

Dialogue

*Facing the Nation: Archaeologists and
Hawaiians in the Era of Sovereignty*

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As a former University of Hawaii academic now living in Australia, I have become struck by many parallels in the situations of native peoples and archaeologists when dealing with each other in Hawai'i, New Zealand (Aotearoa), and Australia.¹ In both New Zealand and Australia, however, archaeologists and historic preservation legislation seem to be further along the road in taking full, formal account of the views of indigenous inhabitants in relation to cultural resource management and historic site protection.

A similar political process of native empowerment is underway in Hawai'i, centered on calls for Hawaiian self-determination and sovereignty. In relation to this it is noteworthy that 20 percent of the population of Hawai'i are indigenous Hawaiians, whereas in New Zealand only 10 percent are Maaori and in Australia, less than 2 percent are Aboriginals. These figures suggest it is extremely unlikely that current Hawaiian demands for an increasing say in relation to historic sites and their protection (partly documented by Spriggs 1990) are going to go away. It also seems clear from past experience in Hawai'i that in any conflict between archaeologists and Hawaiians, the state is unlikely to back the archaeologists.

These two simple points are made irrespective of the moral and ethical responsibilities I am sure the vast majority of archaeologists feel in relation to the archaeological materials they work with and to the cultures that created those materials. Archaeological ethics is a topic of increasing concern to practitioners worldwide, particularly those "Western" archaeologists working in "non-Western" Third or Fourth World contexts (Bray and Glover 1987; Layton 1989; Trigger 1984). However, it is a topic barely articulated in the Hawaiian archaeological literature beyond the Society for Hawaiian Archaeology's *Code of Ethics and Standards of Performance* (SHA 1980).² One of the recommendations of a recent paper by Professor

Haunani-Kay Trask was that “there needs to be some internal discussion among anthropologists and archaeologists about the impact of their work on living Hawaiians and the ethical conflicts that spring from their research” (Trask 1990, 10). I strongly support that recommendation, as I think we are all a bit blasé about what is a difficult set of questions.

Maaori have been able to gain increasing control over cultural resources because they have a treaty—the Treaty of Waitangi, belatedly recognized by the New Zealand government—that gives them rights in some ways analogous to the three hundred or so American Indian nations recognized by the United States federal government (Bulmer and K. Green 1989, 7–8). Political pressure from the Maaori has made that treaty live in the 1980s.

Australian Aboriginals have been able to gain such control not because of a treaty, although one is in the offing in the medium term, but in part because the Australian federal government has the right given it by referendum in 1966 to legislate in relation to Aboriginal matters regardless of states’ rights. In large part, however, Aboriginals have gained such control by concerted political action and the moral force of an argument based on a truly atrocious colonial history where massacres of the indigenous people continued into the early decades of the twentieth century. Australia is also sensitive to the pressure of the international community concerning Aboriginal human and other rights.

There are some important differences in the national situations in the three countries, and these should not be forgotten. In general terms, however, quite similar native demands are being put forward in these countries, all three of which have been invaded by Western powers and have seen their indigenous populations made minorities in their own lands.

It seems inevitable that Hawaiians will get some form of sovereignty, perhaps akin to the status of American Indian nations, during this “decade of the Hawaiian.” Without buying into the arguments over who should represent the Hawaiian nation and what detailed forms such sovereignty might take, archaeologists should recognize that significant changes will become necessary in their practice and in their formal relations with the Hawaiian community. If the idea of sovereignty seems a bit too farfetched to some, it is important that many of the issues involved are ones that would arise, indeed have partly arisen already, whether formal sovereignty were to be achieved or not. I will therefore treat them in general terms.

Based on the kinds of demands made by native groups in New Zealand and Australia, many of which have now become enshrined in law in those countries, it is worth considering the kinds of issues archaeologists are likely to face. I hope the discussion will be useful in allowing the archaeological community to be pro-active rather than re-active on these issues. To quote one recent New Zealand archaeological commentator:

Rather than worrying that everything is changing, it would be more useful if the archaeological community could fix their gaze on which of the possible outcomes is the most useful and work towards achieving it. . . . not everything is bleak if we have the will and the vision to become an active part of the process of change rather than innocent bystanders in danger of being hit by a runaway truck. (H. Allen 1988, 151, 152)

Six issues have come up and have been at least partly resolved in New Zealand and Australia. I examine them in turn.

1. *Recognition of Prior Ownership of the Land by Indigenous People*

The New Zealand Archaeological Association and historic preservation laws in New Zealand recognize Maaori as *tangata whenua*, “people of the place” or the original owners of the land (Horwood 1989, 105). Similar recognition is given in Australia (Murray 1986), and is implied in the Society for Hawaiian Archaeology *Code of Ethics* (see note 2). It is clearly a first step in recognizing the legitimate Hawaiian interest in the management of the state’s natural and cultural resources and should be made explicit in the constitution of the society, and indeed of the state.

