THE LIFE AND AFTERLIVES
OF HANABUSA ITCHŌ, ARTIST-REBEL OF EDO
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The Life and Afterlives of Hanabusa Itchō, Artist-Rebel of Edo

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Dedicated to the spirit of a friendship,
Jeb and Dave
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Nowhere is the scandal of Itchō’s life more concentrated than in connection with his painting *Asazuma Boat*, the motif that depicts a boat prostitute of the port of Asazuma on Lake Biwa (opposite). Subversive meanings, most likely unintended, took on a life of their own as this motif spread in seemingly every possible way—through stories and factual accounts, ukiyo-e and craftwork, Kabuki and popular books. This image was not by any means the only work that people immediately associated with Itchō. Ironically, he was given credit for originating what was, in fact, a centuries-old formula, the one-stroke (*ippitsu*) Daruma.1 Similarly, he was given credit for inventing the motif of Daruma as courtesan.2 Yet because *Asazuma Boat* came to be understood as the reason for Itchō’s exile, the subject was the very embodiment of gossip and quickly took on legs. Such talk veered from the truth (as gossip does), yet was conceivable; attached to Itchō, it also shaped his reputation. And, as gossip—the seed of legend—is wont to do, it leapt between various forms of communication as it proliferated.

Very little is certain about the Asazuma-boat motif, but a few things are known (or can be guessed) with reasonable certainty about its original conception and the unintended meanings that it later accrued. Only one pre-exile painting of the motif by Itchō is known to exist, the one found in the album *Fūzokuga ekan*. It is highly unlikely that Itchō intended this rendering to be a political satire of the shogun’s concubine Oden no kata, as Baba Bunkō claimed. The song “Asazuma-bune,” which Itchō inscribed on the painting and which was published while he was in exile, all but precludes this as the true reason for his banishment. The song is a romantic ditty about the hardships of a prostitute’s life that, by extension, concerns the ephemerality of the floating world. Nothing in it points to Oden no kata, just as nothing in the picture suggests a burlesque of the shogun’s concubine. It seems logical to assume that Itchō first wrote the song (meaning the lyrics) and then illustrated it. In fact, as noted previously, other pictures in the same album seem more seditious than *Asazuma Boat*: the boys’ playful transgression of the Laws of Compassion (fig. 16f), the suggestion that the Tokugawa rulers are slacking off (fig. 16s), the representations of untoward amorous pairings, and the temporary mixing of social types (figs. s, t) all contain subversive undertones.

As for the reasons behind Itchō’s exile, it is possible that he was punished in part for works such as *Fūzokuga ekan*, or possibly because of his involve-
ment with a satirical pamphlet on the subject of either one hundred prominent men or the same number of ladies/courtesans (as discussed in Chapter 4). This rumor might have telescoped into the Asazuma-boat motif, which was popular in song and dance, as reference to a ruler’s lovers was a common way of criticizing an authority figure for slacking off. Meiji readings of the story have interpreted the depiction of the willow (yanagi) as a reference to Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu (1658–1714), advisor to the shogun Tsunayoshi. The rumor about Itchō’s peripheral involvement with a murder and the report of his previous arrest, combined with his allusions to having been “lost in the tangled path,” make it difficult to believe that he was innocent of any transgression. The question is the degree to which his slightly subversive parodies played a part in his punishment. In any case, as we can garner from Baba Bunkō’s account and later versions of the same story, the painting Asazuma Boat was perceived by a growing majority—perhaps during Itchō’s lifetime, perhaps during the next generation, or perhaps only as a result of Bunkō’s mid-eighteenth-century tale—to be the reason for Itchō’s exile.

Asazuma boat became Itchō’s most overdetermined motif. Although never a major theme, it was taken up by many artists of song, dance, drama, and ukiyo-e, not just for the surface meanings of its subject (an ancient prostitute type), but also for the subversive connotations that it accrued from its popular association with Hanabusa Itchō and his exile. This association is most evident in the debate

16g Hanabusa Itchō. Asazuma Boat from Fūzokuga ekan (Album of Genre Paintings). Late 17th century. Album of 24 leaves; ink and color on silk. Ibaraki Prefectural Museum of History.
among intellectual writers about the true reasons for Itchō’s exile, which was fueled by Santō Kyōden’s 1804 biography of the artist in Kinsei kiseki kō. A little later in the nineteenth century, the theme became a veiled symbol of subversiveness in the oie sōdō (house-revolt) genre of Kabuki. While taking pains to repudiate the rumor that Asazuma Boat was the cause of Itchō’s exile, Kyōden simultaneously employed the motif in his fictional books to exploit subversive connotations that derived only from hearsay, as he knew too well. The recurring and contradictory uses of the Asazuma-boat motif in his work might be taken as symptomatic of the epistemological fissures around authorship that were occurring in the time of the Tanuma generation.

A number of extant paintings on the Asazuma-boat theme are signed Hanabusa Itchō, but most of them are of doubtful provenance. The only example that is beyond dispute is the Asazuma Boat found within Fūzokuga ekan (fig. 16g). This leaf is signed Gyōundō Chōko, a combination of Itchō’s pre-exile haikai name and his lay priest’s name, dating the work to sometime before his exile. This lavish album used to be in the collection of the Hitotsubashi branch of the ruling Tokugawa family (as mentioned in Chapter 1), but because that line of the family was only established in the generation after Itchō’s death, the album could not have entered the Hitotsubashi collection during the artist’s lifetime. Given the richness of the album, and the premise that artworks were usually exchanged between members of the same status group, it seems likely that the work was a commission from a member of the highest ranks of the samurai elite. Considering Itchō’s role as taikomochi to the samurai elite, it is probable that he produced the album for an ally among them. With its hints of transgression, in particular the insignia very much like the Tokugawa crest within the picture parodying the four sleepers (fig. 16s), the album may have been made for a knowing friend within Itchō’s circle. Even though no other convincing example of the Asazuma-boat motif by Itchō appears to be extant, the Fūzokuga ekan version should not be considered his one original painting of the motif, given the song’s popularity and Itchō’s tendency to repeat many of his designs. It is highly likely that Itchō made others, as he did with some of the motifs in the same album in which it is found.

Still, this Asazuma Boat serves well as a prototype. The innate harmony of its simple composition clearly identifies the work as Itchō’s. Stylistically, the painting is subtle, like all of Itchō’s output. The brushwork varies slightly: the willow’s dotted leaves are differentiated from the sinuous lines of its trunk and branches; the very fine outline of the lady’s face contrasts with the sinuous lines that define her robes. The lightness of the brushwork in the leaves, and the undulating lines in the tree trunk, mark Itchō’s autograph, as does the overall light pigmentation. The weight of the work is balanced by variations in the ink tones in the curving branches, the sinuous ripples in the water, and the flow of the calligraphy above.

The song, a kouta written by Itchō and published soon after, is inscribed in his hand on the upper left. Before the song, and just after the initial vertical seal, Itchō includes a rather long preface stating that the song is in the style of Ryūtatsu, an important founder of the kouta tradition. The hauntingly memorable lyrics, with much reiteration of the “ah” sound in Asazuma, are a poignant lament on the existence of a boat lady who never knows who her next partner will be. Translated for a sense of the whole, they run as follows:

Another, yet another, the coming and going of the waves, the misery of the Asazuma boat.
Alas, with whom must I lie today? With whom must I share my charms, share my charms?
This shameful pillow.
This life of never-ending falseness, bedding down near Mount Toko.
Well, such is life.

(Adashi adanami, yosete wa kaeru nami, asazuma-bune no asamashiya / Aa, mata no hi wa, tare ni chigiri o kawashite iro o, kawashite iro o, makura hazukashi / Itsuwari gachinaru, waga tokono ya ma / Yoshi sore totemo yo no naka)
The simple, well-designed composition is comprised of a handful of elements—lady, boat, willow tree, and inscription—and a few supporting touches. Rendered in light colors on silk, the image depicts a lady dressed in male court attire, seated alone in a shallow boat, under a willow tree. She represents a precursor to the yūjo of the Edo era. Her clothing and accoutrements—the tall gold eboshi (court hat) on her head, her loose white suikan (short jacket) over red and blue under-robes, the fan peeking out from her garments, and the small drum resting in front of her—identify her as a shirabyōshi (an entertainer-prostitute of the early medieval period). The boat points out into the water, the woman’s whitened face is presented in profile, and above her a willow branch echoes the flow of her long hair, which is tied with a ribbon in court fashion. Her presence in the boat identifies her additionally as a funagimi (boat lady), another type of prostitute-entertainer of the classical era, who would row out to larger boats to attract wealthy clients.

Itchō rendered this amalgamated prostitute type out of an imagined past. The Asazuma boat had figured in poetry from at least the medieval period. Prostitutes had most likely worked at the large and well-frequented port in a previous era; by Itchō’s time, however, Asazuma was defunct as a port, completely replaced in this function by the nearby port of Maebara. Indeed, the nature of the literary evidence available raises doubts as to whether such boat ladies ever frequented that spot at all. After all, the funagimi was a common poetic trope, derived from Chinese precedents. Yet during Itchō’s time, Asazuma—in addition to Eguchi, Kanzaki, and Muro—was considered one of the places where prostitution originated. Ihara Saikaku, in his 1682 novel Kōshoku ichidai otoko (The Life of an Amorous Man), compares the prostitutes of Asazuma to those of Muro to impart a sense of the loss of an elegant, mysterious past:

The beginnings of yūjo in this country came out of the Asazuma [port] of Kōshū and the Muro port of Banshū; now they have spread to every province. At Asazuma, they disappeared at some point, and now there are only women in humble hovels, working both day and night, weaving rustic kasuri cloth while the men pull in fishing nets. In the largest port of the Western province, however, the yūjo of Muro are not bested by their predecessors; their accomplishments and manners do not differ much from the yūjo of Osaka.

