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Ladies-in-Waiting in the Heian Period

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Introduction

This essay provides a broad overview of the lives and roles of ladies-in-waiting (*nyōbō*) in the Heian period from the late tenth to mid-eleventh century. Heian women's literature offers us valuable information about the ladies-in-waiting of this period. This is because many of the women who wrote tales, diaries, informal essays, and collections of poetry were themselves ladies-in-waiting. Indeed, a knowledge of *nyōbō* is indispensable to deepening our understanding of Heian women's literature.

Scholars have, of course, had a long-standing interest in this topic. There is an immense body of research on ladies-in-waiting in Heian women's literature (Yoshikai 1991), encompassing discussion of them as authors (Saigō 1960, Masuda 1951) and as characters appearing in texts (Akiyama 1957, Shimizu 1967). Moreover, studies from a historical perspective have been done on ladies-in-waiting and lower-ranking female attendants at the court and at palaces of other members of the imperial family (Tsunoda 1973a, Gomi 1984).

Nevertheless, our grasp of the overall circumstances in which ladies-in-waiting lived and worked remains weak; as a result, our picture of these women remains far from clear. This is due to a weak grasp of the overall situation. Questions such as the following need to be answered. Ladies-in-waiting served a variety of powerful houses (reigning and retired or cloistered emperors, empresses, princes, princesses, and nobles); what characterized these different types of ladies-in-waiting and what was the nature of the connections between them? Furthermore, what sort of relations did these women have with the heads of the houses they served and with their own families? What kind of overall social network did these connections and relations form? In this essay I would

like to consider these questions by examining the lives and roles of ladies-in-waiting as depicted in Heian women's literature and in historical sources.¹

1. Upper Ladies-in-Waiting

Many women served at the Inner Palace (*dairi*) of the Heian court from the late tenth to mid-eleventh century. (The Inner Palace is also known as the Rear Palace and by the name of its central structure, the Seiryōden, the living quarters of the emperor.) These women may be categorized according to rank as follows:

(1) empresses (*chūgū*, *kōgō*), grand empresses (*kōtaigō*), and senior grand empresses (*taikōtaigō*);²

(2) ladies of the bedchamber (*miyasudokoro*): junior consorts (*nyōgo*) and concubines (*kō*);

(3) ladies-in-waiting;

(4) female officials (*nyōkan* — low-ranking female attendants besides the ladies-in-waiting); and

(5) woman servants (*jūō*): maids (*shimotsukae*) and serving girls (*me no warawa*).

Groups (1) and (2) were imperial consorts; the imperial consorts, the emperor, and the crown prince were served by ladies-in-waiting and female officials of groups (3) and (4). These women were in turn assisted in their duties by the female servants of group (5). In the following section I would like to discuss the ladies-in-waiting who attended the emperor, to whom I will refer as “upper ladies-in-waiting.”

1.1 Process of formation and organization

The upper ladies-in-waiting (*ue no nyōbō*) had as their predecessors the female officials (*nyōkan*) of the *ritsuryō* state established on the Chinese bureaucratic model in the eighth century (Yoshikawa 1990). Female officials included those who served at the twelve offices of the Rear Palace (*kōkyū jūnishi*) and other servants known as palace ladies (*myōbu*). With the placement of male officials in attendance at the Inner Palace in the late eighth century, the exclusive character of female service in the Inner Palace became less marked. By the beginning of the tenth century, the primacy of male officials in making announcements to the emperor (*sōsen*) and in administering the imperial household had been established, and thus began the dissolution of the *kōkyū*

jūnishi. The occupational system of female palace attendants changed dramatically when female attendants serving the emperor in the Inner Palace eventually came to share their duties with the gentlemen-in-waiting (*nanbō*): chamberlains (*kurōdo*) and courtiers (*tenjōbito*).

The term *nyōbō* first appears during the early tenth century and by the middle of the century appears frequently.³ The title *nyokurōdo* (lady chamberlain), however, may be found in the *Dairishiki*, which was written in the early ninth century. Therefore, we may infer that the office of lady chamberlain and the system of female officials other than those of the *kākyū jūnishi* serving the Inner Palace must have come into being not long after the same office and service system was created for male officials in the first year of the Kōnin era (810). It is probably safe to say that upper ladies-in-waiting existed in fact from the early ninth century. Eventually the service system was adjusted such that the corps of upper ladies-in-waiting formed a parallel group to the male officials. This revised system eventually replaced the *kākyū jūnishi* during the mid-tenth century. Thus, the position of upper ladies-in-waiting of the late tenth and mid-eleventh centuries came into being as a result of this restructuring of the system of female attendants, but an additional step was needed in order to define their position within the hierarchy.

There are no historical materials that provide a general view of the upper ladies-in-waiting until an entry dated Kyūan 6.1.19 (1150) in the *Taiki bekki* of the mid-twelfth century. According to this document, the number of ladies-in-waiting at that time totaled thirty. At the top were wet nurses (*menoto*) and assistant handmaids (*naishi no suke*), six in all; they were designated as senior-grade ladies-in-waiting (*jōōnyōbō*), permitted to wear the forbidden colors, and served the emperor's meals. Six handmaids (*naishi no jō*) and twelve palace ladies were designated as middle-grade ladies-in-waiting (*chūōnyōbō*), and six lady chamberlains were known as junior-grade ladies-in-waiting (*gerōnyōbō*); together they looked after the emperor's daily needs. This was the basic organization of upper ladies-in-waiting during the late Heian period, and the same general framework was maintained in the *Kinpihō* of the early Kamakura period.

Nevertheless, a similar organization had already existed from the late tenth to early eleventh century. Many historical materials indicate the Wet Nurse/Assistant Handmaid — Handmaid — Palace Lady/Lady Chamberlain organization, and these titles appear in the names of ladies-in-waiting. As for numbers, in Chōhō 1 (999), twenty-six ladies were provided with stipends (*Gonki*, Chōhō 1.7.21) and the figure was more than twenty-three at the enthronement ceremony for Emperor Go-Reizei in Eishō 1 (1046); thus the size of

the ladies-in-waiting corps did not change much over time (EM II:434⁴). The term *jōrōnyōbō* (senior-grade lady-in-waiting) appears in *Saikyūki* (Book 8) and we may conclude that this rank of seniority, one and the same with imperial permission to wear forbidden colors, existed for upper ladies-in-waiting in the mid-tenth century.

The organization of these upper ladies-in-waiting assumed its final form around the time of the reign of Emperor En'yū (969-984). The principal handmaid (*naishi no kami*), the highest-ranking of the ladies-in-waiting at the Inner Palace, became known as a consort (*kisaki*) to emperors or crown princes from the time of Fujiwara Enshi during the reign of En'yū, and lost her status as a lady-in-waiting (Tsunoda 1973a). Thereupon the assistant handmaid became the top lady-in-waiting. Between the reigns of Emperors En'yū and Kazan the position of wet nurse to the emperor rose to sudden prominence, and was merged with the post of assistant handmaid (Tsunoda 1973a). The position of ladies of the bedchamber also changed during this period; while the post of junior consort (*nyōgo*) came to be occupied by the daughters of powerful aristocrats, the post of concubine (*kō*) disappeared almost entirely (Yoshida 1986). In short, the structure of the Inner Palace was overhauled during the late tenth century, and the women were clearly divided into consorts (junior consorts, principal handmaids) and ladies-in-waiting (wet nurses, assistant handmaids, and those of lower rank). This appears to have been part of a general rigidification of the structure of aristocratic society (Yoshikawa 1989) and reflects a social division between the class that produced consorts and the class that produced ladies-in-waiting. Hence the duties of the ladies-in-waiting were clarified, and their organization was adjusted.

In this manner, the service system of upper ladies-in-waiting, which had taken shape slowly from the ninth to mid-tenth century, crystallized rapidly by the late tenth century and was maintained up to the medieval period.

