



Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

Bookreview: Stranger in the Shogun's City by Amy Stanley

Frankfurt am Main, 03.09.2024 [ENA]

Amy Stanley wrote an exciting and instructive life story of a Japanese woman in the Edo period. It is an enlightening story of a courageous woman who goes her own way in a time of social upheaval in Japan. We learn a lot about the social structure of Japanese society in the Edo period.

During this time Japan is an empire cut off from the outside world. Foreigners are not allowed to enter. In 1825, in accordance with the Edict to repel foreigners, every Western ship was burned and the crew executed.

Tsuneno comes from the province of Echigo. Her father was the priest of the True Pure Land Buddhist sect and maintained a temple in Echigo. The family was wealthy and educated. They could live a good life from the donations of the parishioners.

But Tsuneno wanted more. Everything was too cramped for her here. She longed for freedom. She wanted to be independent and therefore she dreamed of going to Edo (today: Tokyo).

The dream of the city, where one is anonymous, where nobody knows the family and the individual can develop himself resp. herself and become a new person.

In contrast to the country, where the narrowness of the family prevails and there was no escape for disappointed, abused or exploited wives. Tsuneno knew early on how easily a woman could be ruined by a bad choice she made in marriage.

The city seemed like a beacon, a vision of a better, freer life. Tsuneno had no idea of the hardship that was prevalent in the city at that time for many, accompanied by hunger, too little clothing, no apartment that offered sufficient privacy and only access to sanitary facilities that were shared by many.

She dared and took the arduous journey to get from the province to the big city. At that time, this was almost impossible for a woman who is alone and on her own. How could she find her feet in the city, without work, without income and without relationships.

And so it came to pass that she made concessions in her time of need and accepted the rape on the journey by a friend she needed to leave the village. He took advantage of the situation and Tsuneno could not defend herself because she was dependent on him. Rape was always associated with physical violence, in this case the weapons were words. The threats of what would happen to her without his protection.

It is excitingly described how Tsuneno gets into the city of Edo. She had no papers. She traveled alone. She

Redaktioneller Programmdienst: European News Agency

Annette-Kolb-Str. 16
D-85055 Ingolstadt
Telefon: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.660
Telefax: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.661
Email: contact@european-news-agency.com
Internet: european-news-agency.com

Haftungsausschluss:

Der Herausgeber übernimmt keine Haftung für die Richtigkeit oder Vollständigkeit der veröffentlichten Meldung, sondern stellt lediglich den Speicherplatz für die Bereitstellung und den Zugriff auf Inhalte Dritter zur Verfügung. Für den Inhalt der Meldung ist der allein jeweilige Autor verantwortlich.



..... International Press Service

was a woman without an escort. She made it because she took the "dog door," an illegal way through the barriers.

Despite all the difficulties, she did not regret her step to leave Echigo and go to the imperial city of Edo. She wanted to escape the confinement of the family. She accepted to violate the strict laws of Confucius' respect for her parents (filial piety). The strict rule of Confucius says that she and her whole body were given completely by her parents. You should not dare to damage the parents and this gift.

Tsuneo experienced the power of the elder brother, who inherited his father's position as head priest in the Rinsenji temple, to determine her living conditions.

The relationship with her mother was difficult. She tried to explain her views and wanted to gain her understanding, but she received only rejection. The mother's only concern was to bring her back to Echigo and marry her well.

Living together in marriage is a high risk. Tsuneno experiences three marriages, three divorces. She cannot leave her husband if she wants to. The husband has the right to refuse the divorce. To be allowed to go on a trip requires the husband's permission.

The character of Tsuneno is demanding. She is willing to make sacrifices in order to lead a self-determined life. She makes the choice. She balances between freedom, life fulfillment, the realization of dreams and the real possibilities that remain. She writes letters to justify her goals, to achieve understanding for her actions or even just to ask to be helped when she is at a loss. She is accused of narrow-mindedness and also of violating the filial piety. She puts the good reputation of the family at risk. Finally, the eldest brother gives her the opportunity to take care of herself if she does not mention the name of the family. Here the dissolution of social structures becomes apparent. These are the first breaks.

The only thing that remained for Tsuneno was to accept the position of a maid at a Hatamoto to earn a living. This was only partially successful. The pay was low and the constant uncertainty about what would happen in the future was very great. A maid lived in the total dependence of the master.

Even marriage was seldom a safe environment, since here too the dependence on the husband led to uncertainty. If the husband did not want to continue the marriage, he simply dissolved it. The wife then returned to the family, first of all to secure her existence and later from there to seek new ways for the future.

For Tsuneno, three marriages had failed and she was already over 35 years old and had not given birth to a child. What to do in this hopeless situation?