In his simple rendering, Itchō invented a convincing predecessor to the Edo prostitute in the figure that he designated as the Asazuma boat lady by means of a song. He set her in the past by dressing her as a shirabyōshi, as was done on stage; in fact, Baba Bunkō describes Itchō’s Asazuma boat lady as
wearing “stage dress.” Her shirabyōshi costume, with its eboshi and fan, is much like that of the main female character in the famous Kabuki play Mu-sama Dōjōji (The Maiden at Dōjōji), as seen in a playbill (e-banzuke) from 1753 (fig. 78). Notably, Edo-period artists did not always portray prostitutes in clothing of the past. For example, Okumura Masanobu (1686–1764), in a woodblock print from about 1710 entitled Riverboat of Love: Eguchi (Koi no kawabune Eguchi), depicts probably the most famous funagimi, a lady who worked the river at Eguchi, in contemporary dress, flanked by her kamuro and writing a love letter (fig. 79).

As with some of his other popular themes (such as taking shelter from the rain), Itchō invented a classic visual formula in Asazuma boat. Rendering visually—for the first time—motifs that had existed only within the realm of classical poetry, he was faced with a choice about whether to portray these subjects in the imagined past, to bring the figures up to date, or to make a mitate, a double vision, by mixing up the past and present. With taking shelter from the rain (which also has its roots in poetry), he brought the motif into the noisy present, thereby creating a slight parody of a classical theme. In the context of Fūzokuga ekan, the Asazuma boat prostitute nicely coincides with the adjacent scene of the Jewel River in the distant past. Again, absolutely no evidence exists that Itchō intended Asazuma Boat to be a parody of Oden no kata. This connection seems
to have happened only in the mind of the public.

The signature on Asazuma Boat in Fūzokuga ekan is remarkable for the way that it elaborates on authorship. After the headnote to the song, Itchō adds, almost as a postscript: “Tawabure ni mizukara egaki, mizukara shōka shi, mizukara sansu” (Playfully painted/written by myself, composed by myself, and inscribed by myself). This triple insistence that he personally rendered all aspects of the creation is rare for any artist. It is especially unusual to repeat mizukara (myself) three times. None of Itchō’s other works in this album are signed in a similar way, nor are any of his other extant works.

The way in which this unusual inscription may serve as tangible evidence that Itchō and others of his time divided their artistic practice conceptually deserves further research. The word egaki, meaning both “write” and “paint,” signifies the fluid boundary between text and image that remained until the Meiji period. Itchō’s unusual variant shōka (lyrics; shō meaning “stanzas of prose or poetry,” ka meaning “song”) seemingly refers to his insistence that he wrote the words to the song. San, in sansu (meaning “inscription”), emphasizes that Itchō himself brushed the inscription. (Traditionally, even in Itchō’s time, someone else would often inscribe an artist’s painting with his or her own poem.) Overall, Itchō’s postscript reflects his idea

of the all-encompassing persona of the artist: not only did he compose the lyrics, but he also rendered both song and image visually. This triple signature is all the more significant because signatures were often omitted in Itchō’s day (following earlier practice), depending on the type of patronage and the status of the painter.14 Broadly, the inscription can be interpreted as an example of the way that increased circulation had commodified art so that artists, including Itchō, more readily signed their works.15 More specifically, the signature is an indication that Itchō wished to be recognized for his authorship of the song and image, as well as for his erudite calligraphy.

Baba Bunkō’s account indicates that this motif was in extraordinary demand, in versions both by Itchō and his pupils.16 Although Bunkō’s tale is most likely exaggerated, the composition at least must have had the reputation of being popular. Four extant versions of the painting can be counted, along with a total of twenty different published versions of the theme. Additionally, the Asazuma-boat motif was reproduced in craftwork, on items from medicine cases to sword guards.17 A treasure trove of materials related to the theme published in a 1925 auction catalogue of the Matsusawa collection shows how popular it once was, with some collectors fixating solely on the subject and various painters and craftsmen willingly supplying their demand (fig. 80).18 This collection of objects also confirms that rich merchant families, as well as elite samurai such as the Hitotsubashi clan, collected works by Itchō—or, rather, works that they believed were by him—related to Asazuma boat. One kozuka (small sword guard) that depicts the theme has made its way to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (fig. 81). Although this comprises evidence that a certain demand existed for works depicting the Asazuma boat, none of these works conclusively dates from Itchō’s lifetime.

MEANINGS ACCRUED

Today, the Asazuma-boat theme is familiar to Japanese involved in any of the art practices that became popular during the Edo period. Unlike many other motifs found in traditional Japanese arts, it is not a completely anonymous creation: the name Hanabusa Itchō is still linked to the Asazuma-boat motif in explications of Kabuki dance, for instance.19 If, up until the early twentieth century, it was considered common knowledge that Itchō had created this motif, the rumor that it caused his exile is almost certainly the reason why.20

In the course of the Edo period, Itchō’s song and image were adapted to become a standard feature of the repertoires of various popular art forms: samisen songs, Kabuki dance, and woodblock prints. As shown by its publication in Matsu no ha in 1703, the
Suzuki Harunobu (ca. 1724–70). *Asazuma Boat*. Circa 1769–70. Woodblock print; ink and color on paper. 28 x 20.6 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
song likely became a part of the dance repertoire in the pleasure quarters from the time that Itchō wrote it. The first known performance of “Asazuma-bune” as a Kabuki dance dates to 1775, but the motif appeared in ukiyo-e even before these Kabuki performances. The earliest extant ukiyo-e prints on the theme are by Suzuki Harunobu (ca. 1724–70). In a work that can be dated to around 1760, a pubescent and almost androgynous standing figure, so typical of the Harunobu style, turns toward the viewer, yet seems to shy away (fig. 82). The gray boat and background set off the refined elegance of her robes. Cropped closely, this image contains little to recall the Itchō version other than the branch of willow, the boat, and the manner of dress. Knowing the influence of performance on Harunobu’s work, we might speculate that this print was inspired by a private staging of the dance. The same can be said for a much later ukiyo-e print by Hiroshige, dated to 1844–47 (fig. 83). Moon Watching on the Twenty-Sixth at Takanawa (Takanawa nijūroku no machi) clearly depicts a private performance of “Asazuma-bune.” At a restaurant, a dancer gets ready to perform on the occasion of moon-viewing in the seventh month: “waiting on the twenty-sixth,” as the print’s cartouche states. On this occasion, the Buddha Amida with the bodhisattvas Kannon and Seishi (Mahāsthamaprapta) were said
Establishing where Itchō was credited in print as the originator of “Asazuma-bune” helps us understand both how the Asazuma-boat motif was linked to him and how the concept of authorship was being socially constructed at the time. It is something of an anomaly that “Asazuma-bune” did not fade completely into anonymity, like so many of the songs that Itchō must have written. Kyōden’s Kinsei kiseki kō seems to have played a large part in the recovery of this aspect of Itchō’s persona. Yet if Itchō had not emphasized his authorship of the song with his tripartite signature, and his Hanabusa-school successors had not perpetuated his name, it is unlikely that Kyōden would have recovered Itchō’s authorship.

As mentioned previously, when “Asazuma-bune” was published in the Kyoto songbook Matsu no ha, compiled by Shūshōken in 1703, it appeared in the hauta (love songs) section of the third volume, where authorship is not indicated (figs. 67b, c). Printed under the title “Asazuma-bune” (which is not found in Itchō’s painting), the song has three verses in addition to the one inscribed by Itchō in Fūzokuga ekan. The first verse, which is inscribed on the painting and therefore certainly written by Itchō, is transcribed completely and accurately in easy-to-read kana. The repetition mark found in Itchō’s original, indicating the repeat of “share my charms” (kawashite iro o), caused confusion for later transcribers, but the mark is not used here; the phrase is simply repeated. We can only note the accurate transcription of the words and wonder if Itchō indeed wrote the other verses. Inclusion of the obvious title could certainly be a mechanical result of listing the song among other works in the table of contents. In other sections of the book, the songs are attributed to musicians; another song by Itchō, for example, is attributed to a certain Hanaichi. We can probably assume that Itchō was not given credit because only musicians are credited, and he was not a professional musician.

Although the introduction to the 1733 songbook Sanjūrokusei junimoto no chiri credits Itchō with an important role in the composition of a type of erudite
samisen song, the nagauta, Itchō’s name was not linked in print to any particular songs until Kyōden’s Kinsei kiseki kō appeared in 1804. It seems that Itchō could not be sure of being recognized as the writer of “Asazuma-bune” in his own time, and this may be why he so adamantly asserts in his painting that he composed its words. As we shall see, Kyōden claimed to have learned of Itchō’s authorship of “Asazuma-bune” from attributed manuscript copies.

