antecedents"). Chengguan understands the relationship the other way around: the shorter texts are offshoots circulating independently. He notes, "Such texts as these are all received according to the [capacities of the] recipients, [like] branches coming forth from a large trunk" 此等並是隨器受持大本支出 (T. 1735: 35.523c9).

suggests that these should be understood as separate but related texts, though he leaves the question open, noting that he has not yet done detailed research.<sup>59</sup>

The fourth part is a brief overview of earlier commentaries. Chengguan mentions two Indian commentaries, namely those attributed to Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu.<sup>60</sup> Next, he mentions two of his Chinese predecessors in the exegesis of the sūtra. Interestingly, he mentions neither Fazang nor any of the exegetes cited above. Rather, he tells of two figures who practised in the Wutai mountains and were devoted to the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* and who wrote commentaries on it.<sup>61</sup>

#### Gateway 8: The Transmission and Translation as well as Miraculous Responses<sup>62</sup>

Here, Chengguan first discusses the history of the translation of the text. He treats both the sixty- and eighty-fascicle versions of the *Avatamsaka* in Chinese translations, as well as the corrected edition based on the latter. Next, he describes, in refined literary style, the kinds of miracles associated with the text. As he notes at the end, a full

62 T. 1735: 35.523c22-23 ff.

<sup>59</sup> T. 1735: 35.523c9-12. He mentions here the following three texts. (1) The Dafangguang fohuayan jing xiuci fen 大方廣佛花嚴經修慈分 (Great and Expansive Buddha's Flower Ornament Sūtra's Section on Cultivating Kindness; T. 306), translated by Devendraprajña (Tiyunbore 提雲般若, fl. late seventh century). (2) The Jingang man jing 金剛鬘經 (Vajra Garland Sūtra), the identity of which remains obscure to me; a potential candidate is the Dasheng jingang jishu pusa xiuxing fen 大乘金剛髻珠菩薩修行分 (Mahāyāna Section on the Bodhisattva Practice of [King] Vajra Topknot; T. 1130). The abbreviation of that title as *Jingang man jing* 金剛鬘經 seems likely enough (bearing in mind that man  $\mathbf{i}$  and  $\mathbf{j}$  are easily mistaken for each other) and the content of that sūtra certainly has the flavour of texts in the Avatamsaka family; moreover, it is listed as Avatamsaka-related in the Tang-dynasty Kaiyuan catalogue (T. 2154: 55.569b16-17). However, that translation (T. 1130) was done by Bodhiruci (Putiliuzhi 菩提流支: ?-527). In itself this presents no problem, but in a parallel passage to Chengguan's current discussion, Huiyuan (or perhaps, rather, Fazang) in the Edited General Commentary attributes both of these first two texts to Devendraprajña. (3) The Dafangguang rulai busiyi jing 大方廣如來不思議境界經 (Great and Expansive Sūtra on the Tathāgata's Inconceivable State; T. 301), translated by Śiksānanda (Shichanantuo 實叉難陀; fl. 7th century). Of this last text, there exists a parallel translation by Devendraprajña (T. 300).

**<sup>60</sup>** These are the *Shi zhu piposha lun* 十住毘婆沙論 (in reconstructed Sanskrit: *\*Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā-śāstra*: Commentary on the Ten Stages Treatise; T. 1521) attributed to Nāgārjuna and the *Shidi jing lun* 十地經論 (*\*Daśabhūmika-sūtra-śāstra*: Treatise on the Ten Stages Sūtra; T. 1522) attributed to Vasubandhu. As Chengguan notes, both these commentaries only comment on the *Shidi pin* 十地品 ("Ten Grounds Chapter," chapter 26 in T. 279: 10.178b28).

**<sup>61</sup>** The former, the lay-hermit Liu Qianzhi 劉謙之 (fl. 5th century during the Northern Qi), wrote a commentary 600 fascicles in length. Fazang tells his story in his *Records of Miracles associated with the Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (see T. 2074: 51.177c14–20); Chengguan gives his version in his *Subcommentary*: T. 1736: 36.114b11–20. The latter, Lingbian 靈辯 (477–522), reportedly attained profound insight into the scripture after carrying it on his head for a year and then proceeded to write a commentary in 100 fascicles. Fazang tells his story in his *Records of Miracles* at T. 2074: 51.173b24–c2; Chengguan's version is at T. 1736: 36.114b20–c1. To my knowledge, neither commentary survives. For a discussion of miracles stories related to the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, see Hamar "Creating Huayan Lineage."

account of these is given in the *Record of the Transmission [of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra]*, a text by Fazang.<sup>63</sup>

#### Gateway 9: A Thorough Explanation of the Sūtra's Title<sup>64</sup>

Moving closer to commenting on the words of the sūtra proper, Chengguan here gives a detailed commentary on its title. He opens this discussion by emphasizing the conventional nature of language, and thus of names and titles. He echoes the *Daode jing* 道德經, a Daoist scripture, as he announces that "within the nameless, I will force an analysis using ten gateways."<sup>65</sup> In the first, the most concrete, he explains the title of this sūtra and some of its chapters in terms of well-established categories—for example, whether the title is based on persons figuring in the text, the content, an analogy, or some combination of the aforementioned.<sup>66</sup> He also gives, in Chinese transliteration, the Sanskrit title of the text along with a literal translation.<sup>67</sup> The remaining nine sections are what we might call exercises in scholastic fractals which function as jumping boards for more philosophical discussions. He breaks up the title, explains every character (in ten different ways), and matches them with well-known doctrinal lists.

The final part of the explanation of the title treats the title of the first chapter. (He explains the titles of other chapters at the appropriate places in his line-by-line commentary.) Again, Chengguan gives the Sanskrit along with a literal translation.<sup>68</sup> He then glosses each character in the title, leading to minor doctrinal digressions, and ends with a very brief comment on the title of this chapter in the sixty-fascicle version of the text.<sup>69</sup>

**66** For some comments on the standard elements used in explaining sūtra-titles see Kanno, "An Overview," 315–16; and Kanno and Felbur, "Sūtra Commentaries," 458.

**67** His transliteration is 摩訶毘佛略勃陀健拏驃訶修多羅 = \*Mahā (mohe) vaipulya (pifolüe) buddha (botuo) gaṇḍavyūha (jiannapiaohe) sūtra (xiuduoluo). He translates this as the Great and Extensive Buddha's Garland Ornament of Variegated Flowers 大方廣佛雜華嚴飾經; see T. 1735: 35.524b20-22.

**68** His transliteration is *sa po lu ji yin na lai piao he nai ye bo luo po po na mang bo li wu duo* 薩婆嚕鷄印拏倈驃訶柰耶鉢攞叵婆 娜忙鉢里勿多」 = \*Sarva (*sa po*) lokendra (*lu ji yin na lai*) vyūha-naya (*piao he-nai ye*) nāma (*na mang*) parivarta (*bo li wu duo*). He translates this as "Chapter Called 'On the Dignity and Virtue Renown of the Adorned Dharma-Gateways of All the Rulers of the World'" 一切世間主莊嚴法門威德名品; see T. 1735: 35.526c1-4. In my translation I take *ming* 名 as representing *nāma* as we (likely) have it in the Sanskrit, which would correspond to a standard title-format in Sanskrit works where *x-nāma-parivarta*, with x standing in for sometimes very long compounds, meaning "the chapter named x." The title of this chapter in the eighty-fascicle translation is "Chapter on the Wondrous Adornments of the World's Rulers" *Shi zu miaoyan pin* 世主妙嚴品. I am grateful for Meghan Howard Masang's help in reconstructing the Sanskrit, based also on her understanding of the Tibetan.

**69** T. 1735: 35.526c19–21.

**<sup>63</sup>** T. 2075. Note that Chengguan reproduces much of this material in his *Subcommentary* to the present passage (T. 1736: 36.113c18 ff.).

<sup>64</sup> T. 1735: 35.524b4 ff.

**<sup>65</sup>** 無名之中。強以十門分別 (T. 1735: 35.524b6). Chengguan is alluding to chapter 25 in the *Daode jing*, where we find the phrase 強為之名曰大, "forced to give it a name, I call it 'great." See also the translation by Ivanhoe, "Laozi ('The Daodejing')," 171.

# Beyond Identity and Difference: The Interpenetration of Commentarial Organization

While the foregoing synopsis hopefully communicates something of the flavour of Chengguan's Commentary, of his erudition and style, it will not be obvious just how deeply it is embedded in an intertextual web. To illustrate this, I will consider commentaries by several other exegetes. In many respects, Chengguan's commentary follows in the footsteps of Fazang's Record of the Search for the Mysteries of the Avatamsaka Sutra (Huayan jing tanxuan ji 華嚴經探玄記; T. 1733), the latter's commentary on the earlier sixty-fascicle translation of the sūtra, as well as to the *Edited General Commentary* on the Avatamsaka Sūtra with Editorial Notes (Xu Huayan jing lüe shu kan ding ji 續華嚴經略疏刊定記; X221), the commentary on the eighty-fascicle translation which was partially written by Fazang and completed by his disciple Huiyuan 慧苑 (673–743?). The outlines of these commentaries are very similar to Chengguan's. Both are also divided into ten topics, following the sūtra's predilection for that number. The exact section-titles vary, as does their order.<sup>70</sup> While large parts of the content of the sections is similar, the commentaries also diverge. As it would require too much detail to give a thorough sense of this, let me offer just one example: whereas Chengguan's sixth gateway consists of two different parts—the purport of the Buddha's teachings overall and the intent of the Avatamsaka Sūtra in particular—Fazang, in his corresponding section, only speaks of the purport and intent of the Avatamsaka Sūtra.<sup>71</sup> Interestingly, Fazang's later work does differentiate them in the same way as Chengguan, although the doxography of the Buddha's teachings he offers is less developed.<sup>72</sup> In other words, while Chengguan in many ways followed in Fazang's footsteps, he did not follow him slavishly.

The contours of the Sui-Tang scholastic world become clearer when we compare Chengguan's work to that of someone writing on a text different than the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. When the differences are greater, the similarities are that much more interesting. Consider the *Commentary on the Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* (*Jie shenmi jing shu* 解深密經疏; X. 369) by Woncheuk 圓測 (613–696). That text consists of four sections, the fourth of which is the line-by-line commentary:

- 1. the teaching's arising and its title;
- 2. analyzing the sūtra's purport and substance;
- 3. revealing its basis and audience;
- 4. the actual explanation according to the text.<sup>73</sup>

While at first sight this may look simpler than Chengguan's elaborate discussion, it turns out that many of the topics treated separately by Chengguan are treated in single sections by Woncheuk. We already see this in the title of the first section. There, he gives us both the circumstances behind the sūtra's preaching and an explanation of its title. In

**<sup>70</sup>** See, respectively, T. 1733: 35.107b22-26 and X. 221: 3.570a12-14.

**<sup>71</sup>** For Fazang's section, see T. 1733: 35.120a6 ff.

<sup>72</sup> X. 221: 03.589a2 ff.

<sup>73</sup> 將欲釋經四門分別。一教興題目。二辨經宗體。三顯所依為。四依文正釋 (X.369:21.171b17-18).

the second section, he first gives a long account of the "substance" of the teaching—that is, the medium—which amounts to a highly technical discussion of the nature of language and then of the Buddha's speech in particular. This corresponds to gateway 5 in Chengguan's *Commentary*. Within that same section, Woncheuk discusses different doxographical schemes to make sense of the overall thrust of the Buddha's teachings and to resolve their contradictions. In the third section, he discusses how to classify scriptures. After a brief listing of different ways of dividing the Buddhist scriptural canon, he discusses at length various doxographies proposed by both Chinese and Indian exegetes that classify scriptures according to their content and/or place in the Buddha's teaching career. Although no separate section is devoted to the translation of the text and a comparison of its different versions, Woncheuk devotes a subsection to this topic at the start of his commentary on the text proper.<sup>74</sup> He lists the various translations, compares the chapters they do and do not contain, and discusses their titles. Thus, apart from recounting miracle stories associated with the sūtra, Woncheuk's chapters hit on all the same elements as Chengguan's *Commentary*.

The same thing applies to Woncheuk's two other extant sūtra commentaries: although there are slight divergences in their organization, all the major themes just mentioned are treated.<sup>75</sup> We see similar outlines, covering the same themes, in the commentaries by other well-known Sui-Tang exegetes such as Kuiji 窺基 (632–682),<sup>76</sup> Zhanran 湛然 (711–782),<sup>77</sup> and Wŏnhyo 元曉 (617–686),<sup>78</sup> and lesser-known exegetes such as Huizhao 慧沼 (648–714),<sup>79</sup> Dingbin 定寶 (fl. first half of the 8th century),<sup>80</sup> Yuanhui 圓暉 (fl. ca. 718–742),<sup>81</sup> and Liangben 良貴 (717–777).<sup>82</sup> The one topic that exegetes

#### 74 X. 369: 21.179a11 ff.

**75** Woncheuk's two other extant commentaries are his *Renwang jing shu* 仁王經疏 (Commentary on the Sūtra for Humane Kings; T. 1708) and his *Bore boluomi xin jing zan* 般若波羅蜜多心經贊(Commentary on the Prajñā-pāramitā-Heart Sūtra; T. 1711).

76 E.g. his Shuo Wugoucheng jing shu 說無垢稱經疏 (Commentary on the Vimalakīrti Sūtra; T. 1782) and his Da boreboluomiduo jing bore liqu fen shuzan 大般若波羅蜜多經般若理趣分述讚 (Commentary on the Chapter on Ultimate Reality of Prajñā in the Large Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra; T. 1695).

77 E.g. his Weimo jing shuji 維摩經疏記 (Commentarial Notes on the Vimalakīrti Sūtra; X. 340).

**78** I referred earlier to two of his digests that follow the format of full-fledged commentary but leave out the line-by-line commentary: his *Da huidu jing zongyao* 大慧度經宗要 (Doctrinal Essentials of the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra; T. 1697) and his *Fahua zongyao* 法華宗要 (Doctrinal Essentials of the Lotus Sūtra; T. 1725).

**79** E.g., see his *Jin guangming zuisheng wang jing shu* 金光明最勝王經疏 (Commentary on the Most Supreme, Regal Sūtra of Golden Light; T. 1788).

80 E.g., see his Sifen biqiu jie ben shu 四分比丘戒本 (Commentary on the Roots of the Four-Part Bhikşu Discipline; T. 1807.

81 See the outline of his *Jushelun song shu lunben* 俱含論頌疏 (Commentary on the Abhidharmakośa's Verses; T. 1823: 41.813c2-3). See also the treatment of his *Lengqie abaduoluo baojing shu* 楞伽阿跋多羅寶經疏 (Commentary to the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra), extant only at Dunhuang and spread across three manuscripts in Chinese and Tibetan; see the contribution to this issue by Meghan Howard Masang and Amanda Goodman.

82 See his Ren wang huguo boreboluomiduo jing shu 仁王護國般若波羅蜜多經疏 (Commentary on the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra on [How] Humane Kings Protect the Country; T. 1709).

regularly omit is the treatment of the nature of language. The inclusion of the formal preface and a verse of homage are also optional. Other than that, they all work with the same materials and building blocks, building commentarial edifices that at once closely resemble each other and diverge in intricate and creative ways.

# Some Themes in Sui-Tang Buddhist Scholasticism

Uncovering such standards, I suggested above, is informative in at least two regards: as boundary markers of the scholastic culture, and as indications of its common assumptions. I will here leave aside analysis of the social boundaries of the scholastic community and focus instead on two notable themes that at once illustrate the thought-world and concerns of the Sui-Tang exegetes.<sup>83</sup> While I draw most heavily on Chengguan's *Commentary*, the observations that follow are intended as representative of Sui-Tang Buddhist commentaries in general.

# Scholastic Pedagogy: Transmitting the Tradition and Entering the Hermeneutic Circle

In my preamble, I emphasized that scholiasts are engaged in transmitting the scriptures of their canon, handing down knowledge and interpretative skills. Bearing this in mind, we can start to understand some of the otherwise puzzling aspects of the style of their commentaries, two aspects of which I pick up in this section.

One dynamic that seems universal to scholastic traditions is what we might call, borrowing from Cabezón, the accordion-effect: scholiasts take expansive texts and summarize them, or take pithy phrases and expand them almost ad infinitum.<sup>84</sup> It seems to me that this is in part an expression of the hermeneutic circle: one can only understand the part in relation to the whole, while understanding the whole depends on grasping the individual elements. As a student, one has to enter everywhere at once, as it were.

The oral background of the scholastic writings suggests a complementary angle from which to think about the accordion-effect. Lists, themes, and formulaic descriptions may well have served the scholastic lecturer in much the same way as musicians make use of motifs and themes when improvising. Even more apt is the analogy with bards in oral traditions: they compose each song simultaneously with its performance, aided by an arsenal of formulae and themes.<sup>85</sup> Notwithstanding their many differences, the use of

<sup>83</sup> One area where intellectual conventions and orientations may have had direct social implications is with regard to the Three-Levels Movement (*Sanjie jiao* 三階教) spearheaded by Xinxing 信行 (540–594), which never fit into the contemporary Buddhist community and at times was even persecuted. Xinxing's exegetical assumptions and practices flew in the face of the assumptions about reading and transmitting scripture shared by the mainstream exegetes. On the structure of Xinxing's texts and the assumptions undergirding his exegesis, see Brandstadt "Three Texts"; and Lewis "The Suppression."

**<sup>84</sup>** Cabezón, "Rethinking Scholastic Communities," 56. Maria Heim speaks in this regard of the waxing and waning of texts, *Voice of Buddha*, 71–73.

<sup>85</sup> I am thinking here of the work of Albert Lord on Yugoslavian bards and the Homeric epics in

formulaic motifs that can be expanded and contracted as required by the situation may be a place where scholiasts' performances resembled that of epic bards.

This dynamic and its pedagogical implications also help explain why many of Chengguan's comments remain obscure on their own. Often, he presupposes detailed knowledge of the sūtra under discussion and of doctrines and scholastic categories associated with it. This is especially striking with respect to some of the shorthand references used in the exegesis of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. Take, for example, the discussion of the tenth supportive condition in Gate One, the buddhas' empowerment, or blessing, of the various speakers. This is how Chengguan opens that section.

Now, the Sage does not always respond. His responding depends strictly on sincerity. When one's mind merges with the absolute, one receives the buddhas' empowerment. However, if it is the Buddha himself who is speaking, no empowerment is needed as in the seventh assembly. If it is spoken by people, it requires an empowerment from higher-up. The eighth assembly, as it concerns practice based on the Dharma, does not differ from what came before and thus, for brevity's sake, there is no empowerment there. Also, because [the interlocutors in that case] do not enter into *samādhi*, there is no empowerment there. In all other cases there are [empowerments].<sup>86</sup>

By itself, this passage is impenetrable. Making sense of Chengguan's comment without knowing quite precisely some of the narrative elements in the sūtra, or the referents of its different "assemblies" (*hui* 會), is impossible. But things start falling into place if one knows that these assemblies refer to the nine sets of chapters into which exegetes divided the sūtra based on the nine separate locations where each assembly occurred. One might then realize that, in the sole chapter that makes up the eighth assembly, *Transcending the Mundane* (chapter 38), the speaker indeed neither enters into a meditative absorption nor receives empowerment from the buddhas.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, this assembly is contiguous with the previous one in two senses: it is set in the same location as the preceding chapters—the Dharma Hall of Universal Radiance (*puguang fatang hui* 普光法堂會)—and, as the scholiasts read the text, it continues with the same topic as the preceding assembly: spiritual practice. Lastly, the seventh assembly is unique in that a number of its chapters are spoken by the Buddha himself rather than by bodhisattvas. None of this background, however, is provided by Chengguan in the immediate context, with even his *Subcommentary* remaining silent.<sup>89</sup> The reader is expected to either

*The Singer of Tales,* with its emphasis on the simultaneity of composition and performance (e.g., p. 5 and chapter 2), and the importance of formulae and themes (chapters 3 and 4).

<sup>86</sup> 第十依能加者。夫聖無常應。應于克誠。心冥至極。故得佛加。然若佛自說則不俟加。如第[七]九會。因人有說。要假上加。其第八會。行依法修。不異前故。略無有加。[□□]二七不入定。故無有加。餘皆具有 (T. 1735: 35.506c13-17). In my translation, I follow the variant readings recorded in the Taishō, stemming from a Tokugawa print of the text, as those make more sense when compared to the content of the sūtra.

<sup>87</sup> Lishijian pin 離世間品; see T. 279: 10.279a5 ff.

**<sup>88</sup>** It is not until the fifteenth fascicle of the *Subcommentary*, when commenting on a passage in the third fascicle of the *Commentary* (in the context of the seventh gate) that Chengguan gives a brief gloss on the nine assemblies, noting precisely to what fascicles they correspond: see T. 1736: 36.110c8–14. Chengguan does point out, in the *Subcommentary*, that in the opening line of this

already have the relevant background knowledge or to pick it up at the relevant junctures and then have a deeper understanding at the second reading.

Another aspect of Sui-Tang commentaries is that, in discussing a given topic, the author often does not merely provide what is deemed to be the correct account. Instead, he may give a fairly extensive recital of various perspectives held by previous exegetes. Although in some cases he arbitrates among the different views and offers a final verdict, it often seems as though the final verdict is not the main point of these passages— at least it is not the only point. I take it that the intended audience is to learn two other things from such passages, beyond the final verdict. First, they need to know the various alternative views simply because they form part of the tradition and its history. Second, they need to learn interpretative skills; when an author, such as Chengguan, evaluates the different views, he may not so much be making arguments about the right interpretation, but offering hermeneutic performances that teach his audience interpretative skills and showcase acceptable interpretive moves.<sup>89</sup>

An example of this practice can be seen in Gateway Two, where Chengguan discusses a variety of doxographies and evaluates them from different angles. It is significant to note in this regard that his discussion here is in line with sections on doxography by other commentators, even if their conclusions may differ. Woncheuk, for example, gives a similarly wide variety of alternative doxographies.<sup>90</sup> Although his discussion is structured differently—he first cites opinions of masters of "this land" (*ci guo* 此國; i.e., China) and then those of Indian masters—he includes more or less the same figures and ideas. He offers critical remarks only occasionally, much less often than Chengguan, enhancing the sense that, for the most part, he is repeating traditional knowledge for knowledge's sake. Woncheuk ends his section on the classification of the scripture as follows.

