Stranger in the Shogun's City: A Japanese Woman and her World. Amy Stanley. New York: Scribner, 2020. xxvi + 324 pp. $28. Hardcover ISBN-13: 9781501188527.

Japanese historian Mary Elizabeth Berry once told me (and my fellow seminar students) that she admired people who created historical drama because of their ability to commit: historians have the luxury of admitting ignorance and leaving out irrelevant details, but not filmmakers, because the camera has to see something. Amy Stanley's book borders on that level of commitment to the visceral experience of history, supplementing the family archival material at its heart with an array of gazetteers, maps, art, private and public writings, to give the reader a rich portrait not only of a life, but lifestyles. And the sources on which Stanley is centering are unusually detailed, unflinchingly personal, and surprisingly coherent, vividly documenting a complicated woman and her relationships. The key question is not whether this book is good — there is already a paperback edition (ISBN: 978-1501188534) and professionally voiced audiobook, with blurbs from an array of notables in Asian and popular history writing — but who is it good for?

First, this is not a book for scholars of nineteenth-century Japan, or even Japan more broadly, though it will probably get cited as a source for a lot of details Stanley offers. Stanley makes the choice to simplify language and terminology away from untranslated and specialist terms, even to the point of sometimes using translated place names for reasonably well-known neighborhoods like Ningyō-cho ("Doll Town"). And while gaps in the record are acknowledged, this is not a historiographically sophisticated presentation. There is no strong thesis, arguably a common feature of biographical sketches: whose life is a clear answer to a single question? There are some points made, though, and themes that run through the work. It has been a long time since I read anything that put the Tempo Famine and Reforms into such stark terms, and the discussion of how officials perceived social unrest and disorder took me back to the great wave of peasant uprising scholarship. Stanley spends a lot of time talking about her subject Tsuneno's status as a country immigrant into the city of Edo, including the places and professions common to other rural migrants, especially from her native Echigo Province. Stanley argues at the conclusion that Tsuneno was an essential worker in the complex system of city life, that part of her legacy is Edo's reputation as a great city, which is a little bit of a stretch given that Tsuneno is described as having no specific skills beyond basic housekeeping and sewing, sporadic employment, and few community connections. Insofar as we are all contributors to the general milieu and economy in which we find ourselves, I suppose that is true, but Tsuneno is a weak example compared to the porters, shopkeepers, actors, officials, craft people, food preparers, and peddlers among whom she lives: Tsuneno was rarely employed as anything other than a maid of all work, and while she seems to have left more often than been dismissed, does not seem to have been missed by coworkers or householders.

Interestingly, one argument that Stanley does not make is about women's agency in nineteenth-century Japan: there is a good case to be made that Tsuneno, though atypical in the number of both husbands and rejected proposals, physical mobility, and childlessness, was only availing herself of opportunities that existed in Japanese society, rather than challenging norms or breaking

new ground. She was divorced repeatedly, but procedure was followed; she turned down suitors, to the frustration of her family, as was her right; she traveled, but always with a chaperone, and when she broke the law by passing undocumented around checkpoints, she did so along well-travelled conventional paths. She worked in stereotypical women's positions, mostly in the form of personal service to religious institutions or samurai elites, something roughly suitable to someone of her rural elite background. It would be a fascinating classroom exercise to puzzle out the ways in which Tsuneno was normal, rather than exceptional.

This all leads to an obvious question: is *Stranger* a good teaching text? I hope so: I have already selected it as a reading in my fall course, "Japan Since 1700." It is replacing some old standby readings. I have long used Teruko Craig's translations of Katsu Kokichi's and Shiba Goro's autobiographical writings, but they are very masculine. I tried using Anne Walthall's book on Matsuo Taseko, but her experience was atypical, and the material not as fully contextualized. Yamakawa Kikue's family ethnography is good if teaching about samurai, but it straddles the primary source-secondary source boundary in ways that can complicate its usefulness for students. Undergraduates will certainly find Stanley's lively writing accessible, her subject intriguing and willful, probably relatable, and the slum-to-castle range of urban life fascinating.

It may seem out of character for a historian to fault a book for having too much historical context, but there are times when Stanley uses tenuous connections to spend pages on interesting social and cultural tidbits, or exciting but gratuitous historical moments. Sometimes the context even goes beyond Japan, including the Opium Wars, French Revolution, corsets and curry leaves. There is a lot of great material about food, funerals, housing, business, money, rules, architecture, fashion, and other components of life in nineteenth-century Japan, but some of it feels more like a digression than a natural development. Some of it seems to be there because Stanley knew that if it was not, someone would say, "what about this?" The most egregious example is the last chapter: Tsuneno herself died before the arrival of Commodore Perry and his "Black Ships" but Stanley gives as full and detailed an accounting of that adventure as she did of the parentage and career of the Tokyo magistrate that Tsuneno's husband worked for, and of the theater culture that she probably saw glimpses of but never personally engaged other than working briefly as a servant in a house rented from a famous actor. No matter what your interest is in Japanese society in the late Edo period, Stanley will probably touch on it.

There are moments where Stanley moves into more novelistic than historical commentary, speculating about Tsuneno's emotional states and thought processes, or about the lives or attitudes of people for whom we have no evidence, such as her last husband after she passed away. These are, at least, clearly indicated as meandering and plausible rather than sourced material, but we all know that students and non-academic readers can take this either as hard evidence of something that it is not, or as a sign that there is less substantial proof for other claims. The occasional declaimed truth slips out, lines that have more flair than probative value. The placement of sources at the end by page number, rather than with citations, is an increasingly common way of handling both the need for and the distaste for documentation, whatever scholars may think about the effect it has on transparency and credibility.

Stranger in the Shogun's City should be a very good teaching text at the undergraduate level, possibly even at the high school level (as long as nobody freaks out about mentions of prostitution and cross-dressing, underage marriage, and one implied rape). As a book for general readers, it is a solid, even fun read. While it does not constitute a monographic contribution to the historical literature in the field, for anyone who is interested in comparative social and cultural history, early modernity, or women's history, it would be a good starting place.

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