Clothes have a great significance in the story. The value of the clothes is determined by the quality of the fabrics. The highest quality is the silk. Many dresses are made of cotton. Artful handicrafts such as embroidery, ornaments, changing the weaves increase their value.

Redaktioneller Programmdienst: European News Agency

Annette-Kolb-Str. 16
D-85055 Ingolstadt
Telefon: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.660
Telefax: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.661
Email: contact@european-news-agency.com
Internet: european-news-agency.com

Haftungsausschluss:

Der Herausgeber übernimmt keine Haftung für die Richtigkeit oder Vollständigkeit der veröffentlichten Meldung, sondern stellt lediglich den Speicherplatz für die Bereitstellung und den Zugriff auf Inhalte Dritter zur Verfügung. Für den Inhalt der Meldung ist der allein jeweilige Autor verantwortlich.



..... International Press Service.....

Tsuneno had some dresses made of Nankin silk and a kimono with silk sashes.

Tsuneno brought her precious dresses to the pawn shop to finance the trip to Edo and to be not completely penniless in Edo.

She receives only a few coins after deduction of agency fees. After that, it is a constant problem for Tsuneno to have the right clothes. At some times she cannot leave the house without freezing. Over a period of time she has to share a coat with her fourth spouse, as they both do not have enough to wear. Everyday scenes are portrayed. We learn what work Tsuneno has to do in a samurai household. The daily work consisted of sewing, mending, weaving, spinning, washing clothes, running errands and shopping.... Filling water jugs, lighting fires in all rooms, preparing the bathroom, ... Sweeping rooms and cleaning sleeping mats.

In return, Tsuneno receives two gold pieces annually. The wage was so low that she could not buy enough clothes. She froze in the evening when she went home because she had no warm clothes.

The daily worries and everyday situations are taken from Tsuneno's letters. We experience her story, we feel her fears and insecurities and we can go back in time. Many things remain a mystery and require interpretation. Often impressions from other sources are consulted in order to get an idea of the life situation at that time.

Tsuneno was so poor that she had no winter clothes and no warm shoes. An old woman is described who was so poor that she had no clothes, was practically naked and could not step outside the front door.

The social structure of Edo is characterized by the Tokugawa Shogunate government. At the top of the hierarchy were the Shogunate families. Below them came their helpers, the bannermen, who were directly subordinate to the Shogunate. Another upper class were the samurai. They occupied military or civil service positions during the Edo period. They were wealthy to very rich. At the lower level were the assistants and servants of the shogunates, the bannermen (Hatamoto) and the samurai. On the same level were the merchants and craftsmen.

The life story of Tsuneno is enriched by descriptions of other contemporaries who passed on how they perceived these times.

Amy Stanley combines the storylines of Tsuneno's private history with the chronicle of Japan's history in the Edo period. The Tokugawa Shogunate began to disband in 1853 when Matthew Calbraith Perry, a U.S. commander of the U.S. war fleet that landed in Japan to force Japan to trade with the Western world. The 1854 Kanagawa Convention sealed the opening of Japan. In 1867, the Tokugawa shogunate rule ended. Japan was transformed into a modern empire under the Meiji government.

Tsuneno died in 1853 at age 49.

**Redaktioneller Programmdienst:
European News Agency**

Annette-Kolb-Str. 16
D-85055 Ingolstadt
Telefon: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.660
Telefax: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.661
Email: contact@european-news-agency.com
Internet: european-news-agency.com

Haftungsausschluss:

Der Herausgeber übernimmt keine Haftung für die Richtigkeit oder Vollständigkeit der veröffentlichten Meldung, sondern stellt lediglich den Speicherplatz für die Bereitstellung und den Zugriff auf Inhalte Dritter zur Verfügung. Für den Inhalt der Meldung ist der allein jeweilige Autor verantwortlich.



..... International Press Service.....

Bericht online lesen:

https://bsportive.en-a.at/kunst_kultur_und_musik/bookreview_stranger_in_the_shoguns_city_by_amy_stanley-89809/

Redaktion und Verantwortlichkeit:

V.i.S.d.P. und gem. § 6 MDStV: Kurt Lehberger

**Redaktioneller Programmdienst:
European News Agency**

Annette-Kolb-Str. 16
D-85055 Ingolstadt
Telefon: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.660
Telefax: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.661
Email: contact@european-news-agency.com
Internet: european-news-agency.com

Haftungsausschluss:

Der Herausgeber übernimmt keine Haftung für die Richtigkeit oder Vollständigkeit der veröffentlichten Meldung, sondern stellt lediglich den Speicherplatz für die Bereitstellung und den Zugriff auf Inhalte Dritter zur Verfügung. Für den Inhalt der Meldung ist der allein jeweilige Autor verantwortlich.