

Chinese Australian Herald. “Aozhou guanzhilun” 澳洲官職論 [Brief Introduction to Official Positions in Australia]. May 10, 1902.

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Brief Introduction to Official Positions in Australia

The political structure here differs significantly from that in China, and we would like to humbly list some of them below.

All provinces of Australia fall under the regulation of the Britain imperial court (*chaoting* 朝廷)¹ due to the concern that diplomatic tensions can be easily stirred up once they have taken actions that might disturb neighbouring countries. For instance, any communications between the provinces or Australia's ban on the entry of coloured races are both seen as disruptive actions, and therefore cannot be carried out without obtaining approval from the British imperial court. Another example would be the establishment of the Australian Navy for the purpose of national defence in case any neighbouring country would covet its land and wage wars. The Australian navy currently has eight warships which were all supplied by Britain and have been preparing in Australia for future potential attacks. Britain offers Australia support in supplying coal, soldiers' pay and provisions, gunpowder and bullets, and also covers the operational cost of the Royal Australian Army Ordnance Corp. Therefore, Australia in turn pays eighty thousand pounds to Britain every year to cover these expenses. Likewise, dominion over both civil and military matters is held by governors of each province of Australia, meaning that they have full authority to decide whether to start or end a war. However, these provincial governors are also appointed by Britain. The governors used to be able to receive as much as ten thousand pounds every year compared with the seven thousand pounds nowadays, and the rest of the grant from Britain is to be used by the provincial governments. The salaries of secretaries (*shiye* 師爺)² and other staff members in general are also covered by the national treasury.

¹ The author employed the word *chaoting* (朝廷), which originally denoted the imperial court of ancient China, to describe the British royal court. It can be also abbreviated as *yingting* (英廷).

² The position *shiye* 師爺 refers to the local officials appointed during the Ming and Qing dynasties who served as assistants to the primary government officials (*zhuguan* 主管) by aiding them in managing documents, legal matters, finances, and other affairs. They also used to be known by a variety of other titles such as *muyou* 幕友, *mubin* 幕賓, *muliao* 幕僚, *muke* 幕客, *binshi* 賓師 and *laofuzi* 老夫子. The *shiye* was a common colloquial term used to refer to them in society (Shi 2006).

Additionally, a judge of the District Court³ (*ancha xianguan* 按察縣官, surveillance commissioner of a county)⁴ is employed based on the candidates' merits and talents and receives their salaries from local treasuries. However, courts (*yanei* 衙內)⁵ are indeed “prestigious,” in that they still issue and implement orders or arrest warrants in the name of the British emperor. Similarly, the customs house in every province is regarded as a taxation office and is called “the cashier of the British emperor”, although in fact, it collects taxes and charges on behalf of Australia's national treasury only. In addition, the name of the British imperial title is also marked on the facades of prisons as well as on prison uniforms. The same condition also applies to the soldiers patrolling the waterfronts, police stations, uniforms, batteries all over the country, lawyers for dealing with crimes and smuggling, postal services and staff at the Customs House, but matters in other areas are governed by Australia.

The methods of governing a country are evolving on a daily basis. This is why a representative of each county of New South Wales (*shenjin* 紳衿)⁶ is elected to the Legislative Assembly and together they will produce bills for Australia.⁷ It is then the Governor's duty to sign them to assent to the official passing of the bills, for their obligation is to govern the country⁸ according to the people's will and therefore they cannot refuse to give assent. There are also aldermen elected by the general public who routinely convene to discuss local affairs or laws in the Sydney Town Hall with the aim of maintaining cleanliness and public safety in the city. For example, tasks such as renovating or cleaning streets as well as tending gardens are all discussed. Officers responsible for patrolling houses and maintaining cleanliness in the city are tasked with collecting taxes from citizens, ensuring the lighting of streets at night and also checking whether the wagons are clean from rubbish. The head of these aldermen is called a “mayor” in English and is in charge of the Sydney Town Hall. A new mayor is appointed every

³ This is different from what is known as a “county” in New South Wales nowadays. Here the author was in fact referring to the electorates or electoral divisions where the members of the Legislative Assembly were elected.

