

# Abigail I. MacBain, PhD

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*University of Edinburgh, Department of Asian Studies*

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## EDUCATION

<b>PhD</b>	<b>Columbia University, New York, NY</b> <u>Department:</u> East Asian Languages & Cultures <u>Fields:</u> East Asian Religions, Japanese Religious History	<b>2021</b>
<b>MPhil</b>	<b>Columbia University, New York, NY</b> <u>Department:</u> East Asian Languages & Cultures <u>Fields:</u> East Asian Religions, Japanese Religious History	<b>2018</b>
<b>MA</b>	<b>Columbia University, New York, NY</b> <u>Department:</u> East Asian Languages & Cultures <u>Fields:</u> East Asian Religions, Japanese Religious History	<b>2015</b>
<b>MA</b>	<b>McMaster University, Hamilton, ON</b> <u>Department:</u> Religious Studies <u>Fields:</u> Japanese Religions, Buddhism	<b>2008</b>
<b>BA</b>	<b>St. Lawrence University, Canton, NY</b> <u>Departments:</u> Religious Studies, History-Asian Studies <u>Fields:</u> Japanese Religious Studies; East Asian and Middle Eastern History & Religion	<b>2004</b>

## SELECTED EMPLOYMENT

<b>University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK</b> <u>Title:</u> Lecturer of Pre-modern Japanese Studies <u>Department:</u> Department of Asian Studies	<b>2022–present</b>
<b>Columbia University, New York, NY USA</b> <u>Title:</u> Postdoctoral Research Scholar; Lecturer <u>Department:</u> East Asian Languages & Cultures	<b>2021–2022</b>
<b>Consulate General of Japan, Miami, FL USA</b> <u>Title:</u> Clerk – Cultural & Educational Affairs, JET Program Coordinator <u>Department:</u> Culture, Education, and Public Relations	<b>2009–2013</b>
<b>JET Programme, Ajigasawa Aomori JP</b> <u>Title:</u> Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) <u>Category:</u> Prefectural, based at Ajigasawa High School	<b>2004–2006</b>

## FELLOWSHIPS, HONOURS & AWARDS

### Research & Language

- **Donald Keene Center of Japanese Culture Postdoctoral Research Scholar** 2021  
Donald Keene Center, Columbia University
- **Donald Keene Dissertation Write-Up Fellowship in Japanese Studies** 2020  
Donald Keene Center, Columbia University

- **Sen Lecture Fellow** 2020  
Donald Keene Center, Columbia University
- **Fulbright Graduate Research Fellow Extension** 2019  
Fulbright U.S. Student Program, Institute of International Education (IIE)
- **Fulbright Graduate Research Fellow** 2018  
Fulbright U.S. Student Program, Institute of International Education (IIE)
- **JSPS Short-term Postdoctoral Fellowship** (*declined*) 2018  
Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS)
- **Japan Foundation Doctoral Fellowship** (*alternate*) 2018  
Japan Foundation
- **Blakemore Freeman Fellowship** 2015  
The Blakemore Foundation
- **Academic Year FLAS scholarship** (*declined*) 2015  
Foreign Language & Area Studies (FLAS)
- **Weatherhead PhD Training Grant** 2015  
Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University
- **Summer FLAS scholarship** 2014  
Foreign Language & Area Studies (FLAS)
- **Scholarship for summer school of Japanese** 2007  
Middlebury College; McMaster University
- **Scholarship for summer study in Japan** 2003  
Mukogawa Women's University
- **Freeman Fellowship scholarship** 2003  
The Freeman Foundation

#### Service & Teaching

- **Dr. Devon T. Wade Mentorship, Service, and Advocacy Award** (*nominated*) 2020  
Columbia University
- **Lead Teaching Fellow** 2017  
Columbia University

#### Academic

- **Full scholarship & bursary** 2006  
McMaster University
- **Magna cum laude, St. Lawrence University** 2004  
St. Lawrence University
- **Faculty Scholar** 2004  
St. Lawrence University
- **Kathryn Frazer Mackay Endowed Prize in Religious Studies** 2004  
St. Lawrence University

### PUBLICATIONS

#### In Print

##### *Book Chapters*

- “South Indian Faces & Traces in Eighth Century Japan: The Life & Legacy of Bodhisena.” In *Geographies of Exchange between India and Japan*, edited by Sushila Narsimhan & Parul Bakshi, 123-144. New Delhi: Manak Publications Pvt. Ltd. 2024.

