

# The Imperial Portraits Ho-an-den of Former Hsin-Hua Ordinary Elementary School- Focusing on the Exploration of Imperial Rescript on Education

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## ABSTRACT

Hsin-hua Primary School, Hsin-hua District, Tainan City, Taiwan, was celebrating its 120th anniversary in 2017. The school was formerly known as the Tavocan branch of Tainan Institute of Japanese, founded in 1898 during the Japanese colonial rule. As part of its commemorative project, it has restored the Ho-an-den, a post-war Japanese period building with slogans on all four walls of the campus.

Ho-an-den, commonly known as "imperial portraits Ho-an-den", was a building used to enshrine the portraits of contemporary emperors and empresses in schools and other educational institutions in Japan and its colonies, such as Taiwan and Korea, before the World War II.

Although it is called "Imperial Portraits Ho-an-den", in general, except for "Imperial Portraits", A transcript of the imperial descript on education, the highest philosophy of education in pre-war Japan, will also be included. This Ho-an-den is one of the only two remaining in Taiwan. It is an important testimony of the Japanese rulers' emphasis on "emperor system" education.

**Keywords:** Japanese colonial period in Taiwan, the imperial descript on education, imperial portraits, Ho-an-den

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Imperial portraits are the portrait of the emperor and empress. The imperial descript on education is a statement on education made by the Cabinet in the name of the Emperor. Ho-an equipment or space

is dedicated to the protection of objects related to the Emperor. The imperial descript on education means the words for Education (the words of the Emperor)". It was drafted by Tsuyoshi Inoue (1844-95) and Nagafu Motoda (1818-91) in accordance with the wishes of Hirobumi Ito, the highest authority of the Meiji government. Based on Confucianism's familism, it emphasizes that the fundamentals of education are "loyalty and patriotism" and "consistency between loyalty and filial piety". It was promulgated by Emperor Meiji on October 30, 1890 (Meiji 23) and became the highest educational philosophy of the Meiji New Government nationalist style [1]. The imperial descript on education, like other imperial edicts in pre-war Japan, was written in a unique style, and interspersed with difficult-to-understand Chinese language, in order to demonstrate the authority of the emperor, Arahitogami. It is quite far from the everyday language of the general public, but it also emphasizes its majesty and sacredness (Shown as Figure 1). Its "English translation" version is as follows [1]:

### Know ye, Our subjects:

Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue; Our subjects ever united in

loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire, and herein lies the source of Our education.

Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious; as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning and cultivate arts, and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the laws; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth.

So shall ye not only be Our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers. The Way here set forth is indeed the teaching bequeathed by Our Imperial Ancestors, to be observed alike by Their Descendants and the subjects, infallible for all ages and true in all places. It is Our wish to lay it to heart in all reverence, in common with you, Our subjects, that we may thus attain to the same virtue.

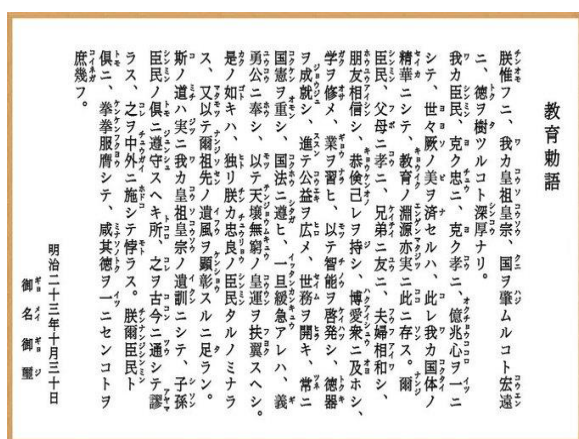


Figure 1: The imperial descript on education

The main purpose of the imperial descript on education was that Japanese education at the time was focused on the introduction of European and American

artifacts to the detriment of moral education. And moral education is owned by Japan and should not be abandoned lightly. Therefore, students are required to cultivate and develop their own moral cultivation while studying.

Same as the imperial descript on education, imperial portraits have the same effect on school children as the Emperor's educational message. It is the common name for the formula portraits of the Emperor, Empress and members of the Imperial family. The portrait of Emperor Meiji is an oil painting made by an Italian painter, and then retouched and photographed. The photo shows the upper half of the emperor sitting on a chair with his right elbow on the table and a sword in his left hand, dressed in army formal wear.

