From Sketch to Print: Kiyochika’s Ryōgoku Fire and Hakone-Shizuoka Prints

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In Nagai Kafū’s well-known appreciation of Kiyochika in *Hiyorigeta* (1914-15), written when the artist was still alive but as if he were already history, the author remarks that Kiyochika had converted his watercolor sketches of the early Tokyo landscape “just as they were” (*sono mama*) into woodblock prints.\(^\text{1}\) Now that all the sketchbooks are available for study, we can begin to understand how many problems lurk within the phrase “*sono mama*.” However close in appearance the sketch and the finished woodblock may sometimes appear, in between lies a constant artistic struggle, a struggle that does much to explain the success of Kiyochika’s early art. His sketches never in fact became prints “*sono mama*” and it is precisely the distance between sketch and print that is most intriguing.

Here, I do not wish to deal with the most immediately interesting issue, the visual ways in which color, line, and texture were transformed from sketch to print. Rather I wish to consider two groups of landscapes in the period 1880-81 in which textual notations on the finished print either imply or provide information about the actual act of sketching. These are prints in which the artist in effect announces “I was there to sketch this scene, and this is what it looked like.”

In all, a total of sixteen prints are of this type, falling into two categories, those of fires in Tokyo in early 1881 (four prints), and those of landscapes of Hakone and Shizuoka (eleven prints). The mode of expressing the act of sketching differs considerably between the two cases, but both combine to reveal a new dimension in the meaning of sketching for Kiyochika’s early landscape art.

The story of the Ryōgoku fire of January 26, 1881, is the single best-known episode in Kiyochika’s life. It is mentioned in all the earliest published appreciations of the artist, and by the time of the first scholarly accounts, by Kondō Ichitarō and Yoshida Susugu, it had come to assume a key role in explaining the evolution of Kiyochika’s art.\(^\text{2}\) The basic story is that when the fire broke out at night, Kiyochika left his home with sketchbook in hand, then sketched the fire all night only to return in the morning and find his house burned and his family gone. According to the Kondō and Yoshida versions of the legend, this crisis led to the break-up of his marriage and the termination of the Tokyo landscape series. The fire thus becomes pivotal in what is seen as a fundamental change in Kiyochika’s art in 1881.

Fortunately, the actual sketching that Kiyochika did of the Ryōgoku fire survives in sketchbook no. V, and provides valuable primary evidence to compare against the surviving written accounts. Let us first consider the latter. There survive five accounts of the fire that seem to have been written independently of each other. All appeared many years after the event and...
must be treated with caution. Only one is an eyewitness account, that of the printer Nishimura Kumakichi, who at the time of the fire was twenty-one years old and the printer of a number of Kiyochika’s Tokyo landscapes of the previous year. In a conversation over fifty years later, Kumakichi recalled:

I think it was in 1881, when a fire broke out in Kanda Matsueda-chō and then spread to Hama-chō 1-chôme and 2-chôme. Carrying nothing but his painting gear, Kiyochika casually dropped by my place, and asked if I wouldn’t put him up for a while. I asked, “What on earth happened,” and he explained that on hearing of the fire he had rushed from his house, and became absorbed in sketching a view of the Hisamatsu Theater, framed by warehouses, as it collapsed in flames. When he finally finished the sketch, he went back to his house, but he couldn’t even tell where he was. The house had burned to the ground, and his family had disappeared. So he decided to go in a direction away from the fire, and ended up wandering to my place. People in those days were sure easygoing about things.\(^{3}\)

Clearly Kumakichi’s memory—he was age 72 when recollecting these events—cannot be considered wholly reliable, and he in fact is in error in claiming that Kiyochika sketched the burning “Hisamatsu Theater.” This must refer to the Meiji Theater, which was destroyed not in the Ryōgoku fire of January 26, but in the wholly different fire that broke out February 11, just over two weeks later. Kiyochika also sketched this fire (sketchbook \(V/106-107\)), but it was the earlier fire in which he lost his house. In general, however, Kumakichi’s account seems to confirm that the basic story line is correct.

