Buddhism and the Work of Making a Life

Zen vows, temple institutions and contested religious authority in craft, fiction, cinema and business

Practice and the achievement story

In a 2022 talk at Upaya Zen Center, the novelist and Sōtō Zen priest Ruth Ozeki tried reading the Buddha's life as a screenplay. A protected young man encounters suffering, acquires a purpose, endures trials and reaches his goal. She recognized the satisfactions of this story, along with its cruelty when applied to ordinary lives: if effort supposedly delivers success, failure becomes evidence against the person who fails. Her professional skill in constructing a protagonist had brought her to a religious difficulty with life stories that attach personal worth to achievement.[1]

A collection called Vocations has reason to pause here. Its very form can encourage us to read a life backward from the work that made it recognizable. The apprentice was already becoming the artist; the detour was secretly preparation; the decisive encounter finally disclosed a true self. Buddhism can easily become another episode in that plot, the resource that made someone more creative, resilient or successful. Such accounts may describe real benefits. They leave the destination of the story largely undisturbed. The person acquires a practice and becomes a better version of the person the story already expected.

Ozeki's question is more troublesome. Dōgen's account of practice-realization challenges the separation between present labor and a future enlightenment that would justify it. In his Fukanzazengi, as translated by the Sōtō school, he discourages designs on becoming a buddha while giving exact instructions for sitting, breathing and arranging the body. Realization is enacted in the act of sitting, rather than stored at the end of a successful career in meditation. The absence of an acquisitive goal does not excuse the practitioner from doing anything.[2] A life organized around this proposition would require another account of why its daily work matters.

Yet the temptation to turn this into Buddhism's answer to ambition must also be resisted. In the Brahmaṇa Sutta, Ānanda faces the objection that using desire to abandon desire produces an endless path. His answer involves a journey: the wish to reach a monastery can cease once one arrives. Intention and exertion have a legitimate place in a practice with an end.[3] The journey analogy and Dōgen's account address practice in different textual and lineage settings. Neither lets us reduce Buddhist practice to a universal prohibition on

wanting or accomplishing something. What matters is the character of an aspiration, how it organizes action, and what happens to it afterward.

The people considered here make that problem concrete. Their Buddhist commitments and inheritances do not consistently diminish ambition, dissolve identity or remove them from public life. They change the terms under which a person undertakes work and claims its value. The difficulty is to discover which commitments become stronger, which claims become harder to sustain, and who gets to decide. A vow may deepen an obligation that professional success cannot discharge. A temple may make an artistic profession possible. A religious authority may demand a representation an artist refuses to supply. These possibilities require us to follow Buddhism into ceremonies, organizations and disagreements, beyond the private moment when someone feels transformed.

Ordination and chosen discipline

On 3 July 2024, the ceramic artist SHOWKO underwent ordination at Taizō-in, in the Rinzai Myōshin-ji tradition. Her account describes bowing toward her mother, affirming the precepts as they were read, receiving robes and receiving the Dharma name Shōe. Her mother and daughter attended. She wanted to become someone who could help others live more easily. She also emphasized that she would continue her family life and work. The training arrangement mattered because it allowed her to undertake religious formation without leaving her household for years.[4]

These details alter the familiar picture of an inward discovery followed by an outward decision. The ceremony makes an undertaking in the presence of others. Its forms precede SHOWKO, and the commitments they carry are not exhausted by how she feels on the day. At the same time, the arrangement of training makes a particular kind of participation possible. The mother, the artist and the person accepting precepts are not successive identities, one replacing the last. They now have to be lived together. Whether that combination proves fruitful or difficult will be worked out after the ceremony, not guaranteed by its solemnity.

Ozeki, announcing her own impending Sōtō ordination in June 2010, named gratitude to her teacher Norman Fischer, the support of the sangha, and the wish to carry forward the Zen traditions of her Japanese grandparents. She wanted to become a link through which knowledge and forms could continue. After offering these reasons, she acknowledged that she could not fully explain why she was doing it.[5] Her uncertainty is consequential. A commitment need not wait until a person possesses a complete account of herself. It can give subsequent life a question to answer.

