



Practices of Commentary

OCTOBER SYMPOSIUM

October 1st-2nd, 2021

Online (all times EDT)

Schedule & Abstracts

IAS

INSTITUTE FOR
ADVANCED STUDY

SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

Friday October 1st

10:00 - 10:15 : Introduction

WALID SALEH, Principal Investigator, Practices of Commentary

10:15 - 11:45 : 1st Panel - Collaborations*

Chair: John Magee, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto

» LORENZA BENNARDO and KENNETH YU

Tradition, Competition, Suppression: Reconsidering the Limits of Graeco-Roman
Commentary

» MORDECHAI COHEN and BORONG ZHANG

Re-creating Canonical Texts through Commentary: Neo-Confucianism of the Song
Dynasty and Medieval Jewish Bible Interpretation in its Muslim and Christian
Contexts

11:45 - 12:00 : *Break*

12:00 - 1:30 : 2nd Panel - Individual Papers*

Chair: John W. Marshall, Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto

» ÖMERCAN KAÇAR

Writing Commentary on Sahīh al-Bukhārī or Transforming al-Andalus from
Periphery to Center

*Please note that each talk will be given consecutively and followed by a combined Q & A at the end of each panel.

SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

Friday October 1st

» TONY SCOTT

The Practical Paradox of Composing Commentary and the Meaning of ‘Meaning’

» NATALIE ROTHMAN

Commensuration as Commentary: Translation Practice in Early Modern Venetian-Ottoman Diplomacy

1:30 - 2:15 : *Lunch*

2:15 - 3:45 : **Keynote Lecture**

Introduction: Suzanne Conklin Akbari, School of Historical Studies, IAS

“Microliteratures”

Jesús Velasco Professor of Spanish and Chair, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, Yale
University

*Please note that each talk will be given consecutively and followed by a combined Q & A at the end of each panel.

SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

Saturday October 2nd

9:00 - 10:30 : 1st Panel — Individual Papers*

Chair: Luther Obrock, Historical Studies, University of Toronto

» Y. K. LO

Reverse Commentary: The Relevance of Ancient Classics to
Contemporary Life in Han China

» ASH GEISSINGER

Let's Talk About Gender – Not Women: A Theoretical Intervention in
Tafsir Studies

» KRISSEY ROGAHN

Songs and Deeds: Paratext as Criticism in the Tamil Nāvalar Caritai

10:30 - 10:45 : *Break*

10:45 - 11:45 : 2nd Panel — Collaborations**

Chair: Stefanie Brinkmann, Saxon Academy for Sciences and Humanities, Leipzig

» JEANNIE MILLER, SOOYONG KIM, ASLIHAN GÜRBÜZEL

Commentary and Multilingualism in Ottoman Manuscripts

*Please note that each talk will be given consecutively and followed by a combined Q & A at the end of each panel.

**Please note that this collaboration consists of one 45 minute talk followed by a 15 minute Q & A.



SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

Saturday October 2nd

11:45 - 12:45 : *Lunch*

12:45 - 2:15 : 3rd Panel - Collaborations*

Chair: Jennifer Purtle, Art History, University of Toronto

» AJAY RAO, ELISA FRESCHI, and JONATHAN PETERSON

Vedānta Commentaries: Between Continuity and Contemporary Practice

» AMANDA GOODMAN and MEGHAN HOWARD

Visual Strategies in Sino-Tibetan Dunhuang Manuscripts

2:15 - 2:20 : *Break*

2:20 - 3:00 : Closing Discussion, Next Steps of the Project

Facilitated by Suzanne Conklin Akbari, School of Historical Studies, IAS

*Please note that each talk will be given consecutively and followed by a combined Q & A at the end of each panel.

Friday October 1st
10:15 - 11:45 a.m. EDT

ABSTRACTS & SPEAKERS

“Tradition, Competition, Suppression: Reconsidering the Limits of Graeco-Roman Commentary”

LORENZA BENNARDO Historical Studies, University of Toronto

KENNETH YU Classics, University of Toronto,

chaired by **John Magee** Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto

Abstract: Our co-authored contribution problematizes the notion of a stable and uncontested form of commentary in the Greek and Roman world, one upon which later commentarial traditions in the West are supposedly based.