Book Reviews

- “Dorothy C. Wong. Buddhist Pilgrim-Monks as Agents of Cultural and Artistic Transmission: The International Buddhist Art Style in East Asia, ca. 645–770,” reviewed in *Journal of Asian Humanities at Kyushu University* 4 (March 2019).

ForthcomingBook Chapters

- “The World on Stage: Multicultural Music and Dance at Tōdaiji Temple’s Eye-Opening Ceremony.” In *Music and Sound in Transpacific East Asia: Transformations and Trajectories*. Accepted for publication by Palgrave Macmillan. Anticipated 2025.

In ProcessIndependent Articles

- “The *Kaishi Shōsei* and Eighth-Century Japan’s Search for Overseas Specialists” (to be submitted winter 2025)
- “*Gigaku* Glimpses of the World in a Japanese Buddhist Space” (to be submitted autumn 2025)

Book Project

- Platforms of Legitimacy: Monastic Priests, Precepts, and Platforms in Eighth-Century Japan (research stage; expected completion 2027)

THESES & DISSERTATIONS

- “Precepts and Performances: Overseas Monks and the Emergence of Cosmopolitan Japan,” PhD diss. Columbia University, 2021.
- “Women and Oracles in the Early Hachiman Cult,” MA thesis. Columbia University, 2015.
- “Temples and Sutra: Nara Japan’s National Defense System,” MA thesis. McMaster University, 2008.
- “The Exploration of Buddhist Themes in Medieval Shintō’s Incorporation of Buddhism as Seen in the *Jinnō Shōtōki*,” honour’s thesis. St. Lawrence University, 2004.

LECTURES & INVITED TALKSInvited Talks

- **School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), Japan Research Centre** **Dec. 2024**  
“Performing Cultures: Multicultural Music & Dance in Eighth-Century Japan”
- **University of Bristol, Department of Religion and Theology seminar series** **Nov. 2024**
- “The World on Stage: Multicultural Music and Dance at Tōdaiji Temple’s Eye-Opening Ceremony”
- **Doshisha University, Kyoto Asian Studies Group** **Oct. 2019**  
“Platforms of Legitimacy: Searching for a Precepts Master and Shifting Monastic Ordinations in Eighth Century Japan”
- **Kyoto Consortium for Japanese Studies** **Oct. 2019**  
“Guided tour around Nara”
- **Fulbright International Education Administrators** **June 2019**  
“How Religion Helped Shape Kyoto: A Brief Tour Through Higashiyama”

Guest Lecture

- **Salisbury University, Salisbury MD USA** **Mar. 2021**

- “Buddhism and the Nara State,” for “Japan and Korea in the Chinese Crucible” course  
**Columbia University, New York NY USA** **Mar. 2018**  
“Japan and South Korea: Additional Tensions and Controversies” for “Introduction East Asian Civilizations: Korea” course

#### Community Engagement

- **Buddhism Discovery Day – Edinburgh Centre for Buddhist Studies** **Jun. 2025**  
“Buddhist Studies Taster Lecture”
- **Japan Foundation, London UK (online webinar)** **Mar. 2023**  
“Tsugaru Dialect: One of the Most Difficult Dialects in Japan” (co-presenter)
- **Silver Lining: East Asia in the Pandemic podcast.** **June 2021**  
“The Origin of Buddhism in Japan.”
- **The Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens, Delray Beach FL USA** **Mar. 2011**  
*Hatsume Festival* – “Traditional Japanese Stories”; “A Kid’s Look at Japan”
- **The Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens, Delray Beach FL USA** **Mar. 2010**  
*Hatsume Festival* – “Study Abroad and Work Opportunities in Japan”; “Traditional Japanese Stories”; “Japanese Ghost Stories”
- **Association of Florida Teachers of Japanese, FL USA** **Dec. 2010**  
*Japan Immersion Day* – “A Brief Look at Japanese Robotics”
- **Association of Florida Teachers of Japanese, FL USA** **Dec. 2009**  
*Japan Immersion Day* – “Tanuki, Foxes, Magic Jewels, and Shinto Shrines: Traditional Folklore in Japanese Pop Culture.”

#### CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

##### National & Regional Conferences

- **Premodern Japanese Religions Workshop (PJRW) (online)** **Aug. 2025**  
*Evolution and Representation of Prince Shotoku Cult: Intersections between History, Ideas and Art* 「聖徳太子信仰の展開と表象：歴史、思想、美術の交差点」  
“The Legacy of Prince Shōtoku in the Development of Japanese Traditional Music” 『聖徳太子が雅楽の発展に与えた遺産』 (talk given in English)
- **American Academy of Religion (AAR), San Antonio TX USA/Online** **Nov. 2021**  
*Religion in Service to the Japanese State panel*  
“Tōdaiji Temple as State Protector and Familial Temple.”
- **Association for Asian Studies (AAS), Online due to COVID-19** **Mar. 2021**  
“Precepts, Platforms, and Politics: Eighth Century Japan's Precepts Master Solicitation.”
- **American Academy of Religion (AAR), Montreal QC CA** **May 2008**  
Eastern International Regional Conference, McGill University  
“Buddhist Nationalism in the Development of the Japanese State”

##### University & Research Organisation Conferences or Workshops

- **Columbia University, Tōdaiji Temple, Nara JP** **Nov. 2025**  
*Buddhist Sacred Music and Ritual Performance* (title in process)  
“Overseas Musical Entertainment at Tōdaiji’s Eye-Opening Ceremony” (title in process)
- **McGill University, Montreal QB CA** **Oct. 2025**  
*Sounds and Colours of Japanese Rites*  
“Tōdaiji Temple’s Multicultural Eye-Opening Ceremony” 「東大寺の多文化的な開眼供養」 (in English).

- **University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh UK** **Mar. 2025**  
*Edinburgh Buddhist Studies: What is Vinaya and How Should We Study It?*  
Panel: “The Vinaya Outside: Commentaries, Handbooks and Monastic Transmission”
- **University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh UK** **Mar. 2024**  
*Edinburgh Buddhist Studies: Curating Buddhism Round Table*  
“Using Museum Resources in the Classroom”
- **University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh UK** **Feb. 2024**  
*Edinburgh Buddhist Studies: Works-in-Progress Workshop*  
“Ordination Precepts and Platforms in Nara Japan”
- **University of Sheffield, Sheffield UK** **June 2023**  
*Transpacific East Asia: Transformations and Trajectories in Music and Sound*  
“Celebration and Celebrants: The Multicultural Spectacle of Tōdaiji Temple’s Eye-Opening Ceremony”
- **The KIZUNA India-Japan Study Forum, New Delhi IN/Online** **Feb. 2023**  
*Discovering India-Japan Civilizational Ties and Southeast Asia Connectivities*  
“South Indian Faces & Traces in Eighth-Century Japan: The Life & Legacy of Bodhisena.”
- **Princeton University, Princeton NJ USA** **Sept. 2022**  
*Doctrine and Practice beyond Borders: International Interactions in East Asian Buddhism*  
“The Vinaya Veneer: Reexamining the Role of Monastic Precepts in Japan’s Precepts Master Solicitation”

Graduate student conferences

- **Columbia University, New York NY USA** **Feb. 2017**  
*EALAC: 26th Annual Graduate Student Conference on East Asia*  
“The Ongoing Legacy of Ethnicity for Bodhisena, the First Indian in Japan.”
- **Columbia University & Bukkyō Daigaku, Kyoto JP** **Jun. 2016**  
*Encounters & Intersections in East Asian Religions: A Columbia University Graduate Student Conference in Kyoto*  
“They Say He Came From India: the Eighth Century Brahman Bishop Bodhisena’s Use in Medieval Japanese Art, Literature, and Religion”「中世日本の美術、文学、宗教に登場する八世紀のバラモン僧正菩提僊那」(in Japanese).

