

Emily B. Simpson, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Department for the Study of Religions
Wake Forest University
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EDUCATION

- **University of California at Santa Barbara** (Sept 2011- June 2019):
 - Graduate Advisors: Fabio Rambelli (Chair); Katherine Saltzman-Li; Sabine Frühstück
 - Doctor of Philosophy in East Asian Languages and Cultural Studies (June 14, 2019): “Crafting a Goddess: Divinization, Womanhood and Genre in Narratives of Empress Jingū”
 - Certificate of College and University Teaching (June 14, 2019)
 - Master of Arts in Asian Studies (Dec 19, 2014): “Sovereign, Shaman and Bodhisattva: A Medieval Reinterpretation of Empress Jingū in the *Hachiman gudokun*”
- **Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan** (Sept 2016-Dec 2017):
 - Graduate Research Fellow through Fulbright IIE
 - Research advisor: Satō Hiroo, Japanese Intellectual History
- **Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY** (Aug 2003-May 2007):
 - Bachelor of Arts in Asian Studies, with department and general honors (May 27, 2007)
 - Phi Beta Kappa Induction (May 2007)
 - Minors in Francophone Studies and Japanese
 - Senior Thesis: “The Miko’s Gift and Other Stories: Shaman Queens of Ancient Japan,” Sophia H. Chen Zen Memorial Prize for Best Thesis in Asian Studies
- **Beijing Language and Culture University Summer Intensive Program** (July-Aug 2012, 2013)
- **Kansai Gaidai University Study Abroad Program** (Jan 2006-May 2006)

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- **Wake Forest University**, Department for the Study of Religions, Assistant Professor (Jul 2023-present)
- **Dartmouth College**, Department of Religion, Lecturer (Sept 2019- June 2022, Summer 2025)
- **Kyushu University**, International Master’s/Doctoral Program in Japanese Humanities, Guest Professor (Aug-Sept 2021)
- **University of California at Santa Barbara**, EALCS Department, Lecturer (Mar-June 2021)
- **University of California at Santa Barbara**, Instructor of Record (2016-2019)

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCIES

- English: native speaker
- Japanese: fluent, reading proficiency in premodern forms (*bungo*, *kanbun*, *sōrobun*, *hentaigana*)
- French: advanced reading proficiency
- Chinese and German: intermediate
- Korean: beginner

HONORS, AWARDS, GRANTS, AND FELLOWSHIPS

- **Archie Fun for the Arts and Humanities Grant, Wake Forest University** (Summer 2026). Grant for research-related travel to Poland, Germany, and Japan during Fall 2026 junior leave.
- **Humanities Institute Summer Course Development Grant, Wake Forest University** (Summer 2024). Grant to create course on Medical Humanities, used to develop REL 391 (future 323) Asian Medicine, Health, and Healing Traditions.
- **Faculty Development Fund and Provost Fund for Faculty Travel, Wake Forest University** (July 27-Aug 11, 2024). Funding to participate in the Mitsubishi Corporation Summer School in Early Modern Japanese Paleography at the University of Cambridge, UK.
- **Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies Postdoctoral Fellowship, Harvard University** (Sept 1 2022 - Aug 31 2023). Twelve month fellowship to pursue research and writing.
- **Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Postdoctoral Fellowship for Research in Japan** (Short-term: June 22-Aug 22, 2022): Fellowship to perform research and writing at a Japanese host institution; hosted by Dr. Ellen Van Goethem at Kyushu University.
- **Fulbright IIE Graduate Research Fellowship** (Sept 2016 - Dec 2017): Fellowship to support dissertation research in Japan. Affiliated with Tohoku University.
- **Japan Foundation Japanese Studies Doctoral Fellowship** (2016 - 2017, declined)
- **Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Program in Buddhist Studies Dissertation Fellowship** (2016 - 2017, declined)
- **UC Regents Graduate Fellowship, UCSB** (2011-2015): Fellowship awarded to incoming graduate students nominated by their department; provides two years of research stipend and two years of guaranteed teaching assistantships.

