

Twenty-One Haiku Lessons from *The Book of Tea*

Michael Dylan Welch

Vice president of the Haiku Society of America

17:30-19:00, December 2nd, 2013
Sophia University, Room 10-301



In 1906, Kakuzo Okakura published *A Book of Tea*, a short treatise on Japanese aesthetics exploring the medium of tea ceremony. This paper presents twenty-one aesthetic observations found in the book and applies them to the art and craft of writing haiku. While focusing on haiku written in English, this paper explores numerous aesthetic choices necessary for writing haiku, and addresses a number of questions that haiku writers have, such as whether haiku should focus just on the beautiful, balancing limitation and liberation, the role of modern technology as subject matter for an ancient and traditional art form, the problem of formula, and how to create a vacuum in haiku by leaving something out. The paper emphasizes attention and interpenetration as sources of haiku inspiration, the value of personal perspective as an extension of poetic voice, distinguishing between observation and inference, the mundane as transcendent, asymmetry, humility, implication, veracity, and community. The paper is framed by a description of visits to Kyoto's Ginkaku-ji Temple, and the role of Ashikaga Yoshimasa (1435–1490) in shaping the traditional aesthetics of Japan.



Michael Dylan Welch is vice president of the [Haiku Society of America](http://www.haikusocietyofamerica.org/). He has won first place in each of the Henderson, Brady, Drevniok, and Tokutomi contests, among others, and has published his haiku, senryu, and other poems in hundreds of journals and anthologies. He has also published numerous books of poetry, including several books from Japanese, co-translated with Emiko Miyashita. One of their waka translations was featured on the back of 150 million U.S. postage stamps in March of 2012. Michael co-founded the Haiku North America conference and the American Haiku Archives, and founded both the Tanka Society of America and National Haiku Writing Month (NaHaiWriMo).