Our conversation will touch upon the following topics, which we aim to analyze in our papers for the project’s forthcoming issue of *The Medieval Globe*: 1) the regnant ancient and modern terminologies used to describe the products and processes associated with Greek and Latin commentaries, focusing particularly on their limitations and biases; 2) the ideological ways in which ancient commentators self-identified and described their practice; and 3) how ancient institutions helped consolidate and standardize particular modes of commentary at the expense of rival commentarial schools.

Our primary goal is to enlarge our understanding of the limits of what counted as commentary in classical antiquity by highlighting practices of commentary that were distinct from and therefore suppressed by the dominant Aristotelian-Alexandrian approach, an approach that perdures (in often taken-for-granted ways) in modern commentaries on classical texts.

Friday October 1st
10:15 - 11:45 am EDT

ABSTRACTS & SPEAKERS

*“Re-creating Canonical Texts through Commentary:
Neo-Confucianism of the Song Dynasty and Medieval
Jewish Bible Interpretation in its Muslim and Christian
Contexts”*

MORDECHAI COHEN Bible Studies, Yeshiva University

BORONG ZHANG East Asian Studies, University of Toronto

chaired by **John Magee** Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto

Abstract: In theory, commentaries on canonical texts are subservient to their master texts. But, in practice, the greatest commentaries reconfigure and repurpose them, endowing those authoritative texts with continued relevance. We explore two such instances in nearly contemporaneous (11th-12th century) but completely separate commentary traditions: Chinese and Jewish. Without any question of influence, this exploration can teach us about the very phenomenology of commentarial practice.

ABSTRACTS & SPEAKERS

“Writing Commentary on *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* or Transforming *al-Andalus* from Periphery to Center”

ÖMERCAN KAÇAR Islamic Studies, Marmara University

chaired by *John W. Marshall*, Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto

Abstract: Many of the early commentaries on *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* were written roughly from the late 4th/10th century to the middle of the 5th/11th century in *al-Andalus*. Until that period, Andalusian scholars were known for their strict commitment to the Mālikī school of law. Legal practice and education were also dependent on Mālik’s (d. 179/795) *al-Muwatta*. Regarding this, transmitting, reading, and commenting on *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* in *al-Andalus* was a direct threat to the authority of *al-Muwatta*. However, a nascent stratum of Andalusian scholars succeeded in turning this threat into an opportunity.

This paper represents an attempt to answer some questions: Why are many of the first commentaries on *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* – like Muhallab’s (d. 435/1044) and Ibn Battal’s (d. 449/1057) – from *al-Andalus*? Could this be an outcome of the vision of Andalusian Umayyad caliphs like ‘Abd al-Rahman III (d. 350/961) to make *al-Andalus* an imperial power and to turn it from periphery to center in the Islamic world? Andalusian caliphs had promoted scholars bringing knowledge of the Islamic East to *al-Andalus* as a means of developing a global scholarly approach convenient to the Caliphate’s imperial vision. In that atmosphere, a new class of scholarship had emerged: Mālikī with a global perspective and Andalusian *esprit de corps*. Analyzing patronage and state influence on this scholarship will help us understand continuity and change in scholarly life. I suggest that early commentaries on *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* were written by this new generation of scholars to reinterpret the hadīth accumulation of the Islamic East with an Andalusian-Mālikī approach under the patronage of the state. It is by a similar process that Ibn al-Faradī (d. 403/1013) wrote his *Tārikh Ulama al-Andalus* as an attempt to build flows of events in history in a way that leads to Umayyad Spain. His *modus operandi* is similar to Taşköprizade’s (d. 968/1561), vis-a-vis the Ottoman empire, in *Al-Shaqa’iq al-Nu’maniyya fi Ulama al-Dawla al-Uthmaniyya*.