Of the four others who described the event, three had actually known Kiyochika but only late in the artist’s life, and all revealed that they were drawing on legend rather than first-hand description. Kinoshita Mokutaro in 1916 reported it as a “famous story” (\(yūnuki na hanashi\)), and Kiyochika’s daughter Katsu qualified the two sentences of her 1924 account with phrases meaning “I have heard it said that” (—\(to\ in\ koto\ deshita, —\(de\ atta\ só\ de\ arimashita\)). While Kurosaki Shin in 1927 said that “it is a tale that I heard told” (\(gojitsu no monogatari ni kiita\)).\(^{4}\) Nor do any of these add significant details to Kumakichi’s account, except for Katsu’s suggestion, later amplified in third-hand accounts, that Kiyochika spent a considerable time sketching the fire: “Father left the house with just his sketchbook in hand, and then went about here and there, following the fire on foot.”

By far the most concretely detailed account, however, is that of Sakai Shōkichi, writing in 1919, who obtained his information from Matsuki Heikichi \(V\) (1871-1931), who himself was ten years old at the time of the 1881 fire, but would also presumably have often heard the story from his adoptive father, Matsuki Tōkō (Heikichi \(IV\), 1836–91).\(^{5}\) Sakai writes:

When the fire broke out, Kiyochika stuffed his sketchbook into his jacket pocket, grabbed his paintbox, and in addition, out of fear that they might be burned, he took with him about six fairly bulky volumes from among some albums of prize antique nishiki-e prints that Matsuki had lent him for study. Thus making his way through the press of the crowd, he
did his sketching, but he was knocked to the ground by some of the people running about, and dropped the albums. He tried to recover them, but people kept trampling over him, and out of fear for his life he ended up losing the precious albums. . . . .

This account tells us that Kiyochika left his house fully aware that he might return to find it burned, and obliges us to reject later suggestions that he irresponsibly abandoned his house and family in his enthusiasm for sketching. The real trauma, according to this account, was not the loss of his house (a common occurrence in the old downtown sections of early Meiji Tokyo, after all), but the loss of the old prints borrowed from Matsuki.

One important detail in Sakai’s account reminds us of how stories get distorted in retelling. This is the matter of the hour of the outbreak of the fire. Of all the printed accounts, only Sakai gives a specific time, of “about eight o’clock in the evening.” This was followed in later derivative accounts, but contemporary newspaper reports make it clear that the fire in fact broke out early in the morning of Wednesday, January 26, at about 1:30 am. It burned to Ryōgoku Bridge by daybreak, and jumped across the Sumida River at about 9 am, moving south to the Fukagawa area and coming under control at about 5-6 pm the same day.

How then does the sketchbook record mesh with these later accounts? I first make two basic assumptions about Kiyochika’s sketchbooks, both of which may be challenged: first, that he used only one sketchbook at a time, and second, that the page order is in general the order in which the sketches were executed. The first assumption seems generally safe, at least for the fire and the Hakone-Shizuoka trip, but the latter is problematic, since it is clear that Kiyochika would often go back and use unfilled pages (usually the pages opposing color sketches), especially for quick pencil sketching. This in fact appears to be the case in the Ryōgoku fire sketches. But color sketches appear on the whole to be in the order in which they were executed.

The Ryōgoku fire first appears on pp. 96-97 of sketchbook no. V, a panoramic two-page spread that seems to have been done in haste. We see a huge crowd of people, with flames down a street to the left and in the distance to the right. A pencilled inscription to the far right reads “January 26, 1881,” followed by a line that is difficult to make out, but that seems to read “Tsukugi-chō.” I would propose that this refers to the small area known properly as “Tsukegidan” (‘Matchstick Alley’), lying almost equidistant between the point that the fire broke out at Kanda Matsueda-chō and Kiyochika’s own house at 2 Yonezawa-chō 1-chōme. Given the known course of the fire, it was probably about 3 or 4 am that Kiyochika made this sketch.