2. *Consultation with and Agreement of Indigenous People as Part of Archaeological Projects*

This would follow as a simple courtesy from the recognition in the previous section. Although it is seen as a basic condition of work by archaeologists working elsewhere in the Pacific or in Australia, it seems to raise eyebrows in Hawai‘i as if it were some radical plan. Far from shutting archaeological work down—the call for a moratorium on archaeological work in Hawai‘i (Trask 1990:9–10) is clearly in frustration at the *lack* of consultation—such consultation has direct and indirect benefits to the archaeologists and certainly helps to alleviate the suspicions of native communities about archaeological intentions and practices (see Pardoe in press *a, b*).

Of course, consultation occurs informally in many cases, but it is in everyone's best interests that it should occur *formally* and at the local rather than the state level if it is to be a meaningful process.

But who to consult? The newly set up burial commissions on the major islands might form the basis for general consultation, but, where islands are large, committees based in traditional districts might be more appropriate. An alternative would be to set up Hawaiian archaeological committees parallel to the county historic preservation committees now being established. Such committees would advise the state Historic Sites Division (which would have a stronger regulatory role for the conduct of *all* archaeological work in the islands) or, in the event of a "strong" form of sovereignty, whatever organization is designated by the Hawaiian nation in accordance with federal historic preservation laws. If sovereignty on the model of the American Indian nations were adopted, federal jurisdiction would remain, and jurisdiction would be taken away from the state government.

Moves toward such a general, formal consultative system should be started now by the archaeological community as part of the necessary process of change. It is up to the Hawaiian community to decide how best to respond to such offers of consultation, but it is reasonable for archaeologists to insist that any consultation occur at the most appropriate *local* community level. Experience in Australia and New Zealand and my past involvement with the Office of Hawaiian Affairs give no evidence that a state-level, Hawaiian-run bureaucracy would be more sensitive to local feelings than any other kind of centralized state system.

3. Presentation of Results of Archaeological Work to Local Communities in a Useful Form

By "useful form" is meant one that a non-archaeologist can understand. In Australia some effort goes into this in the form of publications such as newsletters of state archaeological agencies (eg, *VAS News* from the Victoria Archaeological Survey) and "burial reports" to Aboriginal communities. The latter are reports of analyses of skeletal remains investigated by archaeologists or physical anthropologists who have been requested by local Aboriginal communities to examine such remains where they have been accidentally disturbed during development projects or revealed by erosion (eg, Pardoe 1988). Presentations to local community groups and schools are important, as are public exhibitions of artifacts, and so on. To

an extent this happens in Hawai'i, but not often and certainly not much outside Honolulu. The days of "hit and run" archaeology should now be over.

Such publications and presentations would be one of the better ways to dispel community suspicions concerning the practices and ethics of archaeologists, and contract archaeologists in particular. General dealings with the Hawaiian community suggest that there is an almost complete misunderstanding of what the responsibilities and decision-making processes connected with contract archaeology really are. There is certainly a role for either or both the state Historic Sites Division and the Society for Hawaiian Archaeology here. There is a desperate need for a booklet on cultural resource management in Hawai'i, detailing the conduct and responsibilities of contract archaeologists and how the decisions to preserve or not preserve a site are actually made. Such a booklet could be widely distributed, given out for instance at informational meetings when development projects are first mooted. Otherwise archaeologists in general will be increasingly made the scapegoats in community conflict over development. The film *Hawaii's Endangered Past* was an early attempt by the Society for Hawaiian Archaeology to address this, and further educational films or videos should be considered, dealing for instance with specific details of the legal framework for historic site preservation.

4. Employment and Training of Indigenous People as Part of Archaeological Projects

In Hawai'i individual projects and contract companies do employ Hawaiians, and there are professional archaeologists holding BA and MA degrees who are Hawaiian. More directed training programs, as are common in Australian museums and state park services (VAS 1986) might be considered, perhaps run by the University of Hawaii. The scholarship program to encourage Hawaiians to take part in the university's archaeological field school, initiated in 1989, is a good start along these lines. In many parts of Australia a member of the local Aboriginal community is paid to be on site at archaeological projects at all times—for consultation in case human remains show up; to report back to the community on the archaeological activities; and to bring up community concerns as the work proceeds. I understand this is also the case in some of the United States, such as California.

5. *Protection of Sacred and "Traditional" Sites,
Including Human Burials*

"Traditional" sites in this context are places (not necessarily *kapu* 'sacred') that have no obvious archaeological manifestations in the form of structures and the like, but are recorded as places where significant events happened. In New Zealand, Green (1989) has preferred to divide the universe of sites into *waahi tapu* and *waahi noa*, loosely "sacred" and "nonsacred," further dividing each according to whether knowledge of them is based on oral information only (roughly covering "traditional" sites in the sense used earlier), oral history and archaeology, or archaeology only.