The Taiwanese businessman Robert Tsao’ s retrospective account supplies a different sequence. He described taking refuge after beginning to learn meditation through Sheng Yen, but said the ceremony initially had little inward depth for him. Reading the teacher’ s works subsequently changed his understanding. Drawing on the Platform Sutra, he

interpreted refuge in terms of awakening, rectitude and purity for which the practitioner assumes responsibility.[6] Here, formal entry and understood commitment do not arrive together. A date that looks decisive in a biography may mark the beginning of an interpretation rather than its completion.

The relation between form and freedom becomes clearer when SHOWKO describes the repetition of retreat rules. In a 2025 dialogue with Maria Kawahara, she recalled a requirement to fold bedding within ten seconds. Conduct that initially felt restrictive became familiar and comfortable through repetition.[7] That is a small but exact account of formation. The person who returns to the rule is changing. Freedom, in this telling, includes a capacity acquired through submitting to a form, rather than being measured only by the number of choices left open.

But acquiring such a capacity cannot become an obligation imposed on every life. Asked in 2023 about having once wanted to become a monk, Apichatpong Weerasethakul said that monastic discipline now represented the opposite of what he wanted. He also confirmed that he continued to meditate.[8] His refusal belongs inside the inquiry, alongside the ordinations. It prevents chosen discipline from becoming a universal test of seriousness. A practice can remain consequential while a comprehensive institutional form is declined.

There is no useful ranking here in which the ordained person has gone farther and the lay practitioner has stopped short. These are different undertakings. Their comparison instead reveals a problem for vocational language: the self that supposedly chooses its calling also changes through what it chooses, and sometimes must refuse a once-desired future. To understand those choices, however, we need to know what forms of life are actually available. That means looking at the organizations that provide a place, a schedule and the means to continue.

Temples and workplaces

For Takashi Serizawa, the consequential encounter with a Buddhist institution involved a building project. Trained in urban and regional planning, he was invited into the redevelopment of Tōchōji, a Sōtō temple in Tokyo. He proposed an underground hall for contemporary cultural activity. The temple established an affiliated organization to plan and carry out the program, and exhibitions began in April 1989. That organization became P3 art and environment.[9] The sequence matters: a temple’s decision about its premises created a responsibility that helped turn a planner toward a career producing art.

Serizawa later recalled the pressure of competing proposals from property and financial businesses during Japan’s bubble economy. The planning team had to decide what it wanted the temple to do. Research into temples’ historical roles in learning and community life informed its response, as did New York’s Judson Memorial Church and its association with experimental dance. A place open to contemporary people and culture emerged from these discussions. Serizawa remembered thinking that operating it might

take only part of his week; the work became far more consuming.[10]

A story of Buddhist influence that searches only for beliefs inside Serizawa would miss this mechanism. The temple did not have to convert its planner for its decisions to change his work. Its religious identity left the content of the cultural program open to invention. The commission required practical invention: determining a use, designing the conditions for it, and finding someone to take responsibility. The example also changes how we understand calling. An opportunity can become a vocation because the person who proposed it discovers the scale of the work involved, not because an already complete vocation finally finds a patron.

The arrangement had limits. P3's chronology links its independence in December 1995 to the diversification of its activities and restrictions on the hall caused by Tōchōji's expanding religious work. Its final exhibition in that original venue took place in 1999.[11] The temple records the hall's conversion in 2000 into the Rakan-dō, now a columbarium and a place that can also host lectures.[12] Art was one use of an institution with obligations that continued to develop. The departure belonged to a changing distribution of space and responsibilities between two active institutions.

Who receives the benefit of an open space, and who can decide when its use changes? These questions are usually concealed when religious influence is described as inspiration. The hall makes them unavoidable. Openness requires somebody to allocate resources; it does not abolish other claims on those resources. From an art organization's perspective, the change may appear as a constraint. From the temple's, caring for the dead belongs to the institution's continuing work. Neither perspective alone describes the whole event.