This single sketch of the Ryōgoku fire, however, stands in isolation. It is followed by five pages of unrelated light pencil sketches (98-102), after which comes the sketch (103) that would be the model for “Ryōgoku after the Fire” (Ryōgoku yakeato), perhaps the greatest of all Kiyochika’s Tokyo landscapes. If the gas light was indeed lit, as Kiyochika shows it, then this sketch was probably made just about dusk on the evening of the 26th, some 17-18 hours after the fire began, when smoke could still be seen in the distance in the direction of Fukagawa. In other words, Kiyochika only had time to complete a single color sketch of the Ryōgoku fire, which
basically accords with the accounts of Nishimura Kumakichi and Sakai Shōkichi. He was probably carried along by the crowd in fleeing from the fire, and devoted the rest of the night and the following day to looking for his family, stopping by Kumakichi's along the way. Only later in the day, when he had confirmed his family's safety, did he return to make the sketch of the burnt-out plaza west of Ryōgoku Bridge. For whatever reason, Kiyochika skipped over five pages (98-102) when he made this sketch, and it was probably later that he turned back to do the quick pencil landscapes that appear on these pages.

Finally, how does this sketchbook record relate to the resulting prints of the fire? Other than “Ryōgoku After the Fire,” Kiyochika designed two prints of the fire, both showing the fire at its height. All three prints have an identical inscription to the right of the title and in slightly smaller characters: “Outbreak of Fire on January 26, 1881.” This sort of notation imparts a distinctly journalistic tone to the image, implying that the artist was striving to report exactly what he saw at the time. And this is the way most later viewers of the prints have treated them, as directly based on Kiyochika’s first-hand sketches.

But in fact this was not necessarily true. “Ryōgoku After the Fire,” to be sure, was based on the sketchbook model, as was “Outbreak of Fire Seen from Hisamatsu-chō” (Hisamatsu-chō nite miru shukka), the single print of the February 11 fire (sketchbook V/107). But of the two prints showing the actual Ryōgoku fire on January 26, neither corresponds in the slightest to the single two-sheet color sketch that Kiyochika actually made of the fire. Or rather, to be more accurate, no model can be found in the sketchbook used at the actual time of the fire. But if we turn to Kiyochika’s earlier sketchbooks, we make the surprising discovery that an exact model does in fact exist for one of the two prints. “Ryōgoku Fire Sketched from Hama-chō” (Hama-chō yori utsusu Ryōgoku taika). It is on page 30 of sketchbook no. 1, which according to Kikuno Kazuo’s research was probably executed in 1879, over one year earlier.

Kiyochika thus produced a composite picture, by taking an old sketch of the view from Hama-chō in the direction of Ryōgoku Bridge, and then adding the necessary flames to create a sense of a particular historical moment. The “moment” is when the fire leapt across the Sumidagawa at Ryōgoku at about 9 am. The flames themselves may have also come from an earlier sketchbook, of which there are two separate examples, in II/48-50 (three single-page sketches in color) and in III/58-60 (one single-page and one two-page spread, both in color). (These are difficult to date exactly, but the latter is probably the fire that broke out at Nihonbashi Hakuya-chō on December 26, 1879, the largest fire in Tokyo in this period.)

At any rate, it seems clear that Kiyochika has created a composite view by adding flames to an earlier landscape sketch. It bears attention that the title of this print makes specific reference to the act of sketching in the words “sketched from...” (... yori utsusu). In other words, the artist is making a special effort here to convey the impression that he was at the scene at that moment, sketching the dramatic leap of the fire across the river. But we know from the sketchbook that he was not. In one sense, it could be argued that Kiyochika was being somehow
dishonest by leading people to believe (as later generations did believe) that he actually sketched the scene. But it would seem more valid to interpret this as a creative artistic act, the enhancement of the visual impact of the scene by presenting it as a sketch at one dramatic moment. Whatever the interpretation, the element of fabrication cannot be overlooked.

The other print of the Ryōgoku fire, entitled "The Ryōgoku Fire at Asakusabashi" (Ryōgoku taika Asakusabashi), may also have been a similar composite of previous sketches, although no obvious candidates appear in the surviving sketchbooks. It must be remembered that in fact the majority of Kiyochika's Tokyo landscape series of 1876-81 have no surviving sketch models: many of these may not even have been modeled on sketches but rather drawn from memory or possibly photographs. What gives the two prints of the Ryōgoku fire their persuasive power is rather that they were drawn as if made from sketches. We must recall that Kiyochika did, after all, experience the fire, and that the prints certainly conveyed that experience if not a particular sketch at the time. It is the sketch-likeness of the prints that is critical.