1.2 Official duties and lifestyle

We can ascertain more or less the duties of upper ladies-in-waiting during the tenth and eleventh centuries through records of daily events at the palace (*Saikyūki*, Book 10; *Jichūgun'yō*, Books 1-4). According to these records, ladies-in-waiting were responsible for cleaning the palace, preparing washing water, serving meals, and keeping lamps lit; moreover, they prepared the emperor's bath, arranged his hair, and dressed him. That is to say, ladies-in-waiting directly attended to the emperor's needs. Beyond this, the senior-grade ladies-in-waiting's service to the emperor was of an intimate and personal nature;

they remained constantly by his side. In the case of a child emperor, they slept by him, attended to his slightest needs, and educated him. When an emperor died, it was these women who grieved for him the most. The responsibilities of the male chamberlains (*kurōdo*) were somewhat different, consisting mainly of remaining on duty day and night at the Inner Palace. Even though chamberlains and the Chamberlains' Office (*Kurōdodokoro*) were responsible for announcements to the emperor and for the financial administration of the Inner Palace, the ladies-in-waiting retained some exclusive duties, and the roles of male and female attendants were clearly demarcated.

Upper ladies-in-waiting were posted at the Table Room (*Daibandokoro*), located on the western edge of the Inner Palace. The Table Room bordered the southern side of the emperor's sitting room (the *Asagarei no Ma*, or "Breakfast Room") and stored at any given time a dining table, the emperor's personal chair, a chest, a work register, tatami mats, and other items (Shimada 1987). These furnishings were basically consistent with items kept at the Courtiers' Hall (*Tenjō no Ma*) where the chamberlains served. The eastern and southern sides of the Inner Palace were designated for public purposes, while the western and northern sides were reserved for the emperor's private use; each had an imperial sitting room with male and female attendants. Yet there was a difference in how the Courtiers' Hall and the Table Room were used. First, while the chamberlains on duty would clear away the tables at the Courtiers' Hall and spend the night there, the ladies-in-waiting would return to their private quarters once the emperor had retired for the night, with the exception of those on duty at the Sovereign's Bedchamber (*Yon no Otodo*). When morning came the chamberlains would raise the lattices at the first hour of the Dragon (7 a.m.) and the ladies-in-waiting would commence their duties. Second, although the chamberlains ate at dining tables in the Courtiers' Hall (*Jichū Gun'yō*, Book 4), no such records can be found for the Table Room. While there were three dining tables kept at the Courtiers' Hall, the Table Room contained only one, which would not have been large enough for dining. It seems that the ladies-in-waiting ate lying down in their quarters, with the meals provided by female servants. Thus, gentlemen-in-waiting and ladies-in-waiting had different living arrangements which reflected the differences in their assignments.

Not only ladies-in-waiting were able to serve at the Table Room; some men also enjoyed that privilege. According to the *Kinpishō*, the right of entrance to the private areas of the Inner Palace had been granted to a limited number of persons, primarily the regents (*sekkan*) and their descendants. Moreover, male officials usually were required to wear ceremonial dress (*sokutai*) or garments for overnight duty (*tonoiginu*) at the Inner Palace, but

those who were authorized to serve at the Table Room could wear garments for everyday wear (*nōshi*), just as the emperor did. Like the ladies-in-waiting, these men enjoyed a special position of close contact with the emperor.

In regard to this point, Section 65 of *Ise monogatari* (Tales of Ise) holds particular interest. A certain young courtier falls in love with a lady-in-waiting of whom the emperor is particularly fond; having received the emperor's permission to enter the Table Room, he constantly comes to call on her. Whenever the distressed lady returns to her private quarters, the man goes there to visit her, heedless of the eyes of others. A number of facts can be deduced from this episode. First, we may infer that men were serving at the Table Room in the early tenth century, which is the latest possible period for the compilation of *Tales of Ise*, and probably in the late ninth century as well, the period referred to in the tales. Second, courtiers needed imperial permission to call at the Table Room. Third, it appears that those men granted permission to serve at the Table Room were also allowed access to the women's quarters. This third point is important, as it allows us to posit a unified relationship between the Table Room and the women's quarters. Such a connection might have been based on the ladies' overnight duty and service at meals. Furthermore, from the time of Fujiwara Yoshifusa, high-ranking aristocrats such as regents maintained sleeping quarters in the Inner Palace (*Nihon sandai jitsuroku*, Jōkan 14.4.1 [872]). We can observe that this phenomenon is fundamentally related with service at the Table Room.

1.3 Salaries and Assignments

How did upper ladies-in-waiting acquire the necessary means to maintain their lifestyles? In considering this question, it is essential to understand the system of compensation in place at the time (Yoshikawa 1989). Female officials in the *ritsuryō* state were provided with revenue derived from farm households (*fuko*); those of fourth and fifth rank were given rank stipends (*iroku*), seasonal stipends (*kiroku*), clothing allowances (*jifukuryō*), and banquet stipends (*setsuroku*). But the seasonal stipends, clothing allowances, and banquet stipends paid out by the Ministry of the Treasury had diminished greatly by the mid-tenth century and ceased to have any economic significance. Types of compensation for female officials that remained included (1) farm households and rank stipends, (2) annual offices (*nenkan*), and (3) grade stipends (*tōdairoku*). In regard to the first category, on paper it was prescribed that ladies-in-waiting of the third rank should receive farm income and that assistant handmaids, handmaids, and palace ladies would receive rank stipends from

provincial tax coffers (*Saikyūki*, Book 3; *Chikanobu-kyōki*, Tenroku 3.5.10 [972]). In reality, however, it is believed that payments were influenced by relations with high-ranking provincial officials (*zuryō*, discussed below) and it appears that in certain cases nothing resembling income was received. The lady chamberlains, at the sixth rank, were given nothing. Next, the annual offices were part of a system in which recommenders of appointees received appointment fees in return; this involved ladies-in-waiting insofar as they held rights to recommend low-ranking officials dispatched to the provinces (*Saikyūki*, Books 2 and 3). Nevertheless, by the late tenth century the number of aspirants to such posts had declined dramatically (Tokinoya 1977) and it is difficult to imagine that the ladies-in-waiting obtained the appropriate appointment fees. Finally, grade stipends were paid in the seventh and twelfth months based on the number of days in attendance at the Table Room. By the end of the tenth century, however, there was a tendency for these payments to be deferred (Watanabe 1972); moreover, the grant of a few *hiki* of silk each year would have been insufficient to maintain the lifestyle of a lady-in-waiting, which included attendants and servants. Thus, from the late tenth century, the system of compensation for ladies-in-waiting had weakened and grown lax; the court was unable to provide a solid basis for their luxurious lifestyles. Provisional allowances bestowed by the emperor were not infrequent, but we may conclude that upper ladies-in-waiting did not by any means reap lucrative incomes.

Finally, let us examine how upper ladies-in-waiting were selected for their positions. According to *Eiga monogatari* (I: 312; TFF I: 318), after the death of Emperor Ichijō, few of the ladies-in-waiting who had attended him over the years stayed on to serve Emperor Sanjō; rather, they were divided among the households of the Crown Prince (Atsuhira), the Empress (Shōshi), an Imperial Princess of the First Rank (Shūshi), and H.I.H. the Governor-General of Kyūshū (Atsuyasu). That is, upper ladies-in-waiting were appointed with a change in reigns, just like chamberlains and courtiers; in a case of succession such as that from Ichijō to Sanjō in which kinship ties were weak, almost all the upper ladies-in-waiting were replaced. It is safe to say that parents and maternal relatives played a strong role in the selection of appointees, who often served first mother and then daughter.

