

Princeton University

HONORS FACULTY MEMBERS
RECEIVING EMERITUS STATUS



May 2019

The biographical sketches were written by staff and colleagues in the departments of those honored.

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JACqUELINE ILYSE STONE



Jacqueline Ilyse Stone, professor of religion, is an internationally acclaimed leader in the study of Japanese Buddhism and has been a consummate teacher at Princeton for 29 years. She began a life of scholarship near the city of her birth (Berkeley, California), and intends to continue it in New Jersey and Japan after she transfers to emerita status on July 1, 2019.

Stone earned a B.A. in Japanese and English from San Francisco State University in 1974, an M.A. from UCLA in 1986, and a Ph.D. in East Asian languages and cultures from UCLA in 1990, after which she joined Princeton's Department of Religion as an assistant professor. Her dissertation explores the hermeneutical and historiographical problems raised by the more problematic texts attributed to one of the most controversial figures in the history of Japanese Buddhism, Nichiren (d. 1282). The study examines essays, personal letters, and sources claiming to transmit the master's spoken words as recorded by his disciples. The work chafes against the concept of Nichiren as sole inspiration for a religious movement, demonstrating how his early followers advanced their own ideas and struggled over how to represent their putative founder. At more than 600 pages, it remains a monumental accomplishment. Still widely consulted by experts in Japan and the West, the study displays the precise, in-depth textual analysis that is the foundation of all historical work in East Asian Buddhism.

After joining Princeton's faculty, Stone broached a new subject—and from a different angle. *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), published in the leading monograph series in the field, Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism, was quickly recognized for its innovation, receiving the 2001 American Academy of Religion Award for Excellence in the Study of Religion in the Historical Studies category. Original enlightenment, the idea that all beings are inherently Buddhas or have the inborn capacity to achieve enlightenment, is central to Japanese Buddhism. Stone's intervention largely upends the standard narrative in the field, which regards original enlightenment as a barrier to spiritual motivation, against which Nichiren and other 13th-century figures allegedly reacted by providing new techniques for salvation. In the first place, she uncovers evidence for belief in original

enlightenment across a previously unacknowledged range of Buddhist schools, showing how Nichiren's thinking had much more in common with the earlier mindset. She also advances the field by examining the changing ecclesiastical contexts of the doctrine, offering a nuanced interpretation of the interplay between ideas and institutions.

Stone's second monograph was greeted with similarly high acclaim. *Right Thoughts at the Last Moment: Buddhism and Deathbed Practices in Early Medieval Japan* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2016) was awarded the 2017 Toshihide Numata Book Award in Buddhism.

The book redresses the recent swing of the scholarly pendulum away from Buddhist philosophy. Stone's focus is on the memorable scenes in Japanese paintings representing the ritualized moment of death: an elderly practitioner sitting in concentration, chanting, holding multicolored strings attached to a resplendent Buddha or Bodhisattva welcoming the deceased into the Pure Land. Stone insists on the importance of exemplary death, uncovering how the practice was pursued across the usual sectarian divides. She problematizes the stereotype of premodern Japanese Buddhism as a religion focused on funerary ritual performed by Buddhist priests at the behest of the family members of the deceased. She also draws on the notion that religious traditions like Buddhism can fruitfully be considered repertoires of resources for (in this case) dealing with death. From this perspective, she argues, Japanese Buddhism of the early medieval period consisted of multiple discourses. In particular, she lays out three different conceptual frameworks: karmic causality, which stresses personal morality throughout one's life; transfer of merit, allowing for rituals sponsored by others to benefit the dying person; and deathbed practice, which emphasizes preparation for and performance of a calm, deliberate, focused, ritualized passage at the final moment of life.

As stellar and substantial as her monographs are, Stone has been equally productive in collaborative projects. She has edited five volumes and has published 42 journal articles and book chapters, written in English or Japanese. A co-authored book on the *Lotus Sūtra* is forthcoming in 2019, and she is already well into a new book on Buddhism and Japanese identity formation in premodern Japan.

Stone is a masterful teacher of undergraduates and graduate students. Her course "The Buddhist World of Thought and Practice" has become a vital class in the department's undergraduate curriculum. Her graduate seminars draw students from the departments of art and archaeology, comparative literature, East Asian studies, and religion, and she has served as primary or secondary advisor for dozens of dissertations. She received Princeton's Graduate Mentoring Award in the Humanities

(jointly with Stephen F. Teiser) in 2014 and the President's Award for Distinguished Teaching in 2018.

Stone is a trusted counselor and engaged leader at Princeton and in the profession at large. She was an excellent departmental representative and director of graduate studies, has been co-director of the Buddhist Studies Workshop, and served on numerous University committees. Her fluency in Japanese and deep cultural knowledge means that she moves effortlessly in the rather different domains of Buddhist universities in Japan, secular Japanese universities, and Western academia. She served variously as chair, president, and steering committee member for the Buddhism Section of the American Academy of Religion, the Kuroda Institute for the Study of Buddhism and Human Values, and the Society for the Study of Japanese Religions. She received fellowships and grants from the Fulbright-Hays program, National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and Social Science Research Council (SSRC), among others. In 2018 she was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

In both her dissertation and her most recent monograph, Stone pays homage to her Ph.D. adviser at UCLA, William R. LaFleur (who taught at Princeton from 1971–1980). She credits him with showing his students how to think critically and in ways that cut across established categories— virtues that shine in all of Stone's work. Eloquent in formal discussions and scintillating in after-seminar wrangling, she has shared her knowledge, judgment, kindness, and wit with colleagues and students at Princeton and worldwide. We look forward to continuing these conversations and to reading her emerging work.