Friday October 1st
12:00 - 1:30 pm EDT

ABSTRACTS & SPEAKERS

“The Practical Paradox of Composing Commentary and the Meaning of ‘Meaning’”

TONY SCOTT Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto

chaired by John W. Marshall, Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto

Abstract: The task of composing a religious commentary is fraught with a practical paradox: on one hand, the commentator must accurately render the meaning of obscure words and their syntax as found in the root text in a way intelligible in conventional parlance and to a general audience; on the other hand, the commentator must recast the root text according to the ethos of her age and in-line with contemporaneous doctrinal developments of the religious system often transposed to different regions and languages, meaning that considerable reinterpretation and even manipulation of these same words are necessary. The resolution of this paradox in a single text so as to avoid contradiction is at the heart of the exegetical project, with disparate systems approaching this task in creative and innovative ways. This paper examines how Theravada Buddhist exegetes of South and Southeast Asia, rooted in Indic commentarial conventions, have approached this balancing act over the last two millennia. By examining sets of normative lists outlining the tasks of a commentator in Pali and Sanskrit texts, I argue that rather than being in opposition, such seemingly disparate lists create a two-tiered approach by redefining the meaning of ‘meaning’: on one tier, explaining meaning involves offering synonyms, etymologies, and grammatical analyses on a word- and sentence-level; on another tier that complements and subsumes the first, the meaning of a word is its aim or function in the religious system as a whole, which in Theravada Buddhism is directed toward the path to enlightenment, or nirvana. With this double entendre on the meaning of ‘meaning’, a commentator is able to reconcile prima facie explications of the given root text with more implicit, even “hidden” interpretations that allow for the innovation of a religious system while embedding it firmly in orthodox and accepted conventions.

Friday October 1st
12:00 - 1:30 pm EDT

ABSTRACTS & SPEAKERS

“Commensuration as Commentary: Translation Practice in Early Modern Venetian-Ottoman Diplomacy”

NATALIE ROTHMAN Historical and Cultural Studies, University of Toronto

chaired by John W. Marshall, Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto

Abstract: This paper considers shifting textual practices in a series of some forty bound fascicles known as *Carte turche*, or Turkish Charters, which forms part of the *Bailo a Costantinopoli* fonds in the Venetian State Archives. The series' roughly 2,000 copies of sultanic proclamations and other Ottoman official decrees and missives with their matching Italian translations were all compiled in the Venetian diplomatic chancery in Istanbul between 1589 and 1785, representing the most comprehensive bilingual register of any diplomatic chancery in Early Modern Istanbul, and possibly elsewhere. Dozens of textual practitioners—scribes, secretaries, copyists, and translators ranging from young apprentices to grand dragomans (diplomatic translator-interpreters)—contributed to the *Carte turche* over its lifespan. In the absence of other evidence about dragomans' training and pedagogical routines, tracing their evolving translation practices in the *Carte turche* is a helpful step towards extrapolating their implicit “style sheet.” It also allows us to reconstruct the social lives of the *Carte turche* themselves, their functioning as living textual artifacts that were assembled, annotated, excerpted, catalogued, and invoked as sources of political knowledge and diplomatic protocol. My paper will first identify dragomans' serialized textual strategies and subtle shifts in translational and codicological practices in the *Carte turche* over time, from foliation, page directionality, and the use of catchwords to signing translations, adding descriptive titles to records, providing Gregorian equivalents for hijri dates, commensurating Ottoman epithets and honorific titles, emulating the Ottoman mise-en-page, and various forms of glossing or Italianizing Ottoman nomenclature. I will then suggest how such textual practices served as implicit commentary on Ottoman statecraft and indexed dragomans' self-understanding as professional intermediaries between Venetian and Ottoman political elites. Finally, I will relate dragomans' textual practices to evolving workflows in other Venetian chanceries and the Ottoman divan.

Friday October 1st
2:15 - 3:45 pm EDT

ABSTRACTS & SPEAKERS

“Microliteratures”

JESÚS VELASCO Professor of Spanish and Chair,
Department of Spanish and Portuguese, Yale University

Abstract: The microliterary glosses I study were built inside books made to be frequented in some semi-private libraries in the 14th and 15th centuries in the Iberian Peninsula. They are not casual jottings from a lazy reader, but long, essay-like interventions, sometimes even auto-glosses. Microliteratures are a way of determining the debates regarding contemporary values for those who participated in the production and dissemination of those written artifacts. These are debates that take place in public spaces, and, independently of their historical age, contribute to posit (and sometimes solve) problems related to social justice and political conflict.

