

*Thursday's Lotus: The Life and Work of Fuengsin Trafford.* By Paul Trafford. Private publication via ptworld.net, 2016. 362 pages. Paperback: ISBN 978-1-5239-3518-5.

MICHAEL PYE

This book is a biography of a Thai woman named Fuengsin (1936–1995) who made her way to England and became a teacher of Buddhist meditation. She also started a family with her English husband Tony Trafford, and it is their son Paul who decided to write about the life of his mother, not long after her death in 1995. Although researched in immense detail, it is not an academic work and does not claim to be, yet the author is a highly qualified mathematician and computer consultant. This explains why the writing is highly personal, and indeed not only biographical but also autobiographical, with the author referring to himself in the text many times as Paul. However, the main focus is indeed Fuengsin herself, who made a steady contribution to the development of Buddhism in England. The step-by-step account of her life, from her childhood in war-torn Thailand to the various stages of her life in England from 1963 onwards, is set out with immense care and affection and includes over one hundred photographs and illustrations. It is provided with a complex if somewhat faintly printed photographic accompaniment of just over one hundred items. A commercial publisher might have been tempted to reduce the number of photographs, but they bring the slight figure of Fuengsin alive in numerous ways, both as a person embedded in social and family life, and as a teacher of Buddhism.

As a teenager in Thailand, Fuengsin became strongly motivated to learn Buddhist meditation, which she did under the guidance of Phra Luang Pichit Chaloton. She was also accepted as a student at Chulalongkorn University, where she enrolled in the Faculty of Arts and Education. This brought her into contact with foreign literature and with foreign teachers. It was this combination that determined her later life and contribution. When she had the opportunity to travel to England in her late twenties, she took up the study of the teaching of English as a foreign language in London. It was not long before she became romantically attached to Tony Trafford, whom she then married in full knowledge of his Catholic background. She nevertheless also developed contacts with various Buddhist groups, starting with the Thai foundation Wat Buddhapadipa at Richmond in London and the Hampshire Buddhist Society, to which she was introduced through a contact known to Phra Luang Pichit. Fuengsin was soon invited to speak to these experimental English Buddhists and seekers, and to give guidance

on meditation. She evidently had a gentle and winning approach and was able to combine the promise of authenticity of experience with the ability to communicate well in English. This activity therefore became a regular feature of her life, not only in the context of various other Buddhist societies, for example in Birmingham and Wolverhampton, but also in that of the interfaith organizations that were springing up in Britain at the time.

This book is of interest as the fully documented biography of a fascinating and talented woman who assisted, in her own time and her own ways, in the globalization of Buddhism. It will also be a resource for those who are interested in the story of the western reception of Buddhism. Through it we read a part of that story from the inside, though less as a reception and more from the perspective of giving. This comes through because the writer seems to have empathized very well with the way in which his mother, as a Thai Buddhist, experienced and responded to the Englishness of the new surroundings, which she made her own, and upon which she made a delicate yet distinct impact.

*Yasukuni Shrine: History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar.* By Akiko Takenaka. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015. 296 pages. Hardcover: ISBN 978-0-8248-4678-7.

TAKASHI YOSHIDA

*Yasukuni Shrine: History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar* examines three components of “Yasukuni”: Yasukuni the belief, Yasukuni the site, and Yasukuni the issue. The book consists of six main chapters, an introduction, and an epilogue.

Chapter 1, “Mobilizing Death: Developing the Myth of Yasukuni,” traces the development of Yasukuni belief from the late Tokugawa period to the early Meiji period. In 1859 Maki Izumi (1813–1864), a disciple of Aizawa Seishisai (an anti-bakufu loyalist in the Mito domain and the author of *Shinron* [New Thesis]), advocated in his *Keii gusetsu* (An Opinion on Important Matters and Trends of the Time) the dedication of shrines to loyalists like Kusunoki Masashige, who fought for Emperor Godaigo in the early fourteenth century, in order to inspire Tokugawa-period imperial loyalists (p. 31). In 1862 the Chōshū leaders succeeded in gaining Emperor Kōmei's endorsement of pardoning anti-bakufu loyalists who lost their lives for imperial causes. The year 1862 saw