

Chapter Three

The Prison in Meiji Japan

Introduction

When the Japanese took control of Taiwan in 1895, they sought to impose their own legal and penal system on an unwilling colonial population. The penal system that they brought to Taiwan was a product of extensive reforms during the Meiji era, which had transformed brutal and bloody Tokugawa punishments into a modern penal system inspired by Western penal practice and philosophy. Thus, reforms undertaken in the Meiji Restoration resulted in a new enlightened system of justice, characterized by humanity and rationality.¹ In this chapter we examine the impetus for this change, and the development of a modern prison system in the Meiji era. Thus we shall better understand the penal system that Japanese colonizers brought with them to Taiwan in 1895.

3.1 The Tokugawa Period (1603-1867)

3.1.1 Punishment

Western visitors to Japan in the Tokugawa or Edo period were horrified by the punishments that they witnessed. They returned home telling tales of the “roasting, burning, crucifying...and boiling” of those who transgressed the laws. These descriptions contributed to the image of Japan in the West as a site of ‘pagan brutality’², however the true picture was more complex. The system of punishment in early modern Japan was characterized by demonstrations of state power through

¹ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2005, p. 2

² Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*, p. 130

brutal corporal and capital punishment, and as such it was part of a system used by a powerful warrior state intended to maintain order and control. However, at the same time it was "not lacking in restraint and compassion"³ because it also allowed the state to show their benevolent rule and their responsibility to their subjects (i.e. turning them away from crime), in line with Confucian and Buddhist concepts. Thus although the dominant trait of the political system was a "lack of redress against authority" and laws were based on rule-by-status, acts of restraint also occurred.⁴

3.1.2 Tokugawa Jails

In the Tokugawa system of punishment, similarly to China, imprisonment was not a legally recognized sentence and prisoners were detained while awaiting sentence or trial. Ishii Ryosuke, a Japanese legal historian tells us that, "In the Edo era, the implication of detention was quite different from the modern one. According to the modern idea, a [suspect] should be treated as 'not guilty' until he/she receives judgment. However, in the Edo period, people seemed to think that a [suspect] must be guilty because he was arrested and examined."⁵ And, as in China, although gaols operated primarily as places of detention, prisoners often languished in them for long periods of time. On occasion, authorities complained that they were unable to recapture escaped prisoners, as they had been in prison for so long that no one could

³ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* p. 10 & 11

⁴ R. Mitchell, *Janus Faced Justice: Political Criminals in Imperial Japan*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1992, p. 1

⁵ Ishii, Edo No Keibatsu 20, quoted in Umemori, *Modernization Through Colonial Mediations: The Establishment of the Police and Prison Systems in Meiji Japan*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Chicago, 2002, p. 163

remember their original offences or find their relatives to help them with their enquiries.⁶

While there are some positive descriptions of Tokugawa jails, many focus on their disordered, dangerous and arbitrary nature.⁷ It would seem that the mixed reports point to the uneven nature of incarceration during this period and that much depended on the individual prison: some were described as relatively efficient and humane, while others were characterized as unsanitary, chaotic places. The disordered nature of many of these gaols resulted in frequent prisoner escapes as well as poor jail conditions. Prisoners lost their lives to disease, malnutrition and abuse as well as disasters such as earthquake and fire. As the jails were mainly wooden constructions, they frequently burned down, resulting in loss of life as well as providing opportunity for prisoner escapes.

Interestingly, the Tokugawa jail can be described as a mirror of Edo society, due to the similarity of many of its features, such as architecture and social hierarchy.⁸ The separate incarceration of low, middle and high-ranking prisoners in different areas according to their social status is similar to the separation of rank by spatial distribution that occurred within Edo society. Within the prison, high-ranking samurai and monks were kept in the upper chambers known as *agari-zashiki*, middle-ranking prisoners, including middle-ranking samurai, monks, physicians and priests were kept in the upper rooms (*agariya*) and commoners, homeless people and lower-class samurai were incarcerated in either the *tairo* (great gaol) or the *nikenro* (lesser gaol).⁹

⁶ Umemori, *Modernization Through Colonial Mediations*, p. 164

⁷ See Umemori, *Modernization Through Colonial Mediations* p. 164

⁸ Umemori, *Modernization Through Colonial Mediations* p. 164 and Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*, p. 114

⁹ Umemori, *Modernization Through Colonial Mediations* p.164-165

The internal governance of the gaol was carried out by the prisoners themselves, who were appointed as gaol officials and responsible for various tasks such as food distribution, care of sick prisoners and guarding toilets.¹⁰ Thus a strict hierarchy existed that governed power relations between prisoners. There were strict (unwritten) rules regarding the hierarchy of prisoners, tasks to be performed by each and the space they were allowed to occupy. The arrangement of space reflected the power and status of the prisoners, with the head gaol official perched on a stack of 10 tatami mats, lower “officials” occupying their own mat or sharing with one or two others, and so on down to those of lowest status, who might have to share with up to 7 or 8 others. Social status and financial situation were very important within the prison and could greatly affect a prisoner’s experience of incarceration.

