

# Origin and Development of Former Hsin-hua County Public Hall

Kao-Feng Yarn<sup>1</sup>, Wen-Bin Lin<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Aircraft Maintenance, Far East University, Taiwan 74448, ROC

<sup>2</sup>Department of Electronic and Optoelectronic Application Engineering, Far East University, Taiwan 74448, ROC

**Abstract**—Former Hsin-hua County Public Hall is a historical building, which was completed in 1936. It was the main assembly hall where people congregate during the Japanese rule. After the World War II, it was still the place where people can gather together. In 1960s, Kuomintang (KMT) rented the hall for taking as a KMT Service Center, and it was renamed Hsinhua Community Service Center at that time. After being verified by the Tainan City Government, it was registered as a historical building in 1998. Nowadays, it is used as a youth library in Tainan after the restoration was completed in September, 2018 with costing a total of twenty-five million NT dollars. Besides, this renovated historical building is the first example of being used as the library in Tainan City.

**Keywords**—Japanese colonial period in Taiwan, public hall, library, Tainan City

## I. INTRODUCTION

On June 10, 2008, Hsin-hua County Public Hall was registered as a historical building by the Tainan City Cultural Bureau. However, its history is blurred and broken. In order to find the spatial and temporal texture and meaning of Hsin-hua County Public Hall, it is necessary to construct the basic historical facts, find the reasons for the historical break, and analyze its spatial origin and evolution. To this end, we have attempted to trace the chronological and spatial changes of the Xinhua Guild Hall through historical materials, oral narratives, old photographs, upper beam markers, and inscriptions, and through examination and analysis.

Taiwan's military preparations published in 1664, the local community has become a "Tavacan people's society"[6] dominated by Han Chinese. There is a legend that "Tavacan village, and the bamboo wall is very large, many people of Jinling and Jingkou ancestry, and the cloud is plundered by the Koxinga family, and now it has become indigenous population". [7] In addition, the Koxinga also set up Ying-Bing guard in Tavacan, which was used to monitor the Tavacan community of Pingpu. The area around Heixingli is also known as "Yingpan-Hou", from which it is said to have been named.

In July 1920, the Taiwan Governor's Office readjusted the administrative division of Taiwan and established Hsin-hua County under Tainan State, as shown in Figure 1. It is in charge of 9 streets, including Hsin-hua Street, Shan-hua Village, Hsin-shi Village, An-ding Village, Shan-shan Village, Zuo-zhen Village, Nan-hua Village, Yu-jing Village, Nan-shi Village, etc. The county office was set up in Hsin-hua Street as shown in Figure 2.

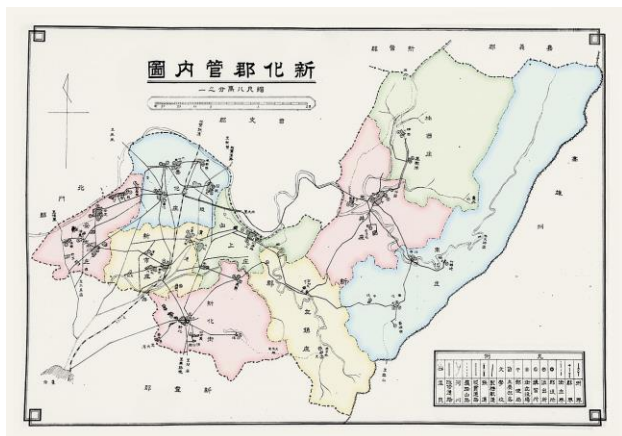


Fig. 1. Hsin-hua County jurisdictional area [7].

## II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF HSIN-HUA PUBLIC HALL

The old name of Hsin-hua is "Tavacan". [1-2] is a translation of the Pingpu word Tavacan or Tavakangh, meaning "land of the mountains and forests"; In the past, this was the living space of the Tayluya Pingpu Tavacan-sha. [3] During the Dutch colonial period, the East India Company forced the Tavacan-sha to move next to the Shinko-sha, [4] and invited the Han Chinese to develop agriculture in the area. [5] Under the policy of isolation, the area around Tavacan became a Chinese reclamation area. According to the map of