The direction of access reverses when Buddhism enters Tsao's workplace. An April 2000 report in Dharma Drum Monthly describes Sheng Yen visiting UMC after Tsao had attended a retreat. Tsao shared his experience with nearly three hundred managers, joking that respected competitors could become favorable conditions for development. Sheng Yen addressed the pressures of high-technology work, speaking about wisdom in responding to difficulty and compassion toward others' mistakes. Tsao praised the immediate applicability of the teaching to business life.[13]

At Tōchōji, religious authority had helped establish an organization for cultural work. At UMC, corporate authority provided a religious teacher with an audience. In both directions, an institution shaped the meeting before any participant could decide what to make of it. An invitation from a chairman differs from a retreat one has independently chosen. The report describes access; the managers' own responses and any changes to working conditions remain outside its record. Without that distinction, the encounter's significance would be determined entirely by those who arranged it.

Meditation in modern professional life

The possibility of using a practice raises a harder question than the accusation that it has

become useful. What is being selected, and what purposes become plausible through that selection? In May 2026, SHOWKO appeared in a publisher-organized craft workshop at ZEROGYM in Tokyo. The event report describes participants regulating their breathing and painting gold lines onto small plates. Its surrounding language connected sensitivity, personal grounding and intuition with creative business decisions. Participants were encouraged to relinquish the demand to draw correctly, within a program marketed partly through what such release could make possible for busy professionals.[14]

The juxtaposition is striking: suspend the pressure to produce the right result, then explain that suspension through the prospect of better results elsewhere. It would be easy to pronounce this a contradiction and stop. The report tells us how a publisher made the event legible to professionals. SHOWKO's work has entered a second public setting, with its own reasons for valuing what she offers. The question has shifted from whether a practice is religious to which account of a worthwhile life makes it attractive.

David L. McMahan's Rethinking Meditation helps specify that shift. Its introduction describes how modern assumptions select from a much larger repertoire of Buddhist practices. Some practices appear immediately credible; others become difficult even to imagine. Expectations then shape how an experience is understood and incorporated into everyday conduct. Ideals such as authenticity and autonomy are therefore part of contemporary meditation's formation of persons, not simply truths uncovered after culture has been removed. McMahan nevertheless allows practices to unsettle inherited habits and enlarge possibilities for action. Cultural formation does not mean that transformation is illusory.[15]

SHOWKO's two settings invite attentive bodily activity toward different ends. One asks for fidelity to received forms and promises; the other offers an occasion to cultivate capacities useful to participants' lives. The same person can take part in both without resolving their relation once and for all. The potential difficulty lies in allowing the most easily marketed benefit to become the public explanation for the whole undertaking. What a practice can supply to an existing ambition may be easier to describe than what it asks that ambition to relinquish.

Tsao's earlier management language offers another safeguard against an overly convenient transformation story. In a March 1999 interview, before the Buddhist entry he later dated to 2000, he already advocated institutional continuity rather than reliance on a heroic leader. He described the group as a partnership and discussed arrangements for transferring authority after retirement.[16] His wish to limit personal control already had an organizational history when he began studying Buddhism. A practice enters a life already equipped with commitments, arguments and professional habits.

Nor does Tsao's subsequent preference for scientific explanations place him outside religion by definition. In 2023 he described Sheng Yen as encouraging him to approach Buddhism scientifically and presented his own rejection of reincarnation in those terms.[17] McMahan's study of global secularisms shows why the familiar route from Asian religion

to Western rational therapy is inadequate. Asian reformers themselves made claims for Buddhism's scientific standing, partly in response to colonial power. The classification of a practice as religious, scientific or secular can open institutional doors and close others. The categories have different histories and practical effects in different societies; they are not neutral containers waiting for a practice to be correctly sorted.[18]

For Tsao, this history directs attention to the authority claimed when he selects a scientifically credible Buddhism. His interpretation is one intervention within a tradition, not a view from nowhere that can decide which other adherents remain burdened by culture. The same scrutiny applies to the claim that ritual must disappear as Buddhism becomes modern. In Teresa Zimmerman-Liu's research on Taiwan's humanistic Buddhist organizations, environmental reform changes ritual: Dharma Drum Mountain's reduced-waste funerary practices retain chanting, charitable acts in the deceased's name and expectations about merit. Reform can organize devotional commitments through new materials and procedures rather than eliminate them.[19]

We are therefore left with neither a story of pure tradition corrupted by work nor one of timeless wisdom efficiently applied to it. Professional purposes can help people recognize something in a practice, yet fail to exhaust what follows from undertaking it. The demanding question is whether the person remains able to encounter an obligation or criticism that the original purpose did not anticipate.

