



Iwa

November 2022

Dear ~~Friend~~ of Iwa,

I just received a wooden statue of Jesus for my birthday a few days ago. It was carved sometime during the Edo period in Japan when, for roughly 260 years, it was illegal and punishable by death to be a Christian. When looking at the hand-hewn Jesus facing me as I write this letter, I am struck by the fact that, if discovered, the Japanese Christian who made or had possession of this statue would have been arrested, tortured, and executed if faith in Jesus was neither recanted nor denied.

When Japan opened its doors to the outside world again and it became legal to be a Christian around 1870, Hidden Christians emerged from the shadows and identified themselves to missionaries by saying "our hearts beat as yours." I am reminded of 2 Corinthians 4:5-12 NIV where it says, "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ." This same passage continues to be appropriate in describing the emerging Hidden Christians because of what they endured that was similar to what the first century Christians faced when the Apostle Paul continued to write in this passage, "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; . . . struck down, but not destroyed. . . . For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body."

This passage was proven true in Japanese history when, famously, the 26 martyrs were forced to march on foot from Kyoto, Japan's capital at the time, all the way down to Nagasaki, where the greatest concentration of Christians resided, to be crucified. This was an attempt by the newly established anti-Christian Tokugawa shogunate to thwart the rapid growth of Japanese becoming Christians. But, due to the way the Christian martyrs suffered and died, converts to Christianity didn't decrease but substantially increased.

We Christians today are inheritors of this double legacy—from the first century church and what might be described as the "Japanese holocaust." Might we utilize the same means by which so many Hidden Christians became and continued to be faithful followers of Jesus? And what was that? Mysteriously, the Japanese tea ceremony used as communion was in the midst of all that occurred.

As we continue to gather a network of ministry partners, find locations to host tea, identify small groups of people to be invited to experience tea together, and trust God for all the resources we need to implement Iesu Chado, let us not forget the legacy we have inherited from the first century church and the Hidden Christians. May we become more one with the Father, Jesus, and other believers, as Jesus prayed in John 17:20-21 NIV, "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

As we celebrate at Christmas Jesus coming into our world to rescue us from sin and death on the cross so that we could be brought into God's family, may ALL our hearts beat together as ONE.

Thanking the Lord for your prayers and your partnership with us,

Stanley K. Inouye
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Iesu Chado, The Jesus Way of Tea
Christian Influence in Shaping the Japanese Tea Ceremony

Introduction

Stanley K. Inouye
President and Founder of Iwa

Iwa's New Ministry

Iesu Chado is the name of the new ministry being launched by Iwa. Translated from Japanese into English, *Iesu Chado* means "The Jesus Way of Tea."

The call and vision of Iwa has always been to discover why people of Japanese ancestry, whether in Japan or elsewhere, have been resistant to becoming Christians, and to develop meaningful and effective ways for them to understand the Gospel and receive Jesus into their lives as Savior and Lord. After over forty years of Iwa's history, I believe God has given us something that will enable us to fulfill that call and vision as nothing else has before.

I am convinced we have discovered a primary reason why Japanese are so averse to considering Christianity as an option for their lives today, and yet were extremely open to becoming Christians during what is often referred to as the Christian Century (1549-1650). It is estimated that a million Japanese became Christians over that time period. Evidence seems to indicate that the Japanese tea ceremony was instrumental in helping the Japanese to become believers, and also to survive seven generations as underground Christians during Japan's isolation from the world immediately following the Christian Century. And so, Iwa is launching a ministry to provide both Christians and those who are not yet Christians a life-transforming encounter with the real and living Jesus, just as those who became Christians during the Christian Century experienced him, through the Japanese tea ceremony.

Experiencing the Good News

Iwa will give people in small groups an experience of the Japanese tea ceremony both in its traditional form and in a way that its correlations to the Bible are made obvious through the use of Christian symbols, tea bowls and other tea accessories. A highly nonverbal and multi-sensory experience, the Japanese tea ceremony will guide participants into an actual encounter with Jesus through their interactions with the host, deep personal reflection, and the sharing of a uniquely intimate bonding experience that will strengthen their relationships with one another and others in the present and in the future.

Being Transformed by the Good News

Explanation of what the Japanese tea ceremony specifically symbolizes and means will be withheld from participants before they experience the traditional ceremony. Experiencing the traditional ceremony is meaningful and life-changing without explanation, but transforms hearts even more when, at a later time, the guests discover for themselves what each

progressive event and every movement represents in the life and ministry of Jesus. Complete information about how the tea ceremony corresponds with the Bible will be provided shortly thereafter.

Sharing the Good News

To provide historical background and thereby make the tea experience even more understandable and meaningful to people of Japanese ancestry and others, Iwa will share with participants information about the relationship between Christianity and the Japanese tea ceremony, that was likely created by direct Christian influence early in its development during the Christian Century (1549-1650).

Positive Outcomes

Iesu Chado may be very controversial among the general Japanese population and vulnerable to backlash from Japanese historians, Japanese tea ceremony aficionados, and Japanese Christians as well. However, the positive outcomes will far exceed any negative reactions we will encounter. Here are a few of them:

- Fresh insights into Japanese history will be offered and a new understanding about Christianity in Japan during the Christian Century will be introduced.
- The identity and self-esteem of Christians of Japanese ancestry will be transformed so they will no longer view themselves as less Japanese or inferior Japanese because they are Christians, but rather see themselves as more fully Japanese. They will become far more optimistic and confident about sharing their faith with Japanese who are not yet Christians.
- People of Japanese ancestry who are not yet Christians will have an opportunity to be introduced to Jesus Christ in an interactive, experiential way through the Japanese tea ceremony.
- Christians of Japanese ancestry will be able to observe Holy Communion, not only in its traditional, primarily verbal, form but also in a distinctly Japanese nonverbal manner that, in a culturally appropriate way, more meaningfully fulfills the Lord's desire for us to "do this in remembrance" of him.
- The philosophy and principles of the Japanese tea ceremony will be applied to other forms of Christian outreach and ministry to enable those forms to be more meaningful and effective for people of Japanese ancestry.
- Many more people of Japanese ancestry, in Japan and wherever they reside, will become more open to the Gospel because of their experience of the real and living Jesus Christ through the tea ceremony and many more will receive Jesus into their lives as their personal Savior and Lord as a result.