3.2 Reform in the Meiji Era (1868-1910)

The Meiji Restoration served as an “announcement for a new kind of learning” and, by extension for a new type of government.¹¹ It was clear that reforms were needed in order to build a modern nation state, capable of meeting the challenge from the West, and the reform of judicial and penal systems was an important component in this process. Thus within a year of the Meiji Restoration a system of modern courts and prisons had already been established.

A range of external and internal considerations supported the introduction of modern prisons. Internally, the transition between Tokugawa and Meiji eras was not smooth, and the Meiji government needed to establish strong systems of control in order to

¹⁰ Umemori, *Modernization Through Colonial Mediations*, p. 166

¹¹ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*, p. 115

battle weakness and dissension.¹² The Meiji government also sought to demonstrate the emperor's benevolence by ending harsh Tokugawa punishments and establish their own legitimacy as a government. It was important for Meiji rulers to build a strong nation with its own institutions and structures that would enforce this direct control by the state.¹³

Building national strength was also important in dealing with threats to Japan's sovereignty from the West, and when the domestic situation was under control, the government could concentrate on repealing the unequal treaties. Extraterritoriality came about due to the concerns of Western nations to protect their citizens from the brutality of Japanese punishments.¹⁴ Thus, to get rid of this greatly resented practice, it was imperative for the Japanese to demonstrate the reform of their judicial and penal system on par with Western nations, and this meant making a break with the old traditions of the Tokugawa period. Thus penal reform as a 'civilizing project' was intimately linked with Japan's struggle to escape from the "inferior status it was assigned within the imperialist world order of the late nineteenth century" thus becoming integral to the creation of a modern Japan.¹⁵

¹² Mitchell, *Janus Faced Justice*, p. 1

¹³ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* p. 116

¹⁴ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* p. 132

¹⁵ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* p. 9, p. 140

3.2.1 Reform of the Legal and Penal System

The Japanese government actively studied Western modern legal concepts and the development of the legal system through the Meiji era was influenced by China as well as Western nations. As Tokugawa punishments were dismantled, initially Chinese law was used as a model for legal reform and a new code was introduced in 1871 that signalled the retreat of the criminal 'body-as-sign' from the Japanese political landscape.¹⁶ These codes provided some safeguards for people in prison, however Tokugawa punishments were still in evidence, namely use of torture to secure confession. In the mid-1870s, widespread criticism of torture had turned this into a very sensitive issue for the government, and it eventually responded by abolishing torture in 1879.

In 1880, the Keihi (Penal Code), Japan's first Western-style penal code, drafted by a French legal advisor to the Meiji government, Gustave E. Boissonade de Fontarabie, was promulgated, going into force in 1882. It established the principle of equality before the law thus sweeping away the old Tokugawa rule-by-status system as well as earlier codes based on Chinese models.¹⁷ The main form of punishment according to this code was incarceration of various types, namely servitude, exile, imprisonment with labor or hard labor and short-term imprisonment.

Prison law underwent another major transformation in 1908, when Law no. 28 was proclaimed and implemented.¹⁸ The new Prison law was influenced by German legal concepts as well as legal ideas about criminal law and legal techniques from other countries. It had detailed regulations regarding custody of prisoners, discipline, education, hygiene, medical care, punishment and reward systems etc. Under this new

¹⁶ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* p. 143

¹⁷ Mitchell, *Janus Faced Justice*, p. 11

¹⁸ 蘇明修, <<嘉義舊監獄修護調查及再利用規劃研究>>, 頁 27

law different types of prisons were detailed including hard labor prisons, detention jails and custody prisons for the incarceration of different offenders according to the seriousness of their offence.¹⁹