A few matters concerning the ladies-in-waiting of Emperor Sanjō deserve our attention. Sanjō's wet nurses, such as Ki no Sanmi (Tachibana Seishi), the Minamoto Assistant Handmaid (Minamoto Meishi), and the Uemon Wet Nurse, had been titled assistant handmaids (*naishi no suke*) from the reign of Emperor Ichijō (Tsunoda 1973, Makino 1993). Based on the description from *Eiga monogatari* mentioned above, we can conclude that these women were not

Emperor Ichijō's ladies-in-waiting, but had been Sanjō's ladies-in-waiting since his days as Crown Prince. That is, bearing the title of assistant handmaid (*naishi no suke*) or handmaid (*naishi no jō*) did not necessarily mean one was a senior lady-in-waiting (that is, a woman serving the emperor); this position was reserved only for those who had permission to enter the Table Room (*Shōyōki*, Eien 2.3.21 [988]).

2. Ladies-in-Waiting in Private Households

In contrast to upper ladies-in-waiting, there were ladies-in-waiting who did not serve at the imperial palace, working instead in the homes of nobles. In this section I would like to analyze the lives of these “private ladies-in-waiting” (*ie no nyōbō*), who were employed at the households of contemporary elites.

2.1 Ladies-in-waiting in the household of Prince Atsumichi

Izumi Shikibu nikki describes a love affair between Izumi Shikibu and Prince Atsumichi (981-1007), from its inception until she moved into his residence. When Izumi Shikibu joined Prince Atsumichi's household during the winter of Chōhō 5 (1003), the Prince's official wife (*kita no kata*) and numerous other ladies-in-waiting were already living there.

Three upper ladies-in-waiting — “Onmenoto,” “Senji,” and “Jijū no Menoto” — each having her own distinctive attitude toward Izumi Shikibu, are mentioned. “Onmenoto” is assigned to the Prince's official wife; many ladies-in-waiting serve under her. Only the woman known as “Senji” and a few ladies-in-waiting attend Atsumichi. The woman known as “Jijū no Menoto” also was on close terms with the Prince, but apparently did not share his quarters.

It is said that Onmenoto managed everything on behalf of the official wife (121; Cranston 164). This is reminiscent of the scene in *Genji monogatari* (The Tale of Genji) in which Hikaru Genji, prior to his departure for Suma, entrusts the management of his Nijō mansion to Lady Murasaki and her wet nurse (II:168; Seidensticker I:225-26). Genji regarded the wet nurse as someone he could rely on, putting a few of his most trusted stewards under her supervision and leaving his mansion in her care while he was away (Wakita 1992). From this we can infer that it is very likely that this Onmenoto in Prince Atsumichi's household was in fact the official wife's wet nurse, and had been a constant source of support to the lady since childhood. Thus she would have been entrusted with the management of the household which would have been the official wife's

fundamental responsibility, and would always have acted on the official wife's behalf. Moreover, it seems that the ladies-in-waiting who spied on Izumi Shikibu, gossiped about her, and criticized her were emotional stand-ins for the official wife and the wet nurse, and so it is likely that most of them were in the official wife's service, having been assigned to her at the time of her marriage.

On the other hand, there were hardly any women assigned to Prince Atsumichi. He says that a woman named Chūjō waits on him, but he regards her as a nuisance because she began to despise him after his official wife became displeased with him (147; Cranston 188). Chūjō was probably on loan to look after Atsumichi, from the group of women who served under the official wife and Onmenoto. The prince relied most of all on the woman referred to as Senji. *Senji* (envoys) were high-ranking ladies-in-waiting who often staffed illustrious houses as well as the households of empresses and crown princes. As one can tell from the envoys who served Fujiwara Korechika (EM I:176; TFF I:199) and Fujiwara Yorimichi (EM II: 183; TFF II: 656), they were close to the head of the household (*kafuchō*). Fujiwara Sanesuke's envoy was also his wet nurse (*Shōyūki*, Chōgen 3.6.3 [1030]). We can say that Atsumichi's envoy was also an important woman, on a par with his wet nurse (Jijū no Menoto), who apparently lived in separate quarters.

Izumi Shikibu herself in fact became one of Atsumichi's ladies-in-waiting. This is clear from her close attendance on him, such as arranging his hair in place of Chūjō (148; Cranston 189). Even though Izumi was the object of Atsumichi's love, due to differences in social station, she remained his *meshiudo* (servant), as she could not be given the status of official wife (Abe 1959). We can hypothesize that the *meshiudo* were included in a general category of ladies-in-waiting who closely attended the head of the household. Nonetheless, Izumi Shikibu had waiting women (*jijo*) and followers (*jūsha*) of her own (113; Cranston 157), maintaining a relationship that was a reduced version of the official constellation of wife and group of ladies-in-waiting.

We have examined the ladies-in-waiting serving Prince Atsumichi's household and identified relationships between the official wife, wet nurse, and numerous ladies-in-waiting on the one hand, and the head of the household, envoy, and a small number of ladies-in-waiting, such as the *meshiudo*, on the other. One would project that the contingent of ladies-in-waiting at the Prince's household would have changed greatly due to the official wife's departure but *Izumi Shikibu nikki* ends just before that incident.⁵

2.2 Ladies-in-waiting at the household of Fujiwara Norimichi

It is also relatively easy to understand the situation of ladies-in-waiting serving the household of Fujiwara Norimichi (996-1075), a son of Michinaga. In the fourth month of Kankō 9 (1012), Norimichi was welcomed at Fujiwara Kintō's Shijō Palace as husband to Kintō's daughter.

We do not know how many ladies-in-waiting were assigned to Kintō's daughter at the time of her marriage to Norimichi. As for Michinaga's other sons, it is known that twenty ladies-in-waiting were assigned to Yorimichi's wife and to Nagaie's wife (EM I:281; TFF I:296, EM II:49; TFF II:536); hence we can suppose that a similar number were assigned to Norimichi's. The duties of the ladies-in-waiting are hardly ever mentioned in historical materials, but after Kintō's daughter died in Jian 4 (1024), the Sakon wet nurse (Sakon no Menoto) and a lady-in-waiting who had served Kintō's daughter for many years attended a seance for the purpose of communicating with their dead mistress (EM II: 135; TFF II: 613). The chief lady-in-waiting to Kintō's daughter was probably her wet nurse. The dead woman's mother accompanied the wet nurse and lady-in-waiting, which shows that they had a close relationship to her. Judging from similar examples, there is sufficient evidence to believe that ladies-in-waiting were passed from mother to daughter. Moreover, when Norimichi's mansion caught fire, a thirteen-year-old girl, whose mother was wet nurse to Kintō's daughter, perished in the blaze (*Shōyūki*, Chōwa 4.4.14 [1015]). This girl was not necessarily the Sakon wet nurse's daughter, but the incident demonstrates that wet nurses were accompanied by their own children in the households they served.

With regard to the ladies-in-waiting who served Norimichi, the activities of his wet nurse are better known. She was a woman known as "Kura no Myōbu" who had remained in close attendance on Norimichi since his youth. When Norimichi's sister Shōshi delivered a child, Kura no Myōbu and Shōshi's mother, Rinshi, stayed with Shōshi behind her screens (*Murasaki Shikibu nikki* 170; Bowring 53). It was probably from Rinshi that Norimichi had received Kura no Myōbu. Kura no Myōbu was a woman of violent temperament who plotted attacks on her husband's later wives on two occasions (Momo 1988). The first incident occurred in Kankō 7 (1010) when, out of jealousy toward the new wife of her husband Ōnakatomi Sukechika, she dispatched thirty of Norimichi's retainers and maids to the woman's house and had them destroy her belongings. It is noteworthy that the unmarried Norimichi already had such a sizeable entourage, and that they would have been under the command of his wet nurse. The second episode took place two years later, in which the wet nurse ordered

some of Michinaga's lackeys (who were actually low-ranking servants assigned to Norimichi) to attack Sukechika's mansion. From this we may conclude that all of Norimichi's followers, male and female, headed by the wet nurse, had been given to him by Michinaga and Rinshi on the occasion of his marriage.