The same issue arises with another special category of Kiyochika landscapes, those of the Hakone and Shizuoka areas that appeared in the same period as the fire prints. These fall into two groups: seven prints published by Fukuda Kumajirō depicting the Hakone area and four prints by Matsuki Heikichi showing landscapes in the area from Tagonoura to Shizuoka. All of the prints, with one exception, are directly based on models from sketchbook no. V, of which pages 1-73 record what was clearly a single journey, beginning at Hakone, on along the Tokaido towards Mishima (32-41), crossing the Fujigawa (46-47), on through Satta Pass (52-53), stopping at Ryōgeji in Shimizu (54-57) and at Kunōzan (58) before entering Shizuoka (61), then returning along the Tokaido by Fujinomiya (66), Tagonoura (68), and Kisegawa Bridge between Numazu and Mishima (70).

Three pieces of evidence combine to suggest that Kiyochika made this journey in early October, 1880. First, one of the prints based on the sketchbook ("View of Shizuoka Ryūhōzan") was published in November of that year. Second, one of the first sketches to appear after the end of the journey appears to be the Oeshiki (a memorial of the death anniversary of Nichiren) at Ikekami Honmonji (p. 77), which would have been on October 13. Finally, the foliage in many of the sketches is clearly that of autumn.

In turning to the prints that resulted from this trip, however, we encounter a problem in assessing one distinctive feature of the series, the frequent provision of a notation in the form "sketched in such-and-such a ten-day period (jun) of such-and-such a month at such-and-such an hour" (____-gatsu ____-jun ____-ji utsusu). Some appear as part of the title below the print, and others are inscribed informally within the print itself, but most have the same format. As Sakai Shōkichi observed in writing of Kiyochika in 1919, "One senses the careful attention of a master in the way in which he mustered every device to depict the effects of light at a particular season and hour." It is striking, however, that of the eight prints bearing such a notation, only one corresponds
to the season of autumn in which the sketches were actually made. Of the remainder, as we see on the following chart, four are recorded as January, one as March, one as “spring,” and one as July:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Alleged Time of Sketching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>View of Fuji from the Hakone Mountains</td>
<td>Sketched in early January at 3 pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazake Stand in Hakone Mountain Pass</td>
<td>Spring day at 6 pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mannen Bridge at the Source of Hakone</td>
<td>Sketched in early October at 9 am.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sokokura Hot Spring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distant View of Kiga at Hakone</td>
<td>Sketched in early March 8 am.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hakone Sanmai Bridge in the Rain</td>
<td>Sketched in early July at 4 pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hakone Shrine in the Snow</td>
<td>Sketched in early January at 6 pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt. Fuji from the Abe River</td>
<td>Mid-January at 6 pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt. Fuji from Satta Pass</td>
<td>Sketched in mid-January at 9 am.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What has happened, obviously, is that Kiyochika freely altered the actual time of the sketching so as to enable himself to create a wider range of seasonal impressions within the published prints. If all had conformed to the reality of sketching, all would have been uniformly “October,” resulting in a monotonous series. One can also imagine pressure from the publishers to vary the months. But what is important is that the artist clearly considered it crucial to specify the act of sketching, and its particular time.

This differs in important ways from the case of the fire prints. The notations do not indicate the year or the day of the month, since there is no element of journalistic reportage: rather it is the seasonal mood and time of day that are primary. Still, there is a basic parallel with the fire prints. In both cases, the artist was seeking to reinforce the sense of the act of sketching, to convince the viewer that he was actually there at a particular point in time. And in both cases he introduced the element of fiction between the actual sketch and the finished print, so that the sketch did not in fact become a print “sono mama,” without any alteration. Ironically, the ultimate aim of this disjunction between sketch and print was to persuade the viewer that in fact there was no such distance at all. Kafū’s phrase “sono mama” in the end is a mark of Kiyochika’s success.

