

Dear Koichi,

Congratulations! Your work has always been a special inspiration to me, and I would like to tell you why.

I was invited to study Chinese Buddhism by my teacher, who was an expert on the history of the Tang dynasty, a man well aware of how Buddhism had shaped the culture of those times. I was happy to do that, but when I came to North America to further my studies I found that my contemporaries all knew more about Buddhism than I did, usually from personal religious practice. Yet I felt that despite my ignorance there were many things that I could still study - how monasteries had their own histories, how their leaders engaged with the world of officialdom and patrons, how ordinary educated persons who did not lead a full time religious life could engage with monks and nuns, how the Buddhist sources for the period had to be carefully interrogated to elicit their relationships to the backgrounds from which they emerged. Only when I read your research did I feel that these things were not simply important to me alone, and this gave me great encouragement. Recently I have been reading accounts of the great scholar 無著道忠 (1653-1744), most of whose major works were completed after he had retired from an active post. Long may your productive retirement continue!

With all good wishes,

Tim Barrett