By the early nineteenth century, Kabuki librettists had achieved rank within the official system of professional rankings. Thus Sakurada Jisuke II (1768–1829) was credited in print as the librettist when he used Itchō’s song as the source for a nagauta that he composed for a Kabuki song and dance performance in 1820. In a collection of Kabuki songs (shohon) published for fans soon after what proved to be a very popular performance, Jisuke’s name appears along with those of the composer, the performing musicians, and the Kabuki star. Only the names of the performing musicians are displayed in the e-banzuke, however.

The “Asazuma-bune” song was reproduced alongside the painting in Suzuki Rinshō’s afore-mentioned Itchō gafu in 1770 (fig. 70e). Itchō’s authorship of the painting is not especially noted, nor is his signature or seal indicated. In fact, none of the works reproduced in Itchō gafu bear a signature or seal. Because these reproductions were included in a monographic art manual titled with Itchō’s name, however, the viewer of the album could assume that the paintings were Itchō’s.

As in Matsu no ha, the title “Asazuma-bune” is found in the table of contents to Itchō gafu; it also appears on the right side of the image. The two pages offer a cropped, compressed view of the motif’s major components. The composition basically accords with Itchō’s version: the willow and hillock are to the right; the shirabyōshi sits in profile, facing left. This image is not an exact reproduction of the picture in Fūzokuuga ekan, however; the details are slightly altered. The front branch of the tree, for instance, twists around in the opposite direction. Moreover, the brushwork is more exaggeratedly varied than Itchō’s, with more of a contrast between the wide broken brush of the tree’s trunk and the diminutive strokes of its descending branches. Whereas a light wash defines the hillock in Itchō’s
original painting, the Rinshō image outlines the edges of the hillock with a sharp, “hammered” stroke, and then adds short, triangular “axe” strokes. Additional differences are seen in the reeds, which here are tall and well defined; and the woman’s robes, which display a chrysanthemum pattern and many more folds. Overall, Rinshō’s image places more emphasis on varied brushwork, reflecting the mannerisms of literati painting, which was a prevalent practice by the end of the eighteenth century.

The reproduction of this work raises questions about the assumed function of gafu, for this image in particular and the album format in general. More than almost any of the other images in the album, “Asazuma-bune” contains visual mechanisms appropriate to the reproduction of a painting. Along with only one of the other images in the book, it includes directions for coloration (as noted in Chapter 5): “Eboshi gold, top white with silver crests, hakama red.” The image is not transcribed with absolute accuracy; rather, a different kind of authenticity is conveyed in the exaggerated brushwork, which reproduces the original more distinctly for the reader who knows how to use a brush. Even so, Itchō’s original design is echoed in the printed reproduction. It bears repeating that, beyond serving as copybooks for artistic practice, these books were visual records that could be perused for pleasure or for reference. It would seem that versions of Itchō’s Asazuma Boat were not readily available to everyone in the mid-eighteenth century. This gafu certainly disseminated the motif, making it easier for later ukiyo-e artists to adopt it into their repertoire.

The song is reproduced to the upper left of the shirabyōshi. The mixture of kanji (Chinese characters) and kana employed here is very similar to that used by Itchō in his inscription; the wide characters seem to be in Itchō’s style as well. Differences are present, however, and most significantly, Rinshō’s version is not wholly accurate: the repeat of kawashite iro o, indicated with a repetition mark in Itchō’s version, is elided. Perhaps this is the sort of inadvertent omission that is inevitable over time. But it may also show that Rinshō was unfamiliar with the rhythms of samisen; and more importantly, that, as Itchō’s artistic ideas were passed down through generations in the Hanabusa school, the image—rather than the song—was of primary concern.

**KYŌDEN’S FACTS**

In and of itself, Itchō’s Asazuma Boat seems to be merely an agreeable depiction of an imagined funaigimi of the past, with a touching song on the same theme. Any further depth that the picture might claim would seem to come from empathizing with the figure and her circumstances. Knowing that the image was widely taken to be the reason behind Itchō’s exile, however, makes us question the history of its reception closely. In 1757, more than thirty years after Itchō’s death, Baba Bunkō was the first to publically allege (through a circuitous narrative) that this rendering was a satire of Oden, the shogun’s concubine. The next important source on the subject is the discussion that Santō Kyōden chose to include just after Itchō’s biography in Kinsei kiseki kō.

If Bunkō’s version was a main source for the popular Edo-period view that Asazuma Boat was the cause of Itchō’s exile, Kyōden’s commentary in Kinsei kiseki kō has been the basis upon which writers since then have verified Itchō’s authorship. Kyōden’s dense text is significant, first of all, because it refutes the rumor set forth in Bunkō’s tale. Yet, reading Kyōden’s text against Bunkō’s, another level is perceived in the writers’ contrasting aims. Just as Bunkō’s account participates in the popular construction of the artist-rebel, Kyōden, in his scholarly manner, reifies the writer in general as one who creates out of tradition and then becomes the rightful owner of his creation. In this discussion, authorial truth depends on accuracy and attribution, though Kyōden’s transcription and research were not, in fact, entirely accurate.

As mentioned in the last chapter, Kyōden was at the center of a circle of popular authors of gesaku. His public notoriety only increased after he was handcuffed for fifty days in 1791, at the beginning of
the Kansei Reforms, a series of reactionary policy changes instituted to reverse many of the liberalizing measures of the previous decade. After this experience, Kyōden was more reflexive about his own authorship, and increasingly applied the kōshō gaku methodology of “investigation of texts” to the history of the Edo culture in which he participated. Kinsi kiseki kō was Kyōden’s first attempt to legitimate the heterodox playfulness of his gesaku endeavors by means of reference to previous texts. Within the work, the discussion of Itchō’s Asazuma Boat takes up as much space as Itchō’s biography; starting at the far edge of a page, it is marked by the number “two” (figs. 73b, c, h).

The following translation is from the original edition of Kyōden’s book:

Thoughts on the Inscription to Asazuma Boat

The colophon to Asazuma Boat:

Another, yet another, the coming and going of the waves, the misery of the Asazuma boat. Alas, with whom must I lie today? With whom must I share my charms? This shameful pillow. This life of never-ending falseness, bedding down near Mount Toko. Well, such is life.

Hokusō Itchō, painted and inscribed (with marks for seals)

These words, as copied in the world, are full of mistakes. I found an authentic version in the collection of Konryūtōkan to copy for this edition.

When he was young, Itchō was given a poem as a present from a friend who had visited the capital. By Yasoküken Michikatsu, and titled “Boat Entertainers,” it read,

The promises of an Asazuma boat [lady] are not shallow like the name; who will my next liaison be?

Written in Michikatsu’s own hand, the gift delighted Itchō and he treasured it deeply. One year, when Itchō went to Hikone in Omi, and was going here and there to see the famous places, he was met by the sight of the desolate town of Asazuma (Omi Province, Handa township). Itchō recalled the poem by Michikatsu, and he was inspired. Presently, he painted the motif of the Asazuma boat, and he made up the kouta “Asazuma Boat” to accompany it.

There is a poem by Kikaku published in Gogenshi:

Under the willow, a drum that awaits song.

This must have been an inscription to a related painting by Itchō. It is said that, later, Itchō sang this himself at a party at a lord’s mansion with Ichikawa-kengyō (who lived at Kanda Nabemachi) accompanying him on samisen. As for the painting Asazuma Boat, there are various outrageous things said about it. All this is certainly falsehood. The picture that everyone knows, which depicts a yūjo wearing an eboshi and suikan, is a version that Itchō did in his late years. Originally, Itchō painted just an eboshi and drum left strewn about the boat. (This is what I heard from a member of the Hanabusa school, who heard it from someone who signs himself the “old man.” I have thought about it, and note my thoughts below.)

I do not think the only source of this song was Michikatsu’s poem.

Roppyaku-ban utawa sense by Gokyōgoku Sessho:

Coming and going, the “pillow of waves” belongs to no one; the reflection of the boat is never the same.

(Dare to naku, yoseteha kaeru nami makura, ukitaru fune no kage moto domezua)

Shinzoku dairin Miscellaneous “Courtesan of the Crags” by Sanekage [1661–1738]:

(Kono nenuru Asazuma-bune no asakaranu, chigiri o tare ni mata kawasuran)
The empty “pillow of waves” lapping at the shore; for whom does the hut in the shadow of the pines wait?

(Adanami no, makura sadamenu kawagishi ni, dare to mare toka matsu kage no yado)

Other things have occurred to me. “Mount Toko” is a play on toko [bed] . . .

The songs of Ryūtatsu were still sung in the Genroku era, and Itchō wrote the words to many such songs. Of them, “Asazuma Boat” and “Eastern Clouds” . . . were especially popular, and the men-about-town [ta-ware-o] of the time loved to sing them. Evidencing this, “Asazuma Boat” was published in the book of songs Matsu no ha in Genroku 16 [1703]. It is found in the hauta section, with four verses as follows:

[The song is reproduced here as in Matsu no ha, although the repetition of kawashite iro o is omitted.]

I believe that these words were put to the style of Ryūtatsu’s music. The song was out in the world, and Itchō inscribed the first stanza on his painting. Itchō added “Shiki e” as a later colophon to his painting: “When I was young, under the spell of the empty, empty waves [adashi adanami], a person of the night, returning in the morning hours as light rain fell, it distressed me not to see the glare of dawn.” Itchō surely wrote this nostalgically, thinking of how he used to sing this song on his way to and from the pleasure quarters.