NOTES


7. The newspaper accounts of the time all differ as to the exact hours of the duration of the fire: Chūgai bukka shinpō (no. 368, January 26, 1881), p. 25: from after 1:30 am until past 4 pm; Tokyo Nichinichi shinbun (no. 2738, January 27, 1881), p. 4: from 2:30 am until 5 pm; Yomiuri shinbun (no. 1805, January 27, 1881), p. 2: from 1:40 am until about 3:40 pm. Perhaps most reliable is a later compilation of information on Tokyo fires by the Tokyo keishi shōbōsho, which gives the hours of 1:30 am until 6:10 pm (Fujiyuki gakō, rinji zōkan gō, April 5, 1899), pp. 37–40, reprinted in Ogi Shinzō, Tōkei shomin seikatsu shi kenkyū [Nihon hōsō shuppan kyōkai, 1979], pp. 96–99.

8. The character for “ten” in the year date was inadvertently dropped from the notation on “Ryōgoku Fire Sketched from Hama-chō.” For the one print of the February 11 Fire, the notation varies slightly: “Great Fire on the evening of February 11, 1881.”


10. For information on Tokyo fires from 1874–98, see the Tokyo keishi shōbōsho report mentioned in note 7.

11. Although only three of the seven Hakone prints bear the mark of Fukuda Kumajirō, Endō Kintarō, who as a dealer had inside information on such matters, asserted in 1939 that all were published by Fukuda. See Kintarō shujin, “Genkon nishiki-e nedan shirabe: Kobayashi Kiyochika, 6,” Ukiyo-e kai 4/2 (February 1939), p. 38. Endō fails to mention, however, the rare untitled print known from the catalog of the 1931 Watanabe hangaten Kiyochika exhibition as “View of Mt. Fuji from Lake Hakone” (Hakone kohan yori Fuji chōbō zu) (illustrated in Hikari to kage no ukiyo-eshi — Kobayashi Kiyochika ten, exhibition catalog, Itabashi kuritsu bijutsukan, 1982), pl. 6. In style, however, this print is very close to “View of Mt. Fuji from the Hakone Mountains,” which bears Fukuda’s mark, and wholly unlike the style or format of any of the Matsuki prints.

12. The exception is “Hakone Shrine in the Snow,” for which the sketch on p. 7, despite the label
“Yumoto” on the facing page, may possibly have been a model.

13. Kikuno Kazuo, in an unpublished manuscript of notes on specific pictures in the sketchbooks, describes this sketch as “Gate of Honmonji Temple and mayudama decorations, 1881,” suggesting that he believed it to be a scene of New Year’s (when mayudama are displayed). The decorations, however, are more likely the mandō of the Oeshiki festival, which Kiyochika was later to depict in “Ikegami Honmonji” in the Musashi hyakkei series (November 10, 1884).

創作された版画
—清親の両国大火と箱根静岡風景作品をめぐって—
ヘンリー・D・スミス
井原西鶴の「日和下敷」にみる清親についての記述は、画家生前の数少ない評論としてよく知られている。また、西鶴の歴史的役割と思想の影響が、その後世の文人・画家の創意に影響を与えている。特に、西鶴の『東京風景』の影響が、その後の文学や美術の発展に大きな役割を果たしている。

清親が描いた東京の風景、特に水彩画『東京名所図』は、当時の社会状況と美術の発展を反映している。西鶴は、この作品群を評価し、特に『東京名所図』は東京の風景を自由に表現した作品群として高く評価している。

西鶴のこの評価は、その後の画家たちの創作を刺激し、水彩画の発展に大いに貢献した。西鶴の『東京名所図』は、当時の人々に新しい風景表現の可能性を示し、美術の進歩に大きな役割を果たした。
木下正太郎、清親のことを誇る黒崎信男の、この火災の件に触れることに、「清親が家を失い、月二十六日の大火灾により、その結果、清親が家を失い、月二十六日の大火灾により、その結果、清親が家を失い、月二十六日の大火灾により、その結果、清親が家を失い、月二十六日の大火灾により、その結果、清親が家を失い、月二十六日の大火灾により、その結果、清親が家を失い、月二十六日の大火灾により、その結果、清親が家を失い、月二十六日の大火灾により、その結果、清親が家を失い、月二十六日の大災
幸い「写生帖」第五冊には、両国大炎の模様を写した清親のスケッチが残されている。しかし、もはやそれらの記録以上の価値をもつ、第一級の資料が残っている。本篇の最後に、まず清親の「写生帖」に関する基本的な問題を論じたうえで、画家人をこのとき使用した写生帖が、やっと向き合えるのを知る。この「写生帖」に描かれた清親自身の記録、後の記述とは一致するのだそう。

