

MEGAN BRYSON
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Department of Religious Studies
University of Tennessee
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Current Position:

Associate Professor and Associate Department Head, Department of Religious Studies, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

EMPLOYMENT

Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 2019-present
Assistant Professor, Department of Religious Studies, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 2013-2019
Lecturer, Department of Religious Studies, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 2010-2013

EDUCATION

Stanford University, Stanford, California, 2002-2010

Ph.D. in Religious Studies, September 23, 2010

Specializations: Chinese Buddhism, Chinese Religions, East Asian Buddhism, Buddhism and Gender

Advisors: Dr. Carl Bielefeldt, Dr. Bernard Faure

University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, 1996-2000

B.A., Religious Studies and Chinese, *summa cum laude*, with departmental honors, March 2000

Thesis topic: Buddhist discourses on gender and ritual pollution in late imperial China.

PUBLICATIONS

Books (Monographs)

In Print

2016. *Goddess on the Frontier: Religion, Ethnicity, and Gender in Southwest China*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Reviews:

Balkwill, Stephanie. H-Buddhism (online).

Bilik, Naran. *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 22.3 (Feb. 2019): 130-132.

Chen, Meiwen. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 85.4 (December 2017): 1181-1183.

Dardess, John. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 48.1 (Summer 2017): 121-122.

Giersch, C. Patterson. *Pacific Affairs* 91.1 (March 2018): 149-151

He, Yuemin. *Religion and the Arts* 21.5 (2017): 665-668.

Lizzerini, Simona. *Reading Religion* (online).

Notar, Beth E. *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in China* 21.1 (2019): 138-141.

Tenzin, Jinba. *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* (E-Journal) 24.

Yao, Ping. *Journal of Chinese Religions* 47.1 (May 2019): 90-92

Yü, Chün-fang. *Studies in Chinese Religions* 3.3 (2017): 301-305.

In Process

Buddhism on the Southern Silk Road

Books (Edited Volumes)

In Process

Megan Bryson and Kevin Buckelew, eds. *Buddhist Masculinities*. Publisher TBD.

Peer-Reviewed Articles

In Print

2013. "Baijie and the Bai: Gender and Ethnic Religion in Dali, Yunnan." *Asian Ethnology* 72.1: 3-31.
- 2014 [2012/13]. "Mahākāla Worship in the Dali Kingdom (937-1253): A Study of the *Dahei tianshen daochang yi*." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 35: 3-69.
2015. "Religious Women and Modern Men: Intersections of Ethnicity and Gender in The Tale of Woman Huang." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 40.3: 623-646.
- 2016 [2015]. "Tsenpo Chung, Yunnan wang, Mahārāja: Royal Titles in Narratives of Nanzhao Kingship between Tibet and Tang China." *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 24: 59-76.
2017. "Gendering Ethnic Religion in 1940s-50s Yunnan: Sexuality in the Gua sa la Festival and the Worship of the Goddess Baijie." *Nannü: Men, Women and Gender in China* 19.1: 97-126.
2018. "Destabilizing Centers: Religious History on the Dali Frontier." *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* 4.1: 2-6. Special Issue on Frontiers.
2019. "The Great Kingdom of Eternal Peace: Buddhist Kingship in Tenth-Century Dali." *Asia Major*, Third Series 32.1 (2019): 87-111.

Submitted

"The Power of Representation: Mimesis and Alterity in Nanzhao-Tang Relations." For a special issue of *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Asian Interactions*.

Book Chapters

In Print

2017. "Between China and Tibet: Mahākāla Worship and Esoteric Buddhism in the Dali Kingdom." In Yael Bentor and Meir Shahar, eds., *Esoteric Buddhism: Chinese and Tibetan Forms*, 402-428. Leiden: Brill.
2018. "Nation Founder and Universal Saviour: Guanyin and Buddhist Networks in the Nanzhao and Dali Kingdoms." In Ann Heirman, Carmen Meinert, and Christoph Anderl, eds., *Buddhist Encounters and Identities across East Asia*, 81-107. Leiden: Brill.