As for the present text [i.e., the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*], it is included in the Bodhisattva basket of the two baskets. Among the three baskets, it is included in the abhidharma-basket. Among the twelve divisions, it is included in the doctrinal explications [*lunyi jing* 論議經; Sanskrit: *upadeśa*]. Among the three periods, it is included in the ultimate teaching. Among the four teachings, it is included in Dharma-characteristics and contemplative practice.<sup>91</sup>

Even without concerning ourselves with the nuances of these different schemes, we can say that Woncheuk shows not which one of the schemes is the correct one, but

passage he is offering a creative paraphrase of a passage in the Confucian classic, the *Shangshu* 尚書; he then supplies the original passage in context (T. 1736: 36.34a8–10).

**<sup>89</sup>** Consider in this regard Holtz's comments on the oral nature of certain texts in Jewish Midrash, describing them as "a kind of public performance in which the preacher (*darshan* in Hebrew) tried both to instruct and to entertain through his skill in public performance": *Finding Our Way*, 23. Holtz refers to Heinemann's insightful and imaginative study of a particular sermon-type found in Midrashic literature, "The Proem."

<sup>90</sup> X. 369: 21.178b12 ff.

<sup>91</sup> 今此一部。二藏之中。菩薩藏攝。三藏教內。達摩藏收。十二部中。論議經攝。三時教中。 了義教收。四教之內。法相觀行。五教門中。觀行門也 (X. 369: 21.178c9-12).

rather tells us how one would locate the Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra within the alternative schemes that he lays out.<sup>92</sup>

### Doxography

Doxographies, to remain with that topic, are an important tool for scholiasts. Since they presume their canon to be meaningful and, in some sense, consistent from beginning to end, stratifications of teachings according to their audience or relevance at different stages of the spiritual path are helpful in dealing with scriptural inconsistencies.<sup>93</sup> I will here discuss some aspects of the treatments of doxography by Chengguan and other Sui-Tang exegetes with an eye to how they diverge from the way doxographies functioned later on in East Asian Buddhism, and have come to be depicted in modern scholarly accounts.

The practice of creating *panjiao* 判教 ("classification of the teachings") is often depicted as specific to East Asian commentators.<sup>94</sup> The origin of these systems is supposed to lie in the hermeneutic predicament of Chinese Buddhists confronted with a canon containing a staggering variety of diverging if not contradictory teachings. Moreover, they are taken to be specific to the different Chinese Buddhist schools (especially Tiantai and Huayan), representing their attempt to put their own teachings above those of other schools. It is clear, however, from the material that Chengguan presents that he, and other Chinese exegetes, understand the practice of categorizing the Buddhist teachings as contiguous with the concerns of Indian exegetes. And in fact, it seems that he is right about this: I see no reason to doubt the veracity of his references to Indian sources.

**93** Henderson, *Scripture, Canon, and Commentary*, 106–21, and "Neo-Confucian Scholasticism," 167; Cabezón, *Buddhism and Language*, 62–73.

<sup>92</sup> The doxographical schemes are as follows. The three periods are those taught in the Samdhinirmocana Sūtra itself: the Hīnayāna teachings, the Prajñāpāramitā teachings, and finally the revelation of the Yogācāra teachings in this text. Woncheuk credits Paramārtha as the source of the scheme of the four teachings: "Some speak of four teachings—that is, the [teaching of the] four noble truths [i.e., the Hīnayāna teachings] and [that of] marklessness [i.e., Prajñāpāramitā]; they also speak of the [teaching of the] characteristics of dharmas, such as the Lankāvatāra Sūtra [i.e., Yogācāra] and [that of] contemplative practice, such as the Avatamsaka Sūtra. This is the explanation given by Tripițaka Master Paramārtha" (X. 369: 21.178c5-6). The five teachings are attributed to the rather obscure \*Prabhāmitra (Bopomiduoluo 波頗密多羅, fl. first half of the seventh century: a name translated as "Brilliant Friend" mingyou 明友; on this figure, see the preface to the translation of Bhāvaviveka's Prajñāpradīpa, 般若燈論 (Lamp of Wisdom; T. 1566: 30.51a9 ff.; cited by Chengguan in his Subcommentary, T. 1736: 36.52b9–10). Woncheuk reports it as follows: "Some speak of five teachings—that is, (1) the four noble truths; (2) marklessness; (3) contemplative practice; (4) peace and happiness, such as the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāņa Sūtra since it speaks of the permanent and blissful fruition of nirvāna; (5) protection, such as the Sūtra of Golden Light since it explains matters regarding the protection of the lands by divine kings. This is the explanation given by Tripițaka Master \*Prabha" (X. 369: 21.178c6-9).

**<sup>94</sup>** For an illustrative sample, see the entry on "Jiaoxiang panjiao" in Buswell and Lopez, *Princeton Encyclopedia of Buddhism*. Peter Gregory's account is more nuanced, but in both his introductory and concluding comments he stresses the same point: *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism*, chapter 3; see also his "Chinese Buddhist Hermeneutics."

Note, also, how Woncheuk is explicit about including views of both Chinese and Indian masters. Moreover, for the most part, the various types of classifications (such as by style of teaching, by profundity of content) listed by Chengguan are distributed evenly over Indian and Chinese scholiasts. The exception to this might seem to be the practice of lining up the Buddha's life with the progressive content of his teachings. At a closer look, this does not hold true either. Take, for example, his brief discussion of the perspective of Paramārtha (Zhendi 眞諦; 499–569), whom he takes to represent an Indian view. These comments come right after a discussion of Chinese masters who divide the teachings into three periods:

Now we explain the accounts [current] in the Western regions. Based on the  $S\bar{u}tra$  of Golden Light, Tripițaka Master Paramārtha established the teaching of the three wheels—that it was turned, illuminated, and upheld. This is also basically the same as [the preceding accounts], though there are minor differences with regards to the periodization. That is to say, in the first seven years [of his teaching career, the Buddha] expounded the four truths. This is called turning the Dharma-wheel. After those seven years, he expounded prajñā. [That is, he] simultaneously turned and illuminated the two wheels as he illuminated existence with emptiness. After thirty years, he simultaneously turned, illuminated, and upheld [the wheel] as he simultaneously illuminated emptiness and existence and upheld the previous two [wheels].<sup>95</sup>

To some extent, this passage is reminiscent of the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*'s doxographical outline of the Buddha's teaching career. But Paramārtha goes beyond that by ascribing specific time-frames for each phase. Also, as we learn from the immediate context in Chengguan's discussion, the context of the teachings associated with the three periods do not coincide with that sūtra, but rather consists of sūtras such as the *Sūtra of Golden Light*, the *Śrīmālādevī Siṃhanāda Sūtra*, and the *Lotus Sūtra*.<sup>96</sup> While one might plausibly claim that Paramārtha's account is possibly influenced by the fact that he was responding to his Chinese environment, the similarity with the doxography found in the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* already serves to make the basic point that Indian Buddhists, too, sometimes stratified the Buddha's teachings as a progression during his

95 至敘西域中說。真諦三藏。依金光明。立轉照持三輪之教。亦大同此。而時節小異。謂七年 前說四諦。名轉法輪。七年後說般若具轉照二輪。以空照有故。三十年後具轉照持。以雙照空有 持前二故 (T. 1735: 35.508c16-21). To paraphrase this periodization: the first seven years after his awakening, the Buddha preached the Hīnayāna teachings; the next thirty years, he preached prajñāpāramitā teachings (along with Hīnayāna); the final seven years he preached a teaching revealing universal buddha-nature. (The content of the third teaching is obvious in the context of Chengguan's exposition; see also below.) For the relevant passage in the sūtra (which is terse and open to multiple interpretations), see T. 664: 16.368b11. Unfortunately, for Paramārtha's interpretation here I have not been able to locate a source-text (which is not an anomaly with texts of his). However, it is worth noting that Huizhao 慧沼 (648-714), in his commentary on this sūtrapassage, records two different interpretations of "turning, illuminating, and upholding," the second of which coincides with Paramārtha's interpretation as recorded here (T. 1788: 39.242c21-p. 243a14). To prove the point, Huizhao goes on to supply quotations from the Fahua jing lun 法華經論 (Commentary on the Lotus Sūtra; T. 1520) attributed to Vasubandhu. The citations from the said Commentary concern how the Buddha differentiates between different types of audiences and what he teaches them (T. 1520: 26.13b19 ff.).

**96** The relevant passage is T. 1735: 35.508c6–16.

lifetime.<sup>97</sup> They, too, sought to make sense of differences and contradictions. This is one area where a cross-cultural reading of scholastic works pays off: it allows us to see that commentators throughout the world faced similar problems in their canonical texts and approached them with similar methods.

This brings us to the claim that the Chinese exegetes used doxographies as polemical tools against other schools. This might be true later on in East Asian Buddhist history, but Chengguan's treatment does not support this view. For one, he does not even group the doxographies according to schools. This applies as well to Woncheuk's discussion of the different doxographies. Moreover, as we saw just above, Woncheuk ends his discussion by showing how to understand the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*'s place within *multiple* doxographies. Chengguan, for his part, ends up using Fazang's fivefold doxography, but explicitly states that it is basically the same as the fourfold schema of Zhiyi, who came to be considered the founder of the Tiantai school, typically considered a rival of Huayan by modern scholars. If, however, Fazang's system had been devised as a Huayan attempt to trump Tiantai, we should expect its addition to be a higher layer. Instead, the Sudden Teaching added by Fazang comes in between the third and the fourth layers of Zhiyi, keeping the Perfect Teaching in its place of honour.

One might point out that Chengguan does ultimately settle for the fivefold system of his "Huayan" predecessor Fazang. However, if this is supposed to argue for Chengguan's allegiance to the Huayan school, this puts the cart before the horse. It is not hard to come up with plausible accounts of why Chengguan followed Fazang's lead. The latter was an esteemed master and the author of well-respected texts and commentaries, including a full-fledged commentary on the entire *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, the teacher under whom Chengguan studied the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, Fashen 法詵 (718–778), was likely a second-generation student of Fazang.<sup>99</sup> With this in mind, we do not need to think of Chengguan's use of Fazang's system as motivated by a sectarian impulse to attack the doctrines of those who preferred Zhiyi's system.<sup>100</sup> Rather, he was following in the footsteps of an earlier exegete of the *Avataṃsaka*, while drawing widely on resources of the tradition.

99 Hamar, A Religious Leader, 36–37.

**<sup>97</sup>** This point is in no way original to me. In fact, Gregory discusses Indian stratifications of the Buddhist teachings at some length: *Tsung-mi*, 93–104. See also Gómez, "Buddhist Books"; Cabezón, *Buddhism and Language*, 62–73; Thurman, "Buddhist Hermeneutics"; Bond, "The Gradual Path."

<sup>98</sup> In fact, in the received canon, Fazang's commentary is one of only two full-fledged commentaries predating Chengguan's, the other being the former's disciple Huiyuan's *Xu Huayan jing lüe shu kan ding ji 續華嚴經略疏刊定記 (Completed and Edited General Commentary on the Avataṃsaka Sūtra with Editorial Notes*: X. 221), in which Huiyuan completes his master's commentary on the then-recent new translation of the sūtra. There is the possibility that there were more commentaries, though I know of no mention of other commentaries. As an aside: it is often noted in reference works that "contemporary scholars" rejected Huiyuan's work. While it may be true that Chengguan criticizes Huiyuan at points, he critically evaluates many other exegetes, including Fazang; moreover, he also cites Huiyuan approvingly throughout his *Commentary*.

**<sup>100</sup>** To be sure, the point is not that there were no real disagreements. On the contrary: Chengguan is by no means shy to argue strongly against ideas associated with Tiantai, such as "inherent evil" *xinge* 性惡; see his discussion at T. 1736: 36.8b1 ff. (Though note that he elsewhere affirms this concept; see T. 1736: 36.323c21–27 and T. 1736: 36.619a22–27.)

# Conclusion

In this essay, I have suggested that we learn much by seeing the great Sui and Tang Buddhist scholiasts as participating in the shared world of Sui-Tang Buddhist scholasticism and its pedagogical tasks, contemplative practices, and intellectual projects. Framing them in this way allows us to describe what it was that Chengguan and other exegetes were doing without having to anachronistically rely on (later) doxographic distinctions. As we have seen, besides being trained in giving line-by-line explanations of texts, the Sui-Tang scholiasts were expected to analyze the titles of scriptures, discuss doxographies, and so forth, working creatively within the parameters set by the tradition. Many of these parameters for working with scriptures are the same as those of commentators all over the world. As such, understanding the Sui-Tang exegetes as participants in a larger scholastic project also allows us to compare the work of these exegetes with that of scholastics in other traditions, which proves fruitful for understanding the Chinese Buddhist case—and hopefully may yield insights salient to other traditions as well.

Above, I have discussed some of the characteristics of Sui-Tang Buddhist scholasticism: elements of their pedagogy, as well as their use of doxographies. While much more could be said about those, let me here point to a few other areas of this scholastic culture that deserve attention but lie beyond the scope of this present paper. One such area is the philological work of the Sui-Tang scholiasts. Through the examples of Chengguan and Woncheuk, we saw their interest in comparing different translations and editions of texts. A related area of interest is their engagement with Sanskrit. Although I remain doubtful that many of these scholiasts had mastered that language, they clearly took great interest in it, reporting on original Sanskrit titles, explaining Sanskrit etymology, and so forth.<sup>101</sup>

One particularly exciting line of research would aim to uncover the curriculum, or at least the shared resources, of the Sui-Tang scholiasts. This could be done by paying close attention to the texts they cite and allude to throughout their writings. In my synopsis, I have already noted some of the texts on which Chengguan relies. Contrary to the general perception that these masters represent a "Sinicized" Buddhism, many of these are works well-known in the Indo-Tibetan tradition. A related line of investigation starts with the observation that we can discern clusters of ideas, doctrines, and tropes around different (groups of) scriptures. Individual scholiasts, when writing on one scripture or the other, would engage in the appropriate discourse—we might say that they would code-switch as they moved between different fields of study. Understanding their works within this context moves us beyond a simplistic focus on the author.

None of this denies the variety among these scholiasts. In fact, it opens up the possibility of much more fine-grained attention to differences and allegiances than the schoolmodel allowed for. We might, for example, plot the geographical locations and travels of

**<sup>101</sup>** This relates to the issue first investigated by Van Gulik, *Siddham*, and more recently engaged by Kotyk, "The Study of Sanskrit," namely to what extent the Chinese Buddhists knew and understood Sanskrit. I plan to discuss this issue further in my dissertation.

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monks against their doctrinal positions and prooftexts. We could also trace how doctrinal discussions changed as new translations of Indian scholastic texts became available. But, maybe most importantly, we may also come to take their arguments more seriously, no longer seeing them as representations or defenses of this or that school, but as sincere attempts by towering intellectuals to work through the problems of their tradition. It can only be hoped that their example will inspire us as modern scholars to reflect on our embeddedness: we cannot stand apart from the world but find ourselves ever within it. And part of our world is made up of such great scholars as Chengguan and Woncheuk.



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- Jin qishi lun 金七十論 (T. 2137.54, Treatise on the Seventy Golden Verses, translation of the Sāņkhyakārikā, translated by Paramārtha [Zhendi 眞諦]).
- Lengqie abaduoluo baojing shu 楞伽阿跋多羅寶經疏 (Commentary on the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra by Yuanhui 圓暉; see also the contribution in this issue by Meghan Howard Masang and Amanda Goodman)
- Mohe zhiguan 摩訶止觀 (T. 1911.46, Great Calming and Contemplating by Zhiyi 智顗).
- Quan fa putixin ji 勸發菩提心集 (T. 1862.45, Collected Exhortations to Bring forth Bodhicitta by Huizhao 慧沼).
- Renwang jing shu 仁王經疏 (T. 1708.33, Commentary on the Sūtra for Humane Kings by Woncheuk 圓測).
- Renwang huguo bore boluomiduo jing shu 仁王護國般若波羅蜜多經疏 (T. 1709.33, Commentary on the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra on [How] Humane Kings Protect the Country by Liangben 良賁).
- She dasheng lun 攝大乘論 (T. 1593.31, the Sanskrit Mahāyānasaṃgraha, Compendium of the Mahāyāna by Asanga, translated by Paramārtha [Zhendi 眞諦] and Xuanzang 玄奘)
- She dasheng lun 攝大乘論 (T. 1594.31, the Sanskrit Mahāyānasaṃgraha, Compendium of the Mahāyāna by Asaṇga, translated respectively by Xuanzang 玄奘)
- She dasheng lun shi 攝大乘論釋 (T. 1598.31, Commentary on the Mahāyānasaṃgraha by Asaṇga, with commentary by Vasubandhu, translated by Xuanzang 玄奘).
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**Abstract** This article aims to show the vast extent of the commonalities among the great Chinese exegetes of the Sui and Tang dynasties. Bringing to bear a perspective informed by commentarial practices across the globe, I argue that we can most fruitfully understand them as participating in a shared scholastic world. I first offer a sketch of Sui-Tang Chinese Buddhist scholasticism; I then use Chengguan's *Commentary on the Avatamsaka Sūtra* as a case-study to substantiate and illustrate elements of that account. In the first part, I look at the organization of Chengguan's *Commentary*, providing a synopsis of his thematic discussion of the sūtra that precedes the line-by-line commentary. I then offer, in the second part, a brief comparison with commentaries by other exegetes to substantiate my contention that these exegetes were first and foremost participating in a shared scholastic culture. In the third part, I discuss briefly some notable themes that emerge from this comparison, namely, scholastic pedagogy and doxography.

**Keywords** commentary, exegesis, Chengguan, Woncheuk, Fazang, orality, Chinese Buddhism, scholasticism



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# THE MISE-EN-PAGE OF A SINO-TIBETAN DUNHUANG MANUSCRIPT: YUANHUI'S COMMENTARY ON THE LAŃKĀVATĀRASŪTRA

## MEGHAN HOWARD MASANG and AMANDA GOODMAN\*

MUCH CAN BE learned about Buddhist commentarial practices by observing the visual text-organization of Buddhist commentarial manuscripts. Conventions of page layout encapsulate exegetical practices, and, in turn, help shape those practices; interpretative layers are informed by, and reflected in, the visualization of the text on the material page. Rather than a secondary consideration of little significance, the mise-en-page of the medieval Buddhist manuscript is best understood as a refraction of the generative processes by which knowledge systems are negotiated and new forms of knowledge are produced. This is because Buddhist commentarial practices, including bilingual commentarial practices, arise out of the dynamics of the medieval lecture hall, and—though the original social (oral?) context is largely lost to us—the material page captures traces of the otherwise invisible interplay between teacher and student, scholar and text, and scribe and page.

This essay examines the essential connection between Buddhist sūtra exegesis and page layout. It takes as a case study a bilingual Chinese-Tibetan Buddhist manuscript from Dunhuang's 敦煌 famous Cave 17. The manuscript is incomplete and preserved in two parts, the bulk of which is held by the British Library in London (Or.8210/S.5603); a single detached folio is held in Paris, by the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF; Pelliot tibétain 609). Separated by historical accident, both items were originally part of the same manuscript. We have reassembled and renumbered the surviving portions of the manuscript, integrating the detached BnF folio, and throughout this article, we use the abbreviation S.5603 to refer jointly to both.<sup>1</sup> S.5603, then, designates a pair of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>\*</sup> We would like to thank Yiting Tang for his help in reassembling and renumbering the manuscript at the centre of this study, and Mélodie Doumy for making the manuscript available for viewing at the British Library in the spring of 2022. We would also like to thank Shayne Clarke, Nathan Vedal, Sam van Schaik, Robert Sharf, and Fedde de Vries, along with the two anonymous reviewers, for their comments on an earlier draft of the paper. Finally, our thanks to Jacob Dalton and Imre Galambos for their help analyzing the Tibetan and Chinese handwriting in the manuscripts discussed below.

I Pelliot chinois and Pelliot tibétain manuscripts (hereafter PC and PT, respectively) are held by the Bibliothèque nationale de France and were acquired by Paul Pelliot during his Central Asian expedition that visited Dunhuang from February 12 to June 7, 1908. Manuscript numbers bearing the prefixes IOL Tib J and Or. 8210/S. belong to the British Library's Stein Collections, having been acquired by Sir Aurel Stein in Dunhuang on his second (1906–1908) and third (1913–1916) expeditions to Central Asia. IOL Tib J denotes Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang—the IOL (hereafter ITJ) indicating that they were held by the India Office Library before being transferred to the British Library—while Or. 8210/S. (hereafter S.) identifies manuscripts that were originally deposited in the British Museum. The latter corpus is mostly Chinese but includes Tibetan texts

concertinas (a book format we discuss at length below) bearing a commentary on the *Lańkāvatārasūtra* (Sūtra on the Entrance to Laṅkā, hereafter also *Laṅkā*) by the Tangdynasty Buddhist scholiast Yuanhui 圓暉 (active ca. 718–742).<sup>2</sup> S.5603, in good condition but with some damage and missing folios, contains sections of the first six fascicles or *juan* 卷 of what was likely originally a ten-*juan* work.<sup>3</sup> The Chinese text, which is written in black ink from right to left in vertical columns, has been carefully annotated with corresponding passages of a Tibetan recension of the *Laṇkā*, written in red ink; the Tibetan text runs horizontally, from left to right, requiring the reader to rotate the booklet 90 degrees counterclockwise (Plate 8.1).

Preserved only at Dunhuang, Yuanhui's commentary is organized according to a complex textual outline referred to in Chinese as a *kepan* 科判 (segmental analysis) that divides the sūtra into a series of numbered topics and then comments on them.<sup>4</sup> On the

S.5603 consists of 430 inscribed panels and sixteen blank sheets of modern paper that appear to have been used to mark missing or loose panels at the time of conservation. At the time of writing, digital images of S.5603 are available on the International Dunhuang Project's (IDP) website (http://idp.bl.uk), but the panels appear in the order of the conserved manuscript without regard for the original concertinas and also do not include Pelliot tibétain 609 (PT 609). Two short descriptions of S.5603 appear on the websites of the IDP, "A Chinese-Tibetan bilingual Buddhist manuscript" (posted by Sam van Schaik, November 2015), and the British Library, "A Chinese-Tibetan manuscript of the Lankavatara Sūtra" (anonymous). Our reassembled and renumbered version of S.5603, including PT 609, is available at the Digital Dunhuang Archive.