The Imperial portraits are not given to all schools in the country, as is the case with the educational transcripts. Instead, these schools must apply on their own initiative. Then, the official will give the applicant schools a copy of imperial portraits according to the criteria of "excellent schools that can serve as a model for other schools". Therefore, the sooner a school receives the Imperial portraits, the sooner it is recognized as a model school, which is an honor for these schools [3]. In order to receive the Imperial portraits, the school that has been awarded the Imperial portraits will hold the Imperial portraits "Bongdai Ceremony" or "Baidai Ceremony".



Figure 2: Emperor's Photo



Figure 3: Empress's Photo

This grand ceremony usually involves not only the entire school, but also the parents of the students and the residents of the surrounding area, making it a major event for the local community. Imperial portraits are the best doppelganger of the Emperor, the "Arahitogami". The symbolic effect of the modern Japanese imperial state is brought to life.

## 2. ORIGIN OF HO-AN-DEN

The origin of Ho-an-den is related to the imperial rescript on education issued by the Emperor of Japan. In 1890 (Meiji 23), the Emperor of Japan promulgated the imperial rescript on education as the highest educational standard in Japan: In 1899 (Meiji 32), the Taiwan Governor's Office issued the transcripts of the imperial rescript on education and the Emperor's official photo (the Emperor's husband and wife's photo) to all schools in Taiwan as shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3. It is thought that Ho-an-den came into existence around the 1910s, after the release of imperial portraits and the establishment of the imperial rescript on education. However, it was in 1935 that the construction of Ho-an-den, an elementary school, began in large numbers. At the same time, there are also night patrols to protect the school's imperial portraits.

In 1898, the "Rules for the Conservation of the imperial portraits and the imperial rescript on education Transcripts" were introduced; stipulating

that the imperial portraits and the imperial rescript on education transcripts should be stored in a safe cabinet. They are kept in a certain place in the school, and are carefully stored. You are not allowed to take them off campus except for extraordinary disasters. At the same time, it was also stipulated that the staff of the school where imperial portraits were kept on duty at night outside of teaching hours [4]. Abiko-shi in Chiba educational materials shows that within a few years after the release of the imperial portraits and the imperial rescript, the construction of a bungalow in the elementary school was ordered. All school staffs (including women) are on duty during the day and only men are on duty at night to protect the imperial portraits and the imperial rescript on education. In fact, before the war, all over Japan (including Taiwan and other colonies), schools were on night duty and on duty during the day on holidays. The original reason for this is the sacred mission of "Guarding the Transcript of the imperial portraits and the imperial rescript on education". In the event of an earthquake, fire, or war, the imperial portraits and the imperial rescript on education must not be damaged, destroyed, or lost; otherwise, they are inexcusable, except for death in service [4]. In fact, at the end of the Second World War, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and Home Ministry issued the "Guidelines for Air Defence of Schools", which stated the sequence of school operations during air attacks. The first priority is to protect the transcripts of the imperial portraits and the imperial rescript on education, and other imperial edicts, followed by the protection of students and children, and then by valuable documents, research materials, and facilities [4]. The importance of the imperial portraits and the imperial rescript on education is evident from this. The imperial rescript on education is treated as a holy edict. All courses are designed with the imperial rescript on education as the central idea, and teachers are required to understand and integrate it as the basis for teaching.

The educational edicts issued to schools at all levels are valued by school authorities. The imperial descript on education was placed in a Firmiana simplex wood box and locked in a special metal cabinet (also known as a Ho-an cabinet) together with the imperial portraits. In the event of a fire or flood at the school building, the imperial descript on education of the Ho-an cabinet and the imperial portraits are the primary targets for rescue.

On ceremonial days, such as National Foundation Day, the Emperor's Birthday and New Year's Day, it was customary to make a deep, respectful bow to the photograph of the Emperor and Empress. In the Taishō era and Shōwa era before the end of World War II, the birthday of Emperor Meiji, November 3, was an additional day of celebration. On these occasions, the school principal read the Imperial Rescript on Education. All, when passing in front of the Hō-an-den, were required to take a deep bow, correcting their uniforms.