Submitted

- "Images of Humane Kings: Rulers in the Dali-Kingdom *Painting of Buddhist Images*." In Stephanie Balkwill and James Benn, eds., *Buddhist Kingship*. Brill: Leiden.
- "Masculine Mountains: Gendered Affordances at Dali's Stone Treasure Grottoes." In Jeffrey Moser and Jason Protass, eds., *Buddhist Geoaesthetics*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Encyclopedia Entries

2017. "Buddhist Geography and Regionalism." *Oxford Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, edited by Richard K. Payne and Georgios T. Halkias. Online resource.

Non-Refereed Articles

- 2017 [2016]. "Southwestern Chan: Lineage in Texts and Art of the Dali Kingdom (937-1253)." *Pacific World Third Series* 18: 67-96.

Conference Proceedings

In Print

“Dali *Dahei tianshen daochang yi he Riben Daikoku tenjin hō de bijiao*” [A Comparison of the Dali kingdom *Bodhimaṇḍa Ritual for the God Mahākāla* and the Japanese *Rituals of the God Mahākāla*]. Translated by Huang Huang. In Hou Chong, ed., *Jingdian, yishi yu minjian xinyang* [Scriptures, Ritual, and Folk Beliefs], 313-326. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2018.

Book Reviews

In Print

2014. Beata Grant and Wilt L. Idema. *Escape from Blood Pond Hell: The Tales of Mulian and Woman Huang*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011. *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 36: 205-207.

2016. Gareth Fisher. *From Comrades to Bodhisattvas: Moral Dimensions of Lay Buddhist Practice in Contemporary China*. University of Hawai‘i Press: Honolulu, 2014. *Religion*.

2016. James A. Benn. *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History*. University of Hawai‘i Press: Honolulu, 2015. *Studies in Chinese Religions*.

2016. Meir Shahar. *Oedipal God: The Chinese Nezha and His Indian Origins*. University of Hawai‘i Press: Honolulu, 2015. *Journal of Chinese Religions*.

2019. Gonçalo Santos and Stevan Harrell, eds. *Transforming Patriarchy: Chinese Families in the Twenty-First Century*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016. *Nannü: Men, Women and Gender in China* 20.2 (2018): 349-352.

Forthcoming

2020. Liang Yongjia. *Religious and Ethnic Revival in a Chinese Minority: The Bai People of Southwest China*. New York: Routledge, 2018. *Journal of Chinese Religions*.

EXHIBITS

Associate Curator

“Zen Buddhism and the Arts of Japan.” Frank H. McClung Museum, University of Tennessee, Knoxville. September 15-December 31, 2012.

I wrote the text panels, image labels, and exhibit brochure, and consulted on the layout. I also led docent training and a teacher inservice on the exhibit.

PAPERS PRESENTED

Conferences: Refereed

“Demonstrating Wrath: The Aesthetics of Horror in Middle-Period Buddhist Art and Ritual.” American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting (*November-December 2020*).

“Ritual Assemblages: Esoteric Bodies and the Problem of Agency.” American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting (*November-December 2020*).

“Recentring Buddhist Kingship: Royal Representations in Dali-Kingdom Images and Texts.” Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting, Denver (March 2019).

“Humane Kings on the Border: The *Renwang jing* in Dali Buddhism.” International Association for Buddhist Studies Meeting, Toronto (August 2017).

“Lianchihui and Jiezhu: Women’s Religious Societies in Rural Southwest and Southeast China.” International Conference on Chinese Women in World History, Taipei, Taiwan (July 2017).

“The Great Kingdom of Eternal Peace: Buddhist Kingship in Tenth-Century Dali.” Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting, Toronto (March 2017).

“Changing the Conversation: The Shift from Confucian to Buddhist Rhetoric in Nanzhao Records.” Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting, Seattle (April 2016).

“Buddhists, not Barbarians: Reimagining the Southern Border in Qing-dynasty China. American Comparative Literature Association Annual Meeting, Cambridge, MA (March 2016).