**3** The basic text-division unit of Chinese Buddhist works is the *juan*, often translated as "volume," "chapter," or "fascicle," which originally referred to a single scroll or rolled volume. Different recensions of the same text are often referred to by their number of *juan*. For example, Yuanhui routinely refers to Guṇabhadra's base text as the "4-*juan Laṅkā*." A largely comparable textual unit in the Tibetan Buddhist canon is the *bampo* (*bam po* བམ་ོད), which is not fully understood by scholars but generally defined as equal to 300 *śloka*, or verses: see van der Kuijp, "Some Remarks." Both *juan* and *bampo* divide texts on the basis of length, and both function alongside other content-based divisions such as *pin* 🛱 (chapter), *bu* भ (section), and *léu* (*le'u* འོའ; chapter).

**4** The *kepan* is essentially a topic outline or exegetical scheme imposed on the root text by the author. Because the commentary is a line-by-line exposition of the root text based on this outline, the *kepan* becomes the commentary's outline as well. Tao Jin isolates four distinct uses of the term *kepan* in Chinese Buddhist sources: "the act of textual organization, the words that narrate such an act, a particular *kepan* scheme, and the content of such a scheme": see "Self-Imposed Textual Organization," 4n5. More research is required to determine the origins of *kepan* analysis, but it seems to draw on both Indian Buddhist and indigenous Chinese exegetical forms: see Mayer, "Commentarial Literature," 166–69; Buswell, *Cultivating Original Enlightenment*, 29–36, and "Wönhyo," 138. On the possible relationship between Chinese *kepan* and Tibetan *sa* 

as well. BD manuscripts are held by the National Library of China in Beijing. On the history of that collection, see Rong, *Eighteen Lectures on Dunhuang*, 164–69.

<sup>2</sup> Yuanhui's commentary is titled *Lengqie abaduoluo baojing shu* 楞伽阿跋多羅寶經疏 (Commentary on the *Lengqie abaduoluo baojing* [Precious *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*]) and is based on Guṇabhadra's 求那跋陀羅 (394-468) 443 CE translation of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, the *Lengqie abaduoluo baojing* 楞伽阿跋多羅寶經 (Precious *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*; edited as *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大 藏經, hereinafter T., 670). Yuanhui includes the entirety of Guṇabhadra's Chinese translation in his commentary. Curiously, Yuanhui's official biography (*Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 [Song Biographies of Eminent Monks]; T. 2061: 50.734a11-22) does not refer to his *Laṅkā* commentary.

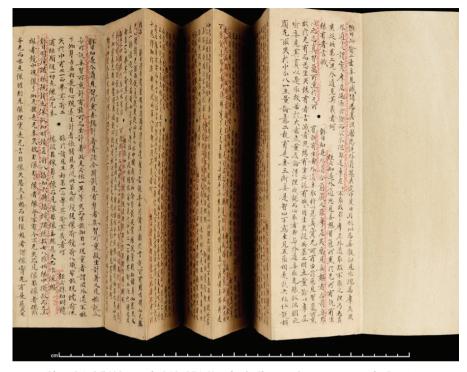


Plate 8.1. S.5603, panels 368–374. Yuanhui's Chinese *Commentary on the Precious Lańkāvatārasūtra* (in black) with Tibetan annotations (in red). Oriented vertically to accommodate the Chinese text, which runs from the top to bottom, right to left, across panels. A blank sheet of modern paper (on right) was added during the conservation process to mark missing panels in the received manuscript. Tibetan period (ca. 760–848), 9th century. From Dunhuang. Concertina; ink on paper, 8.7 × 28.3 cm. © The British Library.

panels of S.5603, passages from the *Lankāvatārasūtra* are marked with red signposts that we refer to as the  $\Delta$ -glyph, followed by Yuanhui's comments marked by red brackets ([]) (Plate 8.2a). The former are further marked with a Tibetan alphabetic numerical notation system (comprised of "index letters" standing for numbers) that tracks Yuanhui's outline and tallies the sūtra passages embedded within his commentary. This notational system uses a sequence of Tibetan letters in red which are positioned at the start of each Chinese sūtra passage but written with a horizontal orientation that matches the Tibetan annotations (Plate 8.2b).

To fully appreciate the manuscript's complexity requires attention to both the Chinese text and Tibetan annotations, together with the spatial strategies and graphic devices used to help the reader navigate the bilingual environment of the manuscript.

bcad, see Steinkellner, "Who is Byan chub rdzu 'phrul?," 235. On the possible role of Khotan in the development of the Tibetan sa bcad ষ্যন্বস্তর্; format, see Stein, "Un genre particulier."



Plate 8.2a. S.5603, panels 49–50 (formerly 50–51). Oriented vertically to accommodate the Chinese text, which runs from the top to bottom, right to left. Red  $\Delta$ -glyphs mark the start of the *Laikāvatārasūtra* passages, and red brackets ( $\Gamma$ ) mark the start of each passage of Yuanhui's commentary. Note the faint Tibetan letters above the glyphs; see also the detail in figure 2b. Tibetan period (ca. 760–848), 9th century. From Dunhuang. Concertina; ink on paper, 8.7 × 28.3 cm. © The British Library.

S.5603 displays a rich assemblage of both Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist intellectual practices, some with long histories of use.<sup>5</sup> The Chinese Buddhists of Dunhuang entered the Tibetan period (ca. 760–848) with a sophisticated manuscript culture that combined indigenous Chinese writing prac-

tices with those adopted from Indian and Central Asian practices. For the Tibetans, meanwhile, writing was a much newer technology and Tibetan manuscript culture was still in a formative stage. The large-scale production of Tibetan Buddhist manuscripts in the early ninth century seems to have driven a consolidation of Tibetan manuscript conventions originally adapted from Chinese and Indic models. And yet, even as the Tibetans actively absorbed practices and technologies from the peoples they encountered in Dunhuang, they also shaped Dunhuang manuscript culture in ways that require additional inquiry.<sup>6</sup> The practices and conventions witnessed in manuscripts like S.5603 represent attempts on the part of Dunhuang's Buddhist community to configure these rules of page layout and markup to their unique linguistic and editorial needs, through a process of experimentation and standardization in two languages.

Bilingual Chinese-Tibetan manuscripts first appeared at Dunhuang during the period of Tibetan rule and were common in the ninth and tenth centuries. Occurring in a

**<sup>5</sup>** For a particularly stimulating contribution to Eurasian manuscript studies, see Scherrer-Schaub, "Poetic and Prosodic Aspect," which outlines the contours of a shared Buddhist manuscript culture, rooted in Indic manuscript practices that the author traces—via Gandhāra—back to Alexandria: see the article by Lorenza Bennardo and Kenneth W. Yu in this issue.

**<sup>6</sup>** While there is widespread agreement that the Tibetan period witnessed dramatic changes in Dunhuang's manuscript and scribal cultures, and while groundbreaking research by scholars such as Fujieda Akira, Jean-Pierre Drège, and others has led to a set of working typologies and dating rubrics to help track those changes, further investigation into the connected book histories of eastern Eurasia is required. This is particularly true of the new book formats that appeared by the ninth and tenth centuries, including the folded and leaf-based book formats referred to as the concertina and *pothī*, respectively. For recent contributions, see Iwao, "On the Roll-Type"; Galambos, *Dunhuang Manuscript Culture*; Dotson and Helman-Ważny, *Codicology*; and Whitfield, "Creating a Codicology."

者此間法身匹帮知是知来意離相法没不德國渴是心智 云市武蔵或今此移如合此二法名圓茂堂の此准知本灣医智 《社委之何代战勇 不成其可必原何故思虑是 村: 第一日 明四初令兹開報義成次美云何代破累不成等已覺者問感 有匹問教到或道之豪色完意天常四軍越坐大 \$実甚,改第世三化相施作分葉義者好 人的文文圣谷所 老燈及与見 各等有禁鐘等之前明毗是社

Plate 8.2b. S.5603, panel 50, detail. Oriented horizontally in line with the Tibetan sūtra passages that run from left to right, between the columns of Chinese. Faint Tibetan index letters (*u* ॶ *and e* ऄ), placed in the spaces next to the red glyphs, mark each Tibetan sūtra passage. Tibetan period (ca. 760–848), 9th century. From Dunhuang. Concertina; ink on paper, 8.7 × 28.3 cm. © The British Library.

number of formats, these manuscripts range from bilingual glossaries and phrasebooks to Chinese texts written in Tibetan script to parallel texts written in both scripts.<sup>7</sup> Such productions testify to the Chinese-Tibetan encounter and Dunhuang's role as a site of contact between the Tibetan imperium and Chinese Buddhism.<sup>8</sup> One instantiation of this encounter is found in the large-scale, state-sponsored scriptural projects of the mid ninth century. Between the 820s and 840s, official scriptoria in Dunhuang and nearby Ganzhou 甘州 produced thousands of sūtra copies, and, starting sometime in the early ninth century, a translation team headed by the well-known Sino-Tibetan translator Wu Facheng 吳法成 (d. ca. 864, also known by the Tibetan name Go Chödrup, 'Go Chos grub འགོོོམོགྲུབ་) translated important Buddhist scriptures from Chinese into Tibetan as part of the effort to compile a complete set of Buddhist scriptures—including Yuanhui's commentary on the *Laṅkā*, a seminal work of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism that directly influenced Buddhism in both China and Tibet.<sup>9</sup>

**<sup>7</sup>** For a survey of bilingual Chinese-Tibetan texts from Dunhuang, see van Schaik and Galambos, *Manuscripts*, 29–33. On the general socio-cultural and linguistic climate of Dunhuang and environs in the Tibetan and Guiyijun 歸義軍 (848/51–1030/36) periods, see Takata, "Multilingualism."

<sup>8</sup> On these dates, see Horlemann, "A Re-evaluation," 49-66. See also Taenzer, The Dunhuang Region.

**<sup>9</sup>** On the Tibetan sūtra-copying projects and the scriptoria that produced them, see Dotson, "The Remains"; Iwao, "The Purpose"; and Taenzer, "*Śatasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā sūtras.*" On Wu Facheng, see Ueyama, "Hōjō no kenkyū"; Li, "Toward a Typology"; and Howard Masang, "A Translator at the Loom," forthcoming. Though he is linked by translator colophons to both received versions of the *Lańkā* in Tibetan (catalogued as *Chibetto Daizōkyō sōmokuroku* 西藏大藏經総目録, hereafter Tōh. 107 and 108), Facheng is responsible for one (Tōh. 108). On the history of these versions, see n. 26. Facheng's Tibetan translation of Yuanhui partially survives in a manuscript held by the British Library in London, ITJ 219: see table 8.1. On the place of the *Lańkā* in the early

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The present paper is an attempt to grapple with the entangled practices visible in the bilingual Chinese-Tibetan manuscripts preserved in Cave 17. In order to explore these entanglements more fully, and to consider the relationship between textuality and materiality in more depth, we take Yuanhui's commentary as our basic text and S.5603's pair of bilingual concertinas as our manuscript case-study. While treating the contents and historical fate of Yuanhui's commentary elsewhere,<sup>10</sup> we focus here on the disposition of the text in S.5603 and the system of signs used to render it legible. By examining the text-division practices evident in S.5603 and related manuscripts from Cave 17, we are able to study the conventions and techniques used by scribes in the region to delineate root text from commentary and to parse the commentary's topic outline in two languages. These devices—textual, exegetical, codicological—reveal how Buddhist sūtras were copied and commented upon using a variety of layouts. Our findings allow us to reflect on the characteristics of a potential reader and, by extension, the manuscript's original intended use by members of Dunhuang's ninth-century Buddhist scholastic community, including Facheng and his circle of disciples.

## The Commentary and Its Manuscript Witnesses

Yuanhui's decision to comment on the *Laṅkā* is partially explained by the preface attached to the received text.<sup>11</sup> The commentary opens with an introductory section, followed by a lengthy and exhaustive line-by-line exposition of the Chinese translation of the *Laṅkā* (T. 670). This exposition proceeds by quoting a passage from the sūtra in full and then presenting Yuanhui's comments on that passage. Alternating thus between base text and comment, the commentary embeds the entire sūtra within it. The base text is itself subsumed under a complex textual outline that divides the body of the sūtra into a master outline (Chinese: *dawen* 大文) comprised of ten major topics (*shi fen* 十分) that are treated in separate sections. Each section begins with its own outline that divides the main topic into numbered subtopics (*men* 門), and this outline is repeated as necessary.

Chan 禪 (Japanese: Zen) tradition, see for example Faure, *Will to Orthodoxy*. An accessible English translation of the *Laṅkā* can be found in Red Pine, *Lankavatara Sūtra*.

**<sup>10</sup>** We are preparing an article-length study on Yuanhui's commentary, tentatively titled "Buddhist Scholasticism in China, Dunhuang, and Tibet: A Study of Yuanhui's Commentary on the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* and Its Circulation via Eighth- and Ninth-Century Scholarly Networks."

II This preface, preserved in PC 2198, was composed by the Tang official Qi Huan 齊澣 (d. 746) and outlines the background to Yuanhui's *Lankā* commentary. On the dating of the *Lankā* commentary, see Ueyama, "Tonkō shutsudo Enki jutsu *Ryōgakyōsho* kō." Unlike Yuanhui's other major work of scriptural exegesis, the *Jushe lun song shu* 俱舍論頌疏 (Commentary on the *Abhidharmakośa* [Treasury of Abhidharma] verses; T. 1823), his *Lankā* commentary was never registered in official Tang Buddhist sources. Modern scholars have been slow to register Yuanhui's commentary: in their recent surveys of Chinese *Lankā* commentaries, for example, neither Deleanu, "Lankāvatārasūtra," nor Jorgensen, "Zen Commentary by one \*Wenhui, without, it seems, connecting the Chinese author named in the Tibetan colophon to Tōh. 108 (\*Wenhui, Wen hvi रेक् ()) with Yuanhui. Nevertheless, the identification of Wen hvi with Yuanhui has been established at least since the work of Kawaguchi Ekai in 1932 and Yabuki Keiki in 1933, with further elaboration by Ueyama Daishun in 1967/1968.

The history of Yuanhui's commentary is paradigmatic of patterns of textual circulation within scholastic networks linking distant corners of the Buddhist world.<sup>12</sup> Part of a larger tradition of seventh- and eighth-century Chinese sūtra exegesis undertaken at the major monasteries in the Tang 唐 capitals, the text was lost in Central China yet was known from references in the Tibetan canon and ultimately survived at Dunhuang. Most likely carried to Dunhuang from Chang'an 長安 by the scholar-monk Tankuang 曇曠 (ca. 700–ca. 788),<sup>13</sup> Yuanhui's text is partially preserved in Chinese and in Tibetan translation in three incomplete Dunhuang manuscripts that together encapsulate the arc of the text's history (see Table 8.1).<sup>14</sup>

The opening of the text survives on the Chinese scroll PC 2198;<sup>15</sup> the bulk of the commentary is represented in the two bilingual concertinas of S.5603;<sup>16</sup> and the text's closing section is found in the Tibetan *pothī* ITJ 219.<sup>17</sup> We estimate that these three witnesses contain roughly 60 percent of Yuanhui's original work, an assessment based on the percentage of root text attested in the manuscripts.

S.5603 comes to us in a hybrid book format known as a concertina.<sup>18</sup> Combining features of the scroll and the loose-leaf *pothī*, a concertina consists of a series of linked panels—oriented vertically or horizontally depending on the language in question—which are created either by folding long sheets of paper accordion-style or by linking individual panels using strips of paper and stitching.<sup>19</sup> The text runs in a continuous flow across the front side of the entire concertina before flipping over and continuing along the verso. The presence of two clear flip points in the intact S.5603 bundles indicates that there were

**17** ITJ 219 opens midway through *bampo* 36 and runs through the close of the commentary (in *bampo* 42). The Tibetan sūtra passages quoted in ITJ 219 correspond to the Chinese text in T. 670: 16.507a12–514b25 (= Tōh. 108, 265r–284v). A black and white reproduction of ITJ 219 can be found in Jin, et al., *Tibetan Documents*, Vol. 9, 234–377. We describe the manuscript in n. 29.

**18** When folded shut, S.5603 measures approximately 8.7 × 28.3 cm. For a brief discussion of S.5603's format, see Galambos, *Dunhuang Manuscript Culture*, 29–30. See also Drège, "Les accordéons," 200.

<sup>12</sup> We give this story our full attention in another study (see n. 10).

**<sup>13</sup>** On Tankuang's life and works, including his use of Yuanhui's *Laṅkā* commentary in his own writings, see Ueyama, "Donkō to Tonkō no bukkyōgaku"; Demiéville, "Récents travaux"; and Pachow, "A Study."

**<sup>14</sup>** Ueyama, "Tonkō shutsudo Enki jutsu *Ryōgakyōsho* kō," 232–33, identifies all four shelfmarks with Yuanhui's commentary. In our renumbered version of S.5603, the recto of the detached BnF folio PT 609 appears as panel 405 and its verso appears as panel 426. Because Yuanhui's commentary embeds the *Laṅkā* base text, we can use his quotation of passages from the sūtra to identify a given fragment's position within the commentary.

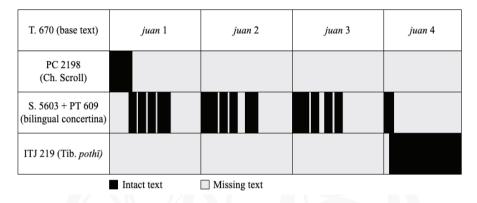
**IS** PC 2198 includes Qi Huan's preface, Yuanhui's introduction, and his exposition of 34 passages from the sūtra corresponding to the text found in T. 670: 16.480a17–480c20. We describe the manuscript in n. 28.

**<sup>16</sup>** S.5603 overlaps with both PC 2198 and ITJ 219. The Chinese sūtra citations in S.5603 correspond, with multiple missing sections, to the text found in T. 670: 16.480b2–509a13, and portions of at least six *juan* of the original (ten *juan*?) commentary are attested.

**<sup>19</sup>** Dotson and Helman-Ważny, *Codicology*, 37–38, note the use of narrow strips of paper to join the panels of concertina during the original construction process. It is difficult to determine whether the paper strips visible on S.5603 are original to the manuscript or were added by modern conservators.

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Table 8.1. Graph illustrating the passages of the 4-*juan Laṅkā* base text quoted in the surviving sections of Yuanhui's commentary in the three extant manuscript fragments.



originally two concertinas, what we refer to here as concertinas A and B<sup>20</sup> Despite the original concertina binding, the panels of S.5603 were additionally pierced for string holes. Although *pothī* books were commonly bound by passing a string through the hole at the centre of each folio, the string holes in S.5603 appear to be ornamental, with no signs of use.<sup>21</sup>

The extant panels of Concertina A have been ruled with a grid of two horizontal and four vertical lines that establish a top and bottom margin and five text columns; Concertina B is similar but has five vertical lines creating six text columns.<sup>22</sup> The layout of these grid lines could have served horizontal Tibetan or vertical Chinese text equally well. However, the precise placement of the Tibetan annotations, which are clearly dependent on the Chinese text, indicates that the Tibetan was added later. It is equally clear that both the Chinese and Tibetan texts were inscribed after the concertinas had been

For the most part, the grid lines in S.5603 appear to be brushed on with diluted ink to create fine, smooth lines. Unlike typical Chinese and Tibetan *pothī* manuscripts from Dunhuang, the right and left margins of S.5603's panels have been left undefined. The result is that the first and last columns on each panel assume a certain margin, and thus appear narrower once the margin is subtracted. On this issue, see Drège, "Les accordéons," 203.

**<sup>20</sup>** Concertina A consists of panels 1–400 and was flipped following panel 200. Concertina B runs from panels 401 to 430 and was flipped following panel 415.

**<sup>21</sup>** On string bindings in early Tibetan *pothī*, see Helman-Ważny, *Archaeology of Tibetan Books*, esp. 98–99, and Lin, "Sūtra Text in Pecha Format," 116. On ornamental string holes in Chinese *pothī*, see Drège, "Les ôles chinois," 362–64.

**<sup>22</sup>** The different rulings between concertinas A and B suggest, perhaps, that the scribe responsible for copying Yuanhui's commentary took stock of the remaining text upon completing the first concertina and estimated the need for an additional column to fit the rest of the commentary in the second volume. This may tell us something about the standard size of Chinese concertinas, which likely were restricted to a certain number of panels in keeping with the conventions of the binding format itself in order to ensure the portability, readability, and storage of individual concertinas.

assembled. This evidence comes by way of faint mirror images of characters in the margins of several panels, suggesting that the scribe turned the page to continue copying before the ink had dried. See for example, the left margin of panel 319 (Plate 8.3).<sup>23</sup>

The Chinese text of S.5603 appears to have been written by a single, practised hand.<sup>24</sup> The scribe has corrected Yuanhui's commentary, sometimes in red but more often in black. The Tibetan annotations are done consistently in red and appear in two different scripts that alternate over the course of the manuscript—one akin to the square sūtra style and one in a semi-cursive style, both of which can be seen in Plate 8.4.

This suggests that there were two Tibetan scribes who alternated over the course of the manuscript, but it could also be variation on the part of a single scribe.<sup>25</sup> We might expect that these annotations would correspond to Facheng's Tibetan translation (Tōh. 108) of Guṇabhadra's 4-*juan* Chinese translation (T. 670) of the *Laṅkā*, which is the base text for Yuanhui's commentary; instead, they reflect an alternate recension of the *Laṅkā* (Tōh. 107).<sup>26</sup> We consider the significance of this apparent mismatch below. Each Chi-

**24** We would like to thank Imre Galambos for sharing his observations on the handwriting and construction of S.5603. At the time of writing, we have been unable to determine whether the Chinese text was written with a brush or a pen, the latter certainly being the writing instrument used to write the Tibetan annotations and letters that appear on the manuscript. On the Tibetan pen, see Helman-Ważny, *Archaeology of Tibetan Books*, 101–2. On the impact of the Tibetan-style pen on Chinese scribal practices in the greater Dunhuang area, see Galambos, *Dunhuang Manuscript Culture*, 14–16. Fujieda, "Tunhuang Manuscripts: Part II," 19–22, estimates that more than 60 percent of all Dunhuang manuscripts were written by pen. We have established that the Chinese hands on S.5603 and PC 2198 do not match.