Waahi tapu have always been of concern to Maaori and have had some degree of protection for many years. They include burial sites, or places associated with death, ritual sites, and so on. Recent papers from New Zealand by Bulmer (1989), Bulmer and K. Green (1989) and the paper already referred to by Roger Green (1989) are instructive about how important sites might be best protected by the integration of indigenous and archaeological perspectives on their significance. Roger Green has warned that adopting a binary opposition of traditional places and archaeological sites, each to be dealt with by separate means, is a mistake. In his scheme, "oral or traditional (historical) as well as physical archaeological evidence are both recognized as valuable and worthy of full consideration in protecting and enhancing knowledge of the past" (Green 1989, 100). In some Australian states and territories, the Northern Territory in particular, there is a sacred sites authority or equivalent government organization sometimes separate from and established earlier than any strong legislative protection for archaeological sites. The Northern Territory Sacred Sites Authority is charged with keeping confidential the locations and associated stories of sacred sites to allow maximum protection. A developer will approach the authority to find out if there are sacred sites in a project area, thus initiating consultation with traditional Aboriginal owners on what can be done to protect them.

Both Maori and Australian Aboriginal people wish to protect sacred sites from interference or destruction, not only because they value them, but also because they believe the violation of *kapu* restrictions brings automatic supernatural retribution in the form of a calamity, whether the violation was accidental or intentional (Bulmer and K. Green 1989, 3).

While few white New Zealand (*Pakeha*) or Australian archaeologists are likely to hold similar perspectives, this is irrelevant in the emerging bicultural condition of New Zealand and, to a lesser extent, Australian society. In this context, to paraphrase Bulmer and Green (1989, 3–4), it is essential that archaeologists in Hawai'i acknowledge that Hawaiian spiritual viewpoints are just as valid as their own.

Wahi pana, perhaps equivalent to the *waahi tapu* of New Zealand, seem to be little understood or considered by non-Hawaiians in Hawai'i, except to be pointed out as settings for exotic stories for tourists as they drive past in their air-conditioned coaches. The situation in Hawai'i in respect of burials has now changed in the wake of the public campaign over the Honokahua burials on Maui and the quieter efforts in the legislature over the years by archaeologists and some Hawaiians to afford Hawaiian burials respectful treatment. Larger *heiau* 'temples', where well-preserved, have been protected, but the importance or potential importance to Hawaiians of "minor" religious structures—family shrines, *ko'a*, *pōhaku o Kāne*, and so on—are not usually taken into account by archaeologists and planners making management decisions. Many sacred sites may have no archaeologically obvious manifestation but may be wholly "natural" features or just general area designations.

Is a *heiau* less important because its platform or other structures have been destroyed? What is an adequate buffer zone around a recognized sacred site? Surely these and related questions are ones for the Hawaiian community, not archaeological "experts" to decide. This should be recognized and stated in contract archaeological reports. It is not part of the archaeological expertise of the contractor or archaeological planner to decide these questions. Once again, there is need for a formal mechanism for consultation with Hawaiians.

Archaeologists working in Hawai'i also need to become much more educated about Hawaiian beliefs and the nature of and meaning within Hawaiian culture of *wahi pana* and other sacred sites. This is not for them to become all-knowing experts, but because they have to deal with these sites on a practical level and therefore should familiarize themselves as best they can with the concepts and concerns involved (see Bulmer and K. Green 1989, 2). Archaeologists possessing such knowledge will be able to act effectively and considerately in assisting the Hawaiian people to achieve protection of their sacred sites.

6. *Differing Interpretations of Prehistory
by Native People and Archaeologists*

This is a particularly complex issue to address and in its broad ramifications I only flag it as an issue of concern rather than attempt to cover it here. In Western nations archaeologists have to deal with Fundamentalist Christian views that the world was created in 4004 BC. In Australia Aboriginals sometimes use the archaeologically derived figure of 40,000 years of Aboriginal prehistory as a legitimation for their land rights struggle, while at other times it is angrily stated on the basis of Dreamtime stories that “We have always been here.” The *Kumulipo* and current archaeological thinking are clearly in contradiction concerning the origins of the Hawaiians. But why the great myths of the creation of the world should be expected to conform to the canons of science is unclear. It would seem to demean their cosmic significance to drag them down to the merely human level to form either/or alternatives to Western-derived science.