{The headnote to the song inscribed on the painting refers to a different kouta published in the 1672 Shochiku shoshin shū:}

“One with the Torn Sedge Hat”
The torn sedge hat, YANYA, the cord broken, OOEEE! we can’t wear it again, EESANSA, YAASANSA, nor throw it out!
(Yabure sugegasa, YANYA, shime o gakireteino, OOEEE, sarani kimososu, EESANSA, YAASANSA, sutemosezu)
This is a song by Ryūtatsu. It was popular in the Kanbun era, accompanied by samisen or shakuhachi. Itchō’s headnote to “Asazuma Boat” . . . means that this song by Ryūtatsu is long transmitted. Sedge is a famous product of Omi, so the link is to Omi. Ryūtatsu lived in Sakai in Izumi Province and was famous for kouta. I have put his detailed biography in my Kotto-shū. Many of the songs written by Itchō had their melodies composed by the blind musician Hanaichi. Itchō’s kouta “Eastern Clouds” is also published in Matsu no ha, under the name of Hanai-chi. He is the one who wrote the melody, not the words.

Another thought I have concerns a poem published in Shōbikin. As Kyōden himself remarks, the deepest underlying reason for printing the song and this exegesis was to correct the “mistakes” (ayamari) and the “outrageous things said” (araru kotodomo o tsutahi tsutafuru to) about the painting. His aforementioned response to criticism made by a member of the Hanabusa school—smashing the printing blocks, erasing Itchō’s dates of exile, and correcting the words of the song—evidences how delicate a matter he considered an accurate rendering to be. By emphasizing the many poetic sources behind the song and image, Kyōden strongly implies that “Asazuma-bune” could not have been intended as a parody of Oden no kata, although he does not address the rumor explicitly. He asserts that the painting and song were directly inspired by Itchō’s visit to the town of Asazuma and recollection of a poem that he had received, written by Yasokuken Michikatsu (1556–1610), a poet of the recent past. Kyōden then supplements this information with other possible poetic sources, suggesting strongly that Itchō’s
song and painting comprised a contribution to an ongoing artistic tradition. In this narrative, the artist is an originator within the flow of a poetic legacy.

Just as Kyōden lauds the song’s intertextuality, he valorizes Itchō by means of his poetic relationship to his contemporaries and predecessors. The claim that “Sugegasa-bushi” (One with the Torn Sedge Hat) was a song by Ryūtatsu enables us to understand Itchō’s reference to him in his inscription on the painting. Kyōden implies that Itchō’s original version of Asazuma Boat depicted just a hat and drum in a boat, in response to a poem by his haikai compatriot Kikaku. No remaining versions of Asazuma Boat show just a hat and drum, and a recent scholar doubts that the poem by Kikaku cited here was inscribed on a painting by Itchō. Here we most likely see Kyōden’s wishful creation of Itchō’s symbiotic relationship with Kikaku.

Kyōden’s exegesis does not contain detailed explanation. The reader must work to draw conclusions from the material that is presented. Much of Kyōden’s underlying argument disputes what he perceives as false beliefs about the Asazuma-boat motif, and much relates to sources of influence. Yet Kyōden’s discussion also explains the work in terms of the artist. Relating the song to Itchō’s colophon “Shiki e-batsu,” by painting a scene of Itchō walking home at dawn, singing, “When I was young, under the spell of the empty, empty waves” (wakakari-shi toki adashi adanami no yorubeni mayoi), Kyōden reminds the reader of how Itchō’s pursuits in the pleasure quarters led to exile. Following a “man and his work” type of criticism, Itchō’s song is seen as intrinsically related to his fate in life.

Kyōden was a professional author. As one of the most successful writers of his period, he had a formative influence on several subgenres of gesaku. Whenever a work of his became immensely popular (as in this case), other publishers pirated it and Kyōden lost income. Partly for this reason, Kyōden was invested in distinguishing the facts of authorship. Thus he was motivated to give an authentic version of Itchō’s creation, and also to understand the authorial intention of the original work. With his naming of so many sources, Kyōden erased the possibility that Itchō’s painting was intended as a transgression against the authorities. Kyōden consecrated Itchō’s work, but he also delimited it as the creator’s rightful property, even while rooted in tradition.

Though quite different in aim and method, Kyōden’s thorough sifting of the sources for Itchō’s song and painting bears comparison with Bunkō’s earlier tale, which ascribed the cause of Itchō’s exile to the painting. Bunkō and Kyōden were both public figures who were punished, and gained notoriety, for “slips of the pen” (hikkashi), the euphemism for seditious writing. Both were involved with unorthodox literary movements of their times: Bunkō with haikai and Kyōden with gesaku. Both of their texts, moreover, insist on the existence of hidden truths within the painting. In very different ways, both texts are deeply concerned with “authorization”—or the making of the author.

**KYŌDEN’S PLAYFULNESS**

The latter half of the Edo period was a time when genres and schools of the visual and literary arts expanded and differentiated themselves, and writers and authors became increasingly professionalized as the markets for their works grew. The Asazuma-boat motif began to appear regularly in popular media only after the Kansei Reforms. From the early 1790s, Edo culture—having flourished in the previous decade under the corrupt yet lenient regime of the senior counselor Tanuma Okitsugu—was subjected to the most censorious of the three reform periods of the Tokugawa era under the new senior counselor, Matsudaira Sadanobu. Authorities made an example of Kyōden, in particular, by his aforementioned shackling in 1791. Afterward, Kyōden stopped writing kibyōshi, a genre that had become openly critical of governing parties; most scholars view this cessation as Kyōden’s direct response to the censorship imposed by the reforms. Many claim, as well, that Kyōden’s turn to the serious, scholarly stance of the “investigation of things” was also a consequence of the Kansei Reforms.
Kyōden shows a greater preoccupation with the Asazuma-boat motif than any other writer of his time. It was not only the topic of his close exegesis in Kinsei kiseki kō, but made its way into at least four of his “playful works.” The earliest reference to Asazuma Boat is found in his kibyōshi of 1785, Kakuchū chōji (A Clove in the Quarters). In a typical back-and-forth between a contemporary narrative and classical references, the story uses Zhuangzi’s dream about the butterfly as a narrative device. The tale begins by describing two attractive young wakashū who are classical bugaku performers of Kochō, the butterfly dance famous from Genji monogatari. The circuitous narrative includes Itchō as a character and plays off his Asazuma-boat composition. As one of the young men brings a courtesan out of Yoshiwara, Hanabusa Itchō (named in the text) appears on the bank and offers his house as a hiding spot (fig. 84). The text explains that the image of the escaping couple is rendered in a style similar to the painting Asazuma Boat, but indeed the picture, with its older elite samurai poling the boat, looks very much like the image of Oden no kata and the shogun that Bunkō described.

The motif’s next appearance in Kyōden’s fiction bears even closer analysis. E-kyōdai, published by Tsutaya Jūzaburō and the house of Tsuruya Kie-mon, and illustrated by Kyōden himself, appeared in 1794, three years after Kyōden’s punishment. The book’s title page describes its content as shinshi gesaku (newly published playful works), making a specific link to the word “playful” (the character for tawamure) as used by Itchō in his signature to Asazuma Boat. The book is thus a rich source for understanding how work termed “playful” crossed visual and textual boundaries. It is also a crucial starting place for understanding Kyōden’s role in transforming the haikai sensibility into a recognized genre called giga. Not at all satirical in a political sense, the humor in E-kyōdai instead addresses ordinary life.

E-kyōdai is an exercise in drawing unexpected conclusions based on analogies of things not usually compared. Kyōden states in his preface that he came upon the ideas for the comparisons while clearing the refuse from the trash can of his mind. After concocting a lineage of artists who did this playful type of painting, he states that no one has yet surpassed the “fresh concepts” (shinzu) of the “mad pictures” (kyōga) by Itchō. The preface goes on to demonstrate how the playful mode works by linking high and low. Mustaches are used to connect people, fish, and objects; sedge hats relate people of all ranks in life. Kyōden states that people laughed at his jokes and urged him to publish them in a book. He ends his preface by naming the source of the title, as was customary: he borrowed it from Kikaku’s book Ku kyōdai (Brother Poems). Finally, Kyōden adds that he wrote the preface himself because someone needed to praise what would become a commodity on the open market.

The Asazuma boat lady appears in Kyōden’s very first example (fig. 85). The “older brother” (ani) is a manzai (comedic) performer and the “younger brother” (otōto) is the Asazuma boat lady. They are implicitly compared in the images, and some very contemporary economic tensions arise out of the comparison. The manzai comedian, who traditionally received sake in exchange for New Year’s performances, voices his irritation plainly:

Here I am again, looking across the Sumida River—what can I say? Oh, I’m all sobered up from the New Year’s sake. This isn’t at all like my home in Mikawa.

The “younger brother,” the Asazuma boat lady, is paired with a play on the poem that Kyōden attributes to Michikatsu in Kinsei kiseki kō:

A not-at-all-shallow alliance of the Asazuma boat tonight—now who will it be?

(Koyoi neru Asazuma-bune no asakaranu chigiri o dare ni mata kawasu ran)

This verse is followed by a haikai poem signed Shūshiki, a doyenne active in the Kikaku school of haikai:

The mist that alights on the prow of the boat, remaining tears from our encounter.