PUBLICATIONS

BOOK:

Crafting a Goddess in Premodern Japan: Divinity and Motherhood in Narratives of Empress Jingū.
Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, Aug 2027.

EDITED VOLUME:

Handbook of Women in Japanese Buddhism. Co-editors Monika Schrimpf and Emily B. Simpson. London: Routledge, Aug 2026.

SPECIAL ISSUE:

Uncanny Bodies in Japanese Religions. Co-editors Caleb Carter and Emily B. Simpson. *Journal of Religion in Japan* 12 (2-3), Dec 2023.

ARTICLES:

A Magnificent Empress, A Brilliant Old Man, and an Ugly Navigator: The Uncanny Bodies of Maritime Deities in Narratives of Empress Jingū. *Journal of Religion in Japan* 12 (2-3), Special issue “Uncanny Bodies in Japanese Religions,” Dec 2023.

Like A Fierce God: Re-envisioning the Enemy in the Legend of Empress Jingū in the Wake of the Mongol Invasions. *Religions* 13 (8), Special issue “Aspects of Medieval Japanese Religion,” July 2022: 695 (16 pages).

Unsilently Sea-Dweller or Beautiful Boy? The Many Faces (and Bodies) of the Deity Azumi no Isora. *Ningen bunka kenkyūjō nenpō* 17, March 2022: 7-11.

Sacred Mother Bodhisattva, Buddha and Cakravartin: Recasting Empress Jingū as a Buddhist Figure in the *Hachiman gudōkun*. *Journal of Religion in Japan* 6(2-3), 2017: 107-127.

BOOK CHAPTERS:

The Depraved Empress: Sexuality and Womanhood in the Demonization of Empress Shōtoku. In the *Handbook of Women in Japanese Buddhism*, edited by Monika Schrimpf and Emily B. Simpson. London: Routledge, Aug 2026.

Women. In *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Japanese Religions*, eds. Erica Baffelli, Fabio Rambelli, and Andrea Castiglioni, 257-266. London: Bloomsbury, March 2021.

An Empress at Sea: Sea Deities and Divine Union in the Legend of Empress Jingū. In *The Sea and the Sacred in Japan: Aspects of Maritime Religiosity*, ed. Fabio Rambelli, 65-78. London: Bloomsbury, 2018.

TRANSLATIONS:

Manami Yasui. **“Women and Buddhism through Material Culture: Pregnancy, Childbirth and Motherhood from Early Modern to Contemporary Japan.”** In the *Handbook of Women in Japanese Buddhism*, edited by Monika Schrimpf and Emily B. Simpson. London: Routledge, Aug 2026.

Deguchi Miki. **“The Transmissions of Music Lineages in Early Modern Japan: A Case Study of the Oka Family Flute Scores.”** In *Gagaku: The Cultural Impact of Japanese Ceremonial Music*, ed. Fabio Rambelli, 167-190. Leiden: De Gruyter Brill, 2025.

Ōuchi Fumi. “**Religious and Political Dynamics in the Bugaku of the Hayashi Family (Yamagata Prefecture).**” In *Gagaku: The Cultural Impact of Japanese Ceremonial Music*, ed. Fabio Rambelli, 219-240. Leiden: De Gruyter Brill, 2025.

Terauchi Naoko. “**Locality and Centralization: Changes to the Performing Arts at Local Shrines from the Meiji Period Onwards.**” In *Gagaku: The Cultural Impact of Japanese Ceremonial Music*, ed. Fabio Rambelli, 241-256. Leiden: De Gruyter Brill, 2025.

Satō Hiroo. “**Changing Images of the World After Death.**” In *Spirits and Animism in Contemporary Japan: The Invisible Empire*, ed. Fabio Rambelli, 17-28. London: Bloomsbury, 2019.

Itō Satoshi. “**Lands and People Drifting Ashore: Distorted Conceptions of Japan’s Place in the World In Medieval and Early Modern Japanese Myths.**” In *The Sea and the Sacred in Japan: Aspects of Maritime Religiosity*, ed. Fabio Rambelli, 131-138. London: Bloomsbury, 2018.