Thus we are able to hypothesize that in the household of Fujiwara Norimichi, a wet nurse, followers, and maids were assigned to the head of the household, while the official wife had a wet nurse and numerous ladies-in-waiting, in a system similar to that which existed in Prince Atsumichi's household. But this situation eventually came to an end in Norimichi's household. Two years after the death of his official wife, Norimichi remarried in Manju 3 (1026), wedding Princess Shishi. Many ladies-in-waiting attended the princess, but upon her marriage a number of young ladies-in-waiting were added to her entourage. Up to this point, the ladies-in-waiting who had served Norimichi's late official wife had been living at his Konijō mansion, attending Norimichi and his children, and they were sad to see his new official wife move in, bringing her own ladies-in-waiting (EM II:267-68; TFF II:716-18). Through his remarriage, Norimichi had become connected with a new group of ladies-in-waiting. It appears that a male aristocrat of the time led a life that passed from one group of ladies-in-waiting to another: first his mother's ladies during the bachelor years, then to the ladies serving his official wife upon his first marriage; and onward to the ladies of a new official wife upon remarriage. Very few women accompanied him his entire life; that was the role of his stewards (*keishi*) and retainers (*kenin*). Ladies-in-waiting were assigned to female aristocrats, and stewards served their male counterparts; these appear to have been the fundamental service relationships at the time.

It does not seem that Kura no Myōbu lived with Norimichi the whole time. Custom dictated that men live apart from their wet nurses upon reaching adulthood (Yoshikai 1995), so it appears that Norimichi began living separately from his wet nurse either after marriage or once he was able to make a living. Fujiwara Kintō's support of his aging wet nurse and his moving her into his mansion (EM II:253-255; TFF II:705-707) was an exception.

2.1.3 Duties and lifestyles of private ladies-in-waiting

Finally, I would like to discuss briefly the duties and lifestyles of private ladies-in-waiting.

As we can gather from the examples of Izumi Shikibu (*Izumi Shikibu nikki* 148; Cranston 189) or the ladies-in-waiting of Fujiwara Yorimichi (EM

II:172; TFF II:645), their duties involved looking after all aspects of the employer's life, starting with the dressing of the hair, and including clothing, meals, and dwelling. There were, however, also services of another dimension. Ladies-in-waiting were divided into two groups: "mature persons" (*otonashiki hitobito*) and "young persons" (*wakaki hitobito*); we can observe differences between the types of services each group provided and in their ways of thinking (Shimizu 1967). The "mature persons," centered around the wet nurse, provided advice and admonishments to the head of the household or the official wife, and led the ladies-in-waiting in running the household. The "young persons," frivolous and prone to gossip, fulfilled a decorative function. It should be noted that ladies-in-waiting could privately act on behalf of the head of the household or the official wife. Offers of marriage were discussed with the ladies-in-waiting acting discreetly as go-betweens.

Ladies-in-waiting in private households lived and worked in the presence of their employers, at Table Rooms, and in their own quarters. High-ranking families had their own Table Rooms, which corresponded to the men's Attendants' Offices (*Samuraidokoro*); ladies-in-waiting were posted there. In Eikyū 3 (1115), the Table Room at the home of the regent Fujiwara Tadazane was located at the north side of the main building (*shinden*) and held two tables flanked by eight tatami mats with Koguryō trim (*Kōraiberi*); eight mats with purple trim (*murakiberi*) were placed out at the north end of the room (*Ruijū zatsuyōshō*). Table Rooms at the residences of empresses, princes, and princesses also contained work registers and chests. Furthermore, the residences included private quarters (*sōshi*) for ladies-in-waiting and for stewards, where the staff carried out their duties. When they fell ill, this is where they recuperated (*Genji monogatari* I: 202; Seidensticker I:54), and those ladies-in-waiting accompanied by children raised them here.

Historical records detailing the income of private ladies-in-waiting are scarce, but it is safe to say that they were provided with banquet allowances (*sechiryō*) and suitable allowances for clothing and food (*Midō Kampaku ki*, Kankō 7.7.13 [1010]; Hérail II:410). It is said that affluent *zuryō* (high-ranking provincial officials) were able to attract superb ladies-in-waiting to their residences (*Makura no sōshi*, Nōin version 183; Morris 1967, I: 183); this is probably because they provided the women with lavish stipends. On the other hand, it is doubtful that ladies-in-waiting who served households that were not well off were able to live on their salaries alone.

Fujiwara Michinaga's Kyōgoku mansion presented a peaceful New Year's scene in the first month of Kankō 5 (1008). When Rinshi visited the room of her second daughter, fifteen-year-old Kenshi, she found several ladies-in-waiting

and Kenshi's younger sister Ishi assembled there, dressed in brilliant finery (EM I: 249; TFF I: 262). At this point the ladies-in-waiting would have been called the ladies-in-waiting of Michinaga's house, but when Kenshi married the emperor they were probably called ladies-in-waiting to the imperial consort (*kisaki*); had she married a noble, they would have been called the ladies-in-waiting of his house. Thus we can see that there was some continuity between the ladies-in-waiting of an imperial consort and those of a private household. We will examine the ladies-in-waiting of imperial consorts, for which there are ample historical records, in the next section; the insights gleaned from those materials may be used as a reference in considering ladies-in-waiting who served in private households.

3. Ladies-in-Waiting to Imperial Consorts

In this section we will examine those ladies-in-waiting who served the emperor's consorts, that is to say empresses (*chūgū*, *kōgō*, etc.) and junior consorts from the late tenth to the mid-eleventh century. By this time, the concubines were with rare exceptions no longer present at the palace. Those who served empresses were not called upper ladies-in-waiting (*ue no nyōbō*) but rather "palace ladies-in-waiting" (*miya no nyōbō*).

3.1 Social standing of ladies-in-waiting to imperial consorts

Opinion is divided as to whether all of the ladies-in-waiting who served imperial consorts were public ladies-in-waiting dispatched from the court or whether they included some private ladies-in-waiting employed by aristocrats such as the regents (Kanō 1972, Tsunoda 1973b). I would first like to clarify this point. At the time, an imperial consort would begin as a junior consort, then become a *chūgū* or *kōgō* upon investiture as empress; it is doubtful that the number of ladies assigned to her changed as a result. I will therefore regard the empress' ladies and the junior consorts' ladies as a whole as ladies-in-waiting to imperial consorts. Later I will consider the differences in how they were organized, the duties they performed, and the compensation they received.

What were the differences between an empress and a junior consort? To begin with a conclusion, as an official wife of the emperor, an empress was supported generously by the court; in contrast, junior consorts did not receive such treatment. Each was an imperial consort with quarters in the Rear Palace and a large staff of ladies-in-waiting, but there was a marked difference in their

respective statuses within the system. If we look at the situation created by the investiture of a woman as empress, this will become instantly clear. The *Shōyūki* includes a series of entries regarding the investiture of Fujiwara Junshi as empress in Tengen 5 (982); according to these records, two changes occurred: (1) the post of *chūgū* was created, with a large staff of attendants; and (2) male and female officials from the Inner Palace went to the temporary palace of the empress (*satodai*) and took up their duties.

Item (2) holds special importance. Imperial guardsmen and low-ranking male and female officials who served the emperor at the Inner Palace began serving the empress; while she was at a temporary palace they fulfilled their assignments there. In *Makura no sōshi* as well, we can see female officials from the Bureau of Housekeeping (*Kamorizukasa*) and the Bureau of Grounds (*Tonomozukasa*) serving Empress Teishi at the Nijō Palace (Section 278; Morris 1967, I: 222).