(Funabari no tsuyu wa, / morone no namida kana)

A page in the back of the book offers a seemingly nonsensical explanation for these sibling comparisons. The stream-of-consciousness prattle begins
with the first phrase of Itchō’s song, “Adashi adanami, yosete ha kaeru nami,” then brings up money, referring to the boat lady by the contemporary vulgar term for boat prostitutes, funamanjū. Next, taking the stance of someone on the shore viewing the Asazuma boat, the narrative voice expresses the wish that melons were for sale in the boat rather than the woman. The ramblings descend into a discussion of swords.

Although anyone who knew the song or image could presumably associate the motif with him, Itchō goes unmentioned in the main text of E-kyōdai. The image, however, is more similar to Itchō’s than the earlier reworking within Kakuchū chōji. Following up on his praise for Itchō in the preface, Kyōden makes Itchō’s famous motif the first example of variations of giga, thus creating a link to a famous antecedent in order to borrow the aura of his reflected fame and notoriety. The fact that a writer would identify himself with someone who played with subversive modes indicates the growing social recognition of the artist and writer as social rebel.

The inherent malleability of the Asazuma-boat motif is used to full advantage in E-kyōdai, which is primarily an exploitation of the possibilities of giga. For instance, the artist’s identification (playful or serious) with the victims of an open market is just one interpretation of the motif that is operative in this example. Kyōden uses the yūjo here as a symbol of cold economic exchange. And the comparison between the Asazuma boat prostitute and a male entertainer dissolves gender differences in the world of performers. Kyōden was not the only artist of the time to portray the figure of the yūjo empathetically as a parallel to the artist’s prostitution of himself in the market. Certainly one aspect of the broad usage of the yūjo in the arts during Japan’s Early Modern period was the analogy that could easily be drawn between entertainers and prostitutes offering themselves to any paying client, and authors and artists producing books, paintings, prints—and indeed merchants providing many types of goods—for a faceless public.

Kyōden later inserted the Asazuma-boat motif into two of his illustrated gōkan; the first was Iwato kagura tsuru gi no itoku (Kagura Dance and the Sword), released from 1808 to 1810 by the publisher Iwatoya Kizaburō, and illustrated by Katsukawa Shuntei (1770–1820). The references to Itchō’s “Asazuma-bune” contained in this work are more textual than visual. The reference to Asazuma boat in the second gōkan is overt in its title: Asazuma-bune yanagi mikazuki (New Moon, Willow, and Asazuma Boat). Utagawa Kuniyoshi was commissioned to illustrate the book, which was published in 1813 by Maruya Kihachi. Kuniyoshi, the master of actor prints, dramatically stages the figures throughout the book; indeed, the preface states that the book is constructed to be like theater. A visual link to Itchō’s image is made in the explanatory pictures placed above the characters in the story when they are initially introduced. A typical Itchō-derived Asazuma boat picture is placed on the right, while to the left the boat lady’s lowly incarnation in the book, Okan, is shown avenging herself on the retainers of her enemy (fig. 86a). Much later in the book, Kuniyoshi demonstrates more fully his skill at staging this fighting scene (fig. 86b). In the center we see the boat lady holding two ruffians whom she is about to toss out of her boat by the scruffs of their necks; in the lower left the ruffians have landed on shore, and in the upper left her boyfriend pummels one of them on the far bank.

Both of these gōkan feature revenge plots that contain several love pairings and cases of mixed identity. And both books reveal the fluid relationship between Kabuki and the other arts that was characteristic of the early nineteenth century. Books were by then widely circulated (thanks to lending libraries), and the readership of gōkan notably extended to women, who were also frequenting the theaters. The appeal of these strong female protagonists in gōkan has been causatively linked to the increase in feminine readership. In fact, a general rise in powerful female protagonists did characterize Kabuki and ukiyo-e at this time. Certainly we may imagine how many women readers might have projected themselves into the character of Okan, delighting in how this lady of the boat overcame her male adversaries.
Kyōden was not the only artist involved in the creation of the genre of playful works to exploit the multifaceted significance of the Asazuma boat. By repetitively employing this motif in various genres of books, however, he certainly revealed many sides to it. In Kakuchū chōji, he seemed to take his cue from the image as it was described by Bunkō. Then, in his introduction to the playful E-kyōdai, he presented the boat prostitute empathetically as a victim of cold economic exchange. A decade later, in Kinsei kiseki kō, he adopted a more scholarly stance, placing the motif clearly within the history of poetry and asserting the author’s right to his new version of it. Lastly, in not just one but two of his gōkan, Kyōden appropriated the image to serve his own fictional purposes, overturning the submissiveness of the Asazuma boat lady in the process. In taking away the overlay of rumor that she was a parody of Oden, he was left with only a yūjo, one who could be empowered, ironically, in her reincarnation as a low-ranking funamantjū.

In Kakuchū chōji and E-kyōdai, Kyōden does not explicitly explain that the Asazuma-boat motif is the legendary reason for Itchō’s exile, although his use of Itchō’s name in the former shows that he must have known about it. The same legend indirectly adds a subversive connotation to the narratives of Kyōden’s later gōkan. Kyōden asserts Itchō’s authorship of the song in Kinsei kiseki kō, but in his light, playful works, he easily appropriates the motif to his own ends.

According to the Kabuki dance historian Furuido Hideo, “Asazuma-bune” first appeared as a Kabuki dance in 1775, and then again in 1790, just before the Kansei Reforms. These dances reveal just how malleable the motif could be within Kabuki: in the 1775 performance, a tea-seller momentarily poses like the Asazuma boat lady; and in the 1790 performance, gender is reversed and a handsome young retainer is cast as a “male Asazuma.” From what we can tell of these performances, little or no allusion was made to Itchō’s authorship; Asazuma boat simply functioned as a trope for a playful tryst.

Three decades later, in 1820, the motif was adapted as a classic Kabuki song and dance called “Nami makura tsuki no Asazuma” (Asazuma Moon: A Pillow of Waves) by the aforementioned Sakurada Jisuke II, and put to music by Kineya Sakichi, for a performance that starred Bandō Mitsugorō III (1775–1831). Verbally a deep pool of poetic allusions, the second stanza quotes Michikatsu’s Asazuma song; mentions Risan, the mountain near the location where the Tang emperor courted Yang Guifei; and then cites Itchō’s song. The only subversive connotation that can be gleaned from this stanza is embedded in the combined mention of the emperor’s concubine with the partial quotation from Itchō’s song. The entire performance was poetically linked by the familiar conceit of “moon, snow, and flower,” with the Asazuma-boat motif falling under the category of moon.

Actor prints of this popular performance were produced. (As the name for the genre suggests, the actor is given prominence in this medium; secondarily acknowledged is the artist.) A rendering of the performance by the famous Utagawa Toyokuni (1769–1825) was available for fans for one sen (one-hundredth of a yen) at ukiyo-e shops, or perhaps at a concession stand inside the theater (fig. 87). Here the elongated head, a mark of the Utagawa style, well describes the actor, Bandō Mitsugorō. Shown in the typical three-quarter view, he gazes to his right, toward the distant horizon. His left sleeve, of rich green brocade, is flung behind his head, forming a semicircular frame behind his face. With his right knee pulled upward, he is poised for action.
Little is delicate in this rendering. Although his hands are hidden, as was typical of an onnagata (female impersonator), his build is square and broad beneath the fabric. The boat floats on waves that are especially rough. Beside the moon appear the main words of the print’s title: “The dance of the moon, snow, and flower.” In this color “brocade print” (nishiki-e), the charisma of the actor emanates from the elaborateness of his costume. The conventional poetic linkage to the moon found in the Kabuki dance performances here becomes a feature in ukiyo-e, as it will largely remain.

In an entirely different vein, in 1819, just a year before Jisuke’s classic song and dance, the foremost Kabuki dramatist, Tsuruya Nanboku IV (1755–1829), inserted Itchō into an oie sōdō drama, Ume ni yanagi wakaba no Kaga zome (The Fresh Willow and Plum Tainted by Kaga). An advertisement for the performance, illustrated with the Asazuma boat, makes reference to Itchō.44

In a twist not unusual for Kabuki, the play is not about the Kaga rebellion of the late sixteenth century, as its title suggests, but rather concerns the Yanagisawa revolt of Tsunayoshi’s time. During the course of the eighteenth century, many stories and rumors competed with Oden’s tale as indications of the profligacy of the shogun Tsunayoshi. One such story concerned another lady, Osame, a prominent character in the legend of the Yanagisawa revolt.45 In the story, the aforementioned samurai Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu, Tsunayoshi’s advisor, is the main figure of blame. With Yanagisawa’s encouragement, his wife, Osame, becomes intimate with Tsunayoshi. When she conceives a boy, Yanagisawa and Osame plot to have Tsunayoshi adopt the child as his heir. The plot culminates in resistance by some of the retainers against Tsunayoshi, resulting in the shogun’s suicide. Despite a complete lack of basis in fact, this story was fueled by the sudden death of Tsunayoshi.

The basic plot of Nanboku’s play follows this story, and the drama contains characters with disguised names based on the shogun Tsunayoshi, Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu, and Osame. Moreover, one of the characters is based on Itchō: Hanabusa Issen, with slightly different characters used for the family name. (Such disguised names were commonplace in Kabuki, which was not allowed to depict current events.) The intricate revenge plot is set among townspeople rather than officials of the shogunate, and depends on a number of contrivances; for example, a golden duck is stolen from Issen, who manages to recover it in the course of the play.