Microliterary interventions and their presence in manuscripts and prints are not necessarily rhetorical exercises to preach to a choir often formed by an elite set of readers possessing a certain social and cultural capital. “The choir has to rehearse” (Michael Eric Dyson) and learn its role. Writers and readers carefully produce microliterary spaces to serve as a focus from which to modify the ethical and political conditions of their contemporary world.

I do not intend to analyze *everything* that is available, but only those expressions that, by manifesting their will to think critically about issues regarding political and social conflict or questions of social justice, I qualify here as microliterary. I want to explore how microliterary writers resisted the impulse of power structures of a systemic character that perpetuated traditionally acquired modes of action. We can call microliteratures those textual interactions, mostly expressed in marginal writing, that are discontent with the weight carried by these traditional and systemic modes of action, and that would prefer to change them. In order to operate this voluntary commotion, they set in motion materialities of communication that, by using the margins, seek to connect with forms of scientific production such as the institution of the marginal gloss, as it became a central element in studying, theorizing and discussing civil law, ecclesiastical law, theology and other disciplines. This microliterary impulse to change things as they are operates by producing and using the margins, which are also the spaces of reflection and individual thought, of intimacy with the object being studied.

For this presentation, I will take as a case study the experimental manuscript work of the Portuguese Prince Pedro de Avis – who, exiled from Portugal, translated himself into Castilian, before being elected king of Aragon and assassinated at 36.

Saturday October 2nd
9:00 - 10:30 pm EDT

ABSTRACTS & SPEAKERS

“Reverse Commentary: The Relevance of Ancient Classics to Contemporary Life in Han China”

Yuet Keung Lo Chinese Studies, National University of Singapore

chaired by **Luther Obrock** Historical Studies, University of Toronto

Abstract: As a form of writing, commentary is typically derivative; it is motivated by the ambiguities and usefulness of an existing text. The act of writing a commentary is similar to grafting a bud onto a stock plant. Once grafted in, the bud will grow together with the plant and form new shoots. Technically speaking, the original plant provides the rootstock for the hybrid fruits, yet the extrinsic graft organically nurtures the fruits and ultimately changes their flavor and nature, it may thus be considered as their genetic source as well. In this peculiar sense, commentary reverses its function as a paratext to interpret a text; it transforms itself into a text even as it relegates the interpreted text to a paratext, which now becomes a commentary on the new text.

During the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty (r. 141-87 BCE), a set of five classics was singled out and venerated as sacred texts allegedly transmitted by Confucius and they were sanctioned as political orthodoxy that guided the governance of the first-ever plebian regime. Two of these texts, the *Odes (Shi)* and the *Documents (Shu)*, originally traced back to the royal archives of the Zhou dynasty (1046-256 BCE), and they were then indeed records of the philosophy, policies, and practices of the ruling aristocratic government. Commentaries were necessary centuries later to decipher the archaic texts of the classics, and selected commentaries were endorsed for their authoritative claims on their true meanings in the second century BCE. The endorsed commentaries focused on ascertaining and explicating the intrinsic meanings of the classics with the express purpose of preparing the students for a political career, and as such, they were considered “inner commentaries” in contemporary parlance.

By contrast, other commentaries aimed at extrapolating from the classics to offer insights on self-cultivation and life lessons; these were deemed “outer commentaries.” They teased out the hidden meanings of a text and made it meaningful for a new readership. Though the ethical understandings were not at odds with the political teachings gained from the endorsed inner commentaries, the exegetical purpose and hermeneutic intent of the inner and outer commentaries were significantly different.



Abstract (continued):

The exegete Han Ying (fl. ca. 150 BCE) is a case in point. While his inner commentary, *Hanshi neizhuan*, on the *Odes* survives only in fragments today, it is clear that it was a work of exegetical glosses and annotations. Han's outer commentary on the *Odes* (*Hanshi waizhuan*) is extant and offers a full view of the genre at work. Typically, one or more lines of a song from the *Odes* would be excerpted, interpreted out of context, and given a new twist for an expedient purpose. Characteristically, the interpretation was concretely spelled out often in the form of an historical anecdote. On the surface, it appears that the story was used to illustrate the decontextualized lines of a song but upon critical scrutiny it also worked the other way around.

