



Selling Women: Prostitution, Markets, and the Household in Early Modern Japan (Asia: Local Studies / Global Themes)

By Amy Stanley

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This book traces the social history of early modern Japan's sex trade, from its beginnings in seventeenth-century cities to its apotheosis in the nineteenth-century countryside. Drawing on legal codes, diaries, town registers, petitions, and criminal records, it describes how the work of "selling women" transformed communities across the archipelago. By focusing on the social implications of prostitutes' economic behavior, this study offers a new understanding of how and why women who work in the sex trade are marginalized. It also demonstrates how the patriarchal order of the early modern state was undermined by the emergence of the market economy, which changed the places of women in their households and the realm at large.

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Review

“An important book. . . . Illuminates governance and economic change in early modern Japan. . . . Highly recommended.”

(S. A. Hastings, Purdue University *Choice* 2013-01-23)

“Vivid and engaging. . . . A compelling and meticulously researched piece on the evolving place of prostitutes in Early Modern Japanese culture.”

(Sam Bieler, Urban Institute *Criminal Law & Crim Justice Bks / Criminal Justice Abstracts* 2013-01-28)

“Fascinating and often tragic. . . . Stanley’s writing style is both exact and fresh. . . . This book satisfies more than the academic.”

(Kris Kosaka, Hokkaido International School *Japan Times* 2013-03-03)

"An exceptionally sophisticated and extensive study . . . A careful and nuanced retelling . . . lively, insightful, and unique."

(David Eason *Monumenta Nipponica* 2014-12-01)

From the Inside Flap

“At last, a study that goes far beyond the urban-centered discourse with which we are already familiar to place the trafficking of women in a solid historical and comparative context. Through a carefully reasoned and balanced analysis of diverse sources, Stanley shows how prostitution practices varied. This book will set the standard for studies of prostitution in early modern Japan for decades to come.” -Anne Walthall, University of California, Irvine

“*Selling Women* is a remarkable achievement. With her gaze fixed firmly on the young women whose labor sustained prostitution as an industry, Amy Stanley traces shifts in the moral economy of the sex trade over the course of the Tokugawa era, and unveils the ironic consequences of economic growth and social change. This meticulously researched, wonderfully written book is a major contribution to the literature on gender and society in Japan.” -David L. Howell, Harvard University

About the Author

Amy Stanley is Assistant Professor of History at Northwestern University.

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