While Itchō is made a character in the play, the role of the Asazuma boat is indirect and entirely visual. Although the motif is not mentioned in the script, two references to it are made in the poster (tsuji banzuke) that advertised the coming play on street corners (fig. 88). The first of these references is quite noticeable. Prominently displayed in the foreground of the main picture is the Asazuma boat, identified by its orientation, the overarching willow, and the lady in an eboshi, here seated in the bow, with her drum inexplicably floating in the water. A viewer who knew the legend of Itchō’s depiction of Oden and Tsunayoshi in the Asazuma boat would recognize the shogun as the male poling the boat in striped hakama. Following this same logic gained from knowledge of popular rumor, the man seated in the middle of the boat in luxurious attire would be recognized as Tsunayoshi’s supposedly corrupt advisor Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu. Tsunayoshi, with the gazes of the others fixed upon him, is at the crux of this lampoon. Yet the box upon which the seated advisor leans is marked “Yanagibashi”—another reference to the minister and also the name of a bridge on one of the main routes to the pleasure quarters. Subsumed into the context of the Yanagisawa revolt, the lady in the boat is no longer Oden but Osame. Much less evidently, the Asazuma boat is referenced again, this time in writing, at the bottom of the poster. Kabuki posters of this sort listed the actual roles performed, and the actors who played them; after this roster was a listing of “blank” roles, or roles not actually performed by the actors credited to them (the greater the number, the higher the actor’s status). The blank role of Asazuma, incorporating the usual characters for Asazuma, can be found within the list (eighth from the left).

Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu may have been all the
more readily recognized in this Kabuki poster because, in recent decades, the aforementioned senior counselor Tanuma Okitsugu, whose lax policies had allowed Edo culture to thrive for sixteen years, was perceived as Yanagisawa’s historical parallel. The fact that this play could be produced in Edo a generation later demonstrates how popular culture continued to test the bounds of censorship. Like the appearance of the Asazuma boat on the poster, the disguised presence of Itchō in this story (in which he played no historical part) shows how his name and this motif were becoming veiled signs of transgression.

The Asazuma-boat motif underwent a transformation during the Meiji period. With the downfall of the Tokugawa shogunate and subsequent restoration of the Meiji emperor to power, the subversive political allusions that had only been hinted at in Kabuki became overt. Just eight years after the Meiji Restoration, in 1875, the most famous Kabuki playwright of the latter half of the nineteenth century, Kawatake Mokuami (1816–93), made the Asazuma-boat motif a key element in his play Ura-omote yanaqi no uchiwa-e (The Front and Back of the Willow Painting on the Fan). He even linked the name Taga Chōko to the motif as its originator, as Kyōden had done in his kibyōshi in 1785. The play proved immensely popular with the public and en-

88 Poster (tsuji banzuke) for the Kabuki play Ume ni yanaqi wakaba no Kaga zome (The Fresh Willow and Plum Tainted by Kaga) by Tsuruya Nanboku IV (1755–1829). 1819. Woodblock print; ink on paper. Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum, Waseda University.
joyed repeat performances. Yet this Mokuami play is far from a simple political allegory. If the Nanboku play contains shattered pieces of a mirror reflecting bits of social satire, then the Mokuami play has taken these splinters and patched them together with numerous others to make a mosaic that reflects rumors with many different distortions.

In *Ura-omote yanagi no uchiwa-e*, the world (*sekai*) is split into a “back” (*ura*) of lords and ladies of the past and a “front” (*omote*) of present-day townspeople, as was common in Kabuki at the time. In this way, events unfold in layers. The basic drama, derived from the anonymous manuscript *Gokoku onna taiheiki* (*Protecting the Realm: The Women’s Taiheiki*), is once more about an intrigue over succession. The characters equivalent to Osame and Yanagisawa (in both the front and back worlds) try to gain position and wealth through an affair and the conception of an illegitimate child with the shogun. The plot, which involves both *omote* and *ura* versions of Tsunayoshi, Yanagisawa, and Osame, ultimately results in the death of the shogun and his lady. Although Itchō is not a character (as he was in the Nanboku play), Taga Chōko is the focus of discussion in several scenes as the notorious painter of *Asazuma Boat*.

A page from the illustrated playbill from the 1875 performance depicts the *ura* realm of the past at the top, and the townspeople’s *omote* world at the bottom (fig. 89). As the cloudlike bubble emanating from the woman seated in the house indicates, the scene that includes the Asazuma boat is distanced as merely a dream. In the dream, Osame is seated in the boat, flanked by Tsunayoshi, who poles it, and Yanagisawa, at whom she casts a knowing glance. Ohara maidens dance on the shore to the left (a performance within the performance), while in the background someone beats a dog. Within the play, this reference to Tsunayoshi’s hated Laws of Compassion turns out to be merely a performance as well.

Toyohara Kunichika (1835–1900), a member of the Utagawa school who specialized in actor prints during the Meiji period, depicted the debut of this Kabuki performance in a triptych that was sold in ukiyo-e shops for one sen per sheet. When the play was produced again eight years later, in 1883, he portrayed it once more (fig. 90). As was usual in these prints, Kunichika shows the penultimate *mie* (frozen-moment) pose when Tsunayoshi locks rolled-eyed gazes with Osame. Yanagisawa, the evil minister caught up in his ambitions, watches a swallow dive over the water. The deep-red hue pop-
ular in Meiji prints here brings out the purple of Tsunayoshi’s kerchief, the gold of the eboshi, and the blue of Yanagisawa’s shaven pate, intensifying the atmosphere of intrigue. The rough trunk of the tree and a few dangling branches are all that is shown of the willow. Likewise the Asazuma boat, as if absorbed into the drama as a sign of illicit political scheming, is barely indicated between the figures.

About a century before, the Asazuma boat had provided no more than a site for a playful tryst in a Kabuki dance. Originally occupied by just one yūjo—whether dressed simply, as in Itchō’s original, or sumptuously, as in Toyokuni’s version—the boat gained a shogun and his minister as the Meiji period got underway, and was available for purchase by the Kabuki-loving public. Flanked by these two men, the Asazuma boat lady still stands both for the yūjo of the past and the corruptive potential of women’s sexuality, but the legend of Itchō has transformed her into a sign of the hidden corruption in the Tokugawa regime.

In the Meiji period, a depiction of the Asazuma boat was chosen to represent the legacy of the Utagawa school to the new nation. A couple of years after the debut of the Mokuami drama, Kunichika chose to submit Asazuma Boat (Asazuma-bune) as his entry for the Domestic Industrial Exposition (Nai-koku Kangyō Hakurankai) of 1877 (fig. 91).\(^8\) Produced in the unusually large ō-ōban size, the print is splendid in its generous application of metallic pigment. Dressed in an exquisite green robe over red hakama, the boat lady wears a purple scarf that suggestively emerges from between her legs as she raises a knee as if about to rise. The boat is carpeted with a red fabric ornamented with gold. The fronds of a willow descend into the frame, and reeds peek out just under its trunk, which passes diagonally through the picture. A mountain, suggestive of Mount Tsukuba because of its double-crested shape—thus rising above Yoshiwara, not Asazuma—dominates the background with a golden mist at its base. With so much gold in the picture, the lady’s eboshi is black, echoing the angle of the thick branch above. In this context especially, the ukiyo-e medium has loosened its ties to Kabuki, and considering the debates raging at the time to define the fine arts (bijutsu) in contrast to crafts (geijutsu), the picture becomes a beautified, nostalgic gesture toward the recent past.

How did Itchō’s name remain so closely linked to his *Asazuma Boat* in the course of the Edo period that everyone seemed to know that the painting was the cause of his exile (even if this was false)? The circumstance almost seems accidental. Even if Itchō claims in the extant version that he drew the picture, composed the song, and brushed the inscription himself, this album leaf and other versions were too little known to have stopped the motif from being absorbed anonymously into the vernacular. If it were not for Bunkō and Kyōden, Itchō’s connection to the work might have been forgotten.

The false rumor that *Asazuma Boat* was a parody and the cause of Itchō’s exile might not seem to say much about the nature of authorship as it emerged in the Edo period. But in fact, as a reflection of how Itchō was received or understood, the story tells us quite a bit about the developing public conception of the artist. Whether or not Bunkō first heard Itchō’s tale in the same way that he told and wrote it, he wanted to believe that a specific reason existed for Itchō’s exile, and that the reason could be reduced to an *act* by the painter. Bunkō’s audience and later readership wanted to believe this, too. The popularity of the painting was fueled by its entanglement in the idea that it was created by an artist-rebel, an idea that dovetailed with, and probably helped perpetuate, emerging Early-Modern ideas about the role of the artist and his work. Most closely related to the Early-Modern conception of creation, however, was the idea that the power of the artist resided in his ability to use the power of metaphor, or (in this case) the twisted metaphor of satire.

Kyōden, in his exegesis of *Asazuma Boat* in *Kunichika’s Asazuma Boat: The Tale of the Lady and the Boat.* 1887. Woodblock print; gold and silver dust with ink and color on paper. Private Collection.