- “Networks and Identity in Dali-Kingdom Buddhism.” Conference on Networks and Religious Difference in Asian Buddhist Traditions, Vanderbilt University (April 2015).
- “Made in China: Zen Consumption in the Contemporary U.S.” AAR Annual Meeting, San Diego (November 2014).
- “Transforming through Virtue: Tang-Nanzhao Relations in the 766 *Dehua bei*.” Southeast Early China Roundtable, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (November 2014).
- “Tantric Buddhist Ritual in the Dali Kingdom.” International Interdisciplinary Conference on Middle-Period China, 800-1400, Harvard University (June 2014).
- “Indian Image, Chinese Text: Mahākāla Worship in the Dali Kingdom.” Network and Identity: Exchange Relations between China and the World, Ghent University (December 2013).
- “Barbarian Buddhist Kingship: Esoteric Masculinities in the Dali Kingdom (937-1253).” AAR Annual Meeting, Baltimore (November 2013).
- “Pure Bones: Women and Relics in Medieval Buddhism.” Southeast Early China Roundtable, Western Kentucky University (November 2013).
- “Ethnicity, Politics, and Religion in the Nanzhao Kingdom (649-903).” Southeast Early China Roundtable, Berea College (November 2012).
- “Intersections of Ethnicity and Gender in the *Tale of Woman Huang* in Dali, Yunnan.” Feminist Sinologies Conference, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (October 2012).
- “The Transformations of Baijie Shengfei and Mahakala: Religion and Ethnicity in Dali, Yunnan.” AAR Annual Meeting, Atlanta (October 2010).
- “Exceptional Virtue: Ethnicity and Female Sexuality on the Qing Frontier.” Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting, Philadelphia (March 2010).
- “Gender and Ethnicity on the Chinese Frontier: The Cult of the Goddess Baijie from the 15th Century to the Present.” WECSOR (AAR West) Annual Meeting, Tempe (March 2010).
- “Baijie and the Bai: Village Religion and Ethnicity in Contemporary Dali.” International Conference of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Kunming, China (July 2009).

Conferences and Workshops: Invited

- “*Jiao*.” Conference on Critical Terms for Chinese Religious Studies. Chinese University of Hong Kong (June 2019).
- “The Power of Transmission: Buddhism and Colonialism in the Nanzhao and Dali Kingdoms.” Conference on Contact Zones and Colonialism in China’s South, 221 BCE –1368 CE. Penn State University (May 2019).
- “Gendered Geoaesthetics: Dali-Kingdom Carvings at Stone Treasure Mountain.” Conference on Buddhist Geoaesthetics. Brown University (May 2019).
- “Network Theory and Premodern Cultural Encounters.” Seminar on Pre-modern Cultural Studies. Vanderbilt University (April 2019).
- “Body and Gender in the *Zhufo pusa jingang deng qiqing yigui*.” Workshop and the Body and Gender in Chinese Religions. George Washington University, Washington DC (February 2018).
- “The *Compassionate Blood Bowl Repentance*.” Workshop on Reading Gender in Chinese Religions: Body, Blood, Ritual. George Washington University, Washington DC (February 2017).
- “The Buddhist World of the *Baiguo yinyou*.” Conference on Buddhist Literature, Chengdu, China (October 2016).
- “Dali Tantric Ritual and Tang Buddhist Texts: Taking the *Tongyong qiqing yigui* and *Zhu fo pusa jingang deng qiqing yigui* as Examples.” Third Chinese International Academic Seminar on Chinese Tantra, Jianchuan, China (August 2016).
- “Creating Ethnic Religion: History and Ethnography in Dali, Yunnan.” Understanding Religious Change in China: Connecting History and Anthropology, Harvard University (February 2016).
- “Gendering *Minzu* and *Zongjiao*: The Goddess Baijie in 1930s-1950s Yunnan.” Conference on Gender and Religion in 20th-century China, Rutgers University (October 2015).

