The Chill of History: the Experience, Emotion and Changing Politics of Archival Research in the Pacific*

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'The Chill of History' explores how the legacy of colonialism affects and complicates the use of libraries and archival collections in the contemporary Pacific Islands region. Particular attention is paid to the encounters of indigenous or native scholars with these depositories, and to the culturally specific procedures and protocols that govern access to the historical knowledge they house.

I am pleased to be able to speak to this conference on Pacific Collections, though I am uncomfortable with the idea that what I have to say should be construed in any way as a 'keynote address.' There are people at this conference and on this campus whose words you will find far more significant than mine. I begin my comment today with the not terribly profound

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observation that the practice of history, in the Euro-American world anyway, has been intimately tied to libraries and archival collections. Historians have long had a fascination for detail and a belief that men and women are extraordinarily revealing in the written record they leave behind them; writings in the form of letters, journals, diaries, newspapers, and public documents; writings that need to be carefully and patiently searched for their truths and their fictions. Libraries and archival collections, then, hold the stuff, the raw material if you will, from which history is fashioned.

The 'history' to which I refer is a very culturally specific way of approaching the past. Its deepest intellectual roots lie in the Judeo-Roman tradition: it draws from the principles of science and is often written from the perspective and political structure of the nation state. This kind of history ('Western history') rests upon very particular notions of linear time, physical space, determinable fact, and appropriate objects or categories of inquiry. It reveals a penchant for chronological ordering and narrative, and often presumes that all human history is ultimately about development and progress.

This kind of history was brought into the Pacific and applied to island pasts, an application that was usually colonising in its effects and often in its very intentions. It's a particular kind of history that has been unsettled of late by other kinds of histories in this region we call 'the Pacific.' I am referring here to histories that are not necessarily written and can also be spoken, chanted, sung, danced, painted, carved or, through the appropriation of modern technology, filmed, performed, and recorded. The authors or creators of these reemerging and contesting histories are native peoples of the Pacific (or of 'Oceania', as Epeli Hau'ofa prefers to call the region). In the process of transforming history in the Pacific, these resurgent and local histories are redefining our notion of sources and archives. It is within the context of this refiguring of history and its consequent redefinition of sources and mediums of historical expressions that I would like to speak this morning. 'The Chill of History' is the metaphor around which I have organised my talk: a chill that possesses physical, intellectual and political dimensions, and that bears directly, I think, upon the administration and use of libraries and archival collections in the Pacific.

Allow me to speak first about a more immediate, physically felt chill. I come from a cold place and know something of the physical chill of a coastal New England winter, and of a New England spring that is really no spring at all but just an extension of a too long, often dreary, wet winter. I am unwittingly a part of a parade of different peoples from New England -

Salem traders, Boston missionaries, and New Bedford whalers among them - who, like other people from temperate climates, brought winter's chill with them to the Pacific. This chill, I think, can still be felt in places where they landed. Their presence is marked - not least by the libraries and collections that most of you come from.

I consider it one of the great ironies of my professional life to have spent the better part of several months freezing in the basement of Thomas Hale Hamilton Library here at the University of Hawai'i, Manoa. The heavy air conditioning in the basement of that library literally chilled me as I read the microfilmed records of American Congregationalist missionaries to Micronesia and the logs of numerous whaling and trading vessels that sought profits, provisions and comfort among the islands of the Eastern Carolines. I would wear heavy socks, long-sleeved shirts and a jacket or sweater, all to keep warm. Several hours in that environment would leave me with cold, nearly numb fingers as well as tired, strained eyes and a mild headache. Relief came when I emerged from the library to walk under a warm, bright Hawaiian sun that lifted the chill from my body in a moment or two. The chill in that basement was certainly another impediment to accessing and re-presenting a part of pasts long gone, and of places and people different or changed from what they are today. But there was more than just a physical discomfort involved; in its own way, the chill from that air-conditioning was a product of colonialism, a chill with a colonial source that affects not only physical bodies but histories. I want to return to the colonial politics of archival research in the Pacific, but after a consideration of the sometimes warmer emotions and human connections that can be experienced in cold or chilly places.