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91 Toyohara Kunichika (1835–1900). *Asazuma Boat.* 1877. Woodblock print; gold and silver dust with ink and color on paper. Private Collection.
sei kiseki kō, defends and delimits Itchō’s authorship, something of particular concern to him as a popular author who wanted to defend his own copy. He interprets the Asazuma-boat motif within the flow of tradition, and relates it to Itchō’s life. Yet just a little later, in his light, playful works, he exploits the motif to draw out its latent meanings. By comparing her to a *manzai* performer in *E-kyōdai*, Kyōden reveals the Asazuma boat lady (and the *yūjo* in general) to be an all-encompassing economic metaphor, her life not unlike that of an artist or any other entrepreneur who must prostitute himself to the public. Then, in his later *gōkan*, he converts the weak Asazuma boat lady, whom he had characterized as a victim of circumstance in *Kinsei kiseki kō*, into an empowered common prostitute. Asserting Itchō’s originality while appropriating the motif as a symbol in his own fiction, Kyōden explored all sides of authorship, revealing his consciousness of the ironies of the author’s place in a society.

Kabuki took up the Asazuma boat as a symbol of Itchō’s subversive act against the polity in the way that Bunkō had framed it, yet depictions of the boat evolved to transform the shogun-concubine pair into a more complicated triangular target of satire by adding a hated advisor. Because real political power was no longer in the hands of the shogun by the nineteenth century, this transformation reflected the way in which the current power structure was perceived. What is most interesting, however, is the fact that different Kabuki plays separately reference both the Asazuma boat and Itchō without overtly making a link between them,

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92 Watanabe Seitei (Shōtei, 1851–1918). *Asazuma Boat*. Late 19th century. Hanging scroll; ink and colors on silk. 46 x 69 cm. Santa Barbara Museum of Art.
yet still use Itchō to signal artistic subversiveness worthy of punishment.

In its simplicity, the Asazuma-boat motif contains much latent power. In the best of the Edo-period examples, the yūjo of Asazuma is a multivocal symbol. In Kunichika’s Meiji-period masterpiece, the Asazuma boat lady, who also symbolizes the yūjo of Yoshiwara, embodies just as many latent meanings, only now the motif is also a reminder of lost delusions of the bygone shogunal age.

The legend that ascribed Itchō’s exile to Asazuma Boat reveals the power of public discourse concerning artists. What mattered was not whether an artist had actually been punished for subversive acts of creativity, but the extent to which this was believed to be true. Aside from those artists already mentioned—Bunkō, Sukenobu, Kyōden—many others had brushes with the authorities over “slips of the pen.” It would almost seem that, by the nineteenth century, artists invited censure.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, Watanabe Seitei (also called Shōtei, 1851–1918), a painter and illustrator best known for his lush works in the bird-and-flower genre, executed a variant of the Asazuma-boat motif (fig. 92). Attired in the dress of an ancient court entertainer with her lap drum set between her legs in red hakama, the subject of the painting sits framed under the limp branches of a weeping willow, her attendant by her side. She gazes out over the water, with a full moon above and grasses at the banks below, her sleeve raised to her mouth in a classic gesture of veiled emotions. Like many successful artists of his age, Seitei also illustrated popular romantic stories, and these illustrations reveal a fashionable modern beauty. In this verdant scene, a strong whiff of nostalgia for the remote past is balanced with a face representative of a typical Meiji beauty.

This sense of nostalgia, slightly tinged with scandal, was most prevalent up to about 1900 in Japan. Seitei, an artist who mixed Eastern and Western visual approaches in order to ultimately achieve greater success in the West, almost certainly had his Japanese contemporaries in mind when he painted this work, which recently made its way to an American museum. As had happened with the Asazuma-boat motif elsewhere outside Japan, despite the title Asazuma Boat (Asazuma-bune) on its box, the painting was initially misrecognized, and when first exhibited was described much more broadly as an image of a shirabyōshi dancer. The gossip that has bestowed the utmost significance on this painting by linking it to the names Asazuma Boat and Hanabusa Itchō was too complicated, and certainly not relevant enough, to have spread in the United States.
39 See Nihon kokugo daijiten, vol. 6, p. 344.
40 The meaning of ki as used in Kinsei kijin-den is analyzed by Takeuchi, Taiga’s True Views, pp. 123–24.
41 See Hay, Shitao, pp. 21–23, for a parallel phenomenon in China.
42 The authorship of Ukiyo-e ruikō is often too simply attributed to Ōta Nanpo. For the most thorough examination of the variants of this book, see Yura, “Ukiyo-e ruikō seirisu shi.” See also the explanation of Ukiyo-e ruikō published in the supplement (furoku) to Nihon zuihitsu taisei, ser. 2, vol. 11, pp. 1–4. The difficult task of sorting out the editions of this important work has only recently begun.
43 Ōta Nanpo et al., comps., Shin zōho ukiyo-e ruikō, supplement, p. 4.
45 “Shiki-e-batsu,” IKS, no. 22, p. 50.
46 See Beasley and Pulleyblank, eds., Historians of China and Japan, p. 264, for explanation of this type of scholarship in Japan.
47 This scrapbook analogy is featured in Kudō, Edo bunjin no sukuranpukku.
48 Kokusho jinnai jiten, vol. 1, p. 131. The most accurate version of the manuscript is at Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku (Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music). Some of it is reproduced in Musashino Art University Museum and Library, Goyo eshi no shigoto to Kii Kano-ke, p. 19. Tamamushi Satoko and her circle have been studying the manuscript.
49 Koqa bikō, pp. 474–77.
50 For an analysis of the top-down changes brought about by the Meiji regime, see Satō, “Nihon bijutsu” tanjo and Meiji kokka to kindai bijutsu.
51 For a brief description of this multiphased process, see the entry for “Kokuhō” in Nihon bijutsushi jiten, pp. 318–19. Also see Guth, “Kokuhō.”
52 See Smith, “Expanding the Nineteenth-Century of Japanese Art,” for a discussion of how the idea that art and art history began with the Meiji period needs to be revised.
53 This essay by Gonze, “Kōrin,” mentions “Ittsho” (sic) several times as Kōrin’s contemporary. The “Description of the Plates” for the illustration (fig. 75 here), however, compares Itchō to Moronobu, “whose rival he was; but while Moronobu worked almost exclusively for book illustration, Itchō had no desire to multiply his productions.” Bing, Artistic Japan vol. 3, p. 192.
55 These works were The Scarf Dance, the pair of folding screens Four Accomplishments, and the triptych of hanging scrolls now known as Aridōshi. I found these first two works listed in Shōkasha, ed., Monbushō minte jityō bijutsu shin mokuroku, nos. 9 and 32, respectively. The third work has a certificate from the Monbushō designating it a jityō bijutsushin. The early catalogues of these works are frustratingly difficult to use, listing works by location and owner rather than by genre. Further detailed research needs to be done on the workings behind these designations and the institutional changes that resulted in works such as these being dropped from the official rankings.
56 See Hōchi Shimbunsha, Kokuhō jityō bijutsushin kaiga.
57 When the system changed in 1955, all of the works that had been designated as National Treasures automatically became Important Cultural Properties, while Important Artworks lost their ranking. New National Treasures were then chosen from the pool of Important Cultural Properties. Guth, “Kokuhō,” has begun to raise the issues involved.
58 See Kinoshita, “Nihon kindai ni okeru bijutsu-shi kijutsu no kigen.”
59 Earlier nineteenth-century writers were much less direct in their refutation of such legend.
61 Kyokutei Bakin (1767–1848) was the best-known author of fiction criticism, for example.
62 “Gajin shoden: Hanabusa Itchō.”
63 Otsuhane, “Genroku fūzoku to Hanabusa Itchō.”
64 Hashimoto Gahō, “Kobikichō edokoro,” p. 19.
65 Nakamachi touches on the making of the Rinpa school in her “Yomigaeru Rinpa.”
66 Furukawa, “Kōrin to Itchō.”
67 Nakamura, “Hanabusa Itchō to Ogata Kōrin,” “Itchō to Kōrin,” and “Genroku jidai no nimeishō.”
68 Ōkubo, “Kōrin to Itchō.”

Chapter 7

1 See Ichikawa, “Umezawa Kinenkan zō ‘Daruma-zu’ ni miru zenso,” p. 152. Daruma is the Japanese name for Bodhidharma, a monk from ancient India or Central Asia who brought Chan (Zen) Buddhism to China. Regarded as the first Chinese patriarch of the Chan sect, he became a popular figure in Chinese and Japanese art and folk culture.
2 See, for example, Miyakawa Seium, “Zokuji hyakō kigen,” pp. 92–93.
3 See Shimauchi, “Hanabusa Itchō no ‘Asazuma-bune’ danatsu,” for a study that stresses how the public interpreted the motif to indicate a close, untoward intimacy between Tsunayoshi and his advisor.
4 The indisputability of this example is noted by Nakamura Tanio in Hanabusa Itchō (1984), p. 84.
5 This branch of the Tokugawa family was established by Yoshimune, the eighth Tokugawa shogun, in 1735.
6 Other versions of the mitate of the four sleepers, Mount Fuji, and several other images found within this same
album are extant. *Shelter from the Rain* (*Amayadori*) and *All in the Same Boat* (*Noriaibune*) were two popular works that Itchō and others particularly repeated. See Chapter 3.

