

Major women's memoirs of the High-Classical (Heian) period

shortly after 974:

Gossamer Years (*Kagerô nikki*), by Michitsuna's Mother (Michitsuna no Haha, 936?–95?)

- describes the 20 turbulent years of marriage leading to divorce to the man who will become the most powerful political force of his day

995?–96?, substantial portions later:

Pillow Book (*Makura no sôshi*), by Sei Shônagon (Sei Shônagon, 966? – 1021-28?)

- a collection of various things: anecdotes of life in the imperial women's quarters, personal reflection, lists

ca. 1007?:

Lady Izumi's Story (*Izumi Shikibu nikki*, sometimes called *Izumi Shikibu monogatari*), by Lady Izumi (Izumi Shikibu, b. 977?)

- describes through prose and numerous exchanged love poems, the first 10 months of a scandalous affair with an imperial prince

covers events of 1008–10, composition dates unknown:

Lady Murasaki's Journal (*Murasaki Shikibu nikki*, dates unknown), by Lady Murasaki (Murasaki Shikibu, b. ca. 973?, d. 1014? or later)

- describes life in the imperial women's quarters, especially the many ceremonies surrounding the birth and young life of Michinaga's grandson, born to an emperor, that established Michinaga's complete control over the imperial house, includes some personal reflections

shortly after 1059:

The Sarashina Memoir (*Sarashina nikki*), by Sugawara Takasue's Daughter (Sugawara no Takasue no Musume, 1008–?)

- describes the life of a woman who from a young age loved reading and later came to regret this as having prevented her from turning towards Buddhism until she was much older

Full translations of all the memoirs are available though some are out-of-print.

- There are two full English translations of *Kagerô nikki*: Edward Seidensticker, titled **Gossamer Years** (1964) and Sonja Arntzen, titled **A Kagerô Diary** (1997). Helen C. McCullough has a complete translation of Book One in her *Classical Japanese Prose* (1990). Seidensticker, a fine translator, did one of his less successful translations for this work. The narrator sounds catty and petty. Arntzen tried to balance this with a more understandable narrator; sometimes she is too nice compared to the original (in my opinion).
- Ivan Morris has translated *Makura no sôshi* titling it **Pillow Book**. The only full translation is the original edition published in two hardback volumes by Columbia University Press (1967). Later editions are nearly complete however; there are fewer footnotes. Helen C. McCullough translated a large number of passages for her *Classical Japanese Prose* (1990).
- There are two complete translations of *Izumi Shikibu nikki*: Edwin Cranston's **The Izumi Shikibu Diary: A Romance of the Heian Court** (1969) and Earl Miner's **Japanese Poetic Diaries** (1969). Cranston's is heavily supported with footnotes; Miner's is the more "poetic" effort. Personally, I prefer Cranston.
- Richard Bowring has translated *Murasaki Shikibu nikki* together with Murasaki's poem anthology in a work titled **Murasaki Shikibu: Her Diary and Poetic Memoirs** (1982). He has published a revised translation as well, called **The Diary of Lady Murasaki** (1996). The 1982 edition is better supported with notes on facing pages. The revision is almost the same text as the 1982 version, but does have some minor improvements. It is a Penguin edition, so very portable.
- Ivan Morris has translated *Sarashina nikki* in a work titled **As I Crossed a Bridge of Dreams** (1971). I have recently heard that Sonja Arntzen is working on a new translation.