**25** We would like to thank Jacob Dalton and the anonymous reviewer for help in examining the Tibetan hand on S.5603. An annotation on panel 374, in the course of which the Tibetan script switches without disrupting the spacing or ink tone of the text, suggests that the two scripts may have been written by a single scribe: again, see Figure 4. However, there are patterns in spelling and punctuation specific to the two scripts that, while challenging to interpret, make it more likely that we are dealing with multiple scribes. The text in square script observes syllable boundaries fairly regularly, whereas that in the semi-cursive script frequently collapses two syllables together. Is this a feature of cursive writing or the signature of a specific scribe? Syllables in the cursive text are often punctuated with double tsheg देंग। marks, which are very rare in the square text, but again, this could be an artifact of writing mechanics and not necessarily the marker of different scribes. Patterns in spelling would seem to offer firmer ground. The square text tends to aspirate the consonants in bc(h)om নইর্ম and thams c(h)ad রম্ম'র্ড্, while the semi-cursive text does not. Meanwhile, on several occasions, the semi-cursive text drops the secondary -sa 🎮 suffix in the first syllable of two-syllable words like sang(s) rgyas শ্বন্দ্রশ and sem(s) can শ্বিশ তর্ব. Such evidence appears to come closer to a scribal signature, suggesting that we are dealing with two Tibetan scribes who alternated over the course of the manuscript. Yet, there is still much that we do not know about the relationship between script, punctuation, and orthography. A final determination awaits advancements in the field.

**26** As has been noted by Ueyama, *Hōjō no kenkyū*, 113, and Iwao, et al., *Old Tibetan Texts*, s.v., the Tibetan annotations to S.5603 are closely related to the received Tibetan translation Tōh.

**<sup>23</sup>** We also find mirror images of the red lectional signs used to highlight the Chinese text, as well as multiple instances where the red ink of the Tibetan annotations has transferred to an opposing panel, though without defined mirror images. This could have resulted from the scribe turning the page before the ink dried or from later smearing in the course of the manuscript's use. See, for instance, the red smudge around the first three characters of panel 361, col. 1, and the faded quality of the ink of the Tibetan annotation following the final column of panel 360.



Plate 8.3. S.5603, panels 319-320 (formerly 114–115). Faint mirror-image characters remain from the copying process (in large box) on a panel that also includes the changeover between juan 3 and 4; arrows mark, from right to left, top to bottom, (a) the end title of *juan* 3, (b) the head title of juan 4, and (c) the author colophon to juan 4 of Yuanhui's Commentary on the Precious Lankāvatārasūtra. Note the red points marking the numbered hierarchies in the commentary's outline (in small box); they are also used to mark the title, colophon, and start of juan 4. Tibetan period (ca. 760-848), 9th century. From Dunhuang. Concertina; ink on paper, 8.7 × 28.3 cm. © The British Library.

nese sūtra passage is marked by Tibetan index letters in a larger headed script (*uchen*, *dbu can* དབུ་ཕན་) written with a—usually quite faded—red ink. As this ink differs from that used for the Tibetan annotations and Chinese signposts, it indicates an additional hand or at least an additional "pass" through the manuscript.<sup>27</sup> While acknowledging the

<sup>107.</sup> As established by Howard Masang, "A Translator at the Loom," Toh. 108 is a translation from Gunabhadra's Chinese text (T. 670) that can be confidently attributed to Facheng. The colophon identifying him appears in all received versions in wording that is fully consistent with the manuscript record—including, importantly, the colophon to his translation of Yuanhui's commentary in ITJ 219. The textual history of Toh. 107 is complicated, but it is unlikely that Facheng was its translator: the colophon crediting Facheng with Toh. 107 appears to stem only from the Degé canon (see the text edited in Degé Kangyur, Sde dge bka' 'gyur ষ্ট্র'নশ্বান্বন্দ্রান্বা, hereafter D, 107), and its wording departs in several respects from other colophons crediting him in both the manuscript record and in the canons. It is not impossible that Facheng revised an earlier recension of Toh. 107 against Śikṣānanda's 實叉難陀 (652-710?) 7-juan Dasheng rulengqie jing 大乘入楞伽經 (Mahāyāna Sūtra on the Entrance to Lankā; T. 672), for instance, but it is perhaps more likely that his name has been attached to Toh. 107 due to a combination of mistakes and wishful thinking on the part of much later editors of various canons. In terms of Tōh. 107's source text, more work remains to be done, but a preliminary analysis suggests that it was translated from a Sanskrit version that was quite close to T. 672: see Li, "A Survey," 198-99. Scherrer-Schaub, "Enacting Words," 297-99, argues persuasively that the Lankā was first translated into Tibetan at an early date—perhaps the first half of the eighth century, well before Facheng's career. On the likelihood that this initial translation was related to Toh. 107, see Goodman and Howard Masang, "Buddhist Scholasticism."

**<sup>27</sup>** There are roughly a dozen citations that are not accompanied by a Tibetan letter. Given the significant fading of the ink used to write them, and the fact that there is no obvious distinction between these citations and those that are lettered, it is likely that these unlettered citations

鮮日知是外道見可所重要視計着者法念旗影見有 与所說委習所重新有旗所而生計者此見必依一要等 う知身与名相是自心親遵生計着後諸見笑後此第九明 关代中有二匹举亦有二 依於著見又初著一匹举 膝頸頭(切色)像而无、奏 進效張豪非を蒙二 除預請色 等放知明镜 通 お現像う知无體 毫无 豪美放非家称~

Plate 8.4. S.5603, panel 374, detail. Shift in Tibetan script captured in the annotations to Yuanhui's *Commentary on the Precious Lańkāvatārasūtra*. The first line of Tibetan in this image is written in the square sūtra style. The ninth syllable of line 2 of the Tibetan switches to a semi-cursive script (see arrow). Tibetan period (ca. 760–848), 9th century. From Dunhuang. Concertina; ink on paper, 8.7 × 28.3 cm. © The British Library.

likelihood that bilingual scribes were involved in the creation of S.5603, we believe the Chinese portion of the manuscript was written by a single scribe and the Tibetan represents the work of two to three individuals.

## Signs and Spaces: Separating Sūtra from Commentary

Scanning the panels of S.5603 from top to bottom, right to left, in order of the Chinese text, we note changes in page density. The Tibetan additions in red dramatically impact the density of each page, as does the change in the number of Chinese lines per text column and the number of characters per line. The red ink of the Tibetan annotations makes the layers of text more legible, signalling shifts between sūtra and commentary and distinguishing the Tibetan from the Chinese. The density of individual lines is directly impacted by the scribe's use of punctuation to mark major divisions in Yuanhui's text. Take, for example, the third and fourth Chinese lines of panel 319 (see Plate 8.3). Here we can see how the scribe has punctuated three paratextual items—the end title of *juan* 3 and the head title and author colophon to *juan* 4—using a combination of line breaks and blank spaces. A similar layout was used in scroll PC 2198 which contains the opening section of Yuanhui's commentary (Figure 8.1).<sup>28</sup> There, the scribe has used

were originally marked by a letter that is no longer visible, but a determination awaits further examination of the physical manuscript.

**<sup>28</sup>** PC 2198 is a scroll measuring 26.5 to 27.7 × 1153 cm and containing 712 columns of Chinese text written in neat italic script with scattered additions and corrections. The manuscript appears to have been ruled using a combination of drypoint and brushed ink. Ueyama, "Tonkō shutsudo

研幾舉而銷之從而釋之前理之傳優詳矣法師以余 楊伽阿联多羅索員経 能文九身禅思監守默語 痛貧女宅中地開 楞伽阿跃寶 平等矢其 一思斯乃不取 九滅美有生无生於有无得常族美故我大年月 與大明燈幽能日照世不動直 了金纳氏承聞直 法而證真 愛雨已世尊聖德霧合光極日月花樂嚴泉 山有、而无上い新法賓海 「充之流」 室我是十万寶得酸在於中天四千伽他来来 之入不動矣非天 法而降而甘露溢度門留矣識宅清矣教 電話 離量察、方應不費相题其馬自劇見清、方匪從 見是以解 首浮法界 故云弟 故题云楞伽阿 和如菜 意流法而波 松不觀之地遊行於 海達唐六是發揮傳心鏡 不樹見 心現所以出龍王宫諸摩罪項代是 猶随色之珠 時夏 不見常而誰對人人法浮号本不二 绝厚益者美楞伽 不格之大道豈有見生无 東京中大雲寺沙門 除楞伽月頭 部託 月菜義皆雨 藏海理 風味 浪息品者勤 軍勝諸仏心 而金色 い指金同 開 下シ 雨 何有之鄉入正受无思之門 詞表夫 至極其孰 本元形 任 万物非 際開物周行本目 別云輕義花費 後之弊者善道派之有 妖多麗寶 福秋 編 義 我霸士 頭清流之月曾何出入故 圓暉 れ此方義玄 新 雪諸法 稽白大年尼 離性境風清 遠旅諸見過 報道範 大空荡之方元 シト 往悟堂之以方登 妊 生之 山則夏 抱有 经 一理我離 元生奚 乃重宣妙百 公部 元念理 裁 而月菜 彩 F 珠 慈雲起而真 雨 聖大新新 引 百万 北此土跃施以 到常樂 頭 清い空 ヨヨ pe 代 震城大雲 - UPB 演 日初 躍利 えい議通 元は い内棒山 遊行无两有 元相 法考读 皆苏 十四仙心居 上所跃多 他專 常 工想明以 将 相、 有 秋圓 花 别 掏 軍 松落 稻 蒲 新香 11/3

Figure 8.1. PC 2198. Showing the textual layout of the title of Yuanhui's introduction (line 4) and colophon (line 5) to his *Commentary on the Precious Lankāvatārasūtra*. Tibetan period (ca. 760–848)? From Dunhuang. Scroll; ink on paper, 26.5 to 27.7 × 1153 cm. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

blank spaces to separate the title and author colophon of Yuanhui's text from Qi Huan's preface, which appears immediately prior on the manuscript. Specifically, we can see how the title was highlighted through its placement at the start of a new line, followed by an interval of blank space (PC 2198, line 4). Indented halfway down the next line (PC 2198, line 5) we find the colophon containing Yuanhui's name and monastery.

The spatial strategies used by scribes to mark major text divisions in S.5603 and PC 2198 can be contrasted with those used in the text's Tibetan translation in *pothī* ITJ 219 (Figure 8.2).<sup>29</sup>

Here, a break in *bampos* (a Tibetan textual unit comparable to the Chinese *juan*) does not occasion a line-break like we encountered in S.5603 and PC 2198. Rather, *bampo* breaks are marked with blank spaces before and after the title of the new *bampo*, and one or both of these spaces is filled by elaborate, hand-drawn flowers. These signs

Enki jutsu *Ryōgakyōsho* kō," 232, dates PC 2198 to the Tibetan period, but further examination of the physical manuscript is required.

**<sup>29</sup>** ITJ 219 measures 7.9 × 42.4 cm and consists of 144 leaves, numbered *ca*  $\overline{s}$  2–100 and *cha*  $\overline{s}$  1–45 (i.e., 602–745). The folios are ruled to create margins on the right and left sides and five lines of text. There are two circled string holes. The manuscript bears three colophons, the first of which indicates that Facheng's translation was undertaken at imperial behest. The interpretation of the second and third colophons is not settled. ITJ 219 was copied by Dongpo Tsenzang (Sdong po Btsan bzang  $\frac{1}{2}(\overline{s}, \overline{s}, \overline{s}, \overline{s})$ , either on the basis of an exemplar copied in the year of the rooster (*bya gag lo*  $\overline{s}(\overline{s}, \overline{s}, \overline{s})$ ), by Bhiksu Dorje (Dge slong Rdo rje  $\overline{s}(\overline{s}, \overline{s}, \overline{s})$ , or with the latter's financial support (see fols. *cha* 45r–v).

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Figure 8.2. ITJ 219, cha 3v, start of *bampo* 41 (folio 102v). Facheng's Tibetan recension of Yuanhui's *Commentary on the Precious Laikāvatārasūtra*. Although the two flowers depicted on this folio are executed in black ink, the floral designs found on other folios are accented with red ink. In contrast to the commentary, which is written in black ink, the *Laikāvatārasūtra* citations are written in red ink (see box). Note the small black "cross" (indicated by arrow) above line 5 used to mark missing text, which has been added by a different hand below. Tibetan period (ca. 760–848), 9th century. From Dunhuang. *Poţhī*; ink on paper, 7.9 × 42.4 cm. © The British Library.

are drawn differently on each occurrence, showing a marked contrast with the pattern of glyphs and brackets used to separate passages of sūtra from those of commentary in S.5603. As Bidur Bhattarai has recently discussed, floral designs called *puṣpikā*, depicted with varying degrees of realism, are commonly used to divide and annotate texts in Indian manuscript cultures.<sup>30</sup> The use of flowers in ITJ 219 reflects a degree of continuity between Indian and Tibetan conventions of the page.<sup>31</sup>

Throughout his text, Yuanhui carefully delineates sūtra from commentary in syntactically independent units that start and sometimes end with short formulae. In S.5603, the scribe has transposed this grammatical distance into the visual layout using a combination of lectional signs and blank spaces. These signs and spaces are applied to alternating passages of sūtra and commentary, thereby graphically distinguishing them on the page. Panel 427, cols. 5–7, shows how the scribe has highlighted the sūtra citations with red points ( $\bullet$ ) and  $\Delta$ -glyphs, and the commentary passages with red brackets. These passages are further separated by spaces, as shown here:

```
且初第一 • 總標正[col. 6]理其義者何
```

Now first, point no. 1, • "Explaining the correct principle overall." What is its meaning?

[space]

ム 經云...

The sūtra states: [...citation...]

[space]

┌解曰…矣

**<sup>30</sup>** Bhattarai, *Dividing Texts*, 75–76.

**<sup>31</sup>** See also the work of Scherrer-Schaub in documenting similar designs on manuscripts from Gandhāra and Khotan.

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To explain: [...commentary...] [full stop = 矣]
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The same combination of  $\triangle$ -glyphs and brackets marking sūtra citation and commentary, respectively, is found on several manuscripts linked to Facheng. See, for instance, his commentary on the *Śālistambasūtra* (Rice Seedling Sūtra) in PC 2284.<sup>32</sup>

By contrast, in the parallel passage from Facheng's Tibetan translation of Yuanhui's Chinese text, the sūtra citations are syntactically integrated into the commentary (ITJ 219, ca 37v5–38r1):

Of these, one is "treating the authentic modes [i.e., the 'correct principal'] in brief," regarding which: [...citation...] thus spoken [by the Buddha], [...commentary...] [full stop = terminative particle]

Rather than inserting spaces within a single coherent sentence, the scribes of ITJ 219 have distinguished the sūtra citation from the commentary by writing the former in red. This keeps with a common convention in Indian and Tibetan manuscripts of rubricating the root text.<sup>33</sup> This convention may also explain why the Tibetan annotations on S.5603 are in red: Not only do they visually distinguish the Tibetan from the Chinese, they are citations of the root text.

Returning to S.5603, we can see that each panel has been divided into five (or six) columns spaced at wide intervals, with each column accommodating up to three lines of text, including the Chinese commentary and the interlinear Tibetan annotations. In this use of extra-wide columns, we may detect resonances with both indigenous Chinese and early Buddhist text annotation traditions. This includes the use of double-columns in the formatting of Chinese exegetical writings, a process Ren-Yuan Li has documented in paper manuscripts dating no later than the third or fourth century CE.<sup>34</sup> A similar practice of double-column annotation is witnessed in some Chinese Buddhist commentarial manuscripts. For example, in the eighth-century (?) Chinese Dunhuang scroll BD14138, which contains an unidentified interlinear commentary on Gunabhadra's Lankā translation (the same text that Yuanhui commented on), both sūtra and commentary are inscribed in the same black ink but using characters of different sizes and modified layouts. Specifically, the commentary has been added in double-columns of smaller characters beneath the sūtra citations. While the layout of BD14138 differs from that of S.5603 in important respects—the root text and Yuanhui's comments to it are written in continuous even-sized script in S.5603—both manuscripts use widely spaced lines to create visual hierarchies between primary and secondary texts on the page.35

**<sup>32</sup>** For more on Facheng's commentary on the *Śālistambasūtra* and the manuscripts associated with it, see Howard Masang, "A Translator at the Loom." See also the discussion of PT 553 (Plate 8) below.

**<sup>33</sup>** For instance, in PT 766 (Plate 5) discussed below, the root verses (in Sanskrit:  $k\bar{a}rik\bar{a}$ ) of the treatise are written in red, embedded in the auto-commentary ( $vy\bar{a}khy\bar{a}na$ ) written in black. The annotations, also in black, constitute a sub-commentary on this base text.

<sup>34</sup> See Li, "Placing Texts," esp. 316.

**<sup>35</sup>** For an edition of the text found in BD14138 (*xin* 新 338), see Fang, ed., *Zangwai fojiao wenxian* 藏外 佛教文獻, 16:41–175. Hureau, "Les commentaires," 242, discusses these issues in relation to PC 2339.

4432-13 42. 4 5-22-15 4-32 12 292-32112 25 0

Plate 8.5. PT 766, folio 1v. Annotated copy of the *Pratītyasamutpādahṛdaya* in Tibetan configured with boxes to delineate the relationship between root text and glosses; verses of the root text are written in in red (l. 1), and the auto-commentary and glosses are in black. Tibetan period (ca. 760–848), 9th century. From Dunhuang. *Pothī*; ink on paper. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Wide ruling may also furnish details regarding a manuscript's production. As Scherrer-Schaub has pointed out, Tibetan manuscripts were ruled at wide intervals in anticipation of interlinear annotation.<sup>36</sup> This insight contains the related point that wide-ruled manuscripts *without* such annotation should be recognized as works in progress which have reached us in an unfinished state. This includes sets of annotations in the process of being copied (scribal labour) and annotations in the process of being composed (intellectual labour). A Tibetan manuscript linked to Facheng's circle demonstrates the process by which the commentary was eventually added as smaller, interlinear annotations (Plate 8.5).

PT 766 contains a Tibetan translation of the *Pratītyasamutpādahṛdaya* (Epitome of Interdependent Origination), which it presents in multiple layers: The root verses (Sanskrit: *kārikā*) are written in red and embedded in an auto-commentary (*vyākhyāna*) written in black; this base text (root verses and auto-commentary) has been heavily annotated with glosses in black. The manuscript's scribe created boxes to delineate the relationship between glosses and the terms in the root text to which they apply, but he did not always correctly anticipate the amount of annotation to be added.<sup>37</sup> Unlike Yuanhui's commentary, which had been in circulation as a finished work for the better part of a century by the time of its inscription in S.5603, the annotations to PT 766 may reflect an earlier stage in the process of commentarial composition. Nevertheless, sets of annotations like those found on PT 766 seem to have circulated independently, effectively constituting complete works of exegesis known as "annotated gloss commentaries"

**<sup>36</sup>** See Scherrer-Schaub, "Towards a Methodology," 23, where she discusses texts "destined to be commented upon."

**<sup>37</sup>** This text, including PT 766, is studied at length in Howard Masang, "Sino-Tibetan Scholasticism." The first folio of this manuscript has been mistakenly flipped by the cataloguers: the side of the folio bearing the BnF pressmark is actually the verso and not the recto. See also Howard Masang, "A Translator at the Loom," for an exploration of the role of annotated manuscripts in ninth-century Dunhuang scholasticism.

(Tibetan: *chentik, mchan tig* सडद्र न्त्रिंग).<sup>38</sup> The formatting of these works in manuscript editions appears to have been integral to their transmission.

These examples might suggest that the Chinese scribe ruled S.5603 in anticipation of the Tibetan annotations, but there is no indication that he did. The Chinese is regularly spaced throughout and the text is no more widely written than other concertinas; these concertinas are widely ruled, but not widely written. S.5603's Chinese scribe also departed from the formatting witnessed in BD14138, discussed above, in which passages of commentary are written in double columns of smaller characters beneath the normal- or large-sized characters of the main text. In S.5603, the passages of root text and commentary are written in characters of equal size, differentiated only by the signs and spaces introduced above.

## Exegetical Mappings:<sup>39</sup> Tracking the Topic Outline

Turning from the formatting of S.5603 to the organization of Yuanhui's commentary, we see that Yuanhui gives each new point in his topic outline (*kepan*) a number and title. However, he does not rehearse its position in the outline hierarchy. With topics nested in up to seven or more levels, it quickly becomes a challenge for the reader to keep the hierarchy clearly in mind.<sup>40</sup> In an apparent attempt to help the reader navigate these layers, someone has gone through and highlighted virtually every single Chinese numeral in S.5603 with a simple red point (see Plate 8.3).

We see a more intricate system of signs used to track the exegetical outline in manuscripts connected with Facheng's lectures on the *Yogācārabhūmi* (The Stages of the Practice of Yoga).<sup>41</sup> For instance, PC 2061 (= PT 783) is a Chinese scroll containing notes taken during Facheng's lectures by his chief disciple, Cao Fajing 曹法鏡 (803–883) (Plate 8.6).<sup>42</sup> In this manuscript we can see signposts, including glyphs, circles, and points in

**41** Facheng gave a series of lectures on the first half of the *Yogācārabhūmi* at Kaiyuan Temple 開元寺 in Dunhuang from 855 to 859. At least seven different disciples in attendance took notes during these lectures, producing more than forty surviving manuscripts. These materials include manuscripts of the root text of the *Yogācārabhūmi* (*Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論, T. 1579), Facheng's *kepan* topic outline (*Yuqie shidi lun fenmen ji* 瑜伽師地論分門記 [Notes on the Divisions of the *Yogācārabhūmi*], T. 2801), and drafts of his expository comments (*Yuqie lun [suiting] shouji* 瑜伽論[隨聽]手記 [Notes (Taken while Listening) to the *Yogācārabhūmi*], T. 2802). For studies of these manuscripts and the lecture project, see Ueyama, "Hōjō no kenkyū," 219–46, and Howard Masang, "A Translator at the Loom."