Cinema and religious authority

Apichatpong makes the question of criticism unavoidable. In a 2021 interview, he described parents who were physicians and a household that was not strictly observant but still visited temples to make merit. Asked whether he continued to consider himself Buddhist, he answered, "Not now," while acknowledging the influence of his upbringing.[20] His answer leaves inheritance, practice and identification moving at different speeds. The filmmaker who declines the label still works with materials shaped by that upbringing.

His 2016 interview with Lily and Generoso Fierro located the difficulty in the public use of karma. He objected to claims that someone's position demonstrated merit accumulated earlier and therefore justified hierarchy. In the same conversation, he recalled the censor meeting over Syndromes and a Century: representatives, including one from a Buddhist group, objected to scenes such as a monk playing guitar and urged exemplary depictions instead. His complaint concerned the demand that cinema serve an approved image of social roles.[21]

This is a different relation to obligation from the promises considered earlier. A vow one undertakes and a representation an authority demands can both be described as responsibilities, but their source and force are different. SHOWKO's account asks what she is prepared to promise. The censor asks what the artist may allow others to see. The distinction prevents us from celebrating all forms of being answerable as though

answerability itself were sufficient. The question is also whether the institution can be challenged, and whether the person affected can decline its account of the good.

There is a temptation to rescue the comparison by assigning meditation to the artist's freedom and institutional Buddhism to constraint. The work itself makes that division unstable. In a 2020 Thai Film Archive discussion, Apichatpong contrasted cinema's holding onto constructed memory with the present-oriented attention he associated with Buddhism. He also described wishing to loosen attachment to his artistic signature. Yet an attempt to edit Memoria differently encountered a practical obstacle: he had shot it in familiar ways, so the available material resisted the intended change.[22] An altered understanding of oneself does not retrospectively produce different footage.

Ozeki had described an adjacent difficulty in 2013. Zazen asks her to notice mental constructions and release them; writing a novel requires her to sustain an invented world for a long time. She regarded the practices as complementary without making their demands identical. In the same interview, she attributed the radical revision of A Tale for the Time Being to the 2011 earthquake, tsunami and Fukushima disaster, which changed the question the manuscript had to address.[23] Here, a life of practice remains exposed to events that no practice has authored.

The comparison moves the inquiry away from artistic style. A long take does not by itself demonstrate meditation, any more than a spare ceramic vessel demonstrates Zen. The more exact question is what an artist must hold onto to make the work at all, and when holding on ceases to be the same thing as possessing it. Memory, a fictional person or a filmed gesture may demand sustained attention without becoming a monument to the maker's identity. Conversely, the wish to escape a recognizable identity can itself become a new professional demand. Neither artist can solve the problem merely by declaring attachment undesirable.

Arnika Fuhrmann's Ghostly Desires brings another kind of persistence into view. In its introduction, she reads Apichatpong's Luminous People through a memorial journey: ashes are released into the Mekong, while a song recounts a dream encounter with the dead father. Fuhrmann interprets this as a continuing relation rather than a completed detachment. She also connects the scene's loss to the possible intimacy of two young men. Her account of vernacular Buddhism concerns how religious temporalities and affects enter contemporary sexual life, including possibilities that exceed doctrinal prescriptions. Queer agency cannot consequently be understood only as a secular freedom won by leaving Buddhism behind.[24]

This reading changes the question raised by the filmmaker's public refusal. A religious world can supply means of imagining an intimacy even when the artist contests its official representatives. To ask only whether a film conveys Buddhist teaching would miss the work done by a ceremony, a dead person or a desire that persists at an inconvenient time. Fuhrmann's interpretation also complicates the opening attraction of release. What appears as a failure to let go may sustain a relation the work finds worth inhabiting. That is

a critical possibility, not a general recommendation to cling to everything one has lost.