Initially, the "Ho-an-sho" was set up in the lecture halls, teachers' offices, principals' offices, and other places. However, if the school building collapses due to an accident such as a fire or an earthquake, the imperial portraits stored inside may be affected. In fact, in Japan, there are many stories about the principal who kept the imperial portraits during the Great Kanto Earthquake, air raids, and school fires. The Japanese government is worried about any accident of the imperial descript on education t, and has started the trend of building for protection. The building of the Ho-an-den is modelled after the Japanese shrine's shrine in order to highlight its sacred status. The building materials were specially selected for earthquake and fire resistance, and most of the school buildings were made of wood at that time. Because of this, the Ho-an-sho bungalow in the school building was converted to a vault type, or further to a separate Ho-an-den bungalow. The former design is usually found in old Japanese high

schools, while the free-standing Ho-an-den is usually found in elementary schools. As a separate structure, there were various types of Ho-an-den, including a Greek temple-style and Shinto shrine type. They are small but sturdy fireproof and shockproof structures, and are designed to give a sense of solemnity. In 1933, there was a Ho-an-den competition. However, the school was in a difficult position to submit a report on the damage to the imperial portraits because of the "humidity" in the building due to the lack of ventilation. In the 1923 Great Kantō earthquake, some photographs burned and principals committed suicide in atonement. The imperial portraits Ho-an-den of former Hsin-hua ordinary elementary school is a Japanese-style palace that houses the "Royal Decree" issued by the Emperor of Japan. It is one of the only two remaining buildings in Taiwan, and is an ideological space that bears witness to its historical and cultural significance and has the value of a registered historical building.

### **3. THE IMPERIAL PORTRAITS HO-AN-DEN OF FORMER HSIN-HUA ORDINARY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

Hsin-hua ordinary elementary school was formerly known as Tavocan ordinary elementary school. It was established in April 1913, and became Hsin-hua elementary school in March 1941 after restructuring. The origin of Ho-an-den is mentioned in the "Overview of Hsin-hua-gun", which was published in the first year of the Showa era, that it was built to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the issuance of the imperial descript on education. Construction began in July 1931 and was completed in October of the same year at a cost of 898 Yen [5]. In addition, Imperial portraits (a photograph of the Emperor and Empress) enshrined in Ho-an-den was requested on July 18, 1931. It was presented on January 29, 1932, and the "Bongdai Ceremony" was held on the same day [5]. After World War II, the campus of Hsin-hua Primary School and Hsin-hua

Junior Vocational School for Girls was taken over by "Tainan County Hsin-hua Junior High School", of which the part of Hsin-hua Primary School was called the North Campus. The elementary school building was used as a music room in the early days, but was later left unused due to the construction of additional buildings. It was then loaned to the Hsin-hua Elderly Welfare Association until 2003. The school building was called "tree house" because it was overgrown by old trees, and was later demolished in conjunction with a new performing arts project because it was a dangerous building [5].

After the restoration of Taiwan, the government ordered the destruction or elimination of such ideological buildings in order to eliminate the cultural shadow of Japanese colonization. The Ho-an-den on the campus was demolished and destroyed one after another, but only the Ho-an-den facility at Hsin-hua Elementary School was fortunately preserved. The reasons for the preservation of Ho-an-den in Hsin-hua include the fact that the structure is stronger than wooden buildings and less likely to be demolished. The main structure was fortunately preserved after the campus gate was relocated and the main access point from the campus was degraded to a border area.

In 2004, the small stage in the lecture hall of the former school building was designated as a historic building along with the Ho-an-den [5]. After the war, the slogans were written on the buildings; although they had not been damaged (they have been removed). In the 1980s, the Ho-an-den was moved backwards by Mr. Yang Baofa when he was the county governor because of the construction of the cultural center in Hsin-hua town. After the Cultural Center was demolished to build a performance hall, the Ho-an-den was moved again to the present site. In addition, the original Bongan Hall was locked with a large lock and was opened by a locksmith on January 25, 2006 under the direction of Tainan County Cultural Affairs Bureau

Chief Mr. Tsai Ze-shan, but the imperial portraits and the imperial descript on education that were originally collected in the Ho-an-den were not stored inside. Instead, there are some old documents, an old clock with the inscription "December 12 of the 12th year of the Showa era" on the back, and a safe [5].