⁴ In line with the officials appointed during the Tang dynasty, an *ancha xianguan* 按察縣官 was tasked with overseeing judicial matters and law enforcement within a designated region as well as assessing government officials. In addition, they also simultaneously encouraged agricultural and sericultural activities (Lü and Zhang 2015).

⁵ The traditional Chinese concept of *yanei* 衙內 used to refer to a variety of governmental administrative offices or a mandarin in imperial China.

⁶ Sun (2022, 22) regards the concept of “elites” as a newly imported strange term that started to circulate and prevail in the academic community in the early 20th century in Europe and the US. In comparison, Sun points out that Chinese people at that time seemed to be more familiar with another term borrowed from Europe, namely “gentry”, which had a direct Chinese counterpart called *shenjin* 紳衿 or *shenshi* 紳士. However, unlike the possible wide reference to the concept of “elites”, the “gentry” in a Chinese context is usually not associated with the people with political powers. This therefore might have partly explained the reason for the author's misuse of this word, as this could either be due to the person's potential misunderstanding of the role of the members of all kinds of political institutions in New South Wales (which can be seen as a type of “elites” in this case) or his inability to coin a new term that could accurately describe this position.

⁷ It was unclear why the author believed that the New South Wales Legislative Assembly had the power to make laws for the entire country. This is because the Parliament of New South Wales had resigned its control over a range of areas in 1901 due to the federation in Australia, and the power to legislate over these areas was in turn handed over to the Commonwealth Parliament (Parliament of New South Wales n.d.).

⁸ See Footnote 7.

year, and this is the same with the aldermen. However, the gas system embedded in the Sydney Town Hall was built with the collective financial support of the wealthy people in the city instead of the Australian state. Likewise, the cost of the natural gas system in barracks is funded by the president of the military⁹, and that in the post offices is not covered by the state either. The cost of lights on the streets is provided by the properties collected from the public in Sydney and therefore is irrelevant to the state as well. We found that there are approximately three deputy governors¹⁰ of major provinces, with Darley¹¹ being one of them. The reason why the name of this position is prefixed with “deputy” is that they would be permitted the full authority over both civil and military matters in the province when the provincial governor is absent, and are therefore essentially the same as a provincial governor. The head of members of a provincial bureau of political affairs¹² is known as a “premier” in English, with that of New South Wales being John See. See initially entered the provincial bureau through popular election, and was later elected as the head by more than one hundred forty members of the bureau after he was elected to the Legislative Assembly, and this is why he currently leads this provincial bureau. However, the management of various local affairs in the cities is still principally managed by the aldermen, with Dr Jamieson being one of their leaders. A few days ago, the British prince arrived here and appointed only Dr Jamieson and Darley as deputy governors of the Australian navy. As a result, the two now hold rival powers.

Those attending court only on trial days are known as jurors, and do not possess real power although they are also regarded as “aldermen”. This is because jurors are not publicly elected, as court officials would simply choose tens of names randomly from a name list of the people in the city and summon them to serve as jurors. Anyone appointed as a juror who does not attend court will be fined two pounds for each day they have missed from court. In addition, jurors are always temporary positions, and new jurors will be chosen for every new case, meaning that they never hold an actual official title.

⁹ This would be equivalent to the position known as “Chief of the Defence Force” today. However, the author was actually referring to Australia’s “Secretary of the Department of Defence” who is responsible for the “budget and resource allocation” (Australian Government, Defence n.d.).

¹⁰ The author was referring to the lieutenant governor which is a standing appointment for a deputy governor of a state. A lieutenant governor acts in place of the governor if the governor is unable, unavailable or unwilling to act.

¹¹ The author was referring to Sir Frederick Matthew Darley (1830-1910), a former lieutenant governor as well as the sixth Chief Justice of New South Wales.

¹² The author was actually referring to the New South Wales Government.

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