

# Abigail I. MacBain, PhD

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*University of Edinburgh, Department of Asian Studies*

*School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures*

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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

- **Grant for Research in Japan** **2025**  
Japan Foundation Endowment Committee
- **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** 2013  
Columbia University
- **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).

#### Forthcoming

##### *Book 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 2026.

##### *Articles*

- “Music and Dance in the Medieval Cult of Prince Shōtoku.” *Journal of Religion in Japan*. Anticipated 2026

##### *Book Reviews*

- “Sherry Fowler. *Buddhist Bells and Dragons: Under and Over Water, In and Out of Japan*,” reviewed in *Japan Review*. Anticipated 2026.

#### In Process

- “The Kaishi Shōsei and Eighth-Century Japan’s Search for Overseas Specialists” (to be submitted September 2026)
- “Unmasking Gigaku: A Japanese Fantasy of Tang Cosmopolitanism” (to be submitted April 2026)

##### *Book Project*

- *Platforms of Legitimation: Buddhism, Authenticity, and Cosmopolitanism in Early Japan* (research stage; expected completion 2028)

### 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 TALKS

#### Invited Talks

- **Oxford University, Oxford Seminar in the Pre-modern History of East Asia June 2026**  
Talk title TBD

TBD

- **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 PRESENTATIONSInternational & Regional Conferences

- **Association for Asian Studies (AAS), Vancouver** Mar. 2026  
*Japan Beyond the Sinosphere, 250-1250 panel*  
“A Japanese Cosmopolis: Gigaku Masked Drama and the Decentering of Tang China in Early Japan”
- **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』 (*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**  
*Symposium: Sacred Music & Buddhist Ritual at Tōdaiji* 「東大寺における音楽と儀礼」  
“Dancers and Dynamics: Foreign Music and Dance at the Tōdaiji Eye-Opening” 「東大寺大仏開眼供養における渡来の音楽と舞踊」(*in English*)
- **McGill University, Montreal QB CA** **Oct. 2025**  
*Sounds and Colours of Japanese Rites*  
“Musical Performance and Law in Premodern Japanese Buddhist Ritual”
- **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	2022–present
• Japanese Studies on the Year Abroad	2023–present
• Society & Culture in Pre-modern East Asia	2024
• Researching Japan: Skills, Methods and Critiques	2022–2023
<i>Course Organiser (honours-level undergraduate &amp; postgraduate)</i>	
• Buddhism and the State in Early East Asia	2023–present
<i>Contributing Lecturer (pre-honours undergraduate)</i>	
• Pre-modern East Asian History	2022–present
• Society & Culture in Pre-modern East Asia	2023–present
• Politics & the Economy in Japan	2023
<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
 <b>Columbia University, New York, NY USA</b>	 <b>2014–2022</b>
<u>Department of East Asian Languages &amp; Cultures</u>	
<i>Lecturer (undergraduate)</i>	
• Intro to Major Topics: East Asia – Religious Landscapes of East Asia	2021
<i>Lecturer (advanced undergraduate and graduate)</i>	
• East Asian Religion: Women in Buddhism	2022
<i>Teaching Assistant (undergraduate)</i>	
• 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
<u>School of General Studies, Academic Resource Center</u>	
<i>Academic Mentor</i>	
• Reaching & Argument Coach – East Asian Languages & Cultures	2020
• Mentoring – Social Sciences, Humanities	2020
 <b>McMaster University, Hamilton, ON CA</b>	 <b>2006–2008</b>
<u>Department of Religious Studies</u>	
<i>Teaching Assistant (undergraduate)</i>	
• 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
 <b>Japan Exchange &amp; Teaching Programme, Ajigasawa Aomori JP</b>	 <b>2004–2006</b>
<i>Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) (high school &amp; special needs)</i>	