Saitō Hideki. “**Origuchi Shinobu and the Sea as Religious Topos: Marebito and Musubi no kami.**” In *The Sea and the Sacred in Japan: Aspects of Maritime Religiosity*, ed. Fabio Rambelli, 167-180. London: Bloomsbury, 2018.

Jinno Yuki. “**Consumer Consumption for Children: Conceptions of Childhood in the Work of Taishō-Period.**” In *Child’s Play: Multi-sensory Histories of Children and Childhood in Japan*, eds. Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall, 83-101. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017.

Koresawa Hiroaki. “**Children and the Founding of Manchukuo: The Young Girl Ambassadors as Promoters of Friendship.**” In *Child’s Play: Multi-sensory Histories of Children and Childhood in Japan*, eds. Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall, 121-137. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017.

BOOK REVIEWS:

Review of Matthieu Felt, *The Chronicles of Japan. Vol. 1: Age of the Gods and Legendary Sovereigns*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2026. In *Japanese Religions*, expected Spring 2027.

Review of Sujung Kim, *Shinra Myōjin and Buddhist Networks of the East Asian “Mediterranean.”* Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2019. In *Journal of Asian Humanities at Kyushu University* 6, Spring 2021: 85-90.

Review of David Quinter, *From Outcasts to Emperors: Shingon Ritsu and the Mañjuśrī Cult in Medieval Japan*. Brill’s Japanese Studies Library, vol. 50. Leiden: Brill, 2015. In *Journal of Religion In Japan* 5(1), 84-88.

PUBLICATIONS FOR A GENERAL AUDIENCE:

“**Is Shinto an Indigenous Religion?**” In *Indigenous Religious Traditions in Five Minutes*, eds. Molly Bassett and Natalie Avalos. Sheffield, UK: Equinox Publishing, Sept 2022.

“**Can We (and Should We) Still Use the Term ‘Shamanism’?**” In *Indigenous Religious Traditions in Five Minutes*, eds. Molly Bassett and Natalie Avalos. Sheffield, UK: Equinox Publishing, Sept 2022.

Encyclopedia entries on “Amaterasu Omikami,” “Guan Yin,” “Kami,” “Shamans and Ritual Practitioners,” and “Shinto Priestesses,” for *Women in World Religions: Faith and Culture Across History*, ed. Susan de-Gaia. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2018.

PRESENTATIONS

INVITED TALKS:

The Katsurame: Professionalization, Legitimation and Gender in Edo Japan (June 23, 2025). Talk given in person at the University of California at Santa Barbara in Santa Barbara, CA, USA.

Uncanny Divine Bodies in Late Medieval Narratives of Empress Jingū (May 3, 2024). Talk given in person at the Institute for the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, Austria.

The Divine Empress and Her Son: Motherhood, Lineage and Deification in Late Medieval Narratives of Empress Jingū (June 29, 2021). Talk given virtually at the University of Zurich as part of the “Warrior Queens and Resistance Fighter” workshop.

Cooling the Womb of Stone: Empress Jingū and Embodied Pregnancy in Late Medieval Origin Stories (May 24, 2021). Talk given virtually at the University of Chicago as part of the “The Body in the East Asian Imaginaire” series.

From Degenerate Age to Divine Country: Reimagining Japan and its World in Medieval Religious Discourse (March 19, 2021). Talk given virtually at the Università Ca’ Foscari Venezia as part of the “Seminar Series on Asian Religions.”

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS - JURIED:

Venerating Empress Jingū as the Sacred Mother Bodhisattva (Jan 27, 2024). Paper presented at the annual Southeastern Conference of the Association for Asian Studies (SEC/AAS) held at Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC.

Ugly Navigators, Dragon Gods, and Awesome Women: The Uncanny Bodies of Maritime Deities in Narratives of Empress Jingū (March 24, 2022, virtual). Paper presented at the annual Association of Asian Studies (AAS) conference.