Thus, Han Ying was in fact legitimizing the validity of the lessons embedded in the quoted anecdotes with the authority of the *Odes*. As such, the *Hanshi waizhuan* was effectively a reverse commentary on history through the lens of the *Odes* interpreted by the exegete; it was a dual-lens commentary that belies both the perspectives of the interpreter on the *Odes* as well as the historical episodes he quoted. This paper begins by comparing the generic features of inner commentary and outer commentary based on Han Ying's works and contrasts the interpretations of the *Odes* in the *Hanshi waizhuan* with those of other inner commentaries. It proposes the new genre of reverse commentary that functions like a bud grafted onto a stock plant and argues for such a case in the *Hanshi waizhuan*.

Saturday October 2nd
9:00 - 10:30 pm EDT

ABSTRACTS & SPEAKERS

“Let’s Talk About Gender – Not Women: A Theoretical Intervention in Tafsir Studies”

ASH GEISSINGER Religion, Carleton University

chaired by **Luther Obrock** Historical Studies, University of Toronto

Abstract: The academic study of Qur’an commentary (Tafsir Studies) seldom utilizes gender as an analytical lens, particularly when examining pre-nineteenth century works. The reasons for this illustrate the continuing role of contemporary concerns in shaping the historical study of pre-modern Muslim texts.

In Tafsir Studies, “gender” is usually equated with “women”—and therefore treated as irrelevant to the field’s central questions. This dynamic is not unique to Tafsir Studies. However, since the nineteenth century when “women in Islam” was constructed as a *cause célèbre* by both colonial powers and Muslim reformers, the topic of “women” has remained politically charged—and also focused on polemics or apologetics about questions such as veiling and marriage. The effect of this on Tafsir Studies has frequently reduced researching gender in classical Qur’an commentary to examining the history of interpretation of verses on such topics. Even work which is designed to disrupt such presumptions is read and heard against this background of controversy, swallowed up by it, and thus rendered mute. The field of Tafsir Studies urgently needs an intervention to enable it to move beyond this rut.

This paper constitutes such an intervention, which argues for and models a reorientation of the field. First, it decentres “our” presumptions of what gender is, showing that premodern exegetes were working from different assumptions. Then, utilizing several hadiths on grammatical and legal matters which appear in early (8th century CE) exegetical works and continue to be quoted in middle and late medieval Qur’an commentaries as case studies, it demonstrates that reading with gender as a lens sheds light on central questions, such as how interpretive authority is constructed through the exegetical process, and how we understand the functions of quotations in these works.

Saturday October 2nd
9:00 - 10:30 pm EDT

ABSTRACTS & SPEAKERS

“Paratext as Criticism in the *Tamiḷ Nāvalar Caritai*”

KRISSY ROGAHN Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto

chaired by **Luther Obrock** Historical Studies, University of Toronto

Abstract: Medieval and early modern South India sustained a vibrant tradition of oral poetic composition and recitation in the Tamil language. While some compositions were committed to written manuscript, this tradition of the “lone song,” or the *taṇippāṭal*, seems to have survived primarily by popular memory, oral exchange, and oral commentary until it was brought to print in anthologies and songbooks the 19th century. Accordingly, in studying this poetry scholars must reckon with a peculiarly thin archive of palm leaf manuscripts and their adjacency to oral performance. One early modern anthology, the *Tamiḷ Nāvalar Caritai* or *Deeds of the Tamil Poets* (17th century?), a work of collective literary biography organized according to a rough chronology, has been singled out as the earliest instance of systematization and historicization this heterodox lyric corpus. However, the text and its paratexts have only received passing mention (Sivathamby 1984, Wilden 2014). In this paper I will critically examine the only two known manuscripts of this text (GOML and UVSL) and three printed editions of the early 19th century. I analyze two different sets of paratexts—anthological notes to individual lyrics (*kuṟippu*) and a prose preface (*muṇṇurai*)—and the ways they contextualize the poetry in this collection. I conclude that these paratexts, while appearing to be hagiographical or historical, must also be considered an archive of literary critical thought for this tradition. I also speculate on the importance of this text for the form and content of literary biography in the nineteenth century.