Promotion of an imperial consort to empress affected her ladies-in-waiting as well. Even though their numbers were the same, the ladies-in-waiting of a junior consort and those of palace ladies-in-waiting differed in their respective statuses and duties. *Eiga monogatari* realistically depicts the changes caused by a woman's promotion to empress. In the Second Month of Kankō 9 (1012), Fujiwara Kenshi became the *chūgū* of Emperor Sanjō. From that day forward her ladies-in-waiting were required to dress according to strict divisions in rank between senior, middle, and junior grades, which was a source of great resentment. Furthermore, daughters of male officials who held the fifth rank became lady chamberlains; much to their chagrin, they now had to serve the empress' meals, and there was nothing they could do about it (EM I: 324; TFF I: 332-33). In short, with their mistress' investiture as empress, the ladies-in-waiting, who had previously operated with few distinctions among them, now had to work under an entirely new set of principles. It seems that along with the distinction in seniority and dress, the titles and duties of Handmaid, Palace Lady, and Lady Chamberlain came into being. From other records, we can observe that ladies-in-waiting were given rank by the court (EM I:387; TFF II:453). Thus we may conclude that, as a result of investiture, the ladies-in-waiting were now on a par with upper ladies-in-waiting, that is, they were promoted to official ladies-in-waiting of the Inner Palace. The difference between empress and junior consort lies in the fact that only the empress' ladies-in-waiting played a public role.

Let us take another look at Fujiwara Kenshi, whom I discussed at the end of the previous section. When she lived in the residence of her father, Michinaga, she was attended by Michinaga's ladies-in-waiting. Not long after,

she became crown princess, and with the enthronement of Emperor Sanjō was promoted to junior consort, then empress. The same forty ladies-in-waiting who served her during her tenure as crown princess probably continued in her service. No doubt the central figures in Kenshi's entourage were those ladies who had served her since her youth, that is, the ladies-in-waiting given to her by Michinaga. To these, more attendants were added, forming the large retinue of forty persons, and it is easy to imagine that Michinaga and Rinshi were closely involved in their selection. Palace ladies-in-waiting served in public capacities, but it is conceivable that the wishes of the woman's family were respected.

Thus we can think of the palace ladies-in-waiting serving an empress as public "ladies-in-waiting of the Inner Palace," while those who attended junior consorts were, on the other hand, similar to private ladies-in-waiting. Still, it is impossible to completely separate the upper ladies-in-waiting from the palace ladies-in-waiting, and there were some women who belonged to both groups. Such examples may be found in *Eiga monogatari* among the ladies of Fujiwara Anshi (EMI:46; TFFI:88), Shōshi (EMI:268; TFFI:282), and Kenshi (EMI:348; TFFI:352). These ladies appear to have played an important role as go-betweens in conveying the emperor's and empress' wishes and feelings to each other; those ladies who were permitted to hold additional positions in other households were envied by their colleagues (*Makura no sōshi* Sec. 158; Morris 1967, I: 162).

3.2 Duties and lifestyle

We may suppose that the duties of ladies-in-waiting to imperial consorts did not differ greatly from those of senior or private ladies-in-waiting. First, they were responsible for the meals, wardrobe, and quarters of the consort. We have examined above the service of meals to the *chūgū*; there is no difference between *chūgū* and junior consort in the sense that the ladies-in-waiting as a whole were directly involved in looking after the consort's everyday needs. *Makura no sōshi* depicts Sei Shōnagon not only serving meals to Empress Teishi, but also arranging her hair and bringing her hand-washing water (Section 9; Morris 1967, I:11). Elsewhere, the ladies-in-waiting are shown sewing a garment for their mistress (Section 95; Morris 1967, I:100-101). Furthermore, the ladies-in-waiting would appear before Teishi to amuse her or to provide advice, as we often see in *Makura no Sōshi*; one is reminded of Murasaki Shikibu's instructing Fujiwara Shōshi in the Chinese classics (*Murasaki Shikibu nikki*

245; Bowring 139). Such emotional and intellectual service formed a second, important set of duties for the ladies-in-waiting of imperial consorts.

A third responsibility was acting as an intermediary. This was an especially important duty for palace ladies-in-waiting, because when male officials presented themselves before an empress, they were not permitted a face-to-face audience; even if they were members of the empress' staff, a lady-in-waiting was required as an intermediary. Hence palace staff were accorded the same treatment given to other officials. Senior nobles (*kugyō*) each had their favorite ladies, and sought through them mutual understandings between themselves and the empress (*Murasaki Shikibu nikki* 236; Bowring 129).⁶ It was advantageous for male aristocrats to be on friendly terms with a well-spoken lady, so they had to be sufficiently cultured to avoid incurring the disdain of the ladies-in-waiting.

Ladies-in-waiting who served imperial consorts spent their time either in attendance, at the Table Room, or in their own quarters. This held true whether they served empresses or junior consorts, and whether they were at the official palace or at a temporary palace. It should be noted, however, that not all ladies-in-waiting were granted private quarters. According to *Eiga monogatari*, which depicts a banquet given by Grand Empress Kenshi in Manju 2 (1025), those ladies-in-waiting who had been living at their own homes arrived the night before the banquet; they made their preparations in the Table Room while the ladies who had been assigned such did so in their private quarters (EM II:173; TFF II:646-47). Thus, among palace ladies-in-waiting were those who were provided with quarters and remained in constant attendance as well as those who lived at home and served only occasionally. These latter could retire only in the Table Room. Ladies who had been assigned quarters slept there. This also applied when the consort went to the Seiryōden; Sei Shōnagon stayed in attendance on the empress as long as she was awake, returning to her own quarters when the empress entered the Sovereign's Bedchamber (*Makura no sōshi*, section 313; Morris 1967, I: 251). Senior-grade ladies were probably housed close to the consort, but that does not appear to be the case for the others. A small chamber attached to the consort's private quarters was a private space for the ladies-in-waiting.

It was no simple matter for men to gain access to the ladies' quarters. One of Fujiwara Ishi's ladies-in-waiting included a woman of high birth known as Lady Nijō, and even Michinaga's sons maintained a respectful distance from her (EM I:422; TFF II:480). In the case of ordinary ladies-in-waiting, however, Michinaga's sons — that is, the consort's brothers — were permitted access; this is linked to the fact that the consort's parents and siblings had permission

to enter her personal quarters. In *Midō kanpaku ki* we can see frequent examples of Michinaga and Rinshi staying at the quarters of their daughter Shōshi, and *Makura no sōshi* vividly describes gatherings of people from the house of the regent Fujiwara Michitaka at the residence of his daughter Teishi. On the other hand, in the section of *Eiga monogatari* covering the banquet given by Kenshi discussed above, male intimates (probably husbands or paramours) are shown going in and out of the ladies' quarters (EM II:174; TFF II:646-647). It is not known if this was the case at the Inner Palace, but male intimates could at least enter the ladies' quarters at a temporary palace. In addition, there were men, such as members of the empress' staff, whose duties required them to visit the ladies' quarters, but it is necessary to recognize clearly that two groups of men were in a special position: (1) close relatives of the imperial consort; and (2) male intimates of the ladies-in-waiting. In order to make requests of the imperial consorts (and, in effect, the emperor) or to obtain secret information, there is no doubt that connections to the ladies-in-waiting were of immense help.

3.3 Income and financial support

How did the imperial consort's ladies-in-waiting support themselves? If we assume that the palace ladies-in-waiting were regarded as wholly public employees, then should we conclude that they subsisted on allowances granted by the court?

As I mentioned in section 1, the system of compensation for upper ladies-in-waiting had degenerated by the late tenth century, and thus it appears that the system of compensation for palace ladies-in-waiting had similarly weakened. Moreover, ladies-in-waiting to junior consorts held the same status as private ladies-in-waiting, so they of course were not granted allowances by the court. On the whole, ladies-in-waiting to imperial consorts were not able to rely much on salaries from the court.

