

**Criticism of the Variant: Discussions of variant readings in Traditional Commentary
Cultures**

8-9 December 2022

Online

All cultures in which written transmission of texts plays a role are confronted with the existence of variant readings. In manuscript cultures this may even be more pronounced; it is virtually axiomatic that one cannot expect to find two manuscripts of the same text which do not differ in some point in their readings.

How were these variants dealt with by traditional scholarship, in commentaries or elsewhere? How was their very existence conceived of (was it frowned upon, seen as a symptom of decline of culture, explained as a matter of regional differences, or something else) and theorized? To what extent, and in what ways, were they systematically collected and/or recorded? Were they classified (for instance into unintentional errors and deliberate changes or innovations)? What criteria for their evaluation or the choice between them are made explicit or can be deduced from the practice of commentators or other scholars? Can the discussion of variants be seen to be continuing, in dialogue so to speak, over multiple generations of scholars? Can it be seen as continuing in dialogue with early modern textual scholars? What was the self-perception or self-theorization by traditional scholars of their own activity in this regard? Do traditional scholars always aim to produce/determine one correct text (whether an "Urtext" or another authoritative version) as postmodern critics of philology often claim that philologists do? And how might we from our modern perspectives evaluate, and perhaps learn from, the discussions of variants by traditional scholars?

The workshop will offer an opportunity to consider these and other questions in a comparative manner, bringing together scholars working on a wide range of traditional cultures.

Program

Thursday afternoon

- 3.30-4.00 pm Christian Brockmann: "Philological expertise and argumentation in medical treatises: The example of Galen of Pergamum"
- 4.00-4.30 pm Caroline Macé: "Gregory the Theologian and his Byzantine Commentators"
- 4.30-5.00 pm Riccardo Macchioro: "Restoring the Text, Conveying the 'Truth': Criticism of the Variants in Latin Texts between Servius and Erasmus"
- 5.00-5.30 pm coffee break
- 5.30-7.00 pm Keynote lecture Michael Friedrich: "Who is Afraid of Variants? Some Observations from the Study of Chinese Literature"
- 7.30 pm dinner

Friday morning

- 9.00-9.30 am Mersha Alehegne: "Variant is Salient: a Case in the *'andamtā* Commentary Tradition"
- 9.30-10.00 am Tilman Seidensticker: "The Handling of Variance in Arabic Poetry, the Qur'an and Prophetic Tradition"
- 10.00-10.30 am Martin Worthington: "The wobbly wedge, or variants and corruptions in the world of Cuneiform"
- 10.30-11.00 am coffee break
- 11.00-11.30 am Harunaga Isaacson: "Sins of the Scribes: Indigenous Sanskrit philologists on corruption and its causes"
- 11.30-12.00 am Eva Wilden: "'There is Also the Reading x' – the Discussion of Variants in Tamil Commentaries"
- 12.00-12.30 am Peera Panarut: "Traditional Editions and Textual Transmission: A Case Study on the Thai version of Lokaniti (Didactic Poems on Worldly Conducts)"

If you would like to participate online, please register at veranstaltungen@awhamburg.de