Saturday October 2nd
10:45 - 11:45 pm EDT

ABSTRACTS & SPEAKERS

“*Commentary and Multilingualism in Ottoman Manuscripts*”

ASLIHAN GÜRBÜZEL Islamic Studies, McGill University

SOOYONG KIM English and Comparative Literature, Koç University

JEANNIE MILLER Near and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Toronto

chaired by **Stefanie Brinkmann** Saxon Academy for Sciences and Humanities, Leipzig

Abstract: In the early modern period, writing in Ottoman Turkish required familiarity with the rhetorical and literary traditions of three Islamic languages: Turkish, Arabic, and Persian. Although the gradual development of this erudite form of Turkish has been noted, the question of how multilingual learning was sustained and disseminated remains inadequately addressed. In this talk, we will emphasize the key role that multiple forms of commentary played in creating and maintaining the multilingual literary culture of the Ottoman Empire. We will argue that commentaries provided a venue for the communication of rhetorical norms to a growing reading public in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Saturday October 2nd
12:45 - 2:15 pm EDT

ABSTRACTS & SPEAKERS

“Vedānta Commentaries: Between Continuity and Contemporary Practice”

ELISA FRESCHI Philosophy, University of Toronto

JONATHAN PETERSON Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto

AJAY RAO Historical Studies, University of Toronto

chaired by **Jennifer Purtle** Art History, University of Toronto

Abstract: In this panel we will present a new project in which traditional scholars of Sanskrit philosophy (Śrī Vidyāśrīṣatīrtha and Maṇi Draṇid Sāstrikaḷ) read and comment on Vedānta texts via Zoom. We will focus on three aspects of this project: 1. the texts and their written and oral commentaries, 2. methods of philosophical commentary in the 16th century as well as in contemporary traditional circles, 3. new dimensions of commentary in the digital medium. Concerning 1, the texts selected are themselves in semi-commentarial relation to each other. The historically antecedent text, Vyāsaṭīrtha’s Nyāyāmṛta (early 16th c.), is dualist and involves a refutation of non-dualism by establishing the real existence of differences. As is common in Sanskrit philosophy, this ontological argument is achieved through an epistemological premise based on inference. Madhusūdana Sarasvatī’s Advaitasiddhi is a response to the Nyāyāmṛta in the form of a detailed commentary.

As part of our discussion of point 2, we’ll show how Vyāsaṭīrtha and Madhusūdana conceived and phrased their arguments through a network of reused concepts and ideas, including the text Madhusūdana was explicitly commenting on, but also other texts silently reused. Creative ideas were inserted in the process of reusing and reshaping old arguments and phrases. Some short extracts of the lessons by Śrī Vidyāśrīṣatīrtha will show how he uses the same technique in his discussion of the Nyāyāmṛta. He explains the text by commenting on it while having his voice emerge from those of other texts he mentions or silently reuses.

Finally, we will consider how new digital media bears upon an older tradition of teaching and scholastic commentary. In a traditional setting, only people who had studied the Vedas and Sanskrit scholastic traditions would be allowed to participate in such discussions. Such learning would have been restricted to Brahmin men. By contrast, Zoom allowed women, strangers and Indians from a range of social backgrounds to participate. How do new digital contexts change the style and content of traditional Vedānta commentary? And what has new digital media left unchanged?

Saturday October 2nd
12:45 - 2:15 pm EDT

ABSTRACTS & SPEAKERS

“Visual Strategies in Sino-Tibetan Dunhuang Manuscripts”

AMANDA GOODMAN Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto

MEGHAN HOWARD East Asian Languages and Cultures, University of California, Berkeley

chaired by **Jennifer Purtle** Art History, University of Toronto

Abstract: This paper explores the variety of visualization strategies evident in the Sino-Tibetan manuscripts from the Dunhuang cave site in what is now Gansu province, China. Specifically, the paper will focus on three main visualization strategies in bi- and multi-lingual manuscripts from the library cave at Dunhuang: one-to-one equivalents found on Sino-Tibetan glossaries, as well as other lists containing Tibetan and Chinese items; annotations found on lecture notes and what appear to be sermon texts, including interlinear annotation; and side-by-side bricolage passages in Tibetan and Chinese. By isolating the specific page layouts and visualization strategies on manuscripts containing instructional and commentarial genres, we hope to contribute to the study of the formal and informal learning environments in which Buddhist knowledge was produced and disseminated in the greater Dunhuang region during the eighth through tenth centuries.