

Approved by the
Regents
May 21, 2015

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION
THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
COLLEGE OF LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND THE ARTS

Micah L. Auerback, assistant professor of Asian languages and cultures, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of Asian languages and cultures, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2007	Princeton University
M.A.	2001	Princeton University
A.B.	1996	Washington University, St. Louis

Professional Record:

2007 – present	Assistant Professor, Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, University of Michigan
2007 – 2010	Assistant Professor, Department of Asian Languages and Cultures and Department of History, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Auerback has shown himself to be a dedicated, skilled, and innovative teacher of the cultures of East Asia. In a department that is committed to training students to understand the interconnections among Asian cultures, his expertise in Japan, Korea, and China has proven to be a great asset to the curriculum. Due to recent retirements in Japanese studies, Professor Auerback designed a range of new courses that fill gaps in departmental course offerings and provide novel approaches to the study of Asia. His courses are meticulously designed and he is devoted to his students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Research – Professor Auerback is a specialist in Buddhism, focusing on the traditions of Japan and Korea, especially in the early modern and modern periods. The high quality of his interdisciplinary research is rare in the field of Asian studies. Professor Auerback works in the disciplines of religious studies, history, literature, and art history, bringing these multiple perspectives to the study of the encounter of Buddhism with modernity, in both its European and its Asian forms. He is a skilled translator of texts in Japanese, Korean, and Classical Chinese. With a first book in press and a second near completion, it is clear that he will be a productive scholar throughout his career, making important contributions to the discipline of Asian Studies, to the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, and to the university.

Recent and Significant Publications:

A Storied Sage: Canon and Creation in the Making of a Japanese Buddha, University of Chicago Press, forthcoming.

“Politics and scholarship in the modern reinvention of Japanese Buddhism,” solicited review essay, *Religious Studies in Japan*, 2, 2014, pp. 23-36.

“A closer look at Zen at War: The battlefield chaplaincy of Shaku Sōen in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905),” in Buddhism and Violence: Militarism and Buddhism in Modern Asia, V. Tikhonov and T. Brekke (eds.), Routledge, 2013.

“Rethinking the historiography of ‘pro-Japanese’ Buddhism: The *Chōsen Bukkyōdan* and the debate over clerical marriage in 1920s Korea,” (in Korean), *Asea yōn’gu*, 51(3), 2008, pp. 15-53.

Service – Professor Auerback has provided important service in both the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures (Graduate Program Committee) and the Center for Japanese Studies (Grants Committee). Because of his high level of expertise in Japanese, he has served on the review committees of five lecturers in the Japanese Language Program. He has also served on two search committees. Outside the university, he served as a reviewer of submissions to journals in both Japanese studies and Korean studies.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A)

“A Storied Sage is an ambitious, creative piece of writing. It weaves summaries of texts and artwork created in Japan from the ninth to the twentieth centuries in an attempt to show how Sakyamuni’s life-narrative has changed over time. I enjoyed reading it and learned a great deal; indeed a great many of the texts discussed and partially translated I had never heard of.”

Reviewer (B)

“Although Auerback wrote his dissertation on Japanese Buddhism in Korea under the Japanese empire, his monograph concerns a completely unrelated topic. It describes the vicissitudes in the literary life of the Buddha in Japan. It is an ambitious project of enormous scope, covering biographical accounts of the Buddha[’]s life in China and Japan, from medieval to modern times (roughly from the sixth to twentieth centuries).”

Reviewer (C)

“Mr. Auerback is clearly a skilled and sensitive reader of texts. I was particularly interested in his work in chapters 2-4, which focus on the early modern period... The texts Mr. Auerback analyzes in these chapters, including a play for the puppet theater by Chikamatsu Monzaemon and a critique of the Buddha by the nativist scholar Hirata Atsutane, are notoriously difficult, but Mr. Auerback’s discussion of them was lucid, sophisticated, and historical[ly] informed.”

Reviewer (D)

“This work introduced me to a wide variety of classical texts that are hardly known to scholars of Japanese Buddhism. Auerback’s exposition of them and his interesting observations about their contexts—inspired in part by the extensive body of scholarship in Japanese and Western languages that he cites—demonstrate his own erudition and wide range of knowledge.”

Reviewer (E)

“I have no doubt his books and articles will appear on my list of most significant works on modern Japanese religion. The fact that one of his articles has been accepted by the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, the major journal in the field of Japanese religion, is a telling sign and his book A Storied Sage will definitely make it to the reading list of many undergraduate courses on Buddhism and Japan. ...he has a strong potential for growth. He would be a welcome addition to any Department of Religion or Asian Studies.”

Reviewer (F)

“...Auerback engages deeply with scholarship in Japanese (as well as in Korean); he is, moreover, profoundly knowledgeable about the primary sources he engages with. The result is a book that draws on an engagement with the sweep of Japanese history to put into perspective the peculiarly modern aspects of the reinvention of the Buddha’s life (and with it, the nature of Buddhism as a modern religion).”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Auerback’s interdisciplinary research is of high quality and he contributes significantly to the university’s long-standing strengths in the field of Asian studies. He is an excellent teacher as well as a valued colleague. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Micah L. Auerback be promoted to the rank of associate professor of Asian languages and cultures, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



Andrew D. Martin
Dean, and Professor of Political Science,
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

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