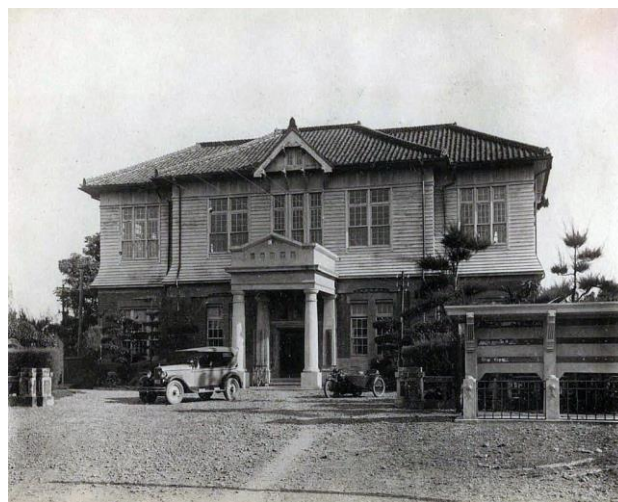


Fig. 2. Hsin-hua County office [7].

Under Hsin-hua Street, there are Hsin-hua, Naba-lin, Jiao-keng-zi, Dai-keng-wei, Zhi-mu-yi, Ju-zi-quan, Yang-zi, Chim-

kou, Bei-se, Lun-zi-ding, and Ding-shan-quan. The reformed Hsin-hua Street is not only the location of the administrative center of Hsin-hua County, but also the core of the surrounding 9 Main Street and Village.

Initially, the street mayor was an honorary position, and the first four mayors of Hsin-hua Street were all Dao Leung, who served for 16 years. In April 1935, the honorary position of the head and assistant officers of the street and village was changed to a paid position. The Mayor of Hsin-hua Street was successively appointed by Japanese people such as Sadao Kamogawa and Yihei Matsumoto. Although the local administration at that time was still under the centralized rule of the Taiwan Governor's Office, it had more autonomy and self-governance, which helped local development and gradually formed a local mechanism with local characteristics. Under such circumstances, it is necessary to build a place where people can meet in accordance with the policy of local autonomy.

During the Qing Dynasty, Taiwan's public construction was not well-developed, and when people celebrated weddings, funerals, and banquets, they mostly used temples, temple grounds, or private residences as venues, lacking dedicated buildings for public gatherings. During the Japanese rule period, with the change of rulers, various new social activities were gradually introduced to Taiwan, but there was a lack of suitable venues for meetings or performances, so the construction of a building for public gatherings and banquets became a contemporary need. Under this circumstance, public halls were built and opened one after another in various parts of Taiwan, among which the Japanese had the intention of replacing traditional public meeting places with public halls. The main function of the public halls is to provide public gatherings. In addition to the necessary gathering space, some guild halls also have public libraries, cafeterias (restaurants), performance halls, recreation rooms, and sports facilities, etc. They have become important places for the residents of the city, streets, and villages to enjoy leisure and fitness, to learn new things, and to bond.

The earliest public hall built in Taiwan was the Keelung Public Hall in 1902, followed by the Tainan Public Hall built in 1911. It is mainly for public and group use. Between 1918 and 1935, various cities, streets and villages were also built. The initiating unit or the person in charge often has a strong official color, and after the completion of the hall, it is mostly handed over to the local government for the purpose of using the hall to promote political achievements or educate the people. The architectural style has changed with the times. During the Meiji and Taisho years, most of the buildings were made of brick and wood, and only a few were made of wood. In the Japanese Showa period, the concrete structure was made of reinforced concrete or steel, and the façade shape was modern and simple. The exterior design can be slightly divided into 3 levels. The first level is the central or state administrative level of the public hall, which is more complex in form, such as the Taipei Public Hall and the Taichung Public Hall. The second level is the public hall of the city (county), street, and township. Most of the buildings are similar: the entrance porch volume is longer than the

rectangular volume on both sides, the front side is concave, and the meeting hall volume is articulated behind the concavity, and the wall is exposed at the highest point in the center, similar to the simplified Gothic style buildings, such as the public halls in Bei-gang and Chang-hua. The third level is for the neighboring community and is of a simpler scale, with entrances and exits from the center of the horizontal side of the building instead of from the vertical side (the face of the hill wall). In the case of the existing Hsin-hua Public Hall, the form is the same as that of the county level.