It cannot be said, however, that ladies-in-waiting to imperial consorts did not receive salaries. We may reasonably assume that, just as household heads paid out allowances for clothing and meals to private ladies-in-waiting, imperial consorts provided the same to their own attendants. In the case of junior consorts, who lacked a strong financial base, we may conclude that salaries for their ladies-in-waiting were provided by their families as part of the expenses of supporting them financially. Nevertheless, the situation changed somewhat once a woman became an empress. This is because empresses received income from farm households, annual offices and ranks. These sources of revenue that

were for the most part functional during this period, and paid their ladies-in-waiting out of these ample funds.

Yet it seems that salaries from the imperial consort were not the sole source of income for ladies-in-waiting. Another example from Kenshi's ladies-in-waiting illustrates this point. During the autumn of Jian 1 (1021), some thirty of Grand Empress Kenshi's ladies-in-waiting copied out the Lotus Sutra. Each woman tried to raise the necessary funds with the support of male relatives or friends, but those ladies who were married yet not particularly well-off found themselves short of funds, while those who were unmarried could only lament their plight, and were obliged to solicit suitable members of the nobility (EM II:42; TFF II:530). From this we can speculate about the general condition of the ladies' finances. That is, women were assisted financially by men who were close to them — their husbands or, if they were of modest means, appropriate members of the nobility. I believe that these men provided some degree of financial support not only to palace ladies-in-waiting, but also to upper and private ladies-in-waiting. The lives of ladies-in-waiting incorporated an important political dimension, as their duties included close attendance upon the imperial family and the relaying of messages. Therefore they attracted male hangers-on seeking to gain advantages for themselves, and who of course provided various rewards in return. For the ladies-in-waiting, the greatest benefit of service was not a lucrative income, but rather the opportunity to improve their positions socially and culturally, which profited not only the ladies, but also the male "clients" who supported them.

3.4 The establishment of ladies-in-waiting to imperial consorts

Finally, I would like to sketch in broad terms the process by which ladies-in-waiting to imperial consorts came into being, focusing mainly on palace ladies-in-waiting.

Palace ladies-in-waiting had as their predecessors women who had served at the palaces of imperial consorts from before the inception of the *ritsuryō* system. But changes occurring in the late eighth century and the late tenth century left a deep impression on the way palace ladies-in-waiting lived and worked.

Great changes took place at the Inner Palace during the late eighth century. First, male officials were appointed to serve there (Yoshikawa 1990). Second, buildings were erected at the Inner Palace for the use of empresses (Hashimoto 1995). It is believed that up to this point empresses' palaces had been situated outside the Inner Palace compound, and from this period onward

the emperor and empresses lived in the same location. It also appears that offices for palace officials were constructed within the Inner Palace, and the women who attended the empress (known as Serving Girls [*nyoju*] under the *ritsuryō* codes) began to serve at the Inner Palace on a daily basis. Thus towards the end of the eighth century the Inner Palace became a political site at which various types of persons were in attendance.

The move of the empress into the Inner Palace brought about a change in status for the Serving Girls who waited on her. The area inside the Inner Palace formed a single living space, so it is difficult to imagine that the various officials served the emperor and empresses separately. To take the example of preparing meals, in the beginning the task was perhaps handled jointly by the Table Office of the Rear Palace (*kōkyūzenshi*) and the Serving Girls of the empress' quarters, but soon the two groups were merged, becoming female officials of the Inner Palace. It is difficult to specify exactly when, but we can at least say that this process seems to have been completed by the mid-ninth century. If we take a look at the reorganization of the Empress' attendants that accompanied the investiture of Tachibana Kachiko as empress in 815 (Kitō 1974), the date can perhaps be pushed back as far as the early ninth century. We should note, however, that even though female officials at the Inner Palace were being integrated, the basic posts at which they served were fixed, and a system was in place in which high-ranking female officials served either the emperor or empresses on a daily basis as ladies-in-waiting. "Palace" ladies-in-waiting came into being, and the positions were ranked, from top to bottom: envoy (*senji*), mistress of the wardrobe (*mikushigedono*), handmaid (*naishi*), palace lady (*myōbu*), and lady chamberlain (*nyokurōdo*).

The second key period for ladies-in-waiting who served empresses was the late tenth century. It did not see structural changes as in the case of the upper ladies-in-waiting outlined above; however, the almost total disintegration of the *ritsuryō* compensation system that had occurred by this time exerted great influence. As a result, aristocratic society assumed a rigid structure and a fixed class that produced ladies-in-waiting was formed. The intricate political situation that led to the monopolization of power by Fujiwara Michinaga accelerated this process. From this period onward the role of palace ladies-in-waiting began to be taken more seriously, and it appears that political influence came to be exerted in the selection process, but not only for the purpose of expanding the Fujiwara regent's power. Close relationships of mutual dependence outside the framework of the *ritsuryō* system developed between the empress and her ladies-in-waiting, and between the ladies and their male

intimates. It may be assumed that this overall trend in aristocratic society gave a decisive impetus to the elevation of the role of the lady-in-waiting.

In terms of their organization and functions, palace ladies-in-waiting had much in common with the *ingū* ladies-in-waiting, their counterparts who served the crown prince, retired emperors, and empresses. The position of *ingū* ladies-in-waiting, which held proportionate status to upper ladies-in-waiting, attained around the late tenth century the form which it would maintain into the medieval period. Moreover, while the ladies-in-waiting of junior consorts held proportionate status with those serving in private households, in terms of the political and social roles they played, large differences between them and the *ingū* ladies-in-waiting disappeared in this period. To put the point broadly, it was during the latter part of the tenth century that ladies-in-waiting began to function as crucial nodes in societal relations; this period was truly "a turning point in the history of ladies-in-waiting" (Masuda 1951, Abe 1959).

4. Ladies-in-Waiting and Their Families

Finally, I would like to shift perspectives somewhat and consider the families of ladies-in-waiting, because many of them had husbands and children. The link between family relationships and master-servant relationships will form the main point of discussion.

4.1 Stewards and ladies-in-waiting

First, we will consider the relations between the stewards (*keishi*) and ladies-in-waiting who served the house of Fujiwara Michinaga. The reason for choosing this house is that there are abundant historical records available, and we have a clear overall picture of his stewards. Michinaga's stewards have been divided roughly into those belonging to the high-ranking provincial official (*zuryō*) class and those belonging to the administrative official class (Satō 1964). Upon examining sixteen men from the provincial official class, it becomes clear that eight of them were married to ladies-in-waiting (especially wet nurses) in close proximity to Michinaga:

(1) Fujiwara Korenori, whose wife Fujiwara Bishi was a daughter of the wet nurse to Michinaga's wife, Minamoto Rinshi, and became lady-in-waiting to Fujiwara Shōshi (empress to Emperor Ichijō), then wet nurse to their son, Emperor Go-Ichijō;

(2) Fujiwara Yasumichi, whose wife Koshikibu was wet nurse to Michinaga's daughter Kishi (junior consort to Emperor Go-Suzaku), while another wife, Minamoto Ryūshi, had been wet nurse to Go-Suzaku since his days as Crown Prince;

(3) Fujiwara Korekaze, whose wife was the Assistant Handmaid Nakatsukasa, wet nurse to Michinaga's daughter Kenshi (empress to Emperor Sanjō);

(4) Fujiwara Yasumasa, whose wife was Izumi Shikibu; she became one of Shōshi's ladies-in-waiting after the death of Prince Atsumichi;

(5) Fujiwara Nariie, whose wife (name unknown) appears to have been one of Rinshi's ladies-in-waiting;

(6) Fujiwara Katamasa, whose wife (name unknown) was wet nurse to Prince Atsuyoshi (Emperor Go-Suzaku);

(7) Minamoto Takamasa, whose wife Fujiwara Kishi was a daughter of Rinshi's wet nurse; she was one of Shōshi's ladies-in-waiting, then wet nurse to Emperor Go-Ichijō; and

(8) Tachibana Tameyoshi, whose wife was Shōho, wet nurse to Prince Atsuhira (Emperor Go-Ichijō).