Tsao approaches religious authority from another position. In his 2023 intervention on Taiwanese Buddhism and pressure from the Chinese Communist Party, he invoked the Platform Sutra against an excessive pursuit of blessings and personal security. He argued that cultivation should foster courage in resisting coercion.[25] The former recipient of instruction was now publicly telling Buddhist organizations what their teaching should emphasize. He used Buddhist language to dispute organizational priorities, moving from gratitude toward a teacher to a public claim about what fellow practitioners owed their society.

Apichatpong's objection to religiously justified hierarchy and Tsao's call for courage emerge from distinct political struggles. What counts as a faithful response remains contestable within and around the tradition. Meditation remains compatible with very different relations to public conflict and religious identification. The consequences depend on who interprets a teaching, under what pressure, and with what power to make others live by that interpretation.

Merit and those who come after

P3's later work with Tōchōji returns us to the question of what a life can claim as its own. In 2015, Serizawa discussed an exhibition organized around ekō, the dedication of merit. He described the circulation of the benefit of one's good acts toward others and approached the exhibition as a way to give that idea artistic form. Ingo Günther's Seeing Beyond the Buddha, as Serizawa described it, gathered daylight through optical fibers into an image that appeared and disappeared with the light. He treated the work as an artist's interpretation of the concept.[26]

Tōchōji's own publication for the completion of its Bunyukaku building explained a related proposal. It described memorial services as involving the living participants' activity and the dedication of its merit to the dead, then extended the idea toward future people and relations. In this account, earlier lives form the conditions of the present, whose actions in turn contribute to a world its inhabitants will not possess. The temple named this a dedication toward the future.[27] Its contemporary interpretation retained a funerary and ritual setting rather than merely borrowing a consoling metaphor of connection.

The return changes the significance of the original hall. Tōchōji first entered this essay as an institution that made Serizawa's work possible and later restricted one of its venues. Its continuing relation with P3 suggests that the boundary between cultural work and religious obligation was itself a subject of work. Opening a temple to the living did not settle what it owed the dead. A new artwork did not settle how an institution should carry inherited responsibilities forward. Those questions survived the organizational separation and acquired another public form.

Dedication also sharpens a distinction the opening left unresolved. The merit invoked here

is not the civic meritocracy Ozeki criticized, and neither term is a synonym for professional credit. Yet placing them together allows a question that a successful life story often avoids: must the value of an action return to its doer as proof of who that person has become? The temple's account gives an explicitly Buddhist reason to direct benefit beyond that claimant. An artist's reputation may endure, but reputation is only one possible account of what endures.

Ozeki's 2022 talk gives this question a daily scale. She invokes the bodhisattva vow to free all beings from suffering, an undertaking she calls impossible and nonetheless renewed each day. She comes to understand writing and sitting as practices of expression whose value need not wait for a perfected self.[28] SHOWKO's wish to be able to go and pray when someone dies gives the same question a particular occasion.[29] It asks for availability when an event arrives, not a final certificate of personal transformation.

The unresolved work is therefore more exact than finding a calling or learning to be less ambitious. These lives ask how to sustain commitments without making every result evidence of one's own accomplishment, and how to distinguish obligations worth accepting from authorities worth resisting. Buddhist practices, inherited forms and contested accounts of benefit give these questions consequences in daily life. A vocational biography ends when the writer has made enough sense of a life to tell it. The promises examined here continue beyond that point, leaving other people, including people who cannot answer back, with claims on what the work may become.

