

ARCHIVAL SOURCES AND HISTORICAL METHODS

PART 2 **ARCHIVAL RESEARCH METHODS**

PROVENANCE: HOW IS THE ARCHIVE CREATED?

- Who created this archive, and why?
- What, or who, was the archive intended to serve?
- Is its content complete, selective, or random?
- How were documents located and who decided upon retention?
- Has there been document destruction in this process?
- Are documents withheld, retained or censored, and if so for what purpose?

READING AGAINST THE GRAIN

- What is missing from the archive?
- What do the 'silences' tell you?
- Is the archive a 'tainted source' of information – 'a poisoned well'?
- *How do you read an archive 'against the grain'?*

TAXONOMY & CLASSIFICATION: ORGANIZING THE ARCHIVE

- All archives require a taxonomy
- What is the classification system, and how does it operate?
 - **Series** (eg Colonial Office)
 - **Classes** (eg CO 533 East Africa correspondence)
 - **Files** (eg CO 533/432 'Kenya: coffee exports 1932')
 - **Documents** (eg CO 533/432, Grigg to Secretary of State, 13 March 1932, 'Memo on fall in coffee prices due to recession.') May have folio number.

FINDING WHAT YOU WANT

- **Search aids**
 - On-line review
 - Computerised searching
 - Hand lists
 - Card catalogues

REMEMBER: ANY SEARCH AID IS ONLY AS GOOD AS THE PERSON WHO CREATED IT.

THINK Laterally AND SEARCH EVERYTHING

USING ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS

- *Develop your own system and apply it rigorously and consistently.*
- **Note taking**
 - Paper, cards, word processing?
- **Paper photocopies**
 - Integrate with notes
- **Digital reproduction**
 - Keep each file separate, using archive citation
 - Carry extra memory, and store to computer regularly

RETAINING AND STORING YOUR ARCHIVAL SOURCES

- *Design a system for storage and retrieval when you start in any new archive.*
 - Keep a record of the system used in the archive
 - Keep each FILE in a separate document
 - Always store digital files, or sort and organise your notes EACH DAY
 - READ through your notes and digital files EACH DAY
 - READ photocopies, do **not** simply file them away!
 - REVIEW what series and classes you are working with every week, and amend your searches accordingly
- **And of course, BACK-UP EVERYTHING!!!**

CITATION SYSTEMS

- **Parenthetical referencing:**
 - (Anderson & Lochery, 2008: 192-93)
 - Not readily adaptable for archival citations
- **Endnotes or footnotes:**
 - UKNA FCO 141/6567, Governor Baring to Johnson (Provincial Commissioner, Central Province), 2 May 1954, 'Resettlement of detainees'.
 - Governor Baring to Johnson (Provincial Commissioner, Central Province), 2 May 1954, 'Resettlement of detainees', UKNA FCO 141/6567.