**42** Due to the Tibetan annotations on the manuscript, PC 2061 is also catalogued as PT 783. The manuscript contains Fajing's record of Facheng's comments on *juan* 1–5 of the *Yogācārabhūmi* (i.e., it belongs to the *Yuqie lun [suiting] shouji*). Our knowledge of Fajing's lifespan is based on his eulogy in PC 4660(4), from which we learn that he died in 883 at the age of eighty. See the notes

<sup>38</sup> See Howard Masang, "Sino-Tibetan Scholasticism."

**<sup>39</sup>** We adopt "exegetical mappings" from Buswell, *Cultivating Original Enlightenment*, 36, and "Wonhyo," 142.

**<sup>40</sup>** This observation is contingent on our imperfect understanding of historical reading practices. It could be that managing the outline hierarchy is chiefly an obstacle to the modern reader, but the various strategies used to represent the outline in textual or visual form (including those highlighted below with reference to S.5603) suggest that ninth-century scholiasts found it similarly difficult.

一中人四串四合首元我 康とかうの 朝间 天城巨 臣天臣 田村大学中三日 虎喜成怪相 限 而三惊頂 ニオー 言又彼晓 我 九三天ろ ah.

Plate 8.6. PC 2061 (= PT 783). Cao Fajing's notes on Facheng's lectures on the *Yogācārabhūmi*, with Tibetan annotations and markup in red. Guiyijun period (848/51–1030/36), 855. From Dunhuang. Scroll; ink on paper. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

red, that track the levels in the outline. They are written in haste and with inconsistent correspondence between any given mark and a specific level of the outline, perhaps betraying the manuscript's origins in a lecture-hall setting.<sup>43</sup>

A highly regularized version of this same tracking system is found in a set of manuscripts characterized by Ueyama as a "notebook" containing the exegetical outline prepared in advance of Facheng's lectures.<sup>44</sup> Costantino Moretti has called attention to the "ornamental vocabulary" used to track the layers of doctrinal hierarchies in two manu-

to Zheng's edition, *Dunhuang bei ming zan jishi*, 112–13; and Rong's comments on eulogy no. 37 in Jiang, Xiang, and Rong, *Dunhuang miaozhen zan*, 359.

**<sup>43</sup>** Ueyama, *Tonkō bukkyō no kenkyū*, 226–27, takes Fajing's manuscripts—including passages in both black and red ink—to have been written in the lecture hall. This differs from his interpretation of other sets of manuscripts connected to Facheng's lectures. For instance, he argues that "notebook X" (see following note) was prepared in advance of lectures, annotated during the lectures, and then corrected afterward. He identifies red ink as a sign of later corrections and also notices a four-column passage in PC 2035 where the paper has been cut and a new sheet pasted in (228–30). Yet, in the case of a chapter of the *Yogācārabhūmi* root text prepared for lecture attendees (S.3927), Ueyama states that the red was added during the lecture (228).

**<sup>44</sup>** PC 2080, together with PC 2035 and PC 2247, belongs to a set of manuscripts dubbed by Ueyama "notebook X." Building on the work of Fujieda Akira, Ueyama argues that notebook X was Facheng's personal notebook containing topic outlines (*Yuqie shidi lun fenmen ji*) prepared in advance of lectures (*Tonkō bukkyō no kenkyū*, 219–46, especially 229–30). PC 2080 corresponds to the second half of *juan* 42 through *juan* 46. PC 2035, also catalogued as PT 2205, corresponds to *juan* 1–20, and PC 2247 to *juan* 58–61.

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Plate 8.7. PC 2080, detail. An exegetical outline prepared in advance of Facheng's lectures on the *Yogācārabhūmi* annotated in Chinese and with signs marking four levels in the outline: the (1) flower, (2) spiral, (3) empty point, and (4) simple point. Guiyijun period (848/51–1030/36), 858. From Dunhuang. Scroll; ink on paper, 30.8 to 31.2 × 1694.4 cm. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

scripts from this "notebook"—PC 2035 and PC 2247. Specifically, he points to four signs used recurrently to mark levels in the text's hierarchies: the (1) flower, (2) spiral, (3) empty point (*point vide*), and (4) simple point.<sup>45</sup> We see the same range of signs used in PC 2080, also from the notebook, where someone went through the text carefully using a standardized set of signs to track the levels in the commentary's

outline (Plate 8.7). Taken together, these sign systems, along with the spatial layouts described above, are typical of the editorial techniques in use in Dunhuang during the time that Facheng and his disciples were active in the region.

Returning to S.5603, we find an additional exegetical mapping system in the form of Tibetan letter-numerals (that is, letters standing for numbers, or "index letters," comprising an alphabetic numerical notation system) that appear at the start of each sūtra passage.<sup>46</sup> The basic template in use over most of S.5603 assigns a letter to a given sūtra passage corresponding to the passage's number in the topic outline. Thus, "point 1" (第 —) is marked ka  $\eta$ ; "point 2," kha  $\eta$ ; "point 3," ga  $\eta$ ; and so on, following the order of the Tibetan alphabet. When the points in a topic are complete, the letters revert to ka and the series begins again. When the commentary moves to a subtopic of a given point, it generally signals this by adding the vowel sign  $i \sim$  to ka, producing  $ki \hat{\eta}$  for "sub-point 1," after which the letter-numerals usually revert to the basic pattern. Thus, "sub-point 2" would be kha (and not khi  $\hat{\eta}$ ). Further subdivisions progress through the vowel signs in alphabetical order, producing  $ku \hat{\eta}$ ,  $ke \hat{\eta}$ ,  $ko \hat{\eta}$ , and  $kam \hat{\eta}$ .

**<sup>45</sup>** Moretti, "Notes et catégories," 260.

**<sup>46</sup>** On the use of alphabetic numerical notation systems across the ancient and medieval worlds, including China and Tibet, see Chrisomalis, *Numerical Notation*.

Table 8.2. Yuanhui's exegetical outline annotated with Tibetan index letters in bold: S.5603, panels 287–91.

1. Mahāmati poses the question 大慧申問
1.1 The actual request 正請問 <b>ka</b> (287.5)
1.2 Explaining that the question is beneficial 明問有益
1.2.1 Explaining that one will transcend bad views 明離惡見 ki (287.7)
1.2.2 One will not slander the True Dharma 不謗正法 <b>kha</b> (288.2)
2. The Tathāgata answers 如來為答
2.1 Answering in verse 以偈答 <b>ka (</b> 288.6)
2.2 The prose explanation 長行顯示
2.2.1 Attribution (Skt. <i>samāropa</i> ) in particular 標建立
2.2.1.1 Asking in particular about attribution 標問建立 <b>ku</b> (289.6)
2.2.1.2 [The types of attribution are] few in number 微其數 <b>kha</b> (290.1)
2.2.1.3 Stating the names [of the types of attribution] 述其名 <b>ga</b> (290.2)
2.2.2 Separately explaining denial (Skt. <i>apavāda</i> ) 別明誹謗
2.2.2.1 Accurately explaining denial 正明誹謗 <b>ka</b> (290.4)
2.2.2.2 Concluding [the discussion of] the characteristics [of attribution
and denial] overall 總結其相 <b>kha</b> (291.2)

By combining consonants and vowel signs in this way, the Tibetan index letters convey richer information about the topic outline than the Chinese text, which reports only the number assigned to a given item—signalled, again, by a red point. Nevertheless, the complexity of the outline remained a challenge for the Tibetan index letters, as well, and it is likely that this explains the variation of their application encountered in S.5603.<sup>47</sup> Table 8.2 includes a representative sample from Yuanhui's topic outline with the corresponding Tibetan index letters appearing on panels 287–91 of S.5603.

The use of index letters to track Yuanhui's topic outline in S.5603 is a previously undocumented application of letter-numerals that are otherwise well attested in Tibetan written culture of every period. Scholars have documented a wide range of variations on several systems that have been used to count verses, textual divisions, folios, *bampos*, and volumes, as well as to tally discards from sūtra-copying projects. A version of this system is used to number the folios in ITJ 219. A brief but analogous (and similarly undocumented) application of letter-numerals to track an exegetical outline can be found in the Tibetan *pothī* PT 553 (Plate 8.8). This copy of Kamalaśīla's (ca. 740–795 CE) commentary on the *Śālistambasūtra* has been heavily annotated in what is likely Facheng's own hand, and the annotator has written two sets of the letters *ka* ¬*nga* ¬ (i.e., 1–4) above several key terms on fol. *ka* 20v.<sup>48</sup> By using matching letters

**<sup>47</sup>** While the employment of consonants is consistent, the vowel signs are applied in a haphazard fashion. Thus, for instance, we find the appearance of *kam* when we are expecting *ki* (panel 328, col. 5), and there are cases where the vowel signs mark every member of a subset rather than only the first member (for instance, panels 327, cols. 4–8, 328, cols. 5–6).

**<sup>48</sup>** We take Kamalaśīla's dates from Marks and Eltschinger, "Kamalaśīla," who cite Frauwallner, "Landmarks."



Plate 8.8. PT 553, ka 20v, detail. Tibetan index letters clarifying the relationship of keywords and their exegetical treatment, from left to right: ka, kha, kha, ga, nga.
Kha is repeated to indicate that ga and nga are its subdivisions. The Tibetan translation of Kamalaśīla's Śālistambaţīkā commentary in black, with embedded quotations of the Śālistambasūtra in red, annotated in black in what is likely Facheng's own hand. Tibetan period (ca. 760–848), 9th century. From Dunhuang. Poţhī; ink on paper. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

to tag the word being glossed and its explanation, the scribe has helped to clarify the relations between the text and annotations for a passage in which key terms are treated out of order and thus easily confused. The terms so marked additionally correspond to a topic outline in which two of the terms are nested within a third (*ga* and *nga* belong to point *kha*), but the lettering system alone is not capable of capturing this shift in hierarchy. Rather, the scribe signals this relationship by the proximity of the *kha* and the *ga*. Here, we are likely witnessing a lettering practice that is mid-development.

A further application of Tibetan index letters appears on panel 206 of S.5603—this one an amalgamation of the red sūtra passage tallies and PT 553's exegetical outline markers. Here they are used to correct a discrepancy between the Chinese and Tibetan sūtra passages. We notice three small Tibetan letters (*kha–nga*; i.e., 2–4), in black ink and headed script, next to two sūtra passages that are also labeled with the familiar red Tibetan letternumerals (Plate 8.9). As mentioned above, the Tibetan annotations to S.5603 are taken from a recension of the *Laṅkā* (related to Tōh. 107) that is significantly longer than Yuanhui's base text (Guṇabhadra's 4-*juan Laṅkā*, T. 670).<sup>49</sup> In most instances, the Tibetan scribe could easily omit material that does not appear in the shorter recension. But on panel 206, he encountered a problem, because at this point the parallel passages in the longer recension appear in a different order from the shorter recension on which Yuanhui comments.

The Tibetan scribe addressed this complication in two steps. First, he annotated the Chinese sūtra passages with the parallel passages in Tibetan. This, however, disrupted the order of the passages as they appear in the Tibetan source text (the longer *Lańkā* recension). In order to rectify this, the scribe added small black letters next to

**<sup>49</sup>** Guṇabhadra's *Laṅkā* translation (T. 670) is comprised of a single chapter titled *Yiqie fo yuxin pin* 一切佛語心品 (Chapter on the Essence of the Speech of All Buddhas). For a discussion of the relationship between this text and the much longer (and later?) Sanskrit version, see Deleanu, "Laṅkāvatarasūtra," 21. Two additional versions of the *Laṅkā* are preserved in Chinese: Bodhiruci's 菩提流支 513 cE translation, the 10-*juan Rulengqie jing* 入楞伽經 (Sūtra on the Entrance to Laṅkā; T. 671) and Śikṣānanda's 700 cE translation, the 7-*juan Dasheng rulengqie jing* 大乘入楞伽經 (Mahāyāna Sūtra on the Entrance to Laṅkā; T. 672). On the extant Tibetan translations, see n. 26.

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想住九結或妾想 • 十结後仍就又初第一明係赵住甚義者何 在大大落族依似就一切法入自自苦相。 都日法依征就者去法是依 如該者矣一切法入自然相有一切法者因接坐法此接坐法不難自相及与若相 故去入失自我有意知前實就從此第二明委想住罪影者何 ▲経亡自心祖習意用相情 委祖自位計着因 御日自心現得豪因者朝心ഡ "他生妄想矣的後心就意成後子習氣因矣甚就善恐而就後失刑障害地自 准計着目者意就撞子流这提此撞子生非多越生時條自住魔而坐計着自 "有不可得者被逼封空失禄、計善即於強正不。如何要越常暫因正計書」的月後人还預約者放援主使国粮生活於,用售捐加的化就。因此發、對差以第三明團成性 實或者何 就法被人无害 切後、計書不許性的是計看之間計看 即是面封有机失推就按推通意的计看政为承失 法受不可得来接因終重反通計運飲石圓或即下往又聽一自怪和成枝来怒

Plate 8.9. S.5603, panels 205–206. Examples of the black-ink Tibetan lettering applied to resolve a discrepancy between the order of parallel passages from the shorter Chinese (T. 670) and longer Tibetan (Töh. 107) *Lańkā* recensions. These letters are integrated into Yuanhui's exegetical outline, which is tracked by Tibetan letters in heavily faded red ink. From left to right, top to bottom: faded *ku* (Ch. passage 1), faded *khu* (Ch. passage 2) and black *nga* (Tib. passage 3), faded *ga* (gu?, Ch. passage 3) and black *kha* (Tib. passage 2), black *ga* (Tib. passage 3), *'khrugs* ("out of order"). Tibetan period (ca. 760–848), 9th century. From Dunhuang. Concertina; ink on paper, 8.7 × 28.3 cm. © The British Library.

the Tibetan annotations, restoring their original order. For reasons that are not entirely clear, he furthermore split the second annotation into two parts, assigning each a letter (*kha* and *ga*). Directly after the last annotation in red on panel 206, the scribe has written in black, "out of order" (Tib. *'khrugs* (TST), apparently signalling the reason for the black index letters and marking the end of the problematic section. What is quite interesting is that the scribe has not simply applied the first three letters of the alphabet as was done in PT 553, for instance. Rather, he worked his re-ordering into the topic outline denoted by the red Tibetan index letters, labeling the annotations, which directly follow a "point 1" in the topic outline, as 2 through 4. Thus, the black index letters simultaneously reorder the annotations, as was done in PT 553, while integrating them into the topic outline established by the red index letters on S.5603.

The logic of tallying sūtra passages with index letters on S.5603 seems particularly consonant with the practice of tallying verses, which is, coincidentally, one of the earliest documented uses of letter-numerals in Buddhist manuscripts.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, a dedicated study of letter-numerals by Brandon Dotson has demonstrated that, particularly for the earliest stratum of Tibetan manuscripts (those produced prior to 848), a given lettering system has the potential to reveal a manuscript's precise origins in time and space.<sup>51</sup> In the case of S.5603, the fact that the Tibetan index letters match one of

<sup>50</sup> See Scherrer-Schaub, "Poetic and Prosodic Aspect."

**<sup>51</sup>** Dotson, "Failed Prototypes," esp. 153. Characterizing several lettering systems found on ninthcentury sūtra copies in the Dunhuang archive as early experiments in written Tibetan culture,

Dotson's "failed prototypes"—rejected sometime between the 820s and 840s—is a key piece of evidence arguing for the manuscript's early date.<sup>52</sup> What is more, the application of letter-numerals to an exegetical outline, as found in S.5603 and PT 553, represents an additional logic beyond simple counting, making these manuscripts rare samples of early lettering practices before the standardization of their use in later periods.

## **Preliminary Conclusions**

Who produced S.5603 and what might it have been used for? In the absence of scribal colophons, we may approach this question through an analysis of scribal hands. Given the preliminary state of Dunhuang paleography, there is not much we can say definitively, but the analysis presented above suggests that there were two to three Tibetan scribes and a single Chinese scribe involved in the manuscript's production. It is possible that one of the Tibetan scribes was also responsible for the Chinese text. Furthermore, while it remains speculative, there are tantalizing indications that one or more of the scribes was bilingual. In one case, the Chinese is corrected with the same colour ink as the nearby Tibetan annotation.<sup>53</sup> In two other instances, the Tibetan has been corrected in black, which is otherwise exclusively used for Chinese.<sup>54</sup>

While we are unable to identify any of these scribes by name, we can place their project fairly confidently in the first half of the ninth century. This date is based in part on the use of the Tibetan index letters in S.5603, compelling evidence that the manuscript dates no later than the mid-ninth century. Paleographic and orthographic features of the Tibetan annotations are consistent with this date, though our current understanding of them is less precise.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, the rubrics distinguishing sūtra citations from passages of commentary on S.5603 are similar to the systems of signs evident in other mid-ninth-century manuscripts, particularly manuscripts with ties to the circle of disciples surrounding Facheng, including Cao Fajing mentioned above. Our conjecture is also supported by the manuscript's subject matter—a commentary on the *Lańkā* by a renowned eighth-century Buddhist exegete based in Luoyang 洛陽, the eastern capital of the Tang dynasty. The body of manuscript evidence preserved

Dotson presents evidence that precise patterns of lettering varied by scriptoria. See also Scherrer-Schaub, "Towards a Methodology," 20–22 and table 8.1.

**<sup>52</sup>** A set of 103 citations (panels 85–92) confirms that S.5603's letter-numerals match a system of foliation found on copies of the *Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* (Sūtra on the Perfection of Wisdom in 100,000 Lines, differentiated from other copies of the same sūtra by the designation "SP1"), studied at length by Dotson in "Failed Prototypes." In his article, Dotson identifies PT 2170 as a key to this system.

**<sup>53</sup>** See S.5603, panel 65, col. 2, where we find the character *zhu* 注 corrected in what appears to be the same ink used to write the Tibetan annotations.

**<sup>54</sup>** See the Tibetan annotation to panel 140, col. 1, where the first word of the annotation  $(rgyu'; \frac{1}{2}\hat{A}')$  appears in a gray ink, followed by the rest of the annotation in red. As discussed above, tiny black letters appear on panel 206.

**<sup>55</sup>** These include midline and occasionally double *tsheg* marks, alternation in consonant aspiration, subscribed *ya* খ' in negation particles *myi* ষ্ট্রি' and *myed* ষ্ট্রি', the reverse *gi gu* গী', ম' vowel sign (*gi log* গী', ম্বি'ম', frequent extra suffix 'a ন', as well as the old orthography of *wa* স্থ' (written as stacked ন + ন).

in Cave 17 indicates that this type of elite, classical Buddhist scholasticism waned in Dunhuang during the second half of the ninth century and appears to have largely disappeared by the tenth.<sup>56</sup>

Facheng produced Tibetan translations of the *Laṅkā* and Yuanhui's commentary in the region of Dunhuang (that is, Shazhou 沙州 and Ganzhou) between roughly 810 and 829.<sup>57</sup> Is it possible to link Facheng's translation project to our bilingual manuscript, S.5603? Not directly, but an analysis of Facheng's translation practices may help explain one of S.5603's most puzzling features. As discussed above, the Tibetan annotations to S.5603 and the Chinese sūtra passages quoted by Yuanhui are based on divergent recensions of the *Laṅkā*, and this discrepancy makes for some awkward fits between the Chinese text and Tibetan annotations. Why would the creators of S.5603—produced in a similar time and place as the Tibetan translation (Tōh. 108) of Yuanhui's base text (T. 670)—not have made use of its more consonant translation?

In her dissertation devoted to Facheng's translation practices, Howard Masang describes his faithfulness to available translations.<sup>58</sup> In the course of translating commentaries that include copious citations of the root text and a range of proof texts, Facheng incorporated pre-existing translations of available texts, rather than translating all such citations from scratch. Similarly, when translating a new version of a text already circulating in a different recension, he based his language closely on the texts already in circulation, making minimal changes as required by fidelity to his source text.

Returning to the *Lańkā*, a comparison of Tōh. 108 with Tōh. 107 reveals that the latter was an important influence on the former. Facheng seems to have incorporated the wording of Tōh. 107 (or, more accurately, a version that eventually became Tōh. 107) into his translation of Tōh. 108. And this observation, in turn, brings us full circle back to S.5603. Although its pairing of texts may at first seem counterintuitive, S.5603 combines the two most important influences on Facheng's translation of Tōh. 108: Yuanhui's Chinese commentary and the earlier Tibetan translation of the *Lańkā* (Tōh. 107). Thus it is precisely the sort of manuscript that could have been of great use to Facheng during his translation of both Tōh. 108 and Yuanhui's commentary.

Stated most strongly, it is possible that S.5603 was a bilingual "working document" a "crib" used by Facheng as part of the process resulting in his Tibetan translations of the *Lańkā* (Tōh. 108) and Yuanhui's Chinese commentary (ITJ 219). This theory was first proposed by van Schaik on the basis of Ueyama's reflections.<sup>59</sup> It finds support in the

**<sup>56</sup>** On the apparent ritual bias of the tenth-century Dunhuang manuscripts, see for example Dalton and van Schaik, *Tibetan Tantric Manuscripts*, xxi. For a discussion of Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang after the Tibetan period, see Takeuchi, "Old Tibetan Buddhist Texts."

**<sup>57</sup>** For a full discussion of these translations, see Goodman and Howard Masang, "Buddhist Scholasticism," and Howard Masang, "A Translator at the Loom." See also n. 9.

<sup>58</sup> Howard Masang, "A Translator at the Loom." Case-studies of Facheng's translation practices include Inaba Shōju, "On Chos-grub's Translation," and an unpublished paper by Benjamin (Deitle) Nourse. We are grateful to Nourse for sharing his work in progress on Facheng's translation of the *Heart Sūtra* (*Bore boluomiduo xinjing* 般若波羅蜜多心經, T. 255).

**<sup>59</sup>** Van Schaik, "A Chinese–Tibetan Bilingual Manuscript," credits Ueyama, *Tonkō bukkyō no kenkyū*, with asserting a possible connection between Facheng and S.5603. Though Ueyama, *Tonkō bukkyō* 

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types of codicological features witnessed in S.5603, including the Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist conventions of mise-en-page outlined above. Specifically, these features make it less likely that S.5603 was a library copy or exemplar and more likely that it served a practical function, as, for instance, a source text for Facheng's imperially-sponsored scholastic projects.<sup>60</sup> For scholars, S.5603 is also something of a crib: The manuscript is a latticework of scribal conventions rooted in Tibetan, Chinese, and Indian intellectual traditions, affording scholars tangible access onto the ephemeral content arising from the Sino-Tibetan encounter in ninth-century Dunhuang.