Sources and scope

Evidence checked through 12 October 2026. This essay develops a selective comparison of creative and public lives, not a representative survey of Buddhist livelihoods. SHOWKO, Takashi Serizawa, Robert Tsao and Apichatpong Weerasethakul were selected from the Vocations profile archive; Ruth Ozeki is an independently researched interlocutor. Ordination, refuge, monastic residence, lay practice and artistic engagement with a temple are treated as distinct relationships. No Buddhist affiliation is inferred for Serizawa from his institutional collaborations.

Interviews and institutional accounts establish what their speakers said and how projects were presented. They do not independently measure psychological benefits, workplace outcomes or political causes. Japanese and Chinese passages are paraphrased in English by the essay's author unless quotation is explicitly marked. The film discussion draws on interviews and attributed scholarship; no film was viewed for this essay. No claim is made to have read Ozeki's novels, SHOWKO's books or Fuhrmann's complete book as part of this research. The McMahan chapter was consulted in an author-hosted uncorrected proof and is paraphrased without quotation.

Notes

1. Ruth Ozeki, talk on Dōgen at Upaya, 25 June 2022, transcript by Antje Boijens, 29 June 2022, pp. 1–3, 5–9. The opening uses Ozeki's narrative analysis, not her retelling as independently verified Buddhist biography. Proper-name and technical-term errors in the transcript have not been reproduced.↩

2. Dōgen, Fukan Zazengi, official Sōtō Zen English text, especially the instructions concerning aspiration, posture and practice-realization.↩

3. Brahmaṇa Sutta, SN 51.15, translated by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu. The account follows this translation's distinction between desire used in practice and that particular desire's ending; it does not equate all aspiration with craving.↩

4. SHOWKO, 「2024年最良の決断は得度したことだった」, 31 December 2024. Her ordination and training account does not establish completion of a professional priestly qualification or permanent residential monastic life. Dharma name: 尚恵, read しょうえ.↩

5. Ruth Ozeki, "ordination", 18 June 2010. This is the announcement before the ceremony, not a retrospective report of it.↩

6. Robert Tsao, 「不深不淺的修行心得，不濃不淡的生命質感」, Dharma Drum Mountain Honorary Board, posted 25 July 2019, updated 18 January 2021. Signed first-person account, including his interpretation of refuge; accessed through indexed substantive text.↩

7. Maria Kawahara and SHOWKO, dialogue on freedom and restriction, Diamond Online, 24 May 2025. This is a publisher's book-promotion dialogue. Kawahara's Catholic background and convent experience are her own, not SHOWKO's.↩

8. Inney Prakash, "Freedom in a Different Way: An Interview with Apichatpong Weerasethakul", Screen Slate, 4 May 2023, exchange on monastic life and meditation. No specific meditation lineage is established.↩

9. P3 art and environment, organizational history. Dates for the temple-affiliated program, independence and the last exhibition at the original hall come from the organization's chronology. For the temple's Sōtō affiliation, see note 11.↩

10. Ginza Machizukuri Kaigi, report of Takashi Serizawa's lecture on cities and art, lecture 2017, report published 3 November 2020, section on the Tōchōji redevelopment. The economic setting and planning discussions are Serizawa's later recollection.↩

11. P3 art and environment, organizational history. Dates for the temple-affiliated program, independence and the last exhibition at the original hall come from the organization's chronology. For the temple's Sōtō affiliation, see note 11.↩

12. Tōchōji, temple history and buildings, chronology and Rakan-dō entry. This is the Sōtō temple in Tokyo, not the similarly named temple in Fukuoka.↩

13. Yan Kang-ning, 「工研院、聯電沐浴禪風」, Dharma Drum Monthly 124, 15 April 2000, p. 1. Institutional event report, accessed through indexed substantive text. The report does not document voluntary uptake or subsequent workplace effects.↩

14. Cross Media Group, report on SHOWKO's craft workshop at ZEROGYM, 8 June 2026, reporting the 31 May event. The claims about creativity, quiet and business value are the publisher's framing, not independently established benefits; the event is not identified here as formal Buddhist instruction.↩

15. David L. McMahan, Rethinking Meditation: Buddhist Meditative Practices in Ancient and Modern Worlds (Oxford University Press, 2023), chapter 1, author-hosted text, especially pp. 10–18 and 21–24. PDF marked uncorrected proof. Only the introductory chapter was used, not the whole book.↩