Western penal practices were transmitted to Japan from a variety of places. Important sources for early Japanese thinkers included not only Dutch studies of the Tokugawa era but also Qing dynasty China.²⁰ Wei Yuan (1794-1857), a friend of the Qing dynasty's special commissioner in Canton, Lin Zexu (1785-1850), wrote a book entitled "Haiguo Tuzhi or "An Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Countries", that was to prove very popular in Japan. It contained information on the West including descriptions of punishments and prisons, primarily obtained from U.S. missionaries, that Japanese activists and scholars found particularly interesting. When they read descriptions of stone prisons with single cells that were ventilated and clean, the separation of different classes of prisoner and educational and trade activities provided for prisoners, they contrasted them with the brutal penal system in Japan. These Western prisons appeared to them as utopian, benevolent environments, rather than the harsh punishment that they were intended to be.²¹

The penal systems described by American missionaries were two different systems of penal incarceration developed in the nineteenth century, the Auburn system (originating in Auburn Prison, New York) and the Pennsylvania system, introduced by the Quakers. The Auburn System consisted of separate confinement at night and congregate work and meal times. It featured segregation by type of criminality and a code of silence harshly enforced by guards. Thus even though the inmates worked and ate together, they did so in complete silence.

¹⁹蘇明修, <<嘉義舊監獄修護調查及再利用規劃研究>>, 頁 38

²⁰ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*, p. 123

²¹ Umemori, *Modernization Through Colonial Mediations*, p. 149

The Pennsylvania system was an alternative system, which featured solitary confinement for all prisoners, who were kept totally isolated from each other. They labored, ate and exercised alone in their cells according to the idea that “the combination of strict discipline and time alone to reflect on past sins would lead prisoners to repent and save themselves from further wrongdoing.”²²

Thus although early reformers already had some knowledge of key Western penal concepts, it was not until the Meiji government began to see penal reform as a key issue for the repeal of the unequal treaties that first-hand experience was gained of Western prisons. Thus government officials were sent to investigate Western penal systems in the 1870s in order to develop the necessary modern technologies of discipline in Japan. Thus from the beginning there was a close connection between Western prison systems, in particular English colonial prisons, and improvements in Japan’s modern prison policy.

In 1871, Ohara Shigechika, the head of the Office of Gaols (shugokushi), a newly created institution for the improvement of prison administration under the Meiji government, was sent overseas to study British colonial prisons in China and South-East Asia. Prisons in Hong Kong and Singapore were studied in order to gain a better understanding of Western penal institutions and more specifically to study the incarceration of people from different cultures.²³ On his return to Japan, based on his experiences, he drafted the “Prison Rules” (Kangokusoku) in 1872, which became the first prison legislation in Japanese history.²⁴

²² Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*, p. 122

²³ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*, p. 148

²⁴ Umemori, *Modernization Through Colonial Mediations*, p. 13

Ohara argued that, “If we build our nation’s prison system on the basis of a system in which people, like ourselves, from countries in which life is sustained through the consumption of rice, are held together with people from meat-eating countries, then it will be most appropriate for our purposes. It will, in the future, enable us to reach a point where we can confine foreigners (in our prisons), and thus greatly help our national policy.”²⁵ Thus he saw the creation of prisons, where foreigners and Asians could be incarcerated together, as imperative for helping Japan achieve its objective of abolishing extraterritoriality.

During their visit to Hong Kong, the Japanese were very impressed by the prison there, in particular, “the separate cells, the careful sanitary arrangements as to ventilation, sewerage et cetera, the classification of the prisoners, their orderly prosecution of their various tasks, the perfect discipline, the machine-like regulation with which every movement was carried out, and the scrupulous cleanliness...”²⁶ Interestingly, the maintenance of prison discipline was achieved through the “incessant application” of corporal punishment, mainly flogging.²⁷ The British authorities supported flogging as they considered it very effective against reducing crime, as well as ensuring that prisoners did not become too comfortable. The Chinese prisoners viewed by colonial authorities as ‘great cowards’ who were terribly afraid of corporal punishments “...[were] so well treated that their confinement almost ceased to be a punishment.”²⁸

²⁵ Shigechika Ohara, quoted in Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* p. 271

²⁶ Umemori, *Modernization Through Colonial Mediations* p. 121

²⁷ Umemori, *Modernization Through Colonial Mediations* p. 124

²⁸ Umemori, *Modernization Through Colonial Mediations* p. 126

Thus the colonial factor was important in “transforming the prison reform discourse into modern form”.²⁹ Ohara was to have a great influence on later penal reform. The establishment of Japanese modern prisons originated with his 1872 “Prison Rules and Plans”, whose radial shape configuration prison designs, while not implemented at the time due to government financial difficulties, became the blueprint for Japanese penal architecture. His proposals thus demonstrate the first attempt to provide a guide for the establishment of modern penal concepts in Japan. He describes the purpose of the penal system as “a means to hold criminals in custody in order to discipline them. The purpose of a prison is to show love and benevolence to people, not to do violence to them. Its purpose is to discipline people, not to cause them pain. Punishments are applied because there is no other choice. Their purpose is to expel evil in the interest of the nation.”³⁰ However, early concerns with demonstrating benevolence were to change in later decades to a more pragmatic and harsh style of penal reform.