火事が発生した瞬間に、松本町の「付近の状況」を述べたものである。そこで、そもそも大旗の火事が発生した瞬間の状況を把握するためには、「付近の状況」を研究する必要がある。本篇では、まず清親の「写生帖」について述べたうえで、さらに清親の「写生帖」について述べたものである。その中で、特に重要であるのは、両国大炎の模様を写した清親のスケッチが残されている。それは、もはやそれらの記録以上の価値をもつ、第一級の資料が残っている。

三日

両国大炎の場合も、この火事に取材した水彩スケッチの間に見える鉤え、過去に何度も描かれたものである。特に大旗の火事が発生した瞬間に、清親の「写生帖」について述べたものである。その中で、特に重要であるのは、両国大炎の模様を写した清親のスケッチが残されている。それは、もはやそれらの記録以上の価値をもつ、第一級の資料が残っている。
火事の発生後十七八時間経過二十六日の夕刻、遠く深川の方角に煙が見える時間に行ったのである。理由はともかく、清公は五頁飛ばしてこのスケッチを描き、九十八〇二頁に見られるような何の変でもない日常の景色を速筆でスケッチしたのでは、たぶんその内のことがあった。

ここで「写生帖」に遺された火事の記録画であるスケッチと、のちに版画となってしま発表される作品との関連について述べよう。清公は両国焼跡のほかに烈しく燃える火事の真っ只中の模様を描いた「浜町より写両国大火、両国大火矢橋の二点の版画製作している。この二点はいずれも題名に添えて少し小さめの文字」（明治十四年二月二十六日出火、「註」）と記載されている。それはそのとき画家が見たもので、それに確実に報道している点を強調する。しかも、清公が直接その場で描いたスケッチに基づいているのだ。その版画を見た後世の多くの人は、とくに関心を高めて興味深く別の事実を知らせるのであろう。

両国焼跡と、二月十一日の火事に取材した唯一の版画「浜町より矢橋にて見る出火」は、確かに「写生帖」にその原因（第五冊一〇七頁）を缺けて出さると少なく説明を欠いている。しかし、一月二十六日の両国の大火を描く三の版画は、どちらも、「両国の火事スケッチを製作するためにそう求めたのである。それらは、写生帖に第十一三〇頁にあり、菊野和夫によれば「両国大火の一年前に明治十二年におそく描かれたものだ」という（註2）。
創造するために炎を付け加えたのである。 "瞬間" とは、火事が午前九時ごろに起きたことである。写真より写両国大火 明治（十）四年一月廿六日出火
両国焼跡 明治十四年一月（二）廿六日出火
両国大火焼草稿 明治十四年一月廿六日出火

昔は、両国大火は、明治時代に起こった大火災であり、その被害は甚大であった。火災の瞬間を捉えた写真が残っているが、その中には、炎を付け加えた瞬間の写真も含まれている。この瞬間を捉えた写真は、瞬間の美しさを表現するための、特に重要な要素である。

以前に描いた風景スケッチが、炎を加えて描かれた清親の版画は、題名を "よろずに" とすることによって、いつもの臨場感を与える。悩みもなく、自分はその場に立ち、炎を上げる瞬間を再現した。しかし、清親のこの期の版画が、多くの人々に気づかれないのは、ある歴史的な瞬間を伝える報道の必要性を強調するために、必要であると考える。清親の版画における芸術的完成度は、こうした瞬間を伝えられたか。

現存する "写生帖" には原因を追えるようにスケッチは見つけることができるが、九冊の "写生帖" の中には、その原因を追えるスケッチは見つけることができない。過去のスケッチの分析は、こうした瞬間を伝えられたか、を示す。

二点の両国大火の版画が示すように、瞬間の美しさは、瞬間の瞬間を捉えた写真や版画を通じて、後世に伝わることができる。
北海道の宿

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