

Unlike many participants at this conference, my in-person interactions with Koichi have been minimal. He was always gracious and kind, and I think I will be delighted to learn from others' birthday messages how these "getting to know you" introductory interactions blossom into rewarding personal and scholarly relationships. I've noticed in recent years how much more common it has become in Buddhist Studies book acknowledgements to point to the interdependence of scholarship -- on networks, on place, on individuals, on communities, on supposedly non-academic activities like cooking or hiking or raising families. I don't think you need to be a Huayan practitioner to recognize the deep truth of this reality -- even if I had never met Koichi in the flesh or read any of his many works, I would still be a product of his profound career, because Buddhist Studies as a field is what it is because of how he shaped it. Columbia, McMaster and Yale all loom large in my personal map of the field.

Koichi weighed in several times on my dissertation that centered around *A Forest of Pearls* -- sometimes to share recent scholarship published in Japanese, sometimes to share some of his translations, and sometimes to warn me from taking too dogmatic a view of what I thought it was -- he invited me more than once to see the forest for the pearls. I tried to soak in as much of his wisdom as I could from this handful of e-mails, and I collected and pored over everything he wrote about Daoshi and Daoxuan. He might not know this but his stern spirit sat on my shoulder for the whole writing process -- and I hope that made the writing stronger! Thank you, Koichi.

Councils and collections are the topic of my paper, and I want to look more closely, as Koichi always has, on how texts and ideas are brought together. But councils were also the bringing together of the sangha, of the Buddha's disciples, of arhats, bodhisattvas, and gods as well. I've always admired Koichi's ability to bring people together for common and uncommon purposes, and I'm very happy to be invited to the birthday party celebration!

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