- “Dali ‘Dahei tianshen daochang yi’ he Riben ‘Dahei tianshen fa’ de bijiao” (A Comparison of the Dali *Rituals of the Bodhimaṇḍa of the God Mahākāla* and the Japanese *Methods of the God Mahākāla*). Conference “Jingdian, yishi yu minjian xinyang” (Scriptures, Ritual, and Folk Beliefs), Shanghai Normal University (October 2014).
- “Btsan po gcung, Yunnan wang, Mahārāja: Narratives of Nanzhao Buddhist Kingship between Tibet and Tang.” Conference on Ritual + Narrative + Kingship ÷ Tibet + Surrounding Cultural Area, LMU, Munich (July 2014).
- “Between China and Tibet: Mahākāla Worship and Esoteric Buddhism in the Dali Kingdom.” Conference on Chinese and Tibetan Tantric Buddhism, Hebrew University (June 2014).
- “The Lotus on the Border: the *Lotus Sūtra* in the Nanzhao and Dali Kingdoms.” International Lotus Sutra Seminar, Tokyo (May 2014).
- “Scripture on Repaying the Kindness of Blood River.” Workshop on gender in Chinese religion. George Washington University, Washington D.C. (November 2013).
- “Woman Huang and Blood Bowl Rituals in Yunnan.” Workshop on gender and ritual pollution in Buddhism, University of Southern California (February 2012).
- “Ethnicity and Gender in the Cult of the Goddess Baijie.” Stanford Humanities Center, Stanford University (April 2009).

Invited Lectures

- “Avoiding the Bloody Pond: Women’s Bodies in Modern Chinese Religion.” Appalachian State University (September 2019).
- “Text and Image: Buddhist Networks in Southwest China.” Vanderbilt University (October 2018).
- “Avoiding the Bloody Pond: Women’s Bodies in Modern Taiwanese Religion.” Michigan State University (March 2018).
- “Imagined Networks: Esoteric Buddhism in the Dali Kingdom (937-1253).” McMaster University (March 2018).
- “Between China and Tibet: Mahākāla Worship and Esoteric Buddhism in the Dali Kingdom.” University of Toronto (March 2018).
- “The Limits of Chinese Buddhism Protecting the State in the Dali Kingdom (937-1253).” University of Michigan (October 2017).
- “Blurred Lines: Buddhism in the Chinese Borderlands.” University of Kentucky (November 2014).
- “Religion and Ethnicity in Dali, Yunnan.” Shanghai University and UTK Joint Forum on China, University of Tennessee, Knoxville (October 2010).
- “Who Is Baijie Shengfei? Reconsidering External Influences on Dali Buddhism (937-1253).” Ho Center for Buddhist Studies, Stanford University (March 2009).

LANGUAGE SKILLS

Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Bai; reading knowledge of Classical Chinese and French

TEACHING

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Mindfulness

Religion and Nonprofit Leadership

Film and Religion in East Asia

Buddhism in the Americas

East Asian Buddhism in Asia and North America

Zen Buddhism

Chinese Religions

Japanese Religions

Religions of Asia

Method and Theory in Religious Studies

World Religions in History
Comparison of World Religions

Stanford University

Instructor

Buddhism and Gender, Spring 2010

Co-Instructor

Religion and the Family in East Asia, Winter 2004

Teaching Assistant

Religion and Music of India, Fall 2004

Introduction to Zen, Spring 2003 and Spring 2004

PhD Committees

Edward Falls. Topic TBD. Department of Philosophy, University of Tennessee. 2017-present.

Jin (Gracie) Gao. "Public Service Motivation: A Cross-National Examination of East Asian Countries."
Department of Political Science, University of Tennessee. 2014-2015.

