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Making Japan Great Again: The Imperial Rescript on Education

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Making Japan Great Again

The Imperial Rescript on Education

Imperial Rescript on Education

Know ye, Our subjects:

“Our Imperial Ancestors founded our empire on a broad and everlasting basis and have deeply and firmly planted virtue; Our emperor, ever united in loyalty and filial piety, has, from generation to generation, illuminated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Nation, and herein also 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 the 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 their descendants and the subjects, infallible for all ages and true in all places. It is our wish that, in all reverence, in common with you, our subjects, that we all thus attain to the same virtue.” (Emphasis added)

Authors

Nakamura Masanao (1832-1875) was originally a Confucian scholar who later voted Tokugawa bakufu students in 1861 to study in Europe. He promoted educational opportunities for women, founded charitable institution for education of blind children, and converted to Christianity believing it as a source of Western power. He strongly argued that Japan must discard its Buddhist heritage and become an imperial power.

Motoda Masanobu (1845-1903) was an influential Pithy Counselor to the Emperor with deep Confucian beliefs but had no experience studying abroad. He was also a Confucian instructor, and was especially responsible for the Confucian elements of the Rescript. He faced a life threat dedicated to the imperial family and worked for them from 1870 until his death.

Iwakura Tomomi (1844-1895) grew up receiving Confucian education, but had no experience studying abroad. He later joined Tokugawa bakufu and drafted the Rescript. He was appointed as a Chief Cabinet Security and as a Minister of Education.

Conclusion

One of the main themes of the Rescript was to provide moral education, especially to the government. Alistor Christianity, significantly contributing to the development of Japanese nationalism. The Imperial Rescript on Education therefore served as an effective tool to justify the hyper-nationalism by standardizing Meiji education and preparing the people for militaristic efforts, which later influenced fascism and increased militarism that plagued Japan before World War II.