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

<b>University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh UK</b>	<b>2022–present</b>
<u>Department of Asian Studies</u>	
<i>Course Organiser (pre-honours undergraduate)</i>	
• Pre-modern East Asian History	<i>2022–present</i>
• Japanese Studies on the Year Abroad	<i>2023–present</i>
• Society & Culture in Pre-modern East Asia	<i>2024</i>
• Researching Japan: Skills, Methods and Critiques	<i>2022–2023</i>
<i>Course Organiser (honours-level undergraduate &amp; postgraduate)</i>	
• Buddhism and the State in Early East Asia	<i>2023–present</i>
<i>Contributing Lecturer (pre-honours undergraduate)</i>	
• Society & Culture in Pre-modern East Asia	<i>2024–present</i>
• Politics & the Economy in Japan	<i>2023</i>
<i>Contributing Lecturer (honours undergraduate)</i>	
• Japanese Studies on the Year Abroad	<i>2023–present</i>
<i>Contributing Lecturer (postgraduate)</i>	

- Research Skills & Methods for Asian Studies 2 2023
- Doing Research on East Asia: Key Concepts, Approaches and Issues 2024–present
- Envisioning Buddhist Studies: Methods and Themes 2025–present

**Columbia University, New York, NY USA 2014–2022**

Department of East Asian Languages & Cultures

*Lecturer (undergraduate)*

- Intro to Major Topics: East Asia – Religious Landscapes of East Asia 2021

*Lecturer (advanced undergraduate and graduate)*

- East Asian Religion: Women in Buddhism 2022

*Teaching Assistant (undergraduate)*

- Intro to East Asian Civilizations: Korea – Seong-uk Kim 2018
- Asian Humanities: Major Texts – Michael Como 2016
- Asian Humanities: Major Texts – William de Bary 2014

School of General Studies, Academic Resource Center

*Academic Mentor*

- Reaching & Argument Coach – East Asian Languages & Cultures 2020
- Mentoring – Social Sciences, Humanities 2020

**McMaster University, Hamilton, ON CA 2006–2008**

Department of Religious Studies

*Teaching Assistant (undergraduate)*

- Religion and Popular Culture in Japan – Mark Rowe 2008
- Indian Religious Tradition – Tinamarie Jones 2007
- Death and Dying: Comparative Views – Mark Rowe 2007
- Japanese Religion – Mark Rowe 2006

**Japan Exchange & Teaching Programme, Ajigasawa Aomori JP 2004–2006**

*Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) (high school & special needs)*

TEACHING TRAINING

**University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh UK 2024–present**

Institute for Academic Development

- Edinburgh Teaching Award (EdTA) – *enrolled in category 3* 2024–present (ongoing)
- Fundamentals of PhD Supervision 2024
- Fundamentals of PhD Examination trainings 2024

**Columbia University, New York NY USA 2017–2020**

Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

- Innovative Course Design Seminar (ICSD) 2020
- Supporting Hybrid & Online Learning & Teaching (SHOLT) Course 2020
- Inclusive Teaching Seminar 2018
- Lead Teaching Fellow (LTF) 2017–2018

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh UK**

Organised Workshops & Research Groups

• Edinburgh Buddhist Studies: Works-in-Progress Workshop	2025
• Classical Japanese Study & Reading Group	2023–2024
<u>Leadership Roles</u>	
• Cohort Lead: Year 3 Japanese Studies students	2023–present
<b>Columbia University, New York NY USA</b>	
<u>Guest speaker/presenter</u>	
• Individual Development Plan (IDP): Careers in Academia	2023
• MA Workshop on Applying for Fellowships and Conferences	2021
• Teaching Experience Workshop	2020
• Duty Calls! Navigating the Service and Skill Side of Academia	2020
• PhD Application Workshop for MA students	2020
<u>Organised Workshops &amp; Research Groups</u>	
• PhD Workshop on Applying for Grants and Fellowships	2021
• Navigating Grant and Fellowship Applications	2021
• PhD Application Workshop for MA students	2020
• Online Academic Writing Retreat & Working Group	2020–2022
• Fellowships Application Workshop	2020
• Fellowship Applications: Another Form of Teaching	2018
• Designing Syllabi for East Asian Studies	2017
• C-BEAR Graduate Student Conference in Kyoto ( <i>committee member</i> )	2015–2016
<u>Administrator</u>	
• GSAS Fellow in Academic Administration at Office of Academic Integrity	2020
• Dept. of East Asian Languages & Cultures Fellowships Database	2018
• Vice President of Communications for Graduate Student Advisory Council	2017–2018