### III. FROM "HSIN-HUA STREET PUBLIC HALL" TO "HSIN-HUA COUNTY PUBLIC HALL"

According to the records in the "Tainan State Social Enterprise Highlights" published in 1937, 1939, 1940, and 1942 and the "Tainan State Health Affairs Highlights" published in 1944, Hsin-hua Public Hall was completed on February 16, 1937 and was managed by Hsin-hua County. If we compare the time of construction of the various public halls in Tainan State, Hsin-hua is the latest among all the public halls in Tainan State. However, according to the Taiwan Daily News of the Japanese rule period, Hsin-hua Public Hall was recorded in 1927. The earliest use of the hall is recorded in the relevant reports as the meeting of the Hsin-hua County Office on November 6, 1927, where the chiefs of all the villages under its jurisdiction met at the hall to discuss the affairs of the villages. Thus, there may be two Hsin-hua Public Halls, and the existing building was completed in 1937.

According to the photos provided by Mr. Wen-rong Kang of the Hsin-hua Cultural History Studio, there should be two generations of Hsin-hua Public Hall. The first generation of the Public Hall was located on the 2nd floor of the 1st generation of the street office. After the street yard was moved, another land was found to build the 2nd generation of the Public Hall (this is the Public Hall that remains today). The 1st generation guild hall was indeed located in the 1st generation street office. However, the records of the Hsin-hua Public Hall in the existing Taiwan Daily News are only available from 1927 to 1933 and after 1938, but not from 1934 to 1937. The 2nd generation of the street office was opened in 1934. It can be seen that the first generation of public halls should coexist with the first generation of the street office. After the relocation of the street office, there is no record of the meeting because the second generation hall has not yet been built. The report did not appear until after the completion of the project in 1937. In addition, although the 1st generation Public Hall was labeled as "Tavacan Public Hall" on the building, it was reported as "Hsin-hua Public Hall" at the time.

The first generation of the street office was built in October 1920 as a result of the correction of the local government system. As for the reason for the relocation, it is mainly because the space of the first generation of street office is not enough, and it is surrounded by residential buildings, which makes the expansion difficult. Therefore, the building was moved to the intersection of Chung-zheng Road and Chung-xiao Road in 1934. The building of the second generation of the street yard still remains, which is now the "1934 Historic Restaurant".

As for the source of funds for the construction of the 2nd generation of the street office, there is a file in the "Codification of Official Documents of the Governor's Office of Taiwan": "Directive No. 739 to borrow funds for the renovation of the hall and market of the street yard in Hsin-hua Street, Tainan State?" (Register No. 10622), which is also stated. The two documents together show that the relocation of the street office was already planned (1929-1934). In addition, the floor plan of the 2nd generation street office has only meeting rooms, but no public hall. It is believed that this is because the Public Hall is open to the public, whether it is a private organization holding an event or an individual holding a wedding, too many people coming in and out will interfere with the office of the street office. For this reason, there is no Public Hall in the 2nd generation street office.

According to the cadastral data of the 2nd generation Public Hall during the Japanese rule period (724, Hsinping section), the lot was originally owned by private person, then transferred to Hsin-hua Public School (now Hsin-hua Elementary School) in 1912, and then to Hsin-hua Street of Hsin-hua County in 1921. The local elders pointed out that the Hsin-hua District Office, the library and the parking lot in the back were all former public school sites. The district office and library served as the principal's dormitory and swimming pool at the time. In the vicinity of the Public Hall, besides the Hsin-hua Public School, the present Min-sheng Road was a train track for sugar delivery by Taiwan Sugar, and the present fruit and vegetable market was a cattle market. The former site of the cattle market, as shown in Figure 3, was opened as early as 1901 and was very busy during trading hours.



Fig. 3. The former site of the cattle market [8].

When the Tainan City Cultural Affairs Bureau conducted a survey, the main beam of the roof was still covered with the "upper beam markers" from the time the house was built, with the words "Four pillars to honor and worship the gods and generations of eternal success". As for the construction-related people listed on the "upper beam marker", they can be divided into two groups. The chairman of the construction committee, Hiraga Yoshikazu, the vice chairman of the construction committee, Yoshisaku Maruyama, the chairman of the construction committee, Nagayoshi Saeki, and the designer of the construction committee, Toyokichi Onodera, are all officials of the Hsin-hua County Office, which proves that this hall is at the county level. At this point, the change of Hsin-hua Public Hall is quite clear. The 1st generation Hsin-hua

Public Hall is located on the 2nd floor of the 1st generation Hsin-hua Street Office, is the street level. The 2nd generation Hsin-hua Public Hall is a county level, located at the current site, but the land is owned by Hsin-hua Street.