Demonizing the Depraved: Portrayals of the Foreign and the Feminine in Late Medieval Hachiman *engi* (Nov 22, 2021, virtual). Paper presented at the annual American Academy of Religion (AAR) conference.

Cooling the Womb of Stone: Embodying Pregnancy in Late Medieval Tales of Empress Jingū (Aug 27, 2021, virtual). Paper presented at the triennial Conference of the European Association of Japanese Studies (EJAS).

Like A Fierce God: Re-envisioning the Enemy in the Legend of Empress Jingū (March 25, 2021, virtual). Paper presented at the annual Association of Asian Studies (AAS) conference.

The Many Faces of Hachiman: A Consideration of Composite Divinization in Medieval Shinto (Oct 11, 2019). Paper presented at the third annual Premodern Japanese Studies (PMJS) Network International Conference. McGill University, Montréal, Canada.

All in the Family: Divinity and Diversity in the Hachiman Cult (Nov 17, 2018). Paper presented at the annual American Academy of Religion (AAR) conference. Colorado Convention Center, Denver, CO.

The Empress Divine: Jingū's Status as a Deity in *Jisha engi* (Aug 31, 2017). Paper presented at the triennial Conference of the European Association of Japanese Studies (EASJ). Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal.

In the Line of Emperors: Empress Jingū in Medieval Explorations of Dynasty (Oct 17, 2015). Paper presented at the annual New York Conference on Asian Studies (NYCAS). Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY.

The Jewel of the Tide: Empress Jingū and Maritime Religiosity in Medieval Japan (Aug 28, 2014). Paper presented at the triennial Conference of the European Association of Japanese Studies (EASJ). University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

The Power of Precedent: Referencing Chinese and Buddhist Traditions in the *Hachiman gudōkun* (Nov 3, 2013). Paper presented at the annual graduate Texas Asia Conference. University of Texas, Austin, TX.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS - INVITED:

Venerating in the Main and at the Margins: The Enshrinement of Empress Jingū in Fukuoka Prefecture (Feb 14, 2025). Presented at the conference Religious Space in Contemporary Buddhism and Shinto, held at the Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen in Tübingen, Germany.

Who is the Sacred Mother? Investigating the Worship of Mazu and Jingū in Kyushu (May 6, 2024). Paper presented at the workshop “Transnational Goddesses and Ritual Transformations in East Asia” at the University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway.

Localizing the Sacred Mother Bodhisattva: Empress Jingū as Seibo Daibosatsu in Northern Kyushu (Sept 22, 2023). Paper presented at Numata Workshop “Thinking Through Minshū Bukkyō: Popular Buddhism and the Study of Premodern Japan,” held at Princeton University, NJ, USA.

Rhetoric and Kagura: Performance in Medieval Narratives of Empress Jingū (Aug 13, 2023). Paper presented at the international symposium “Mediality of Premodern Japanese Narratives: A Diachronic Perspective,” hosted by the University of Zurich, Switzerland.

The Empress' New Sister: The Role of Toyohime in Medieval Legends of Empress Jingū (Aug 6, 2020, virtual). Paper presented at the virtual conference series “Reiterations of the Past: Negotiations

Through Practice,” hosted by the International Master’s Program (IMAP) in Japanese Humanities at Kyushu University, Fukuoka, Japan.

神功皇后の神格化：神になる過程を考え直す [Divinizing Jingū: Reconsidering the Procession of Deification in Premodern Japan] (Feb 16, 2018). Paper presented at the annual USC Meiji University Japanese Research Exchange. University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA.

An Empress at Sea: The Role of Sea Deities in the Legend of Empress Jingū (June 15, 2016). Paper presented at conference on Sea Religion In Japan. UCSB, Santa Barbara, CA.

Mother Before Warrior: The *Hachiman gudōkun* and Empress Jingū’s Place in Early Modern Women’s Cults (Feb 13, 2016). Paper presented at Networks and Negotiations: Graduate Student Conference on Premodern Japan. UCSB, Santa Barbara, CA.