16. Wang Zheng-qin, 「曹興誠：管理要像夥伴　不要掌控」, CommonWealth 214, 1 March 1999, exchanges on institutionalization, retirement and managing the group.↩

17. Robert Tsao, 「台灣佛教徒怎麼可能被中共統戰？」, FTV public-submissions platform, 14 February 2023, reprinted from his Facebook. Cited as his signed intervention. His classification of Taiwan's Buddhist organizations is not adopted as a scholarly account, and his political claims do not establish institutional endorsement.↩

18. David L. McMahan, "Buddhism, Meditation, and Global Secularisms", Journal of Global Buddhism 18 (2017), pp. 112–128; published PDF, whose heading is "Buddhism and Global Secularisms." The discussion uses the argument about historically distinct secularisms, not a country-specific finding about Tsao or Apichatpong.↩

19. Teresa Zimmerman-Liu, "The Development and Dissemination of Pro-Environmental Dharma among Taiwan's Humanistic Buddhists", Religions 14.2 (2023), article 273, especially pp. 10–12. Published PDF consulted. The study is organizational and ethnographic; it is not a study of Tsao or UMC.↩

20. Rémy Jarry, "Apichatpong Weerasethakul's Past, Present, and Future", Ocula, 10 November 2021, exchanges on religious background and identification. The refusal of the label is his dated self-description.↩

21. Lily and Generoso Fierro, interview with Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Ink 19, 31 October 2016; page also carries a 2026 update date. Exchanges on karma and on censorship. The censorship account is his recollection; the interviewers' generalizations about Buddhism are not adopted.↩

22. Sanchai Chotirosseranee, "Uncle Boonmee: 10 Years Later", Thai Film Archive, conversation 28 May 2020, published 16 July 2020, English translation by Kong Rithdee, exchanges on meditation, signature, editing and time.↩

23. Matt Borondy, interview with Ruth Ozeki, Identity Theory, 10 September 2013, exchanges on zazen and fiction and on rewriting after the 2011 disaster.↩

24. Arnika Fuhrmann, Ghostly Desires: Queer Sexuality and Vernacular Buddhism in Contemporary Thai Cinema (Duke University Press, 2016), introduction, especially pp. 1–9. Publisher; accessible preview. Research access covered introduction pp. 1–15 only. The chapter on Tropical Malady was not consulted. The account of Luminous

People is expressly Fuhrmann’s interpretation, not the essayist’s viewing or a universal definition of Buddhist funerals.↩

25. Robert Tsao, 「台灣佛教徒怎麼可能被中共統戰？」, FTV public-submissions platform, 14 February 2023, reprinted from his Facebook. Cited as his signed intervention. His classification of Taiwan’s Buddhist organizations is not adopted as a scholarly account, and his political claims do not establish institutional endorsement.↩

26. Yūta Hagiwara, interview with Takashi Serizawa, CINRA, 7 September 2015, exchanges on the exhibition 「回向―つながる縁起」 and Seeing Beyond the Buddha. The artwork is described through the interview; its later installation has not been independently verified. Serizawa’s broad East–West contrast is not adopted.↩

27. Tōchōji, Banki, Bunyukaku completion special no. 3, 7 December 2015, pp. 6–7, 「未来への回向―東長寺の考える、これからの寺院」. The account is the temple’s contemporary interpretation of merit, relation and futurity.↩

28. Ruth Ozeki, talk on Dōgen at Upaya, 25 June 2022, transcript by Antje Boijens, 29 June 2022, pp. 1–3, 5–9. The opening uses Ozeki’s narrative analysis, not her retelling as independently verified Buddhist biography. Proper-name and technical-term errors in the transcript have not been reproduced.↩

29. SHOWKO, 「2024年最良の決断は得度したことだった」, 31 December 2024. Her ordination and training account does not establish completion of a professional priestly qualification or permanent residential monastic life. Dharma name: 尚恵, read しょうえ.↩