Cold is not necessarily about death, distance and loss; it can allow for contact, connections and moments of communion with those whose lives we seek to know and understand. Greg Dening, a historian in the Pacific, writes of sitting in the basement at the Foreign Mission School in Cornwell, Connecticut and feeling the chill that Henry Opukahaia, a Native Hawaiian working there from 1817 to 1818, felt and recorded. Dening writes too of his travels to Cambridge University in search of the meanings behind the death of William Gooch at Waimea here on the island of Oahu on 12 May 1792. Gooch served as astronomer abroad the ship *Daedalus,* captained by Lt Richard Hergest. Separated from the larger Vancouver expedition of which it was part, the *Daedalus* had missed a planned rendezvous at Kealakekua Bay on the island of Hawai'i and then proceeded to Waimea on Oahu to get water. The shore party, made up of young Gooch, Hergest and a Portuguese sailor by the name of Manuel, was attacked about a mile up a river that empties into the bay at Waimea.

The last view anyone had of Gooch was of him standing amidst a group of shouting, gesticulating Hawaiians. Hawaiian accounts are ambiguous as to the reasons for the attack; one transcribed narrative mentioned that the visitors were believed to be gods because of their sparkling eyes. Dening, himself, thinks the reason may have involved, among other factors, the unsettled, turbulent polity of the Waimea area at the time.

To know more about Gooch and what caused him to be at Waimea on that fateful May day, Dening journeyed to the library at Cambridge University where the papers of William Gooch are kept. At the Cambridge University Library, Dening was given access to a bundle of papers titled, "Letter, Memoranda and Journal Containing the History of Mr. Gooch," and indexed in a prefatory note as

> whatever is now known or can henceforth be known of William Gooch is contained in this volume which consists of original documents respecting him and in his own handwriting.

And within that bundle of William Gooch's papers, Dening discovered a note written by Gooch's father in which the older man recounts two dreams in which he was visited by his son. About the first, the elder Gooch wrote:

> Early Friday January 24, 1794. I dreamed my son was arrived at Brockdish alive and well, I conversed with him in a dream. He said he must go again. I charged him to take care of himself. He promised not to venture into danger. We were both happy at his going and confident of his future safety. I had a melancholy awakening.

The account of the second dream reads:

> March 4, 1794. I dreamed my son escaped being massacred and arrived home. I asked him how far it might be that Mr. Hergest and himself walked beyond the watering place when the savages first attacked them. I do not remember his answer or whether he made one.

Where, asks Dening, can we put that? Where will we put that hauntingly sad statement that continues to speak of a father's terrible pain at the unexpected loss of his son in a distant land? Such are the power of emotions that lie catalogued, indexed, bundled, and boxed among the chill and cold of the archives of this world.

I have experienced something of the emotions that lie buried in old letters and diaries, and that can be unleashed by accidental or unexpected readings. There is a story that I tell my students here at Manoa that I would like to share with you this morning. It, like Dening's story of Gooch, is about a father's sorrow over the unexpected loss of a son. The story comes from the island of Pohnpei in the Eastern Caroline group of the larger Micronesian geographical area. The year is 1881 and the principals of my

story are the missionary Frank E. Rand, his wife Carrie and their young son Willie, about two and one-half years of age at the time. By most accounts, Frank Rand was not a particularly bright or engaging man. His fellow missionaries thought him slow, difficult, cantankerous and ineffective. They wondered in their private journals and reports to supervisors in Honolulu and Boston, if Rand had not made a mistake in choosing his vocation. They thought his talents, whatever they might be, unsuited for the missionary life. Rand himself was aware of these sentiments and sometimes railed against them in his usually dry, lifeless, dull writing. Pohnpeians made him no happier; he complained about their strange, idle, heathen ways, and about their lack of respect and deference toward him as a servant of God.