### UNIVERSITY SERVICE

<b>University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh UK</b>	
• Asian Studies Seminar Series organiser	2023–present
• Japanese Studies library liaison	2023–present
• PhD Tutor Guaranteed Hours planning & recruitment	2023–present
<b>Columbia University, New York NY USA</b>	
• Graduate Student Advisory Council (GSAC), steering committee	2017–2018
• GSAC, departmental representative	2016–2017
• GSAC, representative to International Student Services Organization (ISSO)	2016–2017
• Donald Keene Center of Japanese Culture, graduate student committee member	2016–2017
• Dept. of East Asian Languages & Cultures, PhD advisory committee member	2016–2017
• Collegium Musicum, singer	2013–2014, 2017
<b>McMaster University, Hamilton ON USA</b>	
• Department of Religious Studies, graduate student representative	2007–2008
<b>St. Lawrence University, Canton NY USA</b>	
• Department of Religious Studies, undergraduate student representative	2003–2004
• Omicron Delta Kappa (leadership honour society)	2004
• Phi Alpha Theta (history honour society)	2004

- Theta Alpha Kappa (religious studies honour society) 2004
- Alpha Phi Omega, community service fraternity member 2003–2004
- Laurentian Singers, singer 2000–2004

### POSTGRADUATE STUDENT ADVISING & COMMITTEES

#### Primary supervisor

- **Mengying He**, Dept of Asian Studies, University of Edinburgh 2024–present  
MSc East Asian Studies – *in progress*
- **Jing Chen**, Dept of Asian Studies, University of Edinburgh 2024–present  
MSc East Asian Studies – *in progress*
- **Ruiyao Dong**, Dept of Asian Studies, University of Edinburgh 2023–2024  
MSc East Asian Relations – Merit  
“Urbanisation and Tourism Development in Ancient Architectural Areas: The Examples of Kyoto and Xi’an”
- **Xidong Fang**, Dept. of Asian Studies, University of Edinburgh 2023–2024  
MSc East Asian Relations  
“The Impact of the Mongolian Invasion on Japanese Buddhism in the Kamakura Period”
- **Catherine Adcock**, Dept. of Asian Studies, University of Edinburgh 2022–2023  
MSc East Asian Relations – Merit  
“What the Fox: A Look at *Kitsune* as Representative of Foreign Women in Heian and Edo Period Folk-Literature”

#### Secondary supervisor

- **Sara Atwood**, Dept. of Art History, University of Edinburgh 2023–present  
PhD Art History (primary: Halle O’Neal) (*in process*)  
Topic: Women’s experiences on Mt. Kōya in the Edo period
- **Arden Taylor**, Dept. of Asian Studies, University of Edinburgh 2023–present  
PhD Japanese (primary: Helen Parker) (*in process*)  
Topic: Masculinity in warrior *Noh* plays
- **Tasha Downs**, Dept. of Asian Studies, University of Edinburgh 2023–2024  
MScR Japanese (primary: Joachim Gentz) – distinction  
Topic: Historical Japanese receptions of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*

#### Committee

- **Gennie Xiaojing Zhang**, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University 2022  
MA Museum Anthropology  
“House of Goddesses 女神之家: The Living Need Light, the Goddesses need Meat”
- **Natali Garcia-Diaz**, Dept. of Communications, Florida International University 2010  
MS Mass Communication: Global Strategic Communications  
“Anti-Mercury Campaign Designed to Protect Dolphins and Public Health in Japan.”

### LANGUAGE SKILLS

#### Japanese

*Modern*: advanced competency, all skills

*Classical*: reading competency, Classical Japanese (*kobun*) and Classical Sino-Japanese (*kanbun*)

#### French

*Modern*: intermediate reading; basic speaking



Chinese

*Modern*: basic competency, all skills

*Classical*: intermediate-advanced (notably Japanese-style *kanbun*)

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Steering Committee Member

- PMJS
- Edinburgh Buddhist Studies

Member

- Association for Asian Studies (AAS)
- American Academy of Religion (AAR)
- Society for the Study of Japanese Religions (SSJR)
- British Association for Japanese Studies (BAJS)
- European Association for Japanese Studies (EAJS)
- UK Association for Buddhist Studies (UKABS)