OTHER CONFERENCE ROLES:

Conference Co-Organizer

Handbook of Women in Japanese Buddhism Conference (Jan 12-13, 2023). Conference planning, funding and organization completed with project collaborator Monika Schrimpf. Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany.

Networks and Negotiations: Graduate Student Conference on Premodern Japan (Feb 12-13, 2016). Graduate conference planning, funding and organization completed with fellow graduate student and faculty advisor at home university. UCSB, Santa Barbara, CA.

Section Co-Convener

Religion and Religious Thought, European Association of Japanese Studies (Aug 27-30, 2026 and Aug 17-20, 2023).

Developed Call for Papers, reviewed and accepted/declined panel and paper proposals, organized section schedule, and facilitated conference sessions with co-convener; presented section report at EAJJS member meeting.

Panel Organizer

Barbarians, Dragons and Frightful Women: Demonization, Conversion and the Grotesque in Premodern Japanese Religions. (Nov 21, 2021, virtual). Panel organized for the annual American Academy of Religion conference, held in hybrid format from Nov 20-23, 2021.

Re-envisioning the Land of the Gods: Reinterpretations of Japan’s History and Religion after the Mongol Invasions (Mar 25, 2021, virtual). Panel organized for the annual Association of Asian Studies conference, held virtually from March 21-26, 2021.

Gods in the Making: A Reconsideration of the Process of Deification in Medieval Japan and Beyond (Aug 30, 2017). Panel organized for the triennial Conference of the European Association of Japanese Studies. University of Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal.

Discussant:

Performance and “Materiality”: Towards a Genealogy of the Sacred Space in Shinto Rituals and Performances (Nov 22, 2025). Discussant at the annual American Academy of Religion conference in Boston, MA from Nov 22-25, 2026.

Repackaging Buddhism as Cultural Heritage in East Asia and Beyond (March 16, 2024). Discussant at the annual Association of Asian Studies conference in Seattle, WA from March 14-17, 2024.

Siting Memories of the Dead (May 8, 2015). Discussant at the symposium War and Remembrance: Cultural Imprints of Japan’s Samurai Age. UCSB, Santa Barbara, CA.

TEACHING/OUTREACH PRESENTATIONS:

American Academy of Religion 2025 conference: Roundtable discussion among 5 instructors, organized by the Society for the Study of Japanese Religions. In-person.

- **Meeting this Moment: Advice for Handling Difficult Topics in the Classroom and Navigating Challenging Institutional Environments** (Nov 22, 2025).

Appalachian State University, Religious Studies Club:

- **Shinto and the Japanese Religious Landscape in Manga and Anime** (April 14, 2025).

Association for Asian Studies 2024 conference: Roundtable discussion among 5 instructors, organized by the Society for the Study of Japanese Religions. In-person.

- **Teaching Japanese Religions: Innovative Methods for Engaging Learning** (March 16, 2024).

Kyushu University: Presentations for “Japanese Religious Studies Behind the Scenes.” Virtual.

- **Tips and Tricks for Reading Premodern Japanese Texts** (Sept 29, 2021).
- **Writing Up the Research: Techniques, Tips, and Time Management** (Nov 25, 2021).

UCSB Teaching Symposium: Roundtable Discussion among 4 instructors. Virtual.

- **Multimedia, Multi-approach: (Re)Designing the Digital and Physical Classroom** (Oct 15, 2021).

Dartmouth Japan Society: Presentation for quarterly Professor Dinner. Hanover, NH.

- **Japanese Religion Through Images** (Nov 13, 2019).
- **Power Spots: The Intersection of Spirituality, Religion and Tourism** (Feb 19, 2021).