Willie Rand, though, was different. Born 24 October 1878 on Pohnpei, Willie had grown up among Pohnpeians; he already spoke their language and was totally at ease among them. If we can believe the accounts of his parents (and I think we can), young Willie was a favorite of the people of the island. In early 1881, however, things changed. Young Willie became sick with some kind of intestinal illness, and it soon became clear that the malady was life threatening. All of a sudden, Frank Rand's writing became infused with anxiety, emotion, life, and the fear of his son's death. Letters to family, friends and superiors, and diary entries chart, dramatically and emotionally, the deterioration of young Willie's condition. There is the articulation of something very close to despair as Rand acknowledges the impending death of his young son. Suddenly, however, the pessimism lifts as Rand writes of the arrival of the missionary ship *Morning Star,* bound for Honolulu. The *Morning Star* was willing to set sail quickly in a desperate voyage to get Willie to Honolulu where, it was hoped, he might receive the medical treatment needed to save his life. The last letters written by Rand just before departing Pohnpei express a cautious hope that Willie might somehow survive the threat to his life. There follows about a three month gap in Rand's correspondence. When Frank Rand begins writing again, it is in that dull lifeless prose that was his usual style. Dryly, matter of factly, with little surface emotion, Frank Rand mentions the death of his son on board the *Morning Star* enroute to Honolulu. The young boy's body was preserved in salt and held for burial. Young Willie was interred at the cemetery behind Kawaiaha'o church.

I read Frank Rand's letters at the Hawaiian Mission Children Society Library here in Honolulu during the early 1980s, when I was in the process of researching my dissertation on the history of Pohnpei Island. The main reading room of the Mission Children Society Library was still open to the trade winds at the time. With its rich green lawn and shaded grounds just behind the Mission Houses Museum and across the street from Kawaiaha'o

Church and its missionary cemetery, the library was (and still is) a quiet oasis in busy, bustling, modern downtown Honolulu. It certainly is one of the most pleasant research libraries I have ever encountered. It was also a dangerous place of sorts back then. A gust of wind could wreak havoc on old letters and papers spread nonchalantly across a table. The terror of the moment could be measured in the looks of horror on the faces of Lila Goodell, Maryjane Knight and the other wonderfully kind, extremely helpful librarians who worked there.

I had gotten caught up in Willie Rand's story; I found it gripping, certainly one of the more moving personal stories I had come across in my research. I remember searching earnestly for the piece of paper that would tell of young Willie's fate, of being saddened to find out that he had died, and disappointed by the dull, dry emotionless words that narrated the end of Willie's life. Drained by the story and the intensity with which I pursued it, I left my reading table to take a break. I walked across the street and entered the cemetery behind Kawaiaha'o church. I sat with my thoughts for a while on a concrete bench and then began walking among the tombstones, reading many of them as I wandered from row to row. Towards the back of the cemetery in the middle of a line of markers, I found Willie Rand's small, scroll-like tombstone. The inscription read:

> Willie Rand
>
> Born at Ponape
>
> Oct 24, 1878
>
> Died on Board the
>
> Morning Star
>
> Feb 10, 1881 - and on the back
>
> Our Baby
>
> Of Such is the
>
> Kingdom of Heaven

The unexpected discovery of young Willie's grave gave me goose bumps (or "chickenskin", as we say in Hawai'i).

Amidst the cold, chill and breezes of archival research libraries, emotional responses and connections are formed to peoples different in many ways from us, distant in terms of time and place. I wonder, though, about other kinds of emotional responses from different kinds of historians. Those of us who come from beyond the Pacific, Pacific outlanders if you will, need to

be mindful of other kinds of emotions that can result from work in Pacific libraries and archival collections.

There is a joy, tinged with sadness perhaps, that comes from finding an ancestor's name mentioned in a letter, report, or diary. A joy tinged with sadness from viewing photographs of earlier generations of family; a joy tinged with sadness from examining old maps on which are drawn the landscapes of places now changed or gone.