3.2.2 Meiji Prison Construction

With the introduction of new Chinese-style criminal codes in the early 1870s, with their emphasis on confinement, as well as growing domestic opposition to Meiji reforms, facilities for the incarceration of criminals were urgently needed. Some existing facilities were expanded, and institutions for hard labour (choekijo) were newly built in Osaka city and 6 prefectures but not to a particularly high standard.³¹ However, it soon became clear that using pre-existing facilities from the Tokugawa era was not ideal, and a better method was needed to cope with the large number of prisoners created by the rebellions of 1876 and 1877. Home Ministry officials in 1877

²⁹ Umemori, *Modernization Through Colonial Mediations* p. 228

³⁰ Umemori, *Modernization Through Colonial Mediations* p. 117

³¹ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* p. 160

called for the creation of a new type of prison, called the shujikan (gather and control prison), in Miyagi prefecture.³² This prison was to function as the central prison of the region, modelled after France's Maison Centrale, and to hold serious offenders serving heavy sentences, while local authorities would deal with less serious offenders.³³ However, despite its large-scale (Miyagi prison could hold over 1,000 prisoners), it was soon found that the new prison was not big enough to hold the rebel prisoners. Thus a second central prison was constructed on the outskirts of Tokyo at Kosuge, being completed in 1884.

The prison at Miyagi, modelled on a Belgian institution, was built from wood and was radial in form with six cellblocks radiating out from a central tower. The prison in Tokyo, situated at Kosuge, was established on the site of a private brickworks, and was intended to be a prison-factory, with prisoners employed making bricks to supply the city's construction needs as well as to build the prison itself.³⁴

3.2.3 Penal Reform in the 1880s

The 1880s signalled a change in penal policy as authorities found that prison construction could not keep pace with the needs of the growing prison population. Overcrowding was a continuing problem throughout the decade. Prison officials therefore tried to develop different strategies to reduce prison populations and in 1880 a plan of sending prisoners to remote and under-populated Hokkaido to develop the region by forced labor was approved by the Council of State. Funds previously marked for the construction of the five central prisons on the mainland were

³² Mitchell, *Janus Faced Justice*, p. 17

³³ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* p. 174

³⁴ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* p. 175

transferred for use of prison construction on Hokkaido. Prisons were subsequently constructed in Hokkaido (five prisons between 1881 and 1895) and housed prisoners who variously worked on road construction, in coalmines and excavating sulphur amongst other things. Thus did Hokkaido “come to occupy a central place in the nation’s penal imagination.”³⁵ Botsman attributes the ability of the Meiji state to utilize Hokkaido as a site for a large-scale penal system to its political system, which allowed it to not only raise taxes to fund prison construction, but also to introduce new technologies of discipline and surveillance which allowed it to transport, institutionalize and control large numbers of people.³⁶

With the issue of the new Prison Rules (*Kangoku Soku*) in September 1881, a change in penal thinking had occurred from the previous decade, evidenced by the increase in discipline and application of force in the prisons. And in 1880, when Onoda Motohiro visited Europe to research prisons in a “search for the ‘spirit’ of Western prison administration” he focused on researching penal architecture’s effect on the reformation of prisoners, not for its benevolent functions.³⁷ The Home Minister Yamagata Aritomo in 1885 wrote that the primary purpose of the prison was to “obligate [the prisoners] to do intolerable disciplinary punishment and make them learn how fearful imprisonment is in order to stop them from repeating their crimes.”³⁸

This new harsher attitude towards the function of prisons and treatment of prisoners was fuelled in part by government crackdowns on continued opposition to Meiji rule, such as rebellions by samurai, farmers and opposition groups. These crackdowns led