Ho-an-den is a reinforced concrete building with a palace-like appearance similar to the shrine in campus. Unlike the on-campus shrine, however, the main structure of the shrine is made of wood. The roof form is in the form of an Irimoyazukuri house, also known as Xieshan style in Chinese. The form is preferred in Japanese ancient architecture, and is used in private houses, shrines, Buddhist temples and Tenshu temples. As shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5.



Figure 4: The sprinkled design of phoenix Ho-an cabinet in Ho-an-den

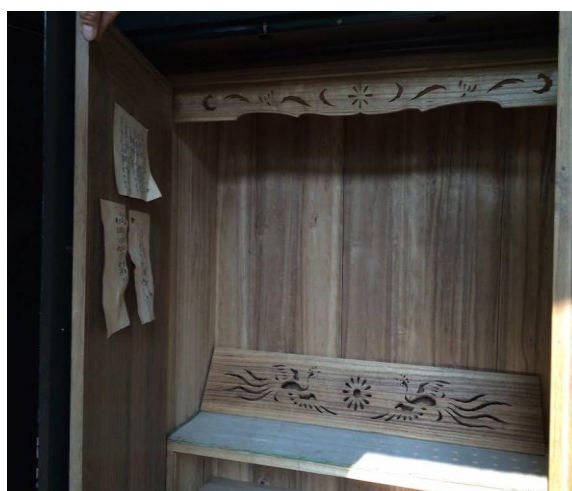


Figure 5: Wooden scaffolding in Ho-an cabinet

The standard Ho-an-den should be built near the principal's office, staff room or duty room, outside the building; the minimum interior space should be 85 cm from the front to the back, 1.5 meter high and 1.2 meter in width; construction should be in reinforced concrete, with walls more than 25 cm thick. The Ho-an-den should be equipped with a safe-type door, and the interior should be resistant to fire and earthquake, with asbestos, and covered inside with wood such as *Chamaecyparis obtusa* or *Paulownia tomentosa*. The height of the container for the photograph was to be 50 cm.

The 2012 Japan- Taiwan Goodwill and Friendship Delegation visited Hinhua on November the 23rd and toured the historical building Ho-an-den of the former Hsin-hua ordinary elementary school. When they opened the Ho-an-den and saw the gorgeous sprinkled design of phoenix Ho-an cabinet, they was amazed and said, "They are so well preserved" [7]. The building is shown in Fig. 6 and Fig. 7.



Figure 6: The small stage in the lecture hall of the former school building and Ho-an-den



Figure 7: Ho-an-den

#### 4. CONCLUSION

For example, only Hsin-hua ordinary elementary school has the imperial portraits. Therefore, the Hsin-hua Public School and the Agricultural Tutorial School are required to attend the "Bongdai Ceremony", and the construction cost of the equipment for the dedication is raised in the context of the entire Hsin-hua Street. In the case of the imperial portraits gift in Hsin-hua district, the structure of the class society is visualized through the gift, and the schools and local communities that did not receive the gift are further involved in the education of the Emperor's veneration in modern Japan.

Immediately after the end of World War II, educational reforms were issued by the GHQ, namely the prohibition of the support of National shintoism on November 15 and the return of the photographs of the Emperor and Empress on December 28, and the order of the destruction of the Ho-an-den (on February 18, 1946). Many Ho-an-den were destroyed or buried, while a small number of them were left as they were, and some of them were designated as local war memorials. Because Ho-an-den were so strongly built, some city ordered that the roof parts should be completely destroyed and the feeling of sacred places should not be left, and it might be left if it was used for the purpose of warehouses. Some of the more solemn looking ones were used as shrines or as towers. Not many of them are still preserved in Japan.

The maintenance of the photographs of the Emperor and Empress was the utmost duty of the principal of the schools. There were cases of principals committing suicide when the photograph of the Emperor and Empress was burned. Despite the fact that the principal committed suicide, some people thought that the photos of the emperor should be removed from the school for the safety of the photos. But no one ever dared to say that it was absurd to commit suicide over the photo. No one dared to question the nobility of the photo of the emperor and the symbolic meaning of the

supremacy of the emperor represented by this photo. This kind of universal crazy worship is actually something we should reflect on.

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