After its completion on February 16, 1937, Hsin-hua County Hall was often used as a location for graduation photos because of its proximity to the public school. The building is also used as a venue for meetings, weddings, funerals and artistic events.

For example, there are many records of gatherings of community groups in the first generation of the hall, and in the second generation of the hall, in addition to gatherings such as the Hsin-hua County Cookie Association (1942), there were also people who rented the hall as a venue for weddings. For example, Ping-Yuen Leung and Chun-Ju Hsu had their wedding photo taken in front of the Public Hall in 1939. After the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the imperialization campaign was launched in response to the "general mobilization of the national spirit" in Japan. The content of the campaign not only inherited the previous social indoctrination campaign, but also included the strengthening of the campaign for the common use of the Japanese language, the worship of shrines, and the implementation of the Japanese way of life. As a result, the public halls were tainted with political control and became a venue for political indoctrination. In Hsin-hua Public Hall, after 1937, there were indeed gatherings of the Imperial School, the Imperial Bonggong Association, the Strongman Group, and the Youth Group.

#### IV. CHANGES IN XINHUA PUBLIC HALL AND ITS SURROUNDINGS AFTER THE WAR

After the war, the Nationalist government announced that all public halls in the province would be renamed "Chung-shan Hall", thus changing the name of Hsin-hua Public Hall, which still serves as a venue for weddings, funerals, gatherings, arts and cultural activities. However, because the neighboring Hsin-hua Public School lacked an auditorium, major school events and graduation ceremonies were held there. When the national government moved to Taiwan in 1949, a large number of troops had no place to live, so they stayed in schools and public places. The school buildings of Hsin-hua Elementary School and Junior High School were borrowed by the armored forces, causing many students to walk two kilometers to other places to attend classes every day. The Public Hall became a temporary residence for military dependents, mostly low-ranking military officers. Subsequently, another group of engineering troops occupied the area behind the Public Hall (now the parking lot), which was originally a vegetable garden, where the engineering troops built their barracks and were stationed. After the departure of the military, there were still activities held here, and the users were not only the townspeople of Hsin-hua, as it was formerly known as the Hsin-hua County Guild Hall, and the nine towns under the former Hsin-hua County also used this place to hold meetings. After the war, many of the local guild halls in Taiwan were borrowed by the KMT's civil service stations, as was the case with the Hsin-hua Public Hall.

The Hsin-hua Citizens' Service Station of the Chinese Kuomintang (local party branch of the KMT: 31st district party branch of Tainan County) was established in 1953 and was originally located at No. 466, Chung-cheng Road, which was a light vehicle garage during the Japanese rule. In 1955, it was renamed the Hsin-hua Civil Service Station and remained in its old location. Later, due to the small size of the building, the Political Integration Group of Hsin-hua Township resolved to rebuild the building at its original location, with the 1st floor rented out and the 2nd and 3rd floors used as an office and meeting room. However, after discussions between the then director of the Civil Service Station, Shou-cheng Zhang, and the mayor of the town, Kao-Ben Wang, it was decided that Chung-shan Hall was not being used and that there was room for a meeting room, so it would be better to move to Chung-sha Hall.

Only, Chung-shan Hall needs to have funding to reorganize. So in about 1963, the mayor of the town, Mr. Kao-Ben Wang, sought funding through the then provincial councilor, Mrs. Chun-Ju Leung-Hsu. Designed by the town office, the two-story building in front of Chung-shan Hall was added, while the rear remains intact. At the same time, the town hall (now demolished) was added to the project. This project was completed in 1967, and the civil service station was moved to this location. The first floor was used for offices and small meeting rooms, and the second floor was used for activities, mostly judo training and folk dance practice. Later, due to the lack of space, the third floor was added between 1967 and 1991, also as a space for events. In addition to the construction of the third floor, a dormitory for the service station supervisor was built on the left side (now demolished).

After the Public Service Station was moved to Chung-shan Hall, the property rights were not owned by the KMT. During the time of Director Tian-he Chen, he wanted to sell the property to the KMT through the Representative Assembly, but the case was not approved. When the Citizens' Service Station first arrived at Chung-shan Hall, the rent was not paid until May 1986, when Mr. Sam-son Chang became the Director of Finance. The annual rent of more than NTS 500,000 contributes to the financial resources of Hsin-hua Township Office.



Fig. 4. Library and Hsin-hua District Office [8]..