*no kenkyū*, 116, hints in that direction, he does not discuss the matter at length, concluding simply that the apparent mismatch of *Laṅkā* recensions on S.5603 indicates that Facheng had not yet translated Tõh. 108 when S.5603 was produced. Credit should also be extended to the pioneering studies of Kawaguchi, "Yabuki hakase satsuei," and Yabuki, *Meisha yoin kaisetsu*, who both mention Facheng in relation to S.5603, albeit with certain inaccuracies.

**<sup>60</sup>** We take inspiration here from the distinctions drawn by Moretti, "Techniques de repérage," 267, between archival copies and working copies of texts that could be modified. On these topics, see also Venture and Drège, "Ponctuation."

## **Bibliography**

## Abbreviations

BD Collection of Dunhuang manuscripts preserved in the National Library of China, Beijing

- ITJ Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts preserved at the British Library, London (formerly in the India Office Library [IOL])
- PC Pelliot Collection of Chinese Dunhuang manuscripts preserved at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris
- PT Pelliot Collection of Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts preserved at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris
- S. Stein Collection (Or. 8210/S.) of Chinese Dunhuang manuscripts preserved at the British Library, London
- T. Taishō shinshū daizōkyō 大正新脩大藏經. Edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, 85 vols. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1932
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## List of Dunhuang Manuscripts

BD14138 (*xin* 新 338) S.3927, S.5603 ITJ 219 PC 2035, PC 2061, PC 2080, PC 2198, PC 2339, PC 2247, PC 2284, PC 4660(4) PT 116, PT 553, PT 609, PT 766, PT 783, PT 2170, PT 2205

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- Dasheng rulengqie jing 大乘入楞伽經 (T. 672.16, Mahāyāna Sūtra on the Entrance to Laṅkā [Laṅkāvatārasūtra]) in 7 juan, translated by Śikṣānanda 實叉難陀 (652–710?) between 700 and 704
- Jia zhu Lengqie abaduoluo baojing 夾註楞伽阿跋多羅寶經 (BD14138, Interlinear Commentary on the Lengqie abaduoluo baojing [Precious Lankāvatārasūtra]), juan 5-8, author unidentified
- Jushe lun song shu 俱舍論頌疏 (T. 1823.43, Commentary on the Abhidharmakośa [Treasury of Abhidharma] verses) in 30 juan, by Yuanhui 圓暉 (active ca. 718-742)
- Lengqie abaduoluo baojing 楞伽阿跋多羅寶經 (T. 670.16, Precious Lankāvatārasūtra) in 4 juan, translated by Guṇabhadra 求那跋陀羅 (394-468)

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- Lengqie abaduoluo baojing shu 楞伽阿跋多羅寶經疏 (Commentary on the Lengqie abaduoluo baojing [Precious Lankāvatārasūtra]) in 10 juan, by Yuanhui 圓暉 (active ca. 718-742)
- Rulengqie jing 入楞伽經 (T. 671.16, Sūtra on the Entrance to Laṅkā [Laṅkāvatārasūtra]) in 10 juan, translated by Bodhiruci 菩提流支 (d. 527) in 513
- Song gaoseng zhuan 宋高僧傳 (T. 2061.50, Song Biographies of Eminent Monks) in 30 juan, by Zanning 贊寧 (920-1001)
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- 'Phags pa lang kar gshegs pa rin po che'i mdo las sangs rgyas thams cad kyi gsung gi snying po zhes bya ba'i le'u এবন্বাব্য নেনে শান বিন্ধান্থ নির্বাধ্য দেই কি আর্ন নেম ক্রেন্ডা ক্রুর্ণ হায়গ্য ডন্ 'গ্রী বাব্য নে নী'ক্লিন্টা নির্বাধ দ্রা নির্বাধ নের শান বিন্ধান্য নের শান বিন্ধান্থ নির্বাধ্য দেশ ক্রেন্ডা ক্রেন্ডা ক্রেন্ডা ব নির্দা ক্লিন্ডা নির্বাধ নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য ক্রিন্ডা নির্বাধ্য ক্রেন্ডা ক্রেন্ডা ব্য নির্দা ক্লিন্ডা নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য ক্রিন্ডা নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য কর্ম ক্রেন্ডা ব্য নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য নির্বাধ্য Buddhas" from The Noble Precious Sūtra on the Visit to Laṅkā [Laṅkāvatārasūtra]) in 8 bampo, translated by Wu Facheng 吳法成 / Go Chödrup ('Go Chos grub বের্না র্ট্রাম্ ল্লুন্ন', d. ca. 864)
- Rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba'i snying po'i rnam par bshad pa รุสร์ราสสิพาสารสุธุราสสิ มีรามีสิ สุมาราราฐรารๆ (Tōh. 3837/4554, Pratītyasamutpādahrdayavyākhyāna, The Auto-Commentary to the Epitome of Interdependent Origination) attributed to Nāgārjuna (fl. 1st-2nd centuries), translators unknown, early ninth century
- Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa stong phrag brgya pa ব্যামনাণ্ট্ৰ হেন্ট্ৰিয় হাই স্থিয় হাই বিজ্য ক্ষ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই ব বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজয হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য হাই বিজ্য

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Abstract This essay examines the entangled Chinese and Tibetan textual and exegetical practices visible in a bilingual Dunhuang manuscript copy (S.5603 housed in the British Library) of the *Lengqie abaduoluo baojing shu* 楞伽阿跋多羅寶經疏 (Commentary on the Precious *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*) by the Tang scholiast Yuanhui 圓暉 (active ca. 718–742). The paper focuses on the disposition of the text in the manuscript and the system of signs used to render it legible, including Tibetan index letters. By exploring the text-division practices evident in S.5603 and related manuscripts from Dunhuang, we uncover the conventions and techniques used by scribes in the region to delineate root text from commentary and to parse the commentary's topic outline (*kepan* 科判). These devices—textual, exegetical, codicological—reveal how Buddhist sūtras were copied and commented upon using a variety of layouts. Our findings allow us to reflect on the characteristics of a potential reader and, by extension, the manuscript's original intended use by members of Dunhuang's ninth-century Buddhist scholastic community, including the Sino-Tibetan translator and exegete Facheng 法成 (d. ca. 864, also known by the Tibetan name 'Go Chos grub འགོརོམོལག<, and base to grade and base to grade and base to grade and base to community.

**Keywords** mise-en-page, *kepan, Lańkāvatārasūtra*, Yuanhui, Facheng, Chos grub, Sino-Tibetan Buddhism, letter numerals, codicology, Dunhuang



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## COMMENTARY AND MULTILINGUALISM IN THE OTTOMAN RECEPTION OF TEXTS: THREE PERSPECTIVES

## ASLIHAN GÜRBÜZEL, SOOYONG KIM, and JEANNIE MILLER

### Introduction by Jeannie Miller

As a scholar of medieval Arabic literature, I often find myself in a predicament. In the manuscript sources underpinning my research, I find comments, variants, shifts in chapter structure, and other scribal and scholarly interpretations. These accretions are often insightful and significant, and they sometimes relate in interesting ways to the history of modern scholarship. But as I go about constructing arguments and textual interpretations, wishing to integrate the insights of the tradition or provide a critical history of prevalent understandings, I am uncertain about how to contextualize this rich and vibrant early modern cultivation of medieval Arabic texts.

Throughout the nineteenth and most of the twentienth century, a "decline paradigm," now widely critiqued, discouraged the study of Islamicate history and culture during the roughly five centuries between the Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 1258 and Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798.<sup>1</sup> This pall has dissipated in recent decades, leading to a burst of vibrant scholarship on early modern Islamic societies, and in the past few years we have seen increased scholarship on Ottoman Arabic literary production in particular.<sup>2</sup> When it comes to the early modern Arabic language arts (philology and literature), the Maghreb and the majority Arabic-speaking provinces of the Ottoman empire have been the main focus of scholarship, though recently Arabic literary production and philology in majority Turkish-speaking territories and the Persianate Safavid and Mughal empires have received some limited attention.<sup>3</sup> But Dana Sajdi's remarks about Ottoman intellectual history apply just as well to studies of Ottoman-era Arabic literature: scholars have "not sought to link these intellectual trends to those occurring at the imperial centre, probably because most modern scholars are proficient in either Arabic or Ottoman, but rarely in both."<sup>4</sup> The prolific and important body of Turkish-language scholarship is "not widely known internationally," among Arabic literary scholars<sup>5</sup> or Islamic Studies schol-

I See Kafadar, "The Question of Ottoman Decline;" von Hees, ed. Inhitāt—The Decline Paradigm.

**<sup>2</sup>** See Ghraoui and Gündüz, "The Ascendant Field" special issue; Gündüz, "Ottoman-Era Arabic Literature"; Kilpatrick, "Still On the Way Up"; Allen and Richards, eds. *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*; Wagner, *A Handbook and Reader of Ottoman Arabic*; Pfeifer, *Empire of Salons*.

**<sup>3</sup>** See Kilpatrick, "Still on the Way Up," 2; Bahl, "Arabic Philology at the Seventeenth-Century Mughal Court"; Burak, "Between Istanbul and Gujarat;" White, *Persian and Arabic Literary Communities*.

<sup>4</sup> Sajdi, "Decline, Its Discontents and Ottoman Cultural History," 24.

<sup>5</sup> Kilpatrick, "Still on the Way Up." Shawkat Toorawa, "Āzād Bilgramī," 96.

ars.<sup>6</sup> National linguistic boundaries still often shape researchers' perspectives, despite the widely acknowledged multilingual character of early modern Islamicate literary culture, which worked among Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. When it comes to the Arabic language arts, the situation is complicated by an exaggerated interpretation of the Ottoman perception that Persian was a literary language, whereas Arabic was the language of the sciences, especially the religious sciences.<sup>7</sup>

For the Arabic classics that I study, the vast majority of the extant manuscripts bear traces of the Ottoman state in one way or another, having passed through the hands of Ottoman administrators who contributed to their dissemination, preservation, and interpretation. Ottoman marginal commentary later made its way into printed editions and the early Orientalist surveys of the tradition, often unacknowledged. Overall, then, the shape of the Arabic literary tradition as we understand it today is deeply structured by an Ottoman perspective: from Kātib Çelebi's canonical bibliographical encyclopedia, *Kashf al-ẓunūn* (Lifting Doubts), written in Arabic circa 1652, to the endowed libraries whose traces still structure the Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi (Süleymaniye Manuscript Library) of Istanbul, among others. It would seem fairly obvious that a critical analysis of the manuscripts containing medieval Arabic letters requires an understanding of Ottoman values, biases, and cultural context as they relate to Arabic.

For this joint contribution, we turn our attention to the place of Arabic philology and literary study within the multilingual literary culture of the majority Turkish-speaking Ottoman territories, examining it through the lens of commentaries and glosses produced by readers there. Ottoman scribes and scholars pursued a massive project of manuscript relocation, clustering precious Arabic manuscripts in the capital of Istanbul and across cities in the Balkans and Anatolia, arguably the core territories of the imperial realm. There is sometimes a sense among Arabist researchers that this loss of manuscripts from the Arab provinces meant they were consigned to a kind of cultural death, to be preserved as artifacts divorced from living culture, as was the case for the manuscripts of the Oriental collections in Europe (notwithstanding the cultural impact of translations and scholarship produced by a rarified group of Orientalist specialists). For manuscripts in the Ottoman empire, however, this could not be farther from the truth. Rather, Arabic manuscripts in majority Turkish-speaking lands were read, commented upon, recopied, and made available to the reading public in endowed libraries, especially from the seventeenth century onward, and served as one of the key pillars of Ottoman literary culture.

To form an impression of how Ottoman scribes and scholars engaged with Arabic texts—and thus to understand the fundamental Ottoman imprint visible in the surviving Arabic manuscript corpus—requires collaboration between Ottomanists and Arabists. This is the path forward that we sketch in this contribution. In lieu of a traditional research essay, we present a cluster of three "snapshots" from distinct vantage points to consider early modern Ottoman engagement with medieval Arabic language and literature, from the early seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries. Sooyong Kim examines early seventeenth-century Ottoman commentaries on Arabic and Persian literary clas-

<sup>6</sup> Fuerst, "Job Ads Don't Add Up."

<sup>7</sup> Graouwi and Gunduz, "The Ascendant Field," 234.

sics in relation to new developments in Ottoman Turkish literary production. I sketch the reading practices of two specific Ottoman administrators working a century apart, who glossed a major Abbasid Arabic literary "classic." And Aslıhan Gürbüzel provides a snapshot of the development of specific editorial practices in Ottoman commentary culture, focusing on the work of an eminent Sufi scholar in the early eighteenth century. Our subjects are not the expected protagonists of Arabic literature and philology—they are Istanbul-based poets, Ottoman state administrators and judges, and a Sufi from Bursa, Anatolia. To the extent that scholarship is still in some ways structured by a paradigm of discrete national literatures, multilingual figures like these should be better attended to, for their commentarial activity had an important impact not only on local literature and thought, but also on the content and interpretation of the medieval canons that were eventually bequeathed to modern nation-states.

## Language Matters: A Look at the Ottoman Literary Scene of the Early Seventeenth Century by Sooyong Kim

The first wave of Ottoman Turkish literary commentaries emerged during the second half of the sixteenth century. The commentaries were primarily devoted to canonical Persian works, the most prominent being the commentary on Hāfiz's  $D\bar{v}a\bar{n}$  or collection of poems, assembled after the poet's death in 1390, which was produced in 1594 by the scholar and tutor Ahmed Sūdī (d. ca. 1600).<sup>8</sup> Sūdī's commentary and those focused on other Persian works reflected a larger interest in re-evaluating the classics that further led to creative engagement. A few years earlier, around 1591, the prolific author and bureaucrat Mustafā 'Ālī (d. 1600) had compiled a volume of *naẓīras* or response poems to Hāfiz's *ghazals* (an early Arabic verse form later adopted by Persian poets), as a demonstration of his ability to compose Persian verse of comparable caliber.<sup>9</sup> 'Ālī was skilled in Arabic, too, but he did not make a parallel tribute to a known Arabic poem or collection of a poet's work.

That 'Ālī did not make such a tribute is not all that remarkable. Like fellow Ottoman literati, mainly composing in Turkish and multilingual to varying degrees, he viewed Arabic principally as the language of science and Persian as that of literary art and poetry in particular. What interest literati displayed in Arabic verse concentrated on religious poetry, as witnessed by their commentaries on individual *qaṣīdas* or odes—for example, al-Būsīrī's ode to the Prophet Muhammad and Ibn al-Fārid's to the Sufi way, both dating from the thirteenth century. In the case of al-Būsīrī's ode to the Prophet, translations were produced as well.<sup>10</sup> Absent among literati, though, was the kind of engagement wit-

**<sup>8</sup>** For a succinct overview of Ottoman literary commentaries on Persian works for the period, see İnan, "Imperial Ambitions, Mystical Aspirations," 84–86. For a comprehensive survey of the known commentaries and the extant manuscripts, see Yazar, "Anadolu Sahası."

<sup>9</sup> Fleischer, Bureaucrat and Intellectual, 141-42.

**<sup>10</sup>** There is little research on the Ottoman composition of supplementary poems in Arabic at the time, especially in the form of a *takhmīs* or a pentastichic gloss. However, a collection of works related to al-Būsīrī's ode, *al-Burda* ("The Mantle"), from 1631, suggests that the composition of

nessed for Persian works. Even in the Turkish commentaries reserved for Arabic compositions, Persian verse was employed as an aid. For instance, in a 1584 commentary on Ibn al-Fārid's ode by the poet and madrasa instructor Mehmed Maʿrūf (d. 1595), Turkish explanations are punctuated with illustrative Persian quatrains.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time, glossaries of an explanatory type were also compiled for certain Persian works. Of note is a 1593 anonymous glossary on Sa'dī's *Gulistān* (Rose Garden) a prose collection of didactic stories, compiled in 1258, that was widely taught and read, and therefore the object of a plethora of commentaries. The glossary, entitled *Müşkilāt* (Difficulties), deals with unfamiliar Persian and Arabic vocabulary used in the *Gulistān*.<sup>12</sup> The attention paid to Arabic words is rather warranted, since a fair amount of Arabic verse was included in Sa'dī's original work. Indeed, the example of the *Müşkilāt* underscores the extent to which the comprehension and appreciation of Arabic verse, and of Arabic itself, was mediated through Persian writing.

Literary commentaries and related textual tools produced in the early seventeenth century varied little from this pattern with respect to the types of works considered. The output, however, was far less in number, with no literary commentary of consequence written. Yet there does appear to have been a marked concern for language among literati, especially pertaining to the rhetorical suitability of Turkish for poetic practice and, additionally, in response to the recent trend of Persian poetic renewal emanating from Mughal India. And in connection, disputes arose among major figures about what constituted new and old in stylistic terms, often expressed through invectives. For the remainder of the essay, I discuss these developments in more detail and conclude with a few remarks on the direction taken by the next wave of commentaries and the broader question of canonicity, which they sought to address.

### **Of Language and Rhetoric**

In 1609, in his *Riyāżu'ş-şu'arā'* (Gardens of Poets), Riyāzī (d. 1644) voices concern about the use of Turkish as a literary language. He notes how particularly difficult it is to compose Turkish verse, "because the words are inadequate and improper," adding that one should not fault the "ancients" (*kudemā'*) or earlier generations of Turkish poets due to their linguistic limitations.<sup>13</sup> Riyāzī states this in the introduction to a Turkish-language biographical dictionary in honour of Turkish poets, in which he cites not a single line of Turkish verse. Beneath his concern lay reservations about the capacity of Turkish as a poetic idiom to rival Persian in rhetorical sophistication. And two years prior in 1607, as an aid for aspiring poets, Riyāzī compiled a Persian-Turkish lexicon, in which he supplied ample quotations of Persian poetry as samples of usage.<sup>14</sup>

such poems was not common before then. On this collection, see Yazar, "Amasyalı Seyyid Hüseyin Efendi," 150–52.

II Alzyout, "Trabzonlu Mehmed Ma'rûf," 527, 544.

<sup>12</sup> Öz, Tarih Boyunca Farsça-Türkçe Sözlükler, 180.

<sup>13</sup> Riyāzī, Riyâzü'ş-Şuarâ, 22–23.

<sup>14</sup> Açıkgöz, "Riyâzî'nın Düstûrü'l-'Amel'i," 6.

It may seem a bit odd that such an anxiety persisted among Ottoman literati, professionally instructors, judges, and scribes, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when a canon of Turkish poetic models had already been established. But it did, and some soon took a hands-on approach to address the concern, rewriting older works in a rhetorically richer and more modern Turkish. Foremost in this endeavour was Cevrī (d. 1654), a poet and calligrapher. He provides an explanation in his 1627 rewriting of a century-old *Selīm-nāme*, a verse narrative chronicling Selīm I's reign (1512–1520). Cevrī tells us that his peers viewed the poem's language as "ancient Turkish," echoing Riyāzī's observation, and that there was much demand for an updated version.<sup>15</sup> In his rewriting, he replaced Turkish words with their Persian and Arabic counterparts.

There appeared, as well, other guiding efforts by literati devoted to the enhancement of Turkish as a poetic idiom. Notably, in the 1610s, the first proper Ottoman Turkish work on rhetoric, *Miftāḥu'l-belāġa* (Key to Rhetoric), was produced by İsmāʿīl Ankaravī (d. 1631), a Sufi sheikh of the Mevlevi Order from whom Cevrī had received lessons. Ankaravī relates at the start of his work that different pupils had been eager to learn poetic composition and rhetoric, but that they did not find accessible al-Khatīb al-Qazwīnī's *Talkhīṣ* a fourteenth-century Arabic digest of rhetoric that was widely taught. He thus made his "key" to assist them.<sup>16</sup> Allegedly a translation of and commentary on al-Qazwīnī's *Talkhīṣ*, Ankaravī's *Miftāḥ* is actually an adaptation of Mahmūd Gāvān's *Manāẓir al-inshā* (Perspectives on Elegant Prose), a fifteenth-century Persian work on style, with illustrations of rhetorical technique taken from the *Talkhīṣ*. Moreover, the adaptation concentrates on the parts of the *Manāẓir* relevant for poetic composition.<sup>17</sup>

Gāvān had long been appreciated by literati as a master of rhetorical technique. One of Ankaravī's contemporaries, Nergisī (d. 1635), went so far as to declare that he was as skilled as "Khwāja-yi Jihān."<sup>18</sup> The moniker "Teacher of the World" was the name by which Gāvān was better known. Nergisī was not simply boasting, though. He was a prominent writer whose works included a 1633 collection of stories, the *Nihālistān* (Sapling Garden), a Turkish response to Saʿdī's *Gulistān*, as well as his (likely earlier) retelling of the fable of the rooster and the fox, the *Horoz-nāme* (Book of the Rooster). Of further note and in comparison to Riyāzī, Nergisī did not express concern about the rhetorical capacity of Turkish, at least with respect to prose. In the introduction to the *Nihālistān*, he extols Turkish in florid terms as a "language of pleasing expression distinguished by its gathering from the surrounding green meadows of various languages the choicest flowers of meaning approved by the men of eloquence."<sup>19</sup> By "various languages," Nergisī meant Persian and Arabic.

In practice, Nergisī did gather the "choicest flowers" for his own prose style and was hailed more mundanely as an "embroiderer in the workshop of rhetoric."<sup>20</sup> The compli-

15 Aynur, "Ottoman Literature," 483.

<sup>16</sup> Ferrard, "Development of an Ottoman Rhetoric," 22.

<sup>17</sup> Most conspicuously, Ankaravi's "key" omits the Manāzir's extensive section on saj' or rhymed prose

<sup>18</sup> Çaldak, Nergisî ve Nihâlistân'ı, 106.

<sup>19</sup> Woodhead, "Circles of Correspondence," 55.