³⁵ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*, p. 177

³⁶ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*, p. 178

³⁷ Umemori, *Modernization Through Colonial Mediations*, p. 234

³⁸ Mitchell, *Janus Faced Justice*, p.20

to dramatic increases in the prison population, and the period between 1876 and 1885 became known as the ‘great confinement’ due to the huge increases in arrests and prison admissions.³⁹ Between 1882 and 1885 for example, the prison population increased from 33,000 to 63,000 and annual new admissions rose from 84,000 in 1882 to 167,000 in 1885.⁴⁰ The huge numbers of prisoners incarcerated during the ‘great confinement’ created overcrowded conditions, which in turn led to unrest in many prisons. Prisoners attacked guards and riots, arson, and escapes were also not infrequent throughout the 1880s.⁴¹ As the situation continued to worsen, military police were assigned to some prisons, and guards in others were given permission to carry arms.⁴²

The harshness of many prisoners’ lives in this period was reflected in the working conditions in prisons on Hokkaido. Death rates of prisoners forced to work in unsafe mines or on road-building projects were very high and they were treated as expendable, one official arguing that “when we are told of the difficulties of paying prison costs, the reduction of numbers (of prisoners dying on the job) should be thought of as a helpful measure.”⁴³

The end of the 1880s saw a new wave of prison reforms that were influenced as much by German penal ideas as by the increasingly urgent need for treaty revision. The focus of penal policy thus changed from one emphasizing hard labor and strict discipline, to reform and vocational training.⁴⁴ The reasons for this included not only treaty revision, and the diminishing need in Hokkaido for penal labor but also

³⁹ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*, p. 179

⁴⁰ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*, p. 179

⁴¹ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*, p. 190

⁴² Mitchell, *Janus Faced Justice*, p. 19

⁴³ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*, p. 189

⁴⁴ Mitchell, *Janus Faced Justice*, p. 22

humanitarian considerations. This trend saw the appointment of professional penologists, the establishment of professional associations, such as the Prisons Society of Great Japan, and the publishing of journals, which circulated ideas about prison management, administration and theories.

One of the influential German advisors to the Meiji government was Kurt von Seebach, (1845-1891) who arrived in Japan in 1889 with ideas that influenced the course of the future Japanese prison system. He recommended the building of small-scale single-cell prisons, for better treatment of inmates, and emphasized the need for new, modern prisons in order to bring about real reform.⁴⁵ The government agreed with the need for more and better prisons. While some prisons had been modernized and featured state-of-the-art facilities, others were embarrassingly antiquated, and the government knew that only modern constructions would impress Western nations. The impetus was thus provided for the construction of such new facilities as the new Sugamo prison (opened in 1895), built to replace the old Isikawajima prison. The huge size and impressiveness of this prison “was key to its true role as a monument to Meiji Japan’s attainment of modernity and civilization.”⁴⁶

Botsman states that by 1895, the key elements of the penal system were all in place: a Western style penal code, independent law courts, and a national network of prisons.⁴⁷ The Meiji government built ten prisons throughout Japan between 1895 and 1908 and these modern prisons and a new penal system based on modern principles made it possible to “inflict suffering and pain more consistently and on a larger body of

⁴⁵ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*, p. 196

⁴⁶ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*, p. 198

⁴⁷ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*, p. 165

people.”⁴⁸ This paid off; with the agreement in 1895 that extraterritoriality would end in 1899. Of course, much work still needed to be done, and despite the heavy financial burden incurred by prison construction, continued efforts were made to improve and increase Western style prison buildings and prepare them for the possible arrival of foreign prisoners.⁴⁹ In addition, prison conditions were gradually improved and dramatic improvements took place after 1900.⁵⁰

3.2.4 Prison Architecture

The primary penal architectural style for the Meiji period was the radial pattern configuration (see Figure 3.1), a direct result of the strong influence of contemporary Western prison architectural concepts. This architectural form, also known as the panopticon cell design or X-shaped radial pattern, features a row of cells “arranged like spokes on a wheel [with] the control center at the hub of the wheel.”⁵¹ This architectural form was first advocated in Japan in 1873, in Ohara’s prison sketches, made after his return from the British colonial prisons of Hong Kong and Singapore. His Prison Rules stress ‘modern’ ideas like the Panopticon, sketches of which were included in his notes, and the use of single cells.⁵² He states: “A round room should be constructed as a watch house for prison guards at the centre of the prison complex. From this room, everything may be observed within a single gaze...the prison

⁴⁸ Gunn, G, “Review: Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan”, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 2005, p. 546

