



## **Lady Nijo's Own Story: The Candid Diary of a Thirteenth-Century Japanese Imperial Concubine**

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Lady Nijo, a lady-in-waiting of the thirteenth-century Japanese Imperial Court, was a small child when the young ex-Emperor Go Fukakusa took her under his protection. She was between twelve and thirteen years old when he made her his mistress, and for more than a decade after that the lovely young girl from one of Japan's most noble families lived at the court as an honored Lady in the ex-Emperor's entourage.

As a historical work, the book documents the routine of long-ago court life, with its great emphasis on poetry contests, "football" games, drinking parties, and clothing (at the most tragic moment, Lady Nijo stops to describe what the messenger bringing word of her lover's death is wearing).

Lady Nijo's story is much more than a day-to-day record of trivial events. It is the tale of a courageous woman, told with consummate skill. Scholars agree that the newly-discovered diary is one of the masterpieces of the country's literature, a genuine autobiography that not only records the social pastimes of the aristocracy, but also gives a contemporary view of the political and economic movements of the time.

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