<sup>20</sup> Woodhead, "The Gift of Letters," 982-83.

ment was given by Veysī (d. 1628), a writer and a poet friendly with Nergisī. The two belonged to an extended and close-knit circle, based in Istanbul, that dominated the literary scene of the day.<sup>21</sup> Another member was Nevʿī-zāde ʿAtāʾī (d. 1635), a poet who shared a taste for didactic stories with Nergisī, and demonstrably so. ʿAtāʾī produced a pair of verse collections in the Persian *maṣnavī* form, the *Nefḥatū'l-ezhār* (Fragrance of Flowers) in 1625 and the Ṣoḥbetū'l-ebkār (Conversation of the Virgins) in 1626. Several years earlier he had produced a translation of the Ṭūțī-nāma (Book of the Parrot), a fourteenthcentury Persian prose collection that incorporated animal fables. In addition, both ʿAtāʾī and Nergisī made claims for the stylistic novelty of their Turkish compositions.

## Of New and Old

It was only in the initial decades of the seventeenth century that expressions like "fresh speech" ( $t\bar{a}ze-g\bar{u}$ 'i) or "new style" (tarz-i nev) started to be employed by Ottoman literati—especially poets—to describe their work in response to the tarz-i  $t\bar{a}za$  or "fresh style" of Persian verse from Mughal India.<sup>22</sup> The tarz-i  $t\bar{a}za$ , largely identified with the poet 'Urfī Shīrāzī (d. 1591), represented a semantically richer type of verse-making that expanded on the rhetoricity of the traditional poetic idiom. Ottoman poets receptive to the tarz-i  $t\bar{a}za$ , however, did not view their Turkish efforts as mere acts of imitation. Cevrī, for example, declared that his own fresh verse would have inspired 'Urfī.<sup>23</sup> Even a writer like Nergisī could not keep away from the talk of freshness, and spoke of his Nihalistan as stylistically novel.<sup>24</sup>

Veysī spoke similarly, but only in regards to his own poetry, whose stylistic novelty was, he claimed, based on his knowledge of older Persian verse. In a couplet that circulated among his circle and beyond, he asserts:

An ancient fashion of the pen of Veysi the mage Is the fresh style of language of the eloquent of Persia.<sup>25</sup>

Veysī, as is apparent from his self-praise, was not particularly receptive to fresh Persian verse and instead preferred an "ancient" style. This was largely true for other members of his circle as well, though some did exploit certain techniques associated with the *țarz-i tāza*, including the use of unusual words and phrases.<sup>26</sup>

That said, the claim put forth by Veysī did not go unchallenged. Nef'ī (d. 1635), a rival poet and an ardent proponent of fresh Persian verse, attacked Veysī for his inability to distinguish the difference between new and old. The attack came as part of an invective poem that Nef'ī composed against Veysī. In the poem, Nef'ī also offers a direct retort to Veysī's boastful couplet, stressing the pastness of his pursuit:

- 23 Aydın, "Cevrî Divanı'nın Tahlili," 26.
- 24 Çaldak, Nergisî ve Nihâlistân'ı, 159, 303.

26 Erkal, Divan Şiir Poetikası, 151.

<sup>21</sup> On this literary circle, see Niyazioğlu, Dreams and Lives, 25–26.

<sup>22</sup> Feldman, "Imitatio in Ottoman Poetry," 45-46.

<sup>25</sup> Gibb, A History, 3:209.

An ancient fashion of the pen was his freshness, Which in his hand was the guiding stick of lost sages.<sup>27</sup>

Veysī himself was not above the occasional invective. Yet curiously, he did not answer Nefī back in kind.

Nef'ī, in fact, targeted not just Veysī but also other members of the dominant circle, excluding Nergisī, with a series of invective poems. A general line of attack was criticism that they had second-rate knowledge of poetic composition, even of the old Persian variety, and therefore had no basis for putting forth any claim of freshness. This Nef'ī makes clear in a couplet addressed to them all, in which he crudely calls out their shortcomings:

You've driveled in poetry's way, astray you went; You've fallen into old muddy talk, shit you ate!<sup>28</sup>

The aggressively critical stance Nef'ī adopted toward them, of course, aimed to elevate his stature in the literary scene. And the stance adopted further served to prop up his own claim of stylistic novelty, which predictably took cues from 'Urfi's poetry.

Not every contemporary whom Nef<sup>T</sup> targeted, though, kept silent in the face of his attacks. And among the most vocal was 'Atā'ī. He composed numerous invectives, in which he likewise criticized Nef<sup>T</sup> for his knowledge of poetic composition, with the implication that he was in no position to judge whose work was fresh or not. In one rebuke, 'Atā'ī tells him:

Nefī, [even] you do not understand the drivel you spout; You're a stranger to skill, to reading, to writing.<sup>29</sup>

The rebuke was made in reference to an earlier invective by Nef<sup>°</sup>ī, who contested 'Atā'ī's claim of novelty, going so far as to declare that his work was pure derivative "drivel."<sup>30</sup>

That Nef<sup>T</sup> reserved his harshest criticism, fair or not, for 'Atā'ī is unsurprising. Of the circle, 'Atā'ī was the boldest in his talk of freshness, asserting that his *masnavī*s surpassed exemplars in Persian and thus laid down a "new custom" (*nev āyīn*) for Turkish.<sup>31</sup> His *masnavī*s, in other words, represented an attempt to create a fresh stylistic synthesis, one that drew equally on existing Turkish models. Also, for his story collections, it appears that 'Atā'ī looked to Arabic works for source material. His *Nefḥatü'l-ezhār*, in particular, is notable for its rich descriptions of animal traits.<sup>32</sup> Whether, in composing this *masnavī*, 'Atā'ī consulted a work such as al-Jāhiz's ninth-century *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* (Book of Animals) warrants study. Be that as it may, 'Atā'ī's attempt reflected wider efforts at poetic renewal, including Nefī's. The dispute Nefī had with 'Atā'ī and others was whether they could justifiably claim novelty without deeply engaging fresh Persian verse.

<sup>27</sup> Nef'ī, Sihām-ı Kazā, 65.

<sup>28</sup> Nef'ī, Sihām-ı Kazā, 91.

<sup>29</sup> Sheridan, "'I Curse No One without Cause'," 93.

<sup>30</sup> Sheridan, "'I Curse No One without Cause'," 284-85.

<sup>31</sup> Nev'ī-zāde 'Atā'ī, Sâkînâme, 204.

<sup>32</sup> Kuzubaş, "Nev'î-zade Atâî'nin Nefhatü'l-Ezhâr," 85. See Jeannie Miller's essay below.

## Conclusion

Among the following generations of Ottoman literati, interest in fresh Persian verse increased significantly, resulting in a new wave of Turkish commentaries that were largely devoted to 'Urfi's poetry: between the middle of the seventeenth century to the early eighteenth century roughly a dozen were produced.<sup>33</sup> No other work of a literary nature received comparable attention during this period. Even a scholar such as İsmā'īl Hakkı Bursevī (d. 1725), the most respected commentator during this time, of mainly religious texts, deigned to comment on 'Urfi's poetry.<sup>34</sup> Thus by the early eighteenth century, 'Urfi's poetry and his particular fresh style attained a measure of canonicity.

Interest in fresh Persian verse continued, albeit to a less conspicuous degree, into the early twentieth century, as is evidenced by the extant commentaries on a few other exemplars, most notably the poetry of Sā'ib Tabrīzī (d. 1676). This fact has usually been glossed over by literary historians who tend to view this interest as an essentially seventeenth-century phenomenon: an outlook is a direct byproduct of the early twentiethcentury creation of a modern and expressly Turkish canon that marginalized things "too Persian" in orientation and additionally associated with India farther to the east. As Walter Feldman observes, this marginalization is itself a reflection of the opinion of seventeenth-century literati who did not embrace fresh Persian verse.<sup>35</sup> As a result, the role of Ottoman commentaries on older works had in the creation of a modern Turkish canon has hardly been considered. Further investigation is required.

# Ottoman Commentaries on al-Jāhiz's Kitāb al-Ḥayawān (Book of Animals) by Jeannie Miller<sup>36</sup>

Despite narratives of rupture advanced by Orientalist and Nahda ("Arab Renaissance") figures of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the trilingual Ottoman canon had a marked effect on modern national literatures, whether Arab, Iranian, or Turkish. Recent scholarship has revealed how deeply Orientalist scholars relied, in ways both avowed and "latent," on the Ottoman trilingual commentary tradition.<sup>37</sup> There is also a suppressed continuity with the Ottoman canon visible among both the proponents of the Nahda and the Ottoman modernizers of the *tanzimat* ("reorganization") era (1839–1876).<sup>38</sup> While these intellectuals claimed to rediscover Abbasid texts, which

38 See Rassi, "Scribal and Commentary Traditions." See also: Patel, The Arab Nahdah, especially

<sup>33</sup> On the commentaries, see Gözitök, "Türk Edebiyatında Urfî-i Şîrâzî Şerhleri."

**<sup>34</sup>** Aslıhan Gürbüzel notes that Bursevī's work as a commentator constituted a form of "philological criticism": "A Portable Majlis," 75.

<sup>35</sup> Feldman, "The Indian Style," 31.

**<sup>36</sup>** This section draws on research funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and relies on work done by Shuaib Ally, as well as the other members of the research team: Mohannad Abusarah, Kyle Gamble, Yussif Adams Khalifa, Bogdan Smarandache, and Simon Whitby.

**<sup>37</sup>** See Babinsky, "Ottoman Philology"; Gallien, "Multilingual Commentary Literatures"; Bevilacqua, "How to Organize the Orient"; İnan, "Crossing Interpretive Boundaries"; and Birus, "Goethe's Approximation of the Ghazal."

they now designated as "classics" on the model of Europe's relation to the Greek and Latin classics, the manuscripts that they studied show ample evidence of active Ottoman cultivation—commentary, readers' notes, glosses, purchase notes, marks indicating their accession to private and public libraries, and curatorial work like repairs and rebinding. To understand the shape of the classical Arabic canon as it exists today, we need to understand the Ottoman reception of Arabic texts.<sup>39</sup> Commentary and readers' notes provide an excellent window into the wide variety of readerships, reading practices, and textual authority structures that determined the multilingual canon of the Ottoman Empire.

I focus here on two manuscript owners and readers working a century apart, whose reading notes are visible in the margins of the extant manuscripts of an early canonical Arabic work, al-Jāhiz's *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* (Book of Animals), composed in the ninth century CE. Both commentators were members of the Ottoman state bureaucracy: the famous Ottoman Turkish poet, literary historian, and judge of Skopje, Nev'ī-zāde 'Atā'ī (1635)<sup>40</sup>; and Abū Bakr b. Rustam al-Shirwānī (1723), a prominent administrator who rose on several occasions to the position of Reisülküttab.<sup>41</sup>

The sharp difference between these two Ottoman glosses suggests the possibility of constructing a diachronic history of Ottoman officials' engagement with Arabic philology. 'Atā'ī's notes are utilitarian and idiosyncratic, and reflect his literary interests and endeavours rather than a disciplinary affiliation or teaching practice. Al-Shirwānī, by contrast, provides lexicographic glosses in a style similar to the medieval philological teaching tradition. This may reflect the maturing of the Arabic philological tradition among Ottoman elites: though Ottoman Turkish, with its extensive use of Arabic and Persian, was already well-established before 'Atā'ī's time, a deeper engagement among Ottoman elites with the Arabic literary tradition was new enough that 'Atā'ī's reading is unhampered by disciplinary demands. By al-Shirwānī's time, Ottoman elites were following the inherited practices of Arabic philology. This difference may also reflect the different purposes governing the two sets of marginalia. 'Atā'ī's comments seem geared towards his own creative endeavours, unlike those of al-Shirwānī.

chapter 3, "Guardians"; Wollina, "A Family of Books"; and De Luca, "The Engagement of Nineteenth-Century Scholars." In the case of *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, the section headings in brackets added by the editor 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn are derived in some cases from his own interpretation of the text and in other cases from the marginal topic headings added by Nev'izāde 'Atā'ī to Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi (hereinafter SK) Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 992, 993, 994, 996.

<sup>39</sup> A similar approach is taken in Webb, "Arabic Texts as Ottoman Literary Phenomena."

<sup>40</sup> See Aynur, "Atai"; and Niyazioğlu, Dreams and Lives.

**<sup>41</sup>** See Süreyya Bey, *Sicill-i Osmani*, 1:176; al-Sayyid, "Les marques de possession"; Richard, "Lecteurs ottomans de manuscrits persans"; Liebrenz, "The History and Provenance," 37–39, 40–41; and Uluç, "Selling to the Court," 85. Al-Shirwānī's ownership marks are identified and reproduced in Schoeler, *Arabische Handschriften, Teil II*, plates 37, 47.

## 'Atā'ī (1635)

<sup>c</sup>Atā<sup>°</sup>ī's marginal notes on al-Jāhiz's *Book of Animals* mainly served an indexing function. But there are also a number of more personal, idiosyncratic notes that he signed with his initial, <sup>c</sup>ayn ( $\epsilon$ ), as well as seventeen notes concluding with the *tamām shud* symbol, the number twelve (1°).<sup>42</sup> These signed and tagged marginal notes go beyond simple thematic headings to express independent commentary on the base text, and they reflect <sup>c</sup>Atā<sup>°</sup>ī's literary interests. The tight correspondence between <sup>c</sup>Atā<sup>°</sup>ī's commentary practice and his literary output is notable, since, as Sooyong Kim describes, most discussions on literary theory of the time revolved around the use of Persian classics as inspiration, not Arabic ones. Though Ottoman Turkish literature wore its Persian sources on its sleeve, it was also inspired by the Arabic literary canon. Authors like al-Jāhiz (d. 868/9) and al-Damīrī (d. 1405) were influential but remained implicit in the formation of the Ottoman canon, and were rarely mentioned by the Ottoman theoreticians.

A consistent interest in sexual and salacious matters is clearly apparent in 'Atā'ī's comments, particularly when these matters might give material for insult poetry. He weighs in on al-Jāhiz's discussion about which animal has the largest penis relative to its size, remarking, "perhaps it is the ass" and then comments that al-Jāhiz has displayed "delicacy" (*lutf*) in omitting discussion of the size of the hemipenes of the monitor lizard, rat, and skink.<sup>43</sup> Where the base text reads, "It is said that there is on earth no smell more foul or more distressing to the soul than the breath of a mouth or the stench of a vulva," 'Atā'ī remarks, "Woe to him who suffers from [these] two companions."<sup>44</sup> He also makes a boorish remark about the promiscuity of *mukhannath* people (an independent gender category typically described as men who dressed, and to some extent behaved, as women).<sup>45</sup> In another passage, al-Jāhiz cites two related poetry excerpts about the elephant. One is by a woman named Dūda or Dawuda, who observes an elephant's penis, causing her to "lose interest in the penises of donkeys and great men." A very similar poem by the scatological poet Abū al-Shamaqmaq (d. after 806) reads:

44 SK Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 992, fol. 143v, gutter margin. Al-Jāhiz, Kitāb al-Ḥayawān, 1:244, lines 7–9.

**<sup>42</sup>** Gacek, "Taxonomy of Scribal Errors," 220, 231, mentions the *tamām shud* symbol. The notes signed with this symbol could conceivably have been added by another person, but their consonance in content, vocabulary, and hand with the marks labelled '*ayn* ( $\epsilon$ ) suggest they were likely authored by 'Atā'ī as well.

**<sup>43</sup>** SK Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 996, fol. 93v, bottom of the page, and fol. 94r, upper left margin, commenting on al-Jāhiz, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, edited by 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn, 2nd ed., 7:118, lines 2–6. For all manuscript citations I also indicate, for reference, where the commented text can be found in this print edition. Note that Hārūn misinterprets both these comments as insertions into the base text instead of comments. He misreads the first as "like the ass" (*nazīr al-ḥimār* rather than *la'allahu al-ḥimār*) and rejects the insertion, but accepts the second comment as part of the edited base text, misreading it as al-Jāhiz's explanation for omitting a discussion of the size of hemipenes (*li-da'f lā yukhfā* rather than *fīhi lutf bi-khafrihi*): 7:118n5 and 7:118:6, placed in brackets to indicate that the phrase is absent from other textual witnesses.

**<sup>45</sup>** SK Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 996, fol. 71r, upside down in the top margin. Al-Jāhiz, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, 7:69, line 5.

Oh tribe, I saw the elephant [following] after you. (May God bless my vision of the elephant!) I saw a house that had something moving it and I nearly did something in my pants!

'Atā'ī comments, "perhaps this was upon seeing the elephant's penis (*ghurmūl*)," drawing on the theme of Dawuda's poem to inject an extra bit of obscenity into Abū al-Shamaqmaq's already scatological riff.<sup>46</sup>

This all fits in with 'Atā'ī's literary output: he was prolific in insult poetry and one of those writers who made sexual content acceptable in Turkish letters, notably through the narratives with sexual content included in his Ottoman Turkish *magnavi* poems.<sup>47</sup> 'Atā'ī's 1625 *magnavi* entitled *Nefḥatü'l-ezhār* (Fragrance of Flowers) also contained descriptions of animal characteristics,<sup>48</sup> testimony to an interest that we can connect to his subsequent purchase, in 1634, of two animal books previously owned by the famous poet Veysī, his predecessor as judge of Skopje: al-Damīrī's Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān al-kubrā, (Great [Book] on the Life of Animals)<sup>49</sup> and, of course al-Jāhiz's *Book of Animals*. 'Atā'ī also translated a book of animal fables called *Ṭūṭī-nāma* (Book of the Parrot), and indeed he comments on one of the rare instances where al-Jāhiz includes a fable, pointing out that the sailors' tale of an island-sized animal is about a giant sea turtle, not a crab.<sup>50</sup> In one case, he cryptically writes his initial beside Abū Tammām's panegyric for the vizier Muhammad b. Mālik Ibn al-Zayyāt (d. 847), marking the line that draws most on animal imagery:

لُعاب الأفاعي القاتلات لعابُه 🛛 وأرِيُ الجني اشتارتُه أيدٍ عواسلُ

His saliva is the venom of lethal vipers, and the honey of fruit that juicing hands have purchased.<sup>51</sup>

Did he intend to cite or adapt this line in something he was writing?

'Atā'ī makes a number of notes that specifically link the text of *Book of Animals* with "our era today" (*'aṣrunā hādhā*), crafting a vision of a multilingual canon that renders the Arabic classics contemporaneous and on a level with idiomatic Persian and Turkish. For example, he remarks on a poem that complains about enemies' persistent harassment, stating "Certain people of our age could rightly recite this [poem]."<sup>52</sup> In response to al-Jāhiz's discussion of the Arabic expression, "He's none other than a devil," indicating that the person described was either as ugly as a devil or as intuitive as a devil, 'Atā'ī writes, "As they commonly say in our age, 'The devil's son is the bureaucrat!'" (*ibn* 

48 See Sooyong Kim's contribution to this joint essay.

**<sup>46</sup>** SK Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 996, fol. 15v, gutter margin. Al-Jāhiz, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*,7:174, line 12 to 7:175, line 5.

<sup>47</sup> Yerlikaya, Nev'ī-zāde Atāyī'nin.

<sup>49</sup> SK Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 991.

**<sup>50</sup>** SK Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 996, fol. 83v, upside down in right margin. Al-Jāhiz, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, 7:106, lines 5–9.

<sup>51</sup> SK Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 992, fol. 38r, left margin in red. Al-Jāhiz, Kitāb al-Ḥayawān, 1:67, line 10.

<sup>52</sup> SK Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 996, fol. 80r, left margin. Al-Jāhiz, Kitāb al-Ḥayawān, 7:97, lines 2-4.

*al-shayṭān al-daftarī*).<sup>53</sup> In response to the Arabic quip, "every clique has its dog—don't be the dog among your friends," (*inna li-kull rufqa kalban fa-lā takun kalb aṣḥābika*). 'Atā'ī writes, "similar to this is what is said in Persian: Better the pig's bristle than the dog's tooth."<sup>54</sup> Finally, 'Atā'ī pens a Turkish poem comparing insult poetry to excrement, in response to al-Jāhiz's discussion of animals that eat dung:

Her şınfıñ eksik olmaz imiş bok yediler

Any species of yours will suffice, [since] they [all] eat shit.55

Al-Jāhiz had included the discussion of dung-eating animals in part because of their prominence in insult poetry, and 'Atā'ī's interest likely ran along the same lines.

In one comment, 'Atā'ī draws on his philological acumen to correct poetry inserted by another commentator who has rewritten a poem cited by al-Jāhiz. The original poem describes the type of man a certain woman is willing to marry:

A woman of the Banū Ziyād al-Hārithī tribe said,

أريد كرامَ الناس أو أنبتَّلُ	فلا تأمُرُوني بالتزوُّج إنَّني أريد فتي لا يملأ المَهَوْلُ صدرَه
يُرِيْحُ عَلِيهُ حلمُه حَين يجهلُ كعالية الرُّمح الطويل أوَ أُطوَلُ	
كعالية الرُّمح الطويل أوَ ٱطوَلُ	كمثل الفتي الجعْدِ الطويل إذا غَدا

Don't tell me to marry, for I only want a noble man – else I will live in chastity. I want a young man whose chest is not filled with terror, whose manly forbearance quiets him when he does not know. On the model of a tall strong youth when he goes out in the morning, like the point of a long lance, or taller.

The anonymous marginal commentator replaces the mild phallic imagery of the last line with something more explicit, and then provides explanatory commentary on the new verse. If the first hemistich were like this, then it would be more effective:

فتيَّ كابن غزَّ فائق الاير قد غدا [كعالية الُّرمح الطويل أوَ ٱطْولُ]

A youth like Ibn Ghazz with a surmounting penis who goes out in the morning [like the point of a long lance, or taller.]

Ibn al-Ghazz is mentioned in *al-Amthāl* (Proverbs) where this proverb refers to him: More copulating than Ibn al-Ghazz.<sup>56</sup>

'Atā'ī dryly corrects the interloper's spelling in his transmission of the proverb, "Perhaps it should be Ibn Alghaz." Indeed—and this correct reading spoils the meter of the new version of the poem.

<sup>53</sup> SK Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 992, fol. 175r, upper left margin. Al-Jāhiz, Kitāb al-Ḥayawān, 1:300, line 5.

**<sup>54</sup>** SK Fazil Ahmed Paşa 992, fol. 151r, in the left margin written at a 90 degree angle. Al-Jāhiz, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, 1:259, lines 13–14. I thank Sooyong Kim for translating the Persian and Turkish of this comment and the next. I am not sure how to interpret the Persian quip in this case.

<sup>55</sup> SK Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 992, fol. 139v right margin. A-Jāhiz, Kitāb al-Ḥayawān, 1:235, lines 7–9.