### TEACHING TRAINING

<b>University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh UK</b>	<b>2024–present</b>
<u>Institute for Academic Development</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Edinburgh Teaching Award (EdTA) – <i>enrolled in category 3</i></li> <li>Fundamentals of PhD Supervision</li> <li>Fundamentals of PhD Examination trainings</li> </ul>	<p>2024–present (<i>ongoing</i>)</p> <p>2024</p> <p>2024</p>
<b>Columbia University, New York NY USA</b>	<b>2017–2020</b>
<u>Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL)</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Innovative Course Design Seminar (ICSD)</li> <li>Supporting Hybrid &amp; Online Learning &amp; Teaching (SHOLT) Course</li> <li>Inclusive Teaching Seminar</li> <li>Lead Teaching Fellow (LTF)</li> </ul>	<p>2020</p> <p>2020</p> <p>2018</p> <p>2017–2018</p>

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

<b>University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh UK</b>	
<u>Organised Workshops &amp; Research Groups</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Edinburgh Buddhist Studies: Works-in-Progress Workshop</li> <li>Classical Japanese Study &amp; Reading Group</li> </ul>	<p>2025</p> <p>2023–2024</p>
<u>Leadership Roles</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cohort Lead: Year 3 Japanese Studies students</li> </ul>	2023–present
<b>Columbia University, New York NY USA</b>	
<u>Guest speaker/presenter</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual Development Plan (IDP): Careers in Academia</li> <li>MA Workshop on Applying for Fellowships and Conferences</li> <li>Teaching Experience Workshop</li> <li>Duty Calls! Navigating the Service and Skill Side of Academia</li> <li>PhD Application Workshop for MA students</li> </ul>	<p>2023</p> <p>2021</p> <p>2020</p> <p>2020</p> <p>2020</p>
<u>Organised Workshops &amp; Research Groups</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PhD Workshop on Applying for Grants and Fellowships</li> <li>Navigating Grant and Fellowship Applications</li> <li>PhD Application Workshop for MA students</li> <li>Online Academic Writing Retreat &amp; Working Group</li> <li>Fellowships Application Workshop</li> <li>Fellowship Applications: Another Form of Teaching</li> <li>Designing Syllabi for East Asian Studies</li> <li>C-BEAR Graduate Student Conference in Kyoto (<i>committee member</i>)</li> </ul>	<p>2021</p> <p>2021</p> <p>2020</p> <p>2020–2022</p> <p>2020</p> <p>2018</p> <p>2017</p> <p>2015–2016</p>
<u>Administrator</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GSAS Fellow in Academic Administration at Office of Academic Integrity</li> <li>Dept. of East Asian Languages &amp; Cultures Fellowships Database</li> <li>Vice President of Communications for Graduate Student Advisory Council</li> </ul>	<p>2020</p> <p>2018</p> <p>2017–2018</p>

### UNIVERSITY SERVICE

<b>University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh UK</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asian Studies Seminar Series organiser</li> </ul>	2023–present

- Japanese Studies library liaison 2023–present
- PhD Tutor Guaranteed Hours planning & recruitment 2023–present

#### **Columbia University, New York NY USA**

- 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

#### **McMaster University, Hamilton ON USA**

- Department of Religious Studies, graduate student representative 2007–2008

#### **St. Lawrence University, Canton NY USA**

- 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

- **Jing Chen**, Dept. of Asian Studies, University of Edinburgh 2024–2025  
MSC East Asian Studies – Merit
- **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”

#### Co-supervisor

- **Nick Cartwright**, Dept of History, University of Edinburgh 2025–present  
PhD in History (co-supervisor: Richard Sowerby)  
Topic: Comparative research on the hagiographies of Gyōki (Japan) and St Cuthbert (England)

#### 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 pilgrimages to 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 by Zeami

- **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

#### Editing Board

- *Japan Forum* – Associate Editor

#### Steering Committee Member

- PMJS
- Edinburgh Centre for Buddhist Studies (ECBS)

#### 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)