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, Department for the Study of Religions, Wake Forest University (July 2023-present):

- **Introduction to East Asian Religions** (Fall 2023, Spring 2024, Spring 2025, Spring 2026)
- **FYS: Warriors, Women, and Wanderers in Medieval Japan** (Spring 2026)

- **Introduction to Buddhist Traditions (Fall 2023, Fall 2024, Fall 2025)**
- **Women and Religion in East Asia (Fall 2025)**
- **Religion in Manga, Anime, and Popular Media (Spring 2024, Spring 2025)**
- **Asian Medicine, Health, and Healing Traditions (Fall 2024)**

VISITING ASSISTANT PROFESSOR/LECTURER, Department of Religion, Dartmouth College (Fall 2019-Spring 2022, Summer 2026):

- **Shinto: Foundations, Festivals and Fox Shrines (remote: Spring 2020; hybrid: Spring 2021; in-person: Spring 2022)**
 - Introductory course examining the history, categorization and diversity of Shinto
- **Buddhism in Korea and Japan: From Tribute Missions to Temple Tourism (remote: Spring 2020, in-person Winter 2022)**
 - Introductory course comparing Buddhism's development and legacy in Japan and Korea
- **Shamanism: The Agony and the Ecstasy (hybrid: Fall 2020; in-person: Fall 2021, Summer 2026)**
 - Theory course with global scope, problematizing the concept of "shamanism"
- **Women and Religion in Japan (in-person: Fall 2019, Summer 2026; hybrid: Winter 2021)**
 - Intermediate course exploring gender and religion in Japan, from prehistory to today
- **Religions of Japan (in-person Winter 2020, remote: Summer 2020)**
 - Introductory course exploring religions in Japan with a focus on material culture

LECTURER, International Master's/Doctoral Program (IMAP/IDOC), Kyushu University in Fukuoka, Japan (remote: Summer 2021):

- **Religion in Manga, Anime and Popular Media**
 - Guest graduate seminar for IMAP/IDOC programs, 8 students

LECTURER, Department of East Asian Languages and Cultural Studies, University of California at Santa Barbara (remote: Spring 2021):

- **Introduction to Japanese Religions**
 - Introductory course on Japanese religions (60+ students, with TA)

INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD, University of California at Santa Barbara (Summer 2016, Fall 2018-Spring 2019):

Department of East Asian Languages and Cultural Studies

- **East Asian Traditions: Modern (Summer 2016)**
 - Course on Modern Chinese and Japanese culture, always co-taught by two instructors
- **Women and Womanhood in Japanese History (Spring 2019)**
 - Self-designed course exploring gender issues in Japanese history, ancient to modern times

Writing Program

- **Academic Writing (Fall 2018, Winter 2019)**
 - Intensive course preparing students for academic writing in various fields
- **Writing Associate (Fall 2018-Spring 2019)**

- Assisted in planning two week-long training workshop and pedagogy seminar for new TAs
- Served as mentor to new TAs in the Writing Program throughout academic year

INVITED CLASS LECTURES

Department of Religion and Philosophy, High Point University

- Shinto: Sacred Practices, Sacred Places (April 13, 2026)

Department of Religion, Wake Forest University

- Shinto and the Yasukuni Problem (Oct 7, 2024)

Department of Japanese Studies, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

- Medieval and Early Modern Shinto (Jan 11, 2023)
- Embryology and Pregnancy in Shingon Buddhism and Institutional Histories (July 26, 2022, virtual)

Department of Asian Societies, Cultures and Languages, Dartmouth College:

- School Lunch in Japan: Kyūshoku in Context (Oct 29, 2019)

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Editorial Work (2011-present):

- Assistant editor for the *Journal of Religion in Japan* (Feb 2021-present)
- Copy editor for *Journal of Religion in Japan* (2015-Aug 2022)
- Copy editor for *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Japanese Religions*, 2021
- Editorial work on manuscripts for several acquainted scholars

Dartmouth College (Fall 2019-June 2022):

- Participating Faculty, Japanese Language Table (Jan 2020-June 2020)
- Faculty Associate, Consortium of Studies in Race, Migration, and Sexuality (Aug 2020-June 2022)

ASSOCIATIONS

- American Academy of Religion (AAR)
- Association for Asian Studies (AAS)
- European Association of Japanese Studies (EAJS)
- Society for the Study of Japanese Religions (SSJR)
- Southeast Regional Conference of the Association for Asian Studies (SEC/AAS)