ACADEMIC AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Junior Teaching Award, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 2019

Chancellor's Award for Professional Promise in Research and Creative Achievement, University of
Tennessee, Knoxville, 2019

ACLS Fellowship, 2016-17

SARIF grant, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 2013

Alumni Outstanding Teaching Award, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 2013

Award of Excellence, Tennessee Association of Museums, for the exhibit "Zen Buddhism and the Arts of
Japan," 2013

Doctoral Fellow, Ho Center for Buddhist Studies, Stanford University, 2008-2010

Geballe Dissertation Fellow, Stanford Humanities Center, Stanford University, 2008-2009

Graduate Dissertation Fellow, Michelle R. Clayman Institute for Gender Research, Stanford University
2008-2009

Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship (declined), 2008-2009

Departmental Fellowship, Department of Religious Studies, Stanford University, 2002-2007

SERVICE

University

Chair, Global Citizenship International Subcommittee (Fall 2019-present)

Global Citizenship International General Education working group (Spring 2018-Spring 2019)

Junior Faculty Fellows (Fall 2017-Spring 2019)

Chair, Cultures and Civilizations Subcommittee (2015-present)

General Education Committee (2015-present)

Schwarzman Scholar Mock Interviews (Fall 2017)

Campus Fulbright Interviews (Fall 2015, 2017, 2018)

Alumni Outstanding Teacher Award Committee (Spring 2014)

University of Tennessee Confucius Institute Student Ambassador selection committee (2014-2018)

Cultures and Civilizations Sub-Committee (2013-2015)

College

University of Tennessee Humanities Center Steering Committee (Spring 2018-Spring 2019)

Steering Committee, Asian Studies IDP (2017-present)

Dean's Advisory Council (2015-2016; 2018-present)

Organizer, “Centers and Peripheries in East Asia” Faculty Research Seminar (2014-2015)
Teaching Council (2014-2015)

Department

Associate Head (Fall 2019-present)
Search Committee Chair: Religion, Race, and Ethnicity in the Contemporary Americas (joint with Africana Studies) (2019-2020)
Undergraduate Committee, Chair (2018-2019)
Strategic Plan and Bylaws Committee (2017-2018)
Advising Committee (2014-2016, 2017-present)
Curriculum Committee (2013-14)
Religious Studies Association Faculty Advisor (2013-2016, 2017-present)
Library Representative (2013-2014)
SACS General Education Requirement Liaison (2013)
Organizer, Department Seminar (2011-2012)

Professional

Board of Directors, Society for the Study of Chinese Religions (2020-present)
Chinese Religions section editor, *Religion Compass* (2019-present)
Research Committee, From the Ground Up: Buddhism and East Asian Religions (Frogbear) (2019-present)
Co-chair, Chinese Religions Unit, American Academy of Religion (2015-present)
Steering Committee, Seminar on Economics and Capitalism in the Study of Buddhism, American Academy of Religion (2015-2019)
Boren Scholarship Review Panel, Institute for International Education (2015, 2017)
Manuscript referee: *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies*, *International Journal of Asian Studies*, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *Asian Ethnicity*, *History of Religions*, *Studies in Chinese Religions*, *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, *Oxford Encyclopedia of Religion*, Routledge, Brill

Community Outreach

“Count Your Lucky Stars: Fate and Fortune in the Chinese Lunar Calendar.” University of Tennessee Confucius Institute Lecture Series (September 7, 2017).
Co-led teacher inservice on *Embodying Enlightenment* exhibit. McClung Museum, University of Tennessee, Knoxville (September 29, 2015).
Public address to Destination Imagination’s Chinese contingent on behalf of University of Tennessee Confucius Institute (May, 2015).
“Religion and Communism in Modern China.” Walters State Community College (October 7, 2013).
“Grandmothers and Gods: Women Reviving Religion in Contemporary China.” Walters State Community College (October 2, 2012).
“From Zen Art to Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance.” McClung Museum, University of Tennessee, Knoxville (September 23, 2012).
“Funeral Objects, Object Funerals: Materiality in East Asian Buddhist Mortuary Ritual.” Tyson House, University of Tennessee, Knoxville (November 10, 2011).
“Introduction to Religion in China.” Pellissippi State Community College (October 27, 2011).