In addition, we can identify a connection between (9) Ōe Kiyomichi and Fujiwara Hōshi (Go-Ichijō's wet nurse); we can also infer that (10) Taira Atsukane's wife (name unknown) also served in Michinaga's house.

That most of the women mentioned were wet nurses is due to the tendency of nurses to appear in historical records frequently, as they belonged to the top class of ladies-in-waiting. There were many other ladies-in-waiting besides wet nurses, and we can easily infer that they included wives of stewards. It may be assumed that most of the women married to Michinaga's stewards were ladies-in-waiting.

Of these ten women, only (5) and (10) are known to have served Michinaga and Rinshi. We can suppose, however, that (1) and (7) were ladies-in-waiting who first served Rinshi and later entered the service of her daughter Shōshi. Moreover, we can imagine that some women held dual posts, and it is very likely that there were other couples in which the husband served as steward and the wife as lady-in-waiting in Michinaga's house.⁷ Either as a result of being transferred from Michinaga and Rinshi's house, or being selected by them, Michinaga's stewards and their wives became stewards or ladies-in-waiting to Michinaga's daughters or to the emperors they bore.

Except for the case of Michinaga's house, it is difficult to find examples of couples who worked as attendants, but it can be supposed that a similar situation existed in other powerful houses. During the time of Kaneie,

Michinaga's father, we find couples such as Fujiwara Arikuni (steward) and Tachibana Tokushi (wet nurse to Emperor Ichijō), and Taira Korenaka (steward) and Fujiwara Hanshi (Senshi's lady-in-waiting, Ichijō's wet nurse). It was in the late tenth century that a division arose between the class that produced imperial consorts and the class that produced ladies-in-waiting. This period also saw the completion of the steward system and the appearance of *zuryō* striving to enrich themselves (Satō 1964, Satō 1990). The dismantlement of the *ritsuryō* system of compensation strengthened the dependence of mid- and low-ranking aristocrats upon the powerful clans, and a structure was set up in which men served as stewards and *zuryō* and women as ladies-in-waiting. They married within their class and formed steward/lady-in-waiting "houses."

Earlier, I stated that one source of income for ladies-in-waiting appeared to have been financial support from male intimates. These funds came mainly from husbands, but if we posit a situation in which both spouses were attendants, this theory becomes even more persuasive. Husbands of ladies-in-waiting were permitted to enter the ladies' quarters, and some stewards were granted quarters of their own, so in this sense a steward and a lady-in-waiting could both live at the mansion of a powerful family. Sometimes their children lived with them as well. Mohitori Suetake grew up at the house of Fujiwara Sanesuke, where both his parents served (*Shōyōki*, Kanjin 2.10.2 [1018]); no doubt there were children like him in almost any powerful house.

4.2 Wet nurses, their husbands, and children

When a woman was a wet nurse (*menoto*), her own family became even more closely involved. A wet nurse's husband was also called a *menoto*, and her children were called *menotogo*.⁸ The husband and children of wet nurses were already important figures by the late tenth century (Hashimoto 1976).

The account given in section 187 of *Makura no Sōshi* (Morris 1967, I: 28) is particularly well-known. Girls were closely attended by wet nurses, and boys by tutors, whose authority was greatly feared. As it was not uncommon for a wet nurse's husband to serve as steward, there would have been many instances in which a steward of the house also served as tutor to the master's son. When the boy reached manhood, the tutor would continue to serve as steward. Ladies-in-waiting were transferred from mother to daughter, and stewards from father to son; marital ties arose between stewards and ladies-in-waiting. We can surmise that these relationships lay in the background of the devoted service of the wet nurse and tutor.

Among the stewards of Michinaga's house that we examined earlier, (1) Fujiwara Korenori, (7) Minamoto Takamasa, and (8) Tachibana Tameyoshi were tutors to Emperor Go-Ichijō, while (2) Fujiwara Yasumichi and (6) Fujiwara Katamasa were Emperor Go-Suzaku's tutors; these men took the greatest care of their charges. There are many cases of a tutor becoming superintendent (*bettō*) or member of the Crown Prince's staff (*bōkan*) at the household of an imperial prince who was a blood relative.

The children of a wet nurse also served in close attendance on their mother's employer. As high-ranking ladies-in-waiting, wet nurses were provided with private quarters, and thus their children no doubt would have been going in and out of the master's mansion from an early age. Upon reaching adulthood the children would work to support the master's material and emotional needs as trusted confidants. That the wet nurse's children and the master were on intimate terms is clear from the important part they played in the master's love life, as exemplified by Koremitsu's assistance to Genji in *Genji monogatari* (Saigō 1983), or the important role they played in funeral ceremonies (EM II:387; *Sanuki no suke no nikki*, 401; Brewster 75-76). Furthermore, the wet nurse children who served Shōshi (Jōtōmon-in) were *zuryō* (EM II: 437). They enjoyed their mistress' patronage in obtaining official appointments, and offered material compensation in return. This type of mutually dependent relationship may be observed among stewards and ladies-in-waiting in general, but it was particularly influential in the case of wet nurses and their families.

With time, the preferential treatment granted to wet nurses and their families became more pronounced. By the latter half of the eleventh century, even the wives of senior nobles were serving as wet nurses to imperial princes (EM II: 494). Moreover, in the Kamakura period the post of tutor to the emperor became a separate position, which was filled even by senior nobles.

4.3 Wives of *zuryō*

Many of the authors who produced Heian women's literature were daughters of *zuryō*, and their literary efforts have been viewed in terms of their relation to the spirit of the "zuryō class" (Saigō 1960, Masuda 1951). But I emphasize the marriage relationships between stewards and ladies-in-waiting, and would like to reevaluate these women as "zuryō wives."

Quite often a steward at a powerful house (including households of retired emperors, or other members of the imperial family besides the reigning emperor) would become a *zuryō* on the recommendation of his master. Accordingly, if his wife was a lady-in-waiting, she became a "zuryō wife," and

accompanied her husband to his provincial post. At the time, women who were official wives of *zuryō* were considered fortunate, and had fine ladies-in-waiting at their service (*Makura no Sōshi* Nōin version sec. 183, 184; Morris 1967, I:183-184).

A wife's assistance was indispensable in the performance of a *zuryō*'s duties, because she had great influence in winning the allegiance of local elites. For instance, when Ōe Masahira became governor of Owari, it was his wife Akazome Emon who soothed the locals' disaffection with a *waka* poem (*Akazome Emon shū*). Also, during the rebellion led by Taira Tadatsune, the governor of Kazusa sent his family back to the capital, and as a result local elites gradually stopped obeying his orders (*Shōyūki*, Chōgen 1.7.15 [1028]). The political role played by *zuryō* wives is confirmed by prohibitions aimed at limiting their influence. According to *Chōya gunsai* (Book 22), *zuryō* were forbidden to consider requests or accusations made by their wives on behalf of local elites. Thus it is apparent that within the context of links between the *zuryō* and local elites, the *zuryō*'s wife played an important role, acting as a confidential intermediary and fostering friendly relationships. If these women had had previous experience as ladies-in-waiting, they would have possessed an impressive knowledge of literature and a keen understanding of the nature of human relations, talents which certainly would have proved advantageous in governing the province. Their abilities are reflected in the fact that they were assigned the responsibility of presenting the province's taxes to the central government (Fukutō 1991). In this situation as well, elegant deportment was desirable, and if the wife had been a lady-in-waiting, she would be able to handle this task with ease.