The area around Chung-shan Hall was also transformed after the war, with the construction of Hsin-hua High School, the Taiwan Water Company's Hsin-hua Service Station, a fruit

and vegetable market, a library, and the Hsin-hua District Office. As shown in Figure 4, the area around Chung-shan Hall was transformed into the administrative center of Hsin-hua Town. The current Hsin-hua District Office used to be the dormitory and swimming pool for the principal and staff of Hsin-hua Elementary School. Hsin-hua Elementary School was first under the control of the public office, but when it was reverted to the county government, the Hsin-hua Town office did not hand over the land around Chung-shan Hall as well. This is one of the reasons why the town office (now the Hsin-hua District Office) was completed here in 1996.



Fig. 5. Hsin-hua Public Hall (left) and Water Company (right) [8].



Fig. 6. Centennial Banyan Tree and Hsin-hua Public Hall[8].



Fig. 7. Hsin-hua Public Hall front view and youth library signage [8].

With the trend of community master building in the 1990s, local people in Hsin-hua began to rediscover and preserve the historical buildings, which also gained the support of the public and the District Office. One by one, the old Hsin-hua Street, the Street Office, and the Bu-to-ku-den have been successfully preserved, and the residents are calling the

building "Public Hall" again. How to revitalize the historical value of Hsin-hua Public Hall, which was designated as a historic building on June 10, 2008, is now a youth library.



Fig. 8. The connection between Hsin-hua Public Hall and the library[8].



Fig. 9. Hsin-hua Public Hall and library[8]



Fig. 10. Side view of Hsin-hua Public Hall [8]

## V. CONCLUSION

During the period of Japanese rule, various new social activities were gradually introduced into Taiwan, but there was a lack of public space for meetings or recreation and fitness, so public halls were built in various parts of Taiwan. The Hsin-hua Public Hall was relocated to the nucleus of the nine streets and villages near Hsin-hua district, and two generations of Public Halls emerged.

The 1st generation guild hall was the "Hsin-hua Street Public Hall", which was located on the 2nd floor of the 1st generation street office, and from 1927 to 1933, various gatherings were held. But it disappeared with the relocation of

the Street Office. The 2nd generation Hsin-hua Public Hall is "Hsin-hua County Public Hall", which was built on February 16, 1937 and was originally the site of Hsin-hua Public School. After the completion of the project, it will be a place where the neighboring 9 street community groups will gather and people will hold weddings.



Fig. 11. A view of the interior of Hsin-hua Public Hall, which has been converted into a youth library[8].

In the early post-war period, the Hsin-hua County Public Hall was renamed Chung-shan Hall, and was once used by the armoured forces as a residence for the dependents of low-ranking officers. After 1963, the second and third floors were added one after another, and the original appearance of the Public Hall was gradually hidden under the modernized appearance. In 1967, the Hsin-hua Citizens' Service Station of the KMT was moved here and was used until 2007. On June 10, 2008, due to its historical and architectural value, it was registered as a historic building by the Tainan City Cultural Bureau, and was then subject to a survey and restoration plan. We can revitalize the hall and combine it with the surrounding scenery to recreate the glory of the hall's bustling flow. In order to present the youth library as it is today, it is an example of revitalizing a historic building into a library in Tainan City.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, Vol.16, No.1, 1986.
- [2] Z.Y. Du, *Between Truth and Imagination: On the Historical Preservation of the Betsy Ross House in the United States*, *Journal of History*, National Cheng Kung University, Vol. 42, pp. 23-34, June 2012.
- [3] S. K. Cheng, *The Dutch in Formosa*, pp. 516-517. Lian-jing co. Ltd., Taipei., 2002.
- [4] S.S. Jiang *The Diary of the City of Jeolla*, Vol. 2, Tainan, 2002.
- [5] Naoshiro Murakami, *The Journal of Batavia City*, Vol. 1, pp. 180., Taiwan Provincial Council of Literature, Taichung, 1970.
- [6] S. L. Ying, *Taiwan Zhiliu*, pp. 44., Yuan-Yuan co. Ltd., Taipei, 2004.
- [7] W.S. Shi, "The Cultivation of the Han Chinese in Taiwan during the Ming and Cheng Periods," *Proceedings of the Symposium on the Study of Taiwan History and the Maintenance of Historic Sites*, National Cheng Kung University, pp. 178-181. Tainan, 1990.
- [8] Photographed by the author.