7 See the entry for “Asazuma-bune” in NDDD, vol. 1, pp. 26–27. See also Kitamura, “Ōmi keizai shi ronkō,” p. 79.

8 At least one scholar seems certain that the earliest poem that features the Asazuma boat, a twelfth-century poem by Saigyō in *Sankashū*, refers neither to these ladies nor to the ferry. The explanatory note for this poem (5/7998) in Kazamaki et al., *eds., Sankashū; Kinkai wakashū*, p. 175, describes the boat as a fishing boat, whereas Kubōta, in his entry “Asazuma Boat” in *Utakotoba utamakura daijiten*, p. 32, describes the boats as carrying lumber. Only in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries do the poems seem to refer conclusively to boat-lady entertainers. For example, in *Kōyō wakashū* by Karasumaru Mitsuhiro (d. 1638), an Asazuma-boat poem appears under the title “Kiyūjo koi” (Love of a Wild Prostitute). Additionally, as discussed later in this chapter, according to Santō Kyōden in *Kiseki kō* (Wild Prostitute), additionally, as discussed later in this chapter, according to Santō Kyōden in *Kiseki kō* (Wild Prostitute), there is a second entry for the “Asazuma-boat” of the title “Woman Entertainer in a Boat” (*Shūchū gido*).

9 See, for example, the beginning of *Dōbō goen ihon*, which was written while Itchō was still living. Ishizaki, *Yoshiwara Yoshiwara*, pp. 29–48, provides lengthy notes on this text.

10 This novel was translated into English by Kenji Hamada in 1964 with the title *The Life of an Amorous Man*, a translation that unfortunately gives little attention to detail and accuracy.

11 My translation was aided considerably by Maeda Kingoro’s notes in *Koshoku ichidai otoko zen chishaku*, vol. 2, pp. 155–57.

12 In contrast, note the seventeenth-century painting of Eguchi at Jakkōji, published in Suniut Museum of Art, *Josei no yakudōbi*, p. 70.

13 Personal communication with Onishi Hiroshi, December, 2004.

14 For example, Moronobu’s paintings were not signed, nor were the *Bugaku Dances* screens at Rinshōji, even though they must have been done by one of the highest of Kanō artists. See my “The Daimyo Commission of Hanabusa Itchō’s ‘Bugaku Dancers.’”


16 For instance, a record attests that Sōmin engraved a knife handle (*kozuka*) with the same design. Kitamura Intei, in “Intei zatsuroku,” p. 125, notes and depicts the Asazuma-boat *kozuka* by Sōmin.

17 The painting featured in this catalogue is also listed in Kanai Shiun’s iconographical dictionary, *Tōyō gadaishōran*.

18 See the background description for the most recent performance of Asazuma Boat as a Kabuki dance at Tokyo’s Kabuki-za in February 2003, for example.

19 For one early-twentieth-century source crediting the motif to Itchō, see Shisōsei, “Hanabusa Itchō.” See also Takigawa, *Eguchi*, *Kanzaki*, p. 262.


21 At least three different versions of this work exist, one in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; one in Chicago; and one in the Guimet collection. One is published in *Genshoku ukiyo-e daihyakka jiten*, vol. 4, p. 12.

22 Chiba City Museum of Art’s *Suzuki Harunobu* concentrated on the influence of Noh and other types of performance on the artist’s work.

23 This rendering varies from the *Ichō* and *Matsu no ha* versions by the lack of repetition of *kawahite iroo* (share my charms). Given Kyōden’s concern for accuracy in this text, his imprecision here is notable.

24 I have not yet been able to trace this archive. Kyōden’s search for an accurate copy makes it seem as if not many versions could be seen at the time.

25 Fancy brackets indicate where comments were added to the original in reduced script.

26 Roppyaku-ban utaawase was a poetry contest that took place in 1193 at the mansion of Fujiwara no Yoshitsune.

27 *Shōbikin* is a *haikai* compilation edited by Kikaku.

28 I have not found this song in collections of Ryūtatsu’s works.

29 I have not found this song in collections of Ryūtatsu’s works.


31 Annotated text and illustrations are found in Mizuno, ed., *Santō Kyōden no kibyōshi*. Kakuchū chōji is also reprinted in Mori, ed., *Kibyōshi kaidai*, pp. 256–62.

32 Mizuno, ed., *Santō Kyōden no kibyōshi*, p. 90. The motif of this couple within the boat was printed on the cover to the second volume of this book. See ibid., p. 81.

33 Other than Furuido using it as a source in his dance handbook (*Buyō techō*, pp. 193–94), I have not seen secondary reference to E-kyōdai.

34 According to Inagaki, *Edo no asobi-e*, p. 196, the term *kyōga* was seen as synonymous with *giga* by Kuniyoshi’s time.

35 See NDDD, p. 453.

36 See Clark, “Utamaro and Yoshiwara,” p. 37, on an inscription to a courtesan print that reveals that “Utamaro has no doubts about the commodity value of his own talents and evidences few qualms about the hierarchy of prostitution.”

37 I referred to the Kaga Bunko edition as well as the published version in Santō Kyōden, *Santō Kyōden zenshū*, vol. 8, pp. 271–325.

38 The preface begins by quoting the *Itchō* headnote and
song, again within a folding screen that recalls Itchō’s depiction. Ibid., pp. 272, 319.

This reference to theater, taken with the title, causes me to wonder if any theater performances of “Asazuma-bune” took place between 1790 and 1819.

The breakdown in the division between genres is discussed in Hattori et al., eds., Kabuki no rekishi, pp. 281–85; even the playwright Nanboku wrote gōkan novels.

A fascinating collaborative painting by Hokusai and Ōta Nanpo parodies Itchō’s Asazuma Boat, making their boat lady a contemporary yūjo. John Carpenter’s exegesis of this painting is quite suggestive of the preoccupations with Itchō and this motif that existed at the start of the nineteenth century. See Calza, Hokusai, p. 158, no. III 45, with explanation on p. 443.

See Furuido’s entry for “Asazuma-bune” in his Buyō techō, p. 16, for a summary of the Asazuma boat in Kabuki dance.

For a brief explanation and transcription of this song, see Gunji, “Asazuma-bune.”

See Fujio, “Kaisetsu: Ume ni yanagi wakaba no Kaga zome,” for a discussion of this play.

An earlier play that concerned this rebellion was Keisei yanagi sakura (Willow and Cherry Blossoms of Keisei), originally produced in Osaka in 1793. See NKBD, vol. 2, p. 359, for a discussion of this play, which does not seem to make any reference to Itchō or the Asazuma boat. For a good explanation of the Yanagisawa revolt, see NDDD, p. 903. A legend about the revolt was disseminated in the book Gokoku onna taiheiki (Protecting the Realm: The Women’s Taiheiki). Kaionji Kōgorō rewrote the legend of the Yanagisawa revolt as modern historical fiction in “Yanagisawa Sōdō.”

The play is published in Kawatake, Mokuami zenshū, vol. 11, pp. 1–306.

The first version of this triptych by Kunichika can be found as a frontispiece illustration in ibid.

Personal communication from Koketsu Kimio, President of Ohya Shobo Co., Ltd., the establishment that now owns the Kunichika print displayed at the Domestic Exhibition.

See Satō, “Watanabe Shōtei ga naze Obeijin ni komare-taka?” It is tempting to try to link Sei-tei’s Asazuma Boat with the minor scandal that he provoked in 1889, when he illustrated Yamada Bimyō’s story “Kōcho” (Butterfly) with a nude in the periodical Kokumin no tomo (no. 37).

Epilogue

1 Ukiyo-e in itself was not recognized as a subfield of Japanese art history in Japan until the 1960s. In the field of art history, as a rule, the ga has been favored over the zoku.

2 For a consideration of the Meiji category of fūzoku (outside of art history), see O’Brien, “‘Custom-izing’ Daily Life in Meiji Japan.” A recent book that addresses some of the problems within Japanese art history is Matsumoto, Idemitsu, and Princess Akiko, eds., Fūzoku kaiō no bunkaku II.

3 See the notice in Marumaru chimbun, no. 97 (1893), in Marumaru chimbun, vol. 29, p. 247. See also Duus, “Marumaru Chimbun and the Origins of the Japanese Political Cartoon.”

4 Shimizu, Nihon kindai manga no tanjō; and Miyamoto, “‘Manga’: Gainen no jūsōka katei,” are among the few reliable secondary sources to date that attempt to trace the modern etymology of manga. Imaizumi Ippyō (1865–1905) was the first to use the term manga for satirical cartoons in 1890. Okamoto Ippei (1886–1948), who headed a manga circle from 1915, defined manga broadly as “pictures of the people” (minshū no ga), and included Itchō in the manga lineage in his Shin manga no kakikata.

5 The motif is a consequence of intermediality in the sense that the intervisual has been variously offered as a counterpart to Kristeva’s intertextual. See Kristeva, “Revolution in Poetic Language” and “Word, Dialogue and Novel”; Hay, Shitao, p. 229; and Moerman, “Dying Like the Buddha,” p. 25.

6 In particular, see the work of Ichikawa Kōta, Ida Tarō, Ikeda Fumi, and Sasaki Eriko.

7 Clark et al., The Dawn of the Floating World, p. 159.

8 See Mitamura, “Asazuma-bune’ ni okeru go no maru dono;” and Konta, Edo no kinsho.

9 Megumi Ono, curator at the Toyama Memorial Museum of Art (where the painting is held), mentioned to me that she often receives requests for permission to publish this work in textbooks. This painting is one of the images used most widely to represent Itchō in art-history surveys as well.

10 The Scarf Dance is reproduced in Kobayashi, NB 260, p. 2, for one example.

11 The painting is reproduced in the catalogue of this exhibition, with an entry by Barbara Ford; see High Museum of Art, Rings: Five Passions in World Art, pp. 316–17.

12 The third work is Mitate of the Four Accomplishments at the Chado Research Center Galleries in Kyoto (fig. 47).