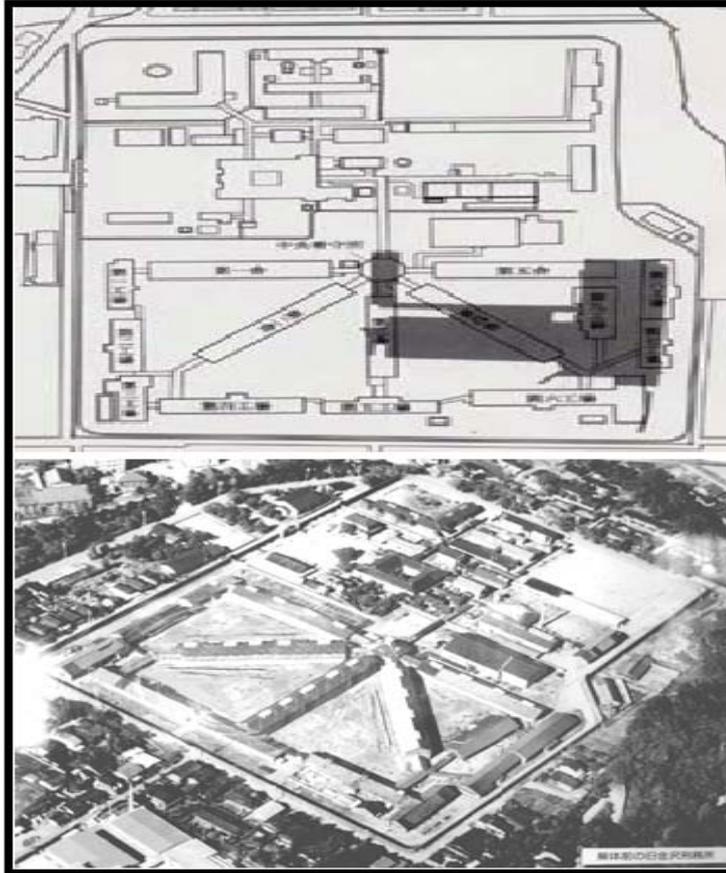
⁴⁹ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* p. 198

⁵⁰ Mitchell, *Janus Faced Justice*, p. 156

⁵¹ Carlson, Hess et al, *Corrections in the 21st Century: A Practical Approach*, West/Wadsworth, California, 1999, p. 238

⁵² The panopticon as designed by Jeremy Bentham consisted of a central tower surrounded by a ring-shaped building that is divided into cells, allowing the inmate of each cell to be isolated from the next and only seen by an unseen observer in the tower.

building should be two or three stories high. Each story ...should consist of ten cells.
In principle, only one person should reside in each cell.”⁵³



*Figure 3.1 Kanazawa Prison, constructed 1907, demonstrates the radial design, with a central guardhouse and radiating prison cells.*⁵⁴

The development of radial form prison architecture can be traced through the early European form of Ghent’s 8-spoke radial form through to the 7-spoke radial design of the Pennsylvania Eastern Reformatory. Ghent Prison was erected in 1775 in the Austrian Low Countries and its radial design enabled prisoners to be confined separately while common work areas were provided for day labour. This was to prove very influential in the design of later prisons. (See figure 3.2)

⁵³ Umemori, *Modernization Through Colonial Mediations*, p. 116

⁵⁴ Source: <http://web.kanazawa-u.ac.jp/~maibun/tahoctix.htm/2004.04/15>, accessed June 2006