**<sup>56</sup>** SK Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 996, fol. 9r, left margin. Al-Jāhi*z, Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, 7:163, lines 3–6. He likely refers to the text of al-Maydānī (d. 1124), *Majmaʿal-amthāl* (Proverb Collection), number 4288.

## Al-Shirwānī (d. 1723)

Part of my interest in the Ottoman reception of *Book of Animals* springs from the surprising paucity of its extant manuscripts, and the almost complete lack of evidence that it was ever included in any pedagogical curriculum—this in spite of the fact that the work was considered canonical almost from the time it was authored.<sup>57</sup> It seems that al-Shirwānī was partially responsible for promoting the transmission and philological study of *Book of Animals* in the early eighteenth century. While many contingencies affect which manuscripts and texts do or do not survive, it remains true that most, if not all, of the complete copies of *Book of Animals* now extant are textual descendants from the 1674 Cairo codex that al-Shirwānī owned and glossed.<sup>58</sup> In fact, to my knowledge, three of the book's seven volumes survive in no other branch of the stemma.

There is no indication of a pre-Ottoman philological commentary tradition for *Book* of Animals, though we have reports that it did receive a medical commentary.<sup>59</sup> In various contexts it was classed either as philology, or as a wonder-book, or as a scientific work on animals.<sup>60</sup> Even though numerous prominent authors cited it and were inspired by it over the centuries, it does not seem to have entered the mainstream philology curriculum. By contrast, on the surviving copies of al-Jāhiz's other masterwork, al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn (Clarity and Clarification), we find two separate fulsome twelfthcentury commentaries. The prominent Andalusi philologist Abū Dharr (d. 1208 in Fez) taught a full philological commentary based on a prestigious manuscript that apparently included one volume ("one third") copied in 958 from a source manuscript in the hand of al-Jāhiz's contemporary, Abū Ja'far al-Baghdādī (d. 859), designated "the complete copy" (al-nuskha al-kāmila), perhaps in reference to multiple editions put forward by al-Jāhiz himself.<sup>61</sup> Abū Dharr's original transmission certificate (*ijāza*) from 1191 appears on the front page (fol. 1r) of Istanbul, Feyzullah Manuscript Library 1580, and several copies of this precious codex were made in Istanbul in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.62

Al-Shirwānī's marginal notes on al-Jāhiz's *Book of Animals* reveal a philological interest in the text. They mainly consist of topic headings, notes on morphology, and glosses drawn from common dictionaries. In one case al-Shirwānī makes reference to a particular manuscript of *Kitāb al-Ṭayr* (Book of Birds) by Abū Hātim al-Sijistānī (d. 869) copied

- 59 Kruk, "'Abd al-Lațīf al-Baghdādī."
- 60 Miller, "Commentary and Text Organization."
- 61 Istanbul, Feyzullah Kütüphanesi 1580, fol. 199r.
- 62 SK Ragıp Paşa 1076, Ragıp Paşa 1077, Hamidiye 1053.

<sup>57</sup> Pellat, "Al-Ğāḥiẓ jugé par la posterité."

**<sup>58</sup>** Al-Shirwāni's copy is SK Damad İbrahim 861. Its descendants are: Cairo, Dār al-Kutub adab 9, adab 10, adab 556, and ṭabīʿiyyāt Taymūr 45; MK Damad İbrahim 35; SK Nuruosmaniye 3031 and Reisülküttab 584 and 876. I have no example so far of a complete manuscript *not* from this line, but I have yet to analyze the text of a few complete or potentially complete manuscripts, including Cairo, Maktabat Jāmiʿat al-Azhar, Abāza 7080 (484); Vienna, *Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*, Ar. 1433; and Baghdad, Maktabat al-Awqāf al-ʿĀmma 13200. For a partial stemma, see Ritter, Review of *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*.

in the hand of one 'Alī b. Hamza.<sup>63</sup> Although al-Shirwānī owned thousands of precious manuscripts, he certainly did not systematically gloss them in this way, unlike 'Atā'ī who marked up many of his codices with a table of contents and topic headings in the same way he did al-Jāhiz's *Book of Animals*. (Al-Shirwānī's special interest in manuscripts is sometimes evidenced in other ways—a note of its commission for example, or circles drawn by al-Shirwānī around the ownership marks of prior owners.)<sup>64</sup> As a promotional blurb, al-Shirwānī added in his own hand a biographical notice about al-Jāhiz at the front of a 1703 copy made in the Cairo Citadel, apparently not a manuscript he owned. He noted that he himself abridged the notice from Ibn Khallikān's classic biographical dictionary *Wafayāt al-a'yān* (Deaths of Notables).<sup>65</sup> Between glossing and promoting the book, al-Shirwānī appears to be innovative in identifying the *Book of Animals* as a text for philological study, where previously it had fallen through the disciplinary cracks.

The Book of Animals manuscript that al-Shirwānī glossed was originally copied in Cairo in 1674. The scribe already included a handful of marginal lexicographic notes marked > for *hāshiya* (gloss), including a cross-reference to comments al-Jāhiz makes in his Clarity and Clarification.<sup>66</sup> Al-Shirwānī must have acquired and glossed it before 1703, perhaps while he was living in Cairo prior to the year 1679. Four copies from this textual lineage were made between 1703 and 1754, and several more were made in the nineteenth century. In many of these, al-Shirwānī's comments are reproduced, his name is cited as author, and the copyist specifies that he copied from al-Shirwānī's autograph source.<sup>67</sup> The collection of marginal glosses is expanded over time, so as to form a glossing tradition on al-Jāhiz's Book of Animals. It is possible that al-Shirwānī's blurbing and glossing encouraged the subsequent philological interest in this book, particularly since his glosses are attributed to him by name. By contrast, one extant copy of 'Atā'ī's glosses is known to exist, in a four-volume set. That copy bears no ownership marks or reading notes other than the Köprülü Library seals of the Fazıl Ahmed Pasa collection, and there are no additional glosses added to the ones copied from the source manuscript.<sup>68</sup> While 'Atā'ī's marginalia were copied, the copyist did not attribute them to anyone, and there is no evidence of further attention paid to them.

Some of these manuscripts ended up in Istanbul, while others remained in Cairo, forming the basis of the 1905–1907 Hamidiyya (later Taqaddum) print edition. This version of the text with al-Shirwānī's gloss was already present in Istanbul in 1725, as a new copy was produced there that year.<sup>69</sup> At some point, al-Shirwānī's original copy, too,

66 SK Damad İbrahim 861, fol. 3r.

**<sup>63</sup>** MK Damad İbrahim 861, fol. 6r.

**<sup>64</sup>** Franssen, "Al-Ṣafadī: Scholar as Reader," 93.

**<sup>65</sup>** SK Reisülküttab 876, fol. 1r (last line). Al-Shirwānī published an abridged Ottoman Turkish translation of that work, but this notice is in Arabic.

**<sup>67</sup>** Al-Shirwāni's comments are copied in: SK Reisülküttab 584, 876; SK Nuruosmaniye 3031; MK Damad İbrahim 35; Cairo, Dār al-Kutub 9. ش.

<sup>68</sup> SK Fazil Ahmed Paşa 992-M (vol. 1), 997 (vol. 3), 995 (vol. 4), 997-M (vol. 5).

<sup>69</sup> MK Damad İbrahim 35.

made its way to Istanbul where it made its way into the Damad İbrahim library. While promoting this text was certainly not at the forefront of his aims, al-Shirwānī's notes and blurb may have had an impact on the transmission and study of *Book of Animals* as a philological work in Egypt and Istanbul.

The marginal glosses of al-Shirwānī and the later glossators also provide diachronic information about the reference materials used in Arabic philological activities among the Ottomans. Al-Shirwānī mainly cites standard early lexica like *al-Ṣiḥāḥ fi al-lugha* (Correctness in Language) of al-Jawharī (d. 1002 or 1008) and its critique, *Takmilat al-Ṣiḥāḥ* (Completion of *al-Sihāh*) by al-Ṣaghānī (d. 1252); the *Mujmal al-lugha* (Summary of Lexicography) by Ibn Fāris (d. 1004); and *Jamharat al-lugha* (Compendium of Lexicography) by Ibn Durayd (d. 933). Later readers added glosses from al-Fīruzabādī's (d. 1415) *al-Qāmūs* (literally: "The Ocean") and the Persian adaptation of al-Jawharī's *Şiḥāḥ* by Jamāl Qarshī (d. 1282), entitled *al-Ṣurāḥ min al-Ṣiḥāḥ* (Epitome of *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*).<sup>70</sup> The lexical item in question, *safaț* (pl. *asfāț*), is not listed in al-Jawharī's original lexicon, though of course it can be found in other Arabic lexicographical works. This addition to the commentary tradition likely predates 1742, as its earliest appearance is in the same hand as the rest of the marginalia in a manuscript endowed in 1154 (1741–1742).

In sum, 'Atā'ī's marginal notes show the active incorporation of Arabic passages into what he conceived as a unified trilingual literary culture, with ample room for individual and even idiosyncratic interests shared by those within the Ottoman literary scene. Al-Shirwānī's approach, on the other hand, was more traditionally philological. The result was that, whatever inspirations 'Atā'ī derived from his Arabic literary studies, they were fully incorporated into his Ottoman Turkish literary production, leaving no explicit traces of the Arabic connection. His reading of al-Jāhiz had nothing to do with establishing a canon, though he certainly appreciated the prestige of the author. Al-Shirwānī, on the other hand, may have had a more significant impact on the incorporation of *Book of Animals* into an Ottoman canon of Arabic philology.

## Philological Commentary for a Composite Language: Sufis as Editors in Ottoman Manuscript Culture by Aslihan Gürbüzel

Since the beginning of my fieldwork in manuscript libraries, I have been intrigued by the question of how manuscript readers were able to trust a given version of a handwritten text, given the often inherent instability of manuscript cultures. While a full response to this question requires a separate essay, in this short piece I will focus on editorial practices in Ottoman manuscript culture ( $i s l \bar{a} h$ ): in particular the editorial and commentarial work of one Ottoman Sufi author, İsmā'īl Hakkı Bursevī (d. 1725), who wrote some of his most significant works while serving as a mosque preacher in Bursa. I intend to show that such work, studied as part of bureaucratic-elite learning, had a broad audience in the early modern period. I hope the discussion will broaden our understanding of the various publics of Ottoman commentarial practices.

**<sup>70</sup>** SK Reisülküttab 584, fol. 15v; Nuruosmaniye 3031, fol. 15r. Thanks to Shuaib Ally for pointing this out to me.

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Sufis are often omitted from early modern histories of science and knowledge due to facile readings of the Sufi discourse condemning bookish learning. While it is true that Sufis often claimed to be men of inspiration, rather than erudition, such claims must be weighed against the relative prevalence of Sufi authors in any manuscript library collection.<sup>71</sup> In reality, the favourable reception of a Sufi's claim to inspired knowledge was often facilitated by his scholarly standing. For example, Bursevi's vita of his sheikh Osman Fazlı Atpāzārī (d. 1691) demonstrates the intertwining of these two forms of knowledge. On the one hand, the hagiographer claims that the sheikh disappeared completely for exactly one hundred and twenty days while working on a *hāshiyya* (gloss) on the Tafsīr al-Fātiha (Commentary on the Fātihā, or first sūra of the Qur'an) of Sadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 1274): a disappearance that allowed the sheikh to later assert that his work was a "pure product of [divine] inspiration and emanation."<sup>72</sup> Yet on the other, his vita also underscores that, prior to the disappearance, the sheikh studied the entire corpus of Konevī, particularly his works on rhetoric and  $\bar{a}d\bar{a}b$  (Arabic literary culture).<sup>73</sup> In fact, the Sufi circles of Bursevī and Atpāzārī provided training in rhetorical and linguistic sciences on a par with the madrasa curriculum, and were thus a part of the larger Ottoman scholarly tradition.74

To further situate Bursevī within the larger milieu of Ottoman commentary traditions, which gave rise to what I describe as "editorial practice" elsewhere, I would point to two key philological moments when there was heightened attention to language as an object of inquiry.<sup>75</sup> The first involves the formation of Ottoman Turkish as a composite language, combining Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, according to parameters that were gradually formalized over multiple decades. While the beginnings of this formation are unclear, it crystallized during the late sixteenth century. The second movement is a collective turn toward ancient texts and authorities which took place at the turn of the seventeenth century and accelerated at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Both shifts were important constituents of Ottoman commentary culture in which Sufis played an important role.

With respect to the formation and standardization of "eloquent Turkish" (fasih ve-beliğ), even a cursory glance at the oeuvre of the Mevlevī sheikh İsmā'īl Ankaravī (d. 1631) suffices to demonstrate this point. Ankaravī was known for his well-received commentary on Rūmī's *Masnavī*, on behalf of which he earned the title "the Commentator" in certain Ottoman circles. His rich oeuvre included many more commentaries,

**<sup>71</sup>** For a recent example, see El Shamsy, *Rediscovering*, 41–61: following the nineteenth-century reformist agenda, El Shamsy casts Sufi discourse on the shortcomings of bookish learning as one of the prime reasons for the alleged intellectual impoverishment of the early modern age.

<sup>72</sup> Bursevī, Tamāmü'l-Feyż, 213.

<sup>73</sup> Bursevī, Tamāmü'l-Feyż, 212; 224-25.

**<sup>74</sup>** Both Atpāzārī and Bursevī trained their students in line with this curriculum, Atpazārī declaring that he would never grant a disciple unlearned in *zāhir* sciences (that is, apparent or exterior meanings) a position in his order: Bursevī, *Tamāmū'l-Feyż*, 219. The involvement of Sufi authors in early modern philology is also an important counterpoint to narratives of the emergence of philological humanities as ultimately leading to secularism: Bod, *A New History*, 161–69.

<sup>75</sup> For my earlier and more detailed treatment of Bursevī, see Gürbüzel, "A Portable Majlis."

some of which were heavily philological. His Turkish commentary on the Arabic *qaṣīda* (ode) of Ibn al- Fārid (d. 1235), *Ḫamriyye*, is one such example. Finally, as Sooyong Kim's contribution has already noted, Anķaravī composed one of the first handbooks of the composite language that was to become Ottoman Turkish. Entitled *Miftāḥu'l-belāğa*, this handbook was a combination of *Talkhīṣ al-Miftāḥ* (a summary of the *Miftāḥ al-'ulūm* or "Key to the Sciences" by Yūsuf ibn Abī Bakr al- Sakkākī, 1160–1129) by al-Qazwīnī (d. 1338) and the *Manāzir al-inshā'* of Mahmūd Gāvān Geylānī (d. 1481), and thereby a (selective) merger between the Arabic *balāgha* and Persian *inshā'* rhetorical traditions. Furthermore, Ankaravī not only wrote the work in Turkish, but supplemented it with examples from Turkish prose and poetry.<sup>76</sup>

Historians of the book point to an increase in the availability of texts in the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the eighteenth century.<sup>77</sup> In this world of textual proliferation, Ottoman readers often discussed the relative value of texts based on their provenance and developed a new interest in ancient texts.<sup>78</sup> One can surmise the development of an increasingly prominent "textual antiquarianism" even at the turn of the seventeenth century, as Tobias Heinzelmann has shown.<sup>79</sup> While discussions of authenticity had long been a standard element of commentaries, a heightened and more widespread interest in "*Ur*-texts," autographs, or other reliable versions is a notable feature of this emerging manuscript culture.

Bursevi's commentarial practice must be situated against this background of a highly dynamic discussion of the relationships among language, history, and the intellectual canon. His commentaries show an excellent command of the "three languages," and his most widely read and extensive commentaries were his exegesis on the Qur'an, commentaries on the Persian Masnavi, and the Turkish Muhammediyye, a canonical religious work written by Yazıcıoğlu Mehmed (d. 1451) devoted to the life of the Prophet. These exegetical works of Bursevi were well received, as attested by the number of copies, followed by the interest of printers in the nineteenth century.<sup>80</sup> Studying his exegetical method, Heinzelmann argues that Bursevi was a philologically-oriented manuscript collator attentive to issues of authenticity as well as to the various historical registers of a source text's language.<sup>81</sup> The fine quality of Bursevi's commentarial work, no doubt, was the major factor behind his success, yet there were other factors that contributed to his popularity. Bursevi's autobiography sheds light on the author's publicity strategies, namely his promotion of his work through various activities, from public preaching to semi-private or private teaching methods. For instance, his exegesis of the Qur'an was completed in a piecemeal fashion, each subsection being delivered orally during

**<sup>76</sup>** For an analysis of Ankaravī's philological work, see Gürbüzel and Tuşalp-Atiyas, "Blending Piety and Philology."

<sup>77</sup> Sezer, The Architecture.

**<sup>78</sup>** For Ottoman discussions on ancient or otherwise credible manuscript copies, see Quinn, "Books," 70–71.

<sup>79</sup> Heinzelmann, "Anfänge einer türkischen Philologie?"

<sup>80</sup> The best summary of Bursevī's works is Namlı, "Kitābetle Mübtelā Olmak," 333–68.

<sup>81</sup> Heinzelmann, "Anfänge einer türkischen Philologie?"

Bursevī's sermons at the Grand Mosque of Bursa. Finally, when the extensive work was completed after twenty-three years, a kind of "launch-party" was held at the Grand Mosque before a large crowd.<sup>82</sup>

That Bursevī had his eye on reaching the broader reading public is also evident in his adoption of the short-form commentary. An example of Bursevī's authority as a textual editor (or, as we shall see, middle author) is his marginal commentary on a wellknown work titled *Dürretü't-tāc fī Ṣāḥibi'l-Mi'rāc* (Pearl of the Crown about the Prophet of Ascension) by Veysī Efendi (d. 1628), a high-level jurist from Skopje and a litterateur praised for his mastery of Ottoman Turkish. The work is often considered to be the first Turkish composition in the *sīra* (Life of the Prophet) genre; however, its reception in commentary culture shows that it was most commonly read for its value as a rhetorical masterpiece of exemplary prose. In other words, Bursevī's commentaries reconceptualize the work within an entirely different genre than modern library catalogues. In particular, Bursevī focused on Arabic lexicography, a field in which Veysī was considered a leading expert.<sup>83</sup>

In one marginal note, Bursevī explicitly explains that he intends his commentary for readers seeking a reliable guide to Veysī's text without the burden of more lengthy commentaries. Such guidance through pithy marginal commentaries was already a well-established practice, and multiple studies show that those attributed to the author of a text (*minhu*, literally "by him[self]") served simultaneously as reading guides and interpretive notes. Indeed, the *minhus* penned by authors were considered an integral part of a text, hence copied widely by other authors.<sup>84</sup> As Tunç Şen has pointed out, even when marginal comments were clearly later additions, they were either left anonymous or attributed to the original author.<sup>85</sup> Hence, even when the mise-en-page appears to be dialogical, the original author was considered the main or sole authority on the meaning of the text. This prioritization of the original author was also evident in colophon conventions: Adam Gacek notes the presence of double colophons in manuscripts copied from the author's original text.<sup>86</sup> These colophons may be considered short-form textual genealogies that establish the manuscript's reliability by showing its proximity to the author.

The unusual nature of Bursevī's marginalia becomes apparent against this background. Instead of attributing his notes to the author or leaving them anonymous, Bursevī signs his marginal notes, of which we have more than one hundred surviving samples. In addition, he writes a second colophon, directly under Veysī's, in which he

**<sup>82</sup>** The publication strategies of manuscript authors in the Ottoman context have not yet been closely studied, hence the successful reception of their work is often explained purely on the basis of content. However, as Daniel Hobbins shows, the success of a publication in a manuscript culture was—much like today a function of the author's publication strategies, such as mobilizing one's religious networks: see his *Authorship and Publicity*.

<sup>83</sup> Hājjī Khalīfa (Kātib Çelebi), Kashf al-zunūn, 2:1071-73: entry on 'Sıhah el-Cevheri.'

<sup>84</sup> Yayla, "Minhu'ların Osmanlı Elyazmalarındaki Rolü," 77–94.

<sup>85</sup> Şen, "Authoring and Publishing."

<sup>86</sup> For two-tier colophons, see Gacek, Arabic Manuscripts, 72.

explains his role in re-forming (*işlāḥ*) the text. More significantly, his editorial role was later acknowledged by multiple copyists who transmitted the text alongside Bursevī's notes and signatures, as well as his colophon. In this way, a genealogy of three separate textual authorities appears on the manuscript page: between the the author and the copyist, it includes one more authority figure, the "middle author" or editor. Elsewhere, I call this form of marginal commentary "portable *majlis*," referring to the dialogical nature of the page, which reproduces a learned conversation between two distinct textual authorities, the author and the editor. The three copies of Bursevī's edition that I have discovered further show that these notes were intended—and understood—to reach and expand the Ottoman reading public.

Was there a broader popularization of such portable *majlises*, or guided texts edited for public circulation, in the course of the eighteenth century? While answering this question requires further studies, I find it plausible that the two cultural-intellectual changes summarized above—that is, the codification of Ottoman Turkish and the valorization of ancient authorities—helped to foster new methods of textual production and dissemination. The increasing availability of texts in the eighteenth century might also have accelerated discussions around, and interest in, reliable versions of texts.

In the end, a survey of the commentarial activity of the Ottoman Sufis shows their involvement in arbitrating this emerging canon and its multiple meanings and uses. Their commentarial practice was steeped in broader Ottoman concerns with correct speech and textual authenticity. By the eighteenth century, this commentary culture promoted practices that produced accessible textual editions for the general reading public through the adoption of marginal commentary formats. The extent to which these evolving editorial practices documented in the manuscript record informed the editorial practices of the print era remains an important question that awaits further study.

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**Abstract** In this collaborative essay, three Arabist and Ottomanist authors sketch an approach to Ottoman multilingual commentary culture that re-integrates Arabic philology into the development of that tradition and provides context for an important stage in the reception of medieval Arabic and Persian linguistic and literary heritages. It offers three snapshots of Ottoman multilingualism: an overview of the early seventeenth-century Ottoman literary scene with a focus on commentaries; a look at seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century glosses on a medieval Arabic literary and scientific text; and a shift in commentarial and textual editing practices pioneered by a Bursa-based Sufi of the early eighteenth century.

**Keywords** commentary, multilingualism, gloss, Arabic, Ottoman, Turkish, philology, manuscripts, marginalia, early modern era, poetry