It is difficult to assess quantitatively the extent of the *zuryō*'s service to the court and powerful houses. But we can state without hesitation that the chief source of income for the powerful houses was the farm households, and that the management of private estates (*shōen*) was secondary; thus they relied upon *zuryō* for most of their income. *Zuryō* promptly broke away from a powerful house if its political power declined; but they faithfully served the great houses and the nobility that enjoyed the backing of the powerful houses. On the surface, farm households were public compensation from the state, but in reality, due to the exertion of personal power they became sources of private income. Thus it need hardly be said that *zuryō* seconded from one's own household were the most reliable conduits of material resources, and it benefitted the powerful houses to send ladies-in-waiting to the provinces as *zuryō* wives.

The movement of ladies-in-waiting to the provinces was also significant in contributing to cultural exchange between the capital and the country. The elegant culture of ladies-in-waiting had a definite role to play at the provincial seat, and even after ladies returned to the capital, their experience in the provinces, especially their familiarity with famous sites mentioned in Japanese poetry, brought about qualitative improvements in the literary arts.

4.4 Ladies-in-waiting without husbands

The service of a steward/lady-in-waiting couple at a powerful house typified one aspect of this social class, but it was by no means always the case that stewards were married to ladies-in-waiting and vice versa. The men and women who constituted this class had different lives and marital relationships, and couples in which both parties served a powerful house should be regarded as special cases. A fair number of women who did not have experience as ladies-in-waiting were married to *zuryō* or stewards, and not a few women who did not have husbands (or were estranged from them) remained in attendance.

For Murasaki Shikibu, the days she spent with her husband, Fujiwara Nobutaka, were the best of her life. *Murasaki Shikibu nikki* records how depressing and shameful it was for a woman without a husband to serve as a lady-in-waiting. Nevertheless, for the ordinary male aristocrat, a lady-in-waiting without a husband made a fine partner to support financially in return for favors that might improve his position. The life of a lady-in-waiting was regarded as frivolous by the men (*Makura no Sōshi*, section 24; Morris 1967, I:20) but such frivolity was a product of contemporary social relations, and the very men who criticized it relied on these women. This frivolity helped generate relationships of mutual dependence, romantic and/or marital in nature, such as those between stewards and ladies-in-waiting or between *meshiudo* and their masters.

A woman without a husband who served a powerful house had a number of dreams for happiness. She could hope to become a distinguished wet nurse and enjoy the protection of the house (*Sarashina nikki*, 359; Morris 1971, 119). If she had a steadfast relationship with a male intimate, she might become a *zuryō* wife (*Makura no Sōshi*, Sec. 24; Morris 1967, I:20-21). Or perhaps if she were a widow she might have high hopes for her children's advancement. The first dream was sought but not realized by the daughter of Sugawara Takasue; Sei Shōnagon failed to reach her ideal in the second dream; and Murasaki saw the third dream fulfilled with the appointment of her daughter Echigo no Ben as imperial wet nurse.⁹ But for young women serving as ladies-in-waiting, having a wealthy husband was the surest guarantee of a stable living. In this regard,

a marital relationship between a lady-in-waiting and a steward/*zuryō* was the most fortunate circumstance.

The ratio of ladies-in-waiting without husbands to those with husbands and the emotional differences between the two groups of women are topics that deserve further study. One common point for both kinds of ladies-in-waiting was that their service at powerful houses was performed with the financial backing of male intimates. These ladies-in-waiting were focal points of contact within contemporary societal relations and maintained an elegant and sophisticated culture. They lived in a world completely different from other women in their class who lived their lives only as wives.

Concluding Remarks

I have discussed the lives and roles of ladies-in-waiting from the late tenth to the mid-eleventh century. Among my conclusions are that the late tenth century indeed proved to be “a turning point in the history of ladies-in-waiting,” and due to the establishment of new societal relationships, the role of ladies-in-waiting rose to prominence. This role was fundamentally consistent for ladies-in-waiting whether in the households of the imperial family or in the households of powerful clans; and this era originated patterns of existence for ladies-in-waiting that were preserved into the medieval period.

In this essay I have tried to depict in concrete terms the lives of the ladies-in-waiting, by making use of diaries written by men in Chinese and, especially, *kana* literature written by women. This approach was made possible by the high level of achievement of Heian women's literature. As a sign that ladies-in-waiting were points of contact in societal relationships, it may be pointed out that by the late tenth century, decrees written out by ladies-in-waiting and the diaries they kept were already beginning to be used frequently (Yoshikawa 1997). There is no doubt that the powers of expression cultivated in such an environment and the ladies' cool-headed sociability contributed greatly to the development of Heian women's literature. Indeed, this literature was based on the very lives of the ladies-in-waiting themselves.

NOTES

1. For citations of literary texts composed in *kana*, I have indicated the appropriate volume and page numbers for *Eiga monogatari* in the series *Nihon koten bungaku taikai* (Iwanami Shoten); section numbers for *Makura no sōshi* in the same series; volume and

page numbers for *Sarashina nikki*, *Genji monogatari*, *Izumi Shikibu nikki*, *Murasaki Shikibu nikki*, and *Sanuki no suke no nikki* in the series *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Shōgakkan); and section numbers for *Ise monogatari* and the Nōin version of *Makura no sōshi* in the Shōgakkan series.[Auth.]

Eiga monogatari is abbreviated as EM in the text. For those works that have been translated into English, a second set of numbers indicates where the passage referred to may be found in the translation. Versions used are:

- (1) for *Eiga monogatari*, McCullough and McCullough 1980, abbreviated as TFF;
 - (2) for *Makura no sōshi* (including the Nōin version), Morris 1967;
 - (3) for *Sarashina nikki*, Morris 1971;
 - (4) for *Genji monogatari*, Seidensticker 1978;
 - (5) for *Izumi Shikibu nikki*, Cranston 1969;
 - (6) for *Murasaki Shikibu nikki*, Bowring 1982;
 - (7) for *Sanuki no suke no nikki*, Brewster 1977;
 - (8) for *Ise monogatari*, McCullough 1968 (section numbers referred to in the text may be used to aid in the location of passages in this translation); and
 - (9) for *Midō Kampaku ki*, Hérail 1988.[Trans.]
2. Of these, the only ones allowed admission to the Inner Palace were the mother and the wife of the regnant emperor (EM II:287; TFF II:732).
 3. It first appears in historical materials in *Daigo tennō gyōki*, Engi 18.10.9 (918). Scattered references may be found in records from the reign of Emperor Murakami, such as *Shingishiki* and *Tenryaku kurōdo shiki*.
 4. This and several other citations from *Eiga monogatari* that do not bear a second set of page numbers corresponding to the translation belong to the section of the tale known as the "Continuation" (*zoku hen*) and are not translated in McCullough and McCullough 1980.[Trans.]
 5. In *Genji monogatari*, the official wife of General Hige-kuro also leaves his household in a similar way (III:362-66; Seidensticker I:499-501). The episode provides a useful reference, as in this instance all the female attendants, with the exception of the *meshiudo*, leave together.
 6. Other instances include Murasaki Shikibu acting as an intermediary between Shōshi and Fujiwara Sanesuke (*Shōyōki*, Chōwa 2.5.25 [1013]) and Sei Shōnagon fulfilling the same role for Teishi and Fujiwara Yukinari (*Makura no sōshi*, section 49; Morris 1967, I:53).
 7. In cases where a husband and wife served a powerful house as steward and lady-in-waiting, it is likely that one of them secured a position at the house first, and based on that connection the other was able to follow.
 8. A wet nurse and her husband were both called *menoto*, but the homonymous titles were written with different characters: 乳母 (literally, "nursing mother") for the woman, translated here as wet nurse, and 乳父 (literally, "nursing father") for the man, translated here as tutor.[Trans.]

9. These three women are famous authors of Heian literature. Sugawara Takasue's daughter wrote *Sarashina nikki* (Sarashina Diary); Sei Shōnagon wrote *Makura no Sōshi* (The Pillow Book); and Murasaki Shikibu wrote *Genji monogatari* (The Tale of Genji). [Trans.]

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