OCTAGONAL PRISON
GHENT BELGIUM 1773

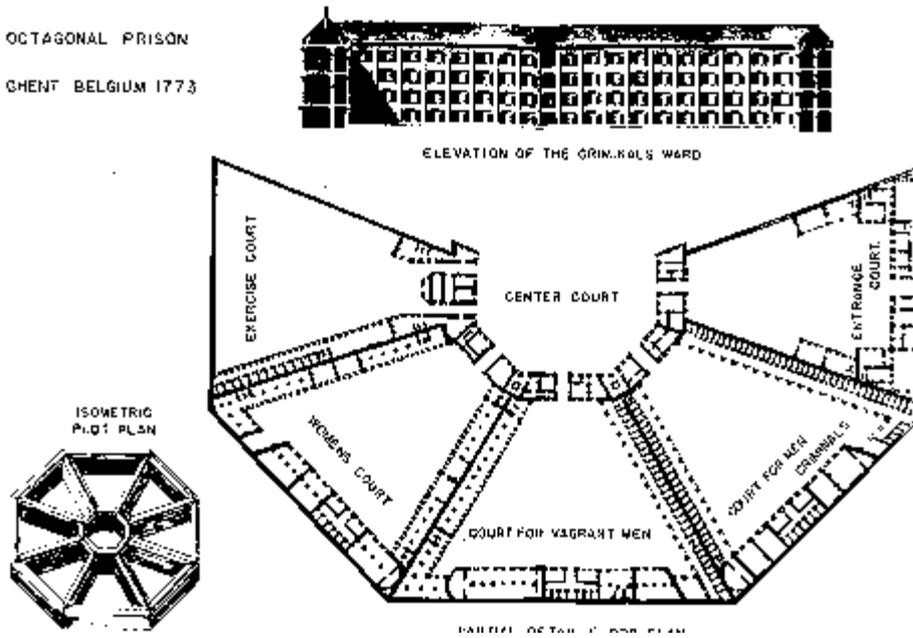


Figure 3.2 Ghent Floor plan showing radial design.⁵⁵

In fact most prisons designed in the 19th century were based on the designs of either one of the American systems of Auburn or Pennsylvania. These two systems led to two different kinds of penal architecture being developed depending on the penal philosophy followed by the prison. The Auburn system developed at New York State's Auburn prison emphasized a congregate system, where inmates were confined in single cells, subjected to a rigid disciplinary regime but permitted to have contact with other prisoners when eating and working. Therefore the Auburn architectural form used cellblocks of small back-to-back cells in the centre of the building and separate congregate workshops. In contrast, the Pennsylvania system, as exemplified by the Eastern Penitentiary, was organized around the principle of total isolation. Inmates occupied a larger single cell, where they slept, ate and worked, and contact

⁵⁵ Source: http://www.sheldensays.com/architectural_and_disciplinary_i.htm. Accessed 07/07/06

was totally forbidden between inmates.⁵⁶ Thus there was no need for common areas in the prison for the purpose of communal eating or working.

The Eastern Penitentiary (shown in Figure 3.3) was built in 1829, in Philadelphia by architect John Haviland, and this world famous prison, the largest structure in America at the time, quickly became a popular site for tourists. Its imposing castle-like appearance “well represented the coherence between architecture and penal ideas”.⁵⁷ The inmates were confined in separate cells and performed labour within their cell. This separate system stressed “confinement in solitude with labour”, which it was thought would lead to repentance on the part of the prisoner. Its radial design was extremely influential in prison design, and more than 300 prisons worldwide are based on its radial floor plan.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Carlson, Hess, *Corrections in the 21st Century*, p. 71

⁵⁷ Carlson, Hess, *Corrections in the 21st Century*, p. 69

⁵⁸ Source: www.easternstate.org/history/index.html. Accessed 07/07/06

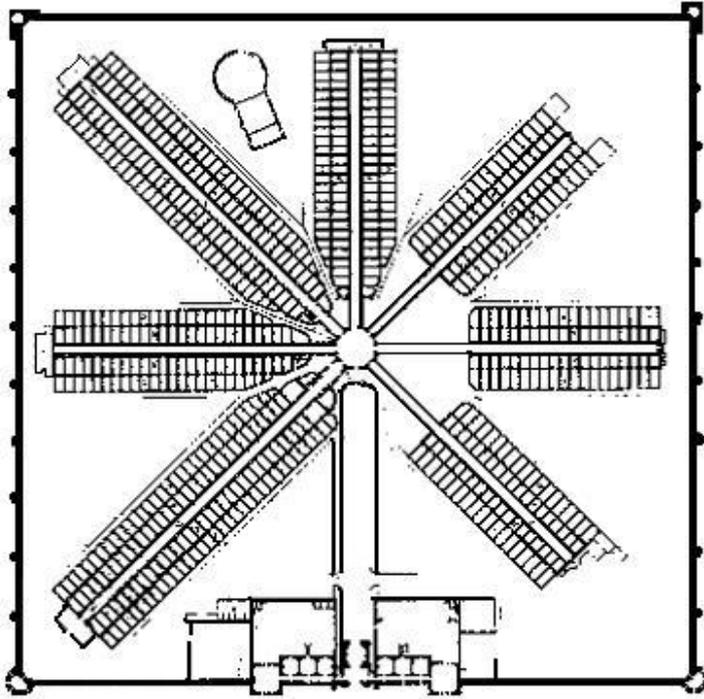


Figure 3.3 Eastern Penitentiary Floor Plan Showing Radial Design and Outside Cell form.⁵⁹