Not everyone comes away from their rummaging through Pacific collections touched or inspired. Jonathan Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio, of this university's Center for Hawaiian Studies, has expressed dismay at the cold, impersonal and detached character of much scholarship derived from archival researching. In a piece entitled 'Songs of Our Natural Selves: The Enduring Voice of Nature in Hawaiian Songs', Osorio espouses history, or rather forms of history, that are emotional, evocative, poetic, and personal. To underscore this point, Osorio spoke and sang his piece on the history of Guam in December of 1990 at the Pacific History Association Conference. The published text of Osorio's talk exists as a supplement to the performance, and by its very omissions attests to Osorio's point about the dangers of a historical expression that is only written.

Three years ago, I heard Teresia Teaiwa of the University of the South Pacific courageously cry her way through a presentation on the twentieth-century history of her native Banaba entitled 'Yaqona/Yagoqu: Contested Roots and Routes of a Displaced Native'. Tere Teaiwa's tears, I think, resulted from the reading of British colonial records that detailed in cold, callous terms the rape of Banaba through phosphate mining, the displacement of Banabans the mining entailed, and the rhetoric of development that sought to justify the mining as necessary and desirable for all concerned.

What range of emotions is excited by the discovery of petitions signed by Native Hawaiians in 1897 against the American annexation of Hawai'i, petitions carried to Washington, D. C., where they were ignored, forgotten and for a long time lost? What range of emotions might result among Native Fijians reading the 1896 report of the colonial commission appointed to inquire into the causes of depopulation in Fiji? This, remember, is a report that ultimately indicted Fijian cultural practices, more particularly those of indigenous Fijian mothers who were singled out for blame and who became the objects of colonial reform programs in public health, sanitation, and 'mothering' education. How painful and provocative must it be for native scholars to read in archival collections of how their people

were 'orientalised', or, if you will, described in denigrating, demeaning, reductionistic ways that justified colonialism. Archives, then, can be a chilling place in more ways than one; they can elicit a host of emotions and memories, many of which are disconcerting, painful and enraging.

And what of the politics that surround or imbue libraries and archival collections in the contemporary Pacific? I think there are some very pronounced contemporary similarities between the forces acting on museums and archival collections. Museums, and their collection practices, have been criticised for their links to imperial and colonial projects in the world. Works of art, religious items filled with ritual and symbolic significance, instruments of war, and tools of the everyday were often taken or purchased for a song by colonial administrators, travellers, anthropologists, missionaries, and sailors, in ports from Africa to the Pacific. Separated from the historical and cultural contexts which gave them meaning and purpose, these items were now labelled "artefacts." They became disembodied objects, and as such were placed in museums (1) to convey a sense of the exotic and the distant, (2) to add silent testimony to the distinction between the primitive and the modern, and (3) by their very placement in museums in metropolitan sites, to reaffirm the global historical transcendence of science, progress and capitalism.

Books and documents in libraries and archival collections can serve the same purposes. It is difficult to disentangle libraries and research collections from the imperial and colonial pasts that have made them possible, whose records they preserve, and whose written histories they advance (often to the exclusion or repression of other histories). As much as we might desire them to be so, libraries and collections are not really neutral or innocent sites. We cannot fool ourselves into ignoring the ways in which knowledge serves power and how knowledge in the service of power is collected, housed, catalogued and preserved. In a real sense, then, the existence of libraries and collections in the Pacific has been made possible by the intrusion, contact, displacement and colonisation of then extant local epistemologies. Knowledge written down needed a place to be kept, while other modes of knowledge were left to be forgotten.

There are cultural politics too in the rules that govern the administration and use of libraries and archival collections. These rules speak to a culturally and historically determined organisation, cataloguing and preservation of knowledge. The silence and general decorum expected of users, the care given to books, historical documents or private papers, the borrowing and request procedures, and the hours kept are all reflective of a culture of knowledge management and preservation particular to lands beyond the Pacific.

