

## Koichi Tribute:

I was Koichi's student at McMaster University in the late 1970s and 1980s. It was a long time ago. Travel to mainland China was inaccessible until the 80s, and I was one of the first two students from McMaster to participate in an exchange with Fudan University in Shanghai. Prior to that, I had spent a couple of years in Japan, largely benefitting from the generosity of Koichi's and his family in Tokyo. Through Koichi, I made connections at Komazawa University that sustained me throughout my career. Koichi's family connections enabled me to score a prime residence in Mejiro-dai, one of Tokyo's affluent areas, located within the Yamanote line that encircled the central part of the city. Former Japanese prime minister, Tanaka Kakuei, who was famously forced to resign due to the Lockheed bribery scandal, occupied a compound in a block across the main road from where I lived. I doubt very much I could have managed my transition to Japan back in those days without the assistance of Koichi and his family.

The Department of Religious Studies at McMaster featured one of the few programs devoted to Asian Religions in those days. Of the six subareas in the Department, three were devoted to Asia. Two of those six were devoted to India and East Asia had a rather "minor" presence in the Asian religions' configuration. Koichi was a junior faculty member among Asian religions professors. Koichi was a wonderful mentor, alternating strict adherence to scholarly standards with an open and friendly demeanor. As I think back, Koichi was indeed both mentor and friend.

While many are aware of Koichi's contributions to Buddhist Studies, few probably know that Koichi started out as something of an accidental Buddhist scholar. His 1977 PhD from Columbia University was entitled: *"Weltanpassung" and rationalization in Max Weber's study of religion and society in China: an examination of the Weberian interpretation in the light of an analysis of T'an Ssu-t'ung's "Jen-hsüeh,"* a long way from Buddhism. Hired into McMaster's Department of Religious Studies to help develop the study of Chinese and East Asian Buddhism, Koichi was forced into labor in a new field, at least for him. In light of ongoing discussions regarding the impact of Weber's analysis on Chinese Studies and perceptions of China (see, for example, Wang Hui's *The Politics of Imagining Asia*), one can only surmise how prescient Koichi's earlier scholarship was. Yet, Chinese Studies loss has proven to be Buddhist Studies gain, as Koichi has

forged his own unique insights into the world of medieval Chinese Buddhism that has impacted profoundly many who have entered and continue to enter the field.

Congratulations, Koichi, on your 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. I only wish we could all be there to celebrate with you!

Albert Welter

Professor and Head, Department of East Asian Studies

University of Arizona

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