When the radial architectural penal form was introduced into Japan, the stage was set for the transformation of Japanese society into a Foucauldian ‘disciplinary society’ with institutions that would reflect both macro- and micro-level “strategies of order and organization and the new culture of time and space that would increasingly come to shape and regulate individual lives.”⁶⁰ However, although the majority of modern prisons built from 1875 on, such as the Sapporo prison, were built in X-shape radial configuration, some, such as the Aomori Prison (1903) utilized the T-shape configuration.⁶¹ And despite being based on Western architectural designs, the buildings still show the influence of Japanese design concepts. In both Sapporo Prison, which began construction in 1881 (see Figure 3.4) and Kanazawa prison, established in 1901, (see Figure 3.5) a mixture of both Western and Eastern styles can be clearly seen. Japanese design elements include the use of wood in the construction of the

⁵⁹ Source www.easternstate.org. Accessed 07/07/06

⁶⁰ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*, p. 159

⁶¹ 蘇明修, <<嘉義舊監獄修護調查及再利用規劃研究>>, 頁 29

central watch house and cells and the distinctive roof design. Thus the Japanese adapted Western concepts to local needs.



Figure 3.4 Sapporo Prison, which began construction in 1881. Demonstrates the X-shaped radial design, and mixture of Western and Eastern elements.⁶²

While those who had seen overseas prisons enthusiastically promoted Western design concepts*, Meiji era architects such as Yamashita Keijiro (1867-1931) and Tsumaki Yorinaka (1859-1916) were also influential in promoting a modern penal architectural vocabulary. Keijiro was an enthusiastic promoter of Western architectural concepts and responsible for completing the Western-style Kanazawa, Chiba, Kagoshima, Nagasaki and Nara prisons. Yorinaka was an American and German-trained architect who designed Sugamo Prison. When it opened in 1895, it was one of the three largest buildings in Japan, with a perimeter wall of over 1.6 meters high and capable of holding 2,400 prisoners in its five radial cellblocks.⁶³ From these Western-style prisons we can ascertain the main principles of prison architecture during the Meiji

⁶²蘇明修, <<嘉義舊監獄修護調查及再利用規劃研究>>, 頁 29

* See 嘉義舊監獄修護調查及再利用規劃研究, p. 30. In addition to Ohara's visit to colonial British prisons, Japanese representatives were sent to 8 European countries and America in 1901 and 1902, inspecting about 30 prisons in total. Their findings and experiences were influential in promoting modern Western prison architectural concepts.

⁶³ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*, pp. 197-198

era as being the use of the radial design and the mixed use of Western and Japanese architectural forms.⁶⁴



Figure 3.5 Kanazawa Prison, constructed 1907, designed by Japanese architect, Yamashita Keijiro. Note the wooden construction, distinctive roof-style and octagonal central guard station from which five cell block radiate outward.⁶⁵

3.3 Conclusion

When the Chair of the International Prison Conference, E.C. Wines, evaluated the Japanese and Chinese prison systems in 1880, he characterized the Chinese system as one where “torpor like death has possession of...the government as regards improvement in prisons and prison administration.” In stark contrast, he stated that “Japan has already taken her place in the forefront of those nations which are reaching out after a prison organization and prison management better, wiser, more scientific and more effective than any embraced in the old methods.”⁶⁶ Thus the process of transformation of Japanese penal institutions, in response to both internal and external factors culminated in a modern prison system that became a symbol of progress and civilization. After years of gradual reform, the West was finally forced to acknowledge the improvements in incarceration and end extraterritoriality. Not only

⁶⁴ 蘇明修, <<嘉義舊監獄修護調查及再利用規劃研究>>, 頁 25

⁶⁵ Source: <http://anny.kinjo-u.ac.jp/~nakata/Nakata/Data/Sectors/7Sector/EChyuo.htm>. Accessed: 01/11/06

⁶⁶ Wines, quoted in Umemori, *Modernization Through Colonial Mediations*, p 236

did penal reform help to transform Japan into a 'disciplinary society' with new strategies of order and discipline, it was also, in the process, transformed into a modern nation. However, while Japan adopted Western penal administrative and architectural concepts, they also adapted them to local conditions. Japanese penal architecture in particular demonstrates the blending of Western concepts with Japanese architectural styles. This process of learning and reform gradually transformed thinking about prisons in Japan and it was this experience that Japanese colonizers drew on when they sought to introduce a penal system into their first colony, Taiwan.