In preparing for this presentation today, I was reminded of the ways in which the management, preservation, and transmission of knowledge is culturally determined. The reminder came in the form of a publication entitled *Maori Claims: How to Research and Write a Report.* The document was written by Jane Tucker in 1994 for the Waitangi Tribunal (as Occasional Publication #1). This publication strikes me as, in many ways, a marvellously helpful document, seeking to assist Maori in researching land claims and related historical issues. In planning a research project, for example, prospective Maori researchers are encouraged to identify goals, develop a sense of direction, set realistic targets, organise their time efficiently and sufficiently, and check their progress regularly against an established timetable. The importance of budgets, the different types of sources housed in archival collections, the art of good note-taking, and the presentation of findings replete with footnotes and bibliography all receive exposition in this most interesting publication. Indeed, I think it a document that could be used with considerable advantage in any academic setting where the concern is to impart basic research skills. A somewhat more intense and careful scrutiny of this research handbook shows just how culturally specific a document it is in its recommended protocols, procedures and schedules for the researching of knowledge. For example, it is concerned with time, planning and resource allotment. Efficiency, progress and budgets provide the measure of a successful research undertaking. But whose measures, standards and procedures are these? And how might they conflict with more local or indigenous systems of knowledge acquisition, preservation and dissemination?

I also came across another book in preparation for this talk, by Russell Bishop titled *Collaborative Research Stories: Whakawhanaungatanga.* In this work, Bishop writes of what is called Kaupapa Maori:

> the "philosophy and practice of being and acting Maori" that challenges the prevailing ideologies of cultural superiority and privilege which pervades the social, economic, political and educational institutions of New Zealand.

The forces of domination are many, varied, and so all-pervasive as to be hegemonic. Among other objectives, Kaupapa Maori, according to Bishop, seeks to overcome the misrepresentation of Maori peoples by authorities and experts who study, analyse, prescribe and speak for the Maori; misrepresentations derived in part from research done in libraries and archival collections, and that find legitimacy and life through the ultimate storage and preservation they receive in these same libraries and collections. Kaupapa Maori opposes the undervaluing and belittling of Maori knowledge and the particular ways in which that knowledge is stored. At the same time, Kaupapa Maori seeks greater, more comprehensive and more culturally

appropriate access to that knowledge deemed valuable and important, and housed in essentially Western cultural institutions - libraries and archival collections. The issue here is pan-Pacific in its relevance and dimensions, and certainly not limited to New Zealand or Aotearoa. How might other indigenous ways of knowing and being in Oceania or the Pacific struggle against knowledge that is wrong or flawed and harmful, and housed in libraries and archival collections? Indeed, how might Pacific peoples better gain access to knowledge of any kind that concerns their pasts, presents, and futures, and that is stored in libraries and archival collections that can be unwittingly intimidating and less than fully accessible?

I learned recently of an encounter that underscores the gravity of the issues at stake, and points out the need for collaborations which acknowledge colonial pasts and presents, and postcolonial futures. It concerns a young Native Hawaiian researcher - degreed, published and tenured at a major university on the North American mainland - and the difficulties she encountered while investigating an extensive collection of transcribed hula chants or mele at a large research library in Hawai'i. These transcribed chants were recorded in song books kept by hula poets or members of the royal court during the late monarchy period. Hula, as many of you know better than I, is a site for cultural memory; indeed, a source for the study of Hawaii's past. Given the ways in which they reflect their own and earlier times, these transcribed chants can, in fact, be read as a historical chronicle. The institutionalisation of this historical knowledge may have helped insure its preservation; its accessibility has proven another matter altogether.

The scholar in question learned that like-minded researchers before and contemporaneous with her were frustrated by imperfect cataloguing, poor indexing, and the library staff's general lack of familiarity with the nature and number of hula songbooks. Concerns for the preservation and protection of manuscript sources also served to distance seekers from the content of sources. Librarians made assessments about the competency, commitment and actual needs of researchers. This lead to discretionary decisions by librarians about the number and versions of transcribed chants provided to particular researchers. Oftentimes, researchers were not shown all the available material, and were not informed about the existence of multiple versions of a given chant. The consequences of this flawed research assistance are formidable, even tragic. Institutional practices, reflecting colonial histories and cultures, and current dimensions of power, have created a divide between archival resources, in this case transcribed hula chants or mele, and those who would use them to perform, to write, to teach, and, more generally, to know. What is ultimately inhibited is the practice of history; in this case, Hawaiians' histories.

As this example from Hawai'i indicates, the stakes surrounding research in the contemporary Pacific are quite high. Some of us have perhaps forgotten the histories that have preceded and made possible the establishment of research libraries and archival collections. We have lost sight too of the specific cultural values that govern their use and access. We have overlooked perhaps the varying and different emotions among natives and non-natives created through encounters with that knowledge. We have failed to recognise or consider the ways in which that knowledge might be fashioned differently into more locally focused and meaningful histories.

Archives certainly do not hold all that there is to know. There is, of course, critical knowledge that exists beyond libraries and research collections-knowledge that is local or indigenous and historical in character and which is archived in culturally distinctive ways; knowledge that is archived in a kapuna or elder's memory, in the landscape, in the surrounding seascape, or in the skies above. I believe Anne Hattori of Guam raised this issue with you yesterday in recounting some of her experiences researching into the more recent Chamorro past. I have concerned myself this morning with knowledge that comes from or is returned to libraries and archival collections in the Pacific; knowledge that is about native peoples, knowledge derived or developed, at least in part, from earlier written records created largely by those who came into the area, knowledge stored in the libraries and archival collections of the region.

I have spoken from the experience and concerns of one formally trained in the use of archival and primary sources at a time when the nature and practice of history is, I believe, undergoing seismic shifts. Professionally degreed and credentialed historians are being asked, indeed required, to let go of their monopolising (some would say colonising) grip on the study of Pacific pasts, and to acknowledge other and different ways of doing history, and other and different practitioners of history. Vicente Diaz of the University of Guam's Humanities Division informed me recently of his mother's confusion over his extensive researching of the historical records and documents housed on Guam. Mrs Diaz, herself touched by migration, war and changing colonial regimes in this century, understood her son to be doing a degree in cultural studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz. "Why all the historical research?" she asked. "Isn't that what the historians at the Micronesian Area Research do? What business is it of yours? Do you know what you are doing?" Vince replied that he was in the process of becoming a historian, as painful, emotionally dislocated and socially alienated as it sometimes made him feel. He realised, however, that he had as much, if not more, to learn from historians such as his mother as from those whose books he read or whose lectures he listened too. Vince's

story is about the democratization of history, a process not without import or effect on the libraries and research collections of the Pacific.

There is a long-standing, intimate relationship between history and archival collections, between historians and librarians. My sense is that, as the practice of history is changing, so will the administration and management of libraries and archival collections be required to change. Indeed, I know that change has already begun. I am not unmindful of the considerable efforts at biculturalism in New Zealand, and how those efforts have worked to make research libraries and archival collections more accessible, more hospitable and more responsible to Maoris and to a Maori sociology of knowledge. I am aware, too, that in many areas of the Pacific, libraries and archival collections have been and continue to be positive sites for communication, collaboration and assistance. On the other hand, in focusing on those areas within the region still struggling with colonialism's lingering chill, I do not mean to suggest that independence or self-government necessarily brings a decolonisation or depoliticisation of stored knowledge. Far from it. But this is another topic. Given, then, the concerns for knowledge and power-sharing in the contemporary Pacific, one of the questions this conference might address is how to continue to make more accessible and culturally sensitive Pacific libraries and collections that have been the depositories of knowledge developed about and sometimes used against the peoples of Oceania or the Pacific.

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