More directly though, archaeologists *do* arrogantly tend to think that they know much more about native culture than any of the natives do, a point forcibly made for Hawai‘i by Trask (1990, 4) and for New Zealand by O’Regan (1990, 97–101). Let us take *heiau* for example. Archaeologists know very little about *heiau* and their role in Hawaiian religion, and yet we pontificate about them regularly. Our knowledge comes usually from other archaeologists, who got it from earlier archaeologists such as Kenneth Emory, who got it from even earlier researchers such as T. G. Thrum. Knowledge is watered down at every transmission until it ends up as “six facts you need to know about *heiau* to be a qualified archaeologist.” The positive side of the debate over the location of Kukuiokāne Heiau on O‘ahu, a Hawaiian temple site in the path of the controversial H3 Freeway, is that it showed archaeologists how little we know about Hawaiian religion. It warns us also to be on our guard concerning the undoubtedly justifiable criticism from Hawaiians that the standard of proof required of natives challenging archaeological interpretations is different from that required of the archaeologists putting forward the interpretations (Trask 1990, 7–8).

The call here is surely for greater archaeological recognition of native scholarship and for a sensitivity to the ways in which seemingly arcane

archaeological knowledge can produce very immediate political consequences, sometimes detrimental to native efforts at self-determination.

A DIALOGUE NEEDS TWO SIDES

There are doubtless other important issues beyond the six outlined here that will be raised in what it is hoped will be an increasingly constructive dialogue between archaeologists and the Hawaiian community. A major point to remember (paraphrasing Allen 1988, 151) is that Hawaiians and archaeologists both believe that archaeological sites are important and have value beyond their economic use. This common ground is a good starting point.

I suggest on the archaeological side that we should be aiming for full partnership with the Hawaiian community in historic preservation concerns. Hawaiians should be given legal recognition as the guardians of the state's Hawaiian cultural resources. The definition of a "Hawaiian site" should include all prehistoric sites, archaeological or "traditional," and Hawaiian values should be given equal importance with scientific significance in management decisions (see Allen 1988, 150). The sad case of the now-desecrated site at Luahinewai (North Kona, Hawai'i Island) is a recent example of why this should be so (Nunes 1990).

Two obstacles to constructive dialogue on the Hawaiian side need to be overcome before such a partnership is achievable. First, as alluded to earlier, there is a real lack of understanding in the Hawaiian community about what archaeology is about, how decisions are made about historic site protection, and who has the final say in whether sites are preserved or not. There is a lack of appreciation about how archaeologists are bound by state laws and regulations and about the degree of flexibility they have in cultural resource management recommendations. The equation that contract archaeologists are paid by the developer therefore they only say what the developer wants to hear, is an extremely simplistic view, and one that archaeologists need to do something about (see issue 3, above). Many archaeologists, not only two or three, have testified on behalf of legislation protecting Hawaiian burials and other sites, in hearings over the protection of Kaho'olawe Island, and to help protect many other sites of concern to Hawaiians. Some credit for this should be admitted from the Hawaiian side.

Second is a tactic being pursued by some prominent Hawaiians in their

dealings with archaeologists of playing on “liberal guilt,” which I believe to be nonproductive in the long-term. Statements along the lines of “You should help us because you are racist colonialists who don’t belong here” may be objectively true. They certainly grab the attention of archaeologists. But all they achieve in the long term are guilt depression (“Oh I’m such a horrible white oppressor, and there’s nothing I can do about it!”) or racist reaction against Hawaiians. The old leftist catch phrase, “Scratch every liberal and there’s a fascist underneath,” almost seems to have the force of a law of nature. Neither guilt depression nor racist reaction seem particularly positive results of this tactic.

“Liberal guilt” as a motivating force for others to support Hawaiians to get protection of historic sites doesn’t do anything for me, and I suspect it doesn’t do much for a lot of archaeologists in Hawai‘i. What should motivate archaeologists is a recognition of the justness of the Hawaiian position, an empowering force that makes one want to do a better job as an archaeologist and to take full account of the legitimate Hawaiian concerns about their cultural heritage.

I return to a central point that was stressed earlier. Pretty much only two groups, Hawaiians and archaeologists, give a damn about archaeological sites as having any value beyond their economic use. Surely this common ground is a good enough starting point?

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Notes

1 There are many parallels with the Hawaiian situation in the literature written by archaeologists and indigenous people in Australia and New Zealand about these issues. See for instance in Australia, papers by Crawford, Golson, Moore, Stockton, Kelly, Creamer, and S. Sullivan in *Australian Archaeology* 2 (1975); by Onus in *Australian Archaeology* 3 (1975); and later papers by Langford (1983),

Allen (1983; 1987), Ucko (1983), K. Sullivan (1986a; 1986b), and Creamer (1990); in New Zealand see Allen (1988), Bulmer (1989), Bulmer and K. Green (1989), R. Green (1989), Horwood (1989), Butts (1990), and O'Regan (1990).

2 The *Code of Ethics and Standards of Performance* (SHA 1980) was closely modeled on the Society of Professional Archaeologists' 1976 *Code of Ethics*. Under Section 1, "The Archaeologist's Responsibility to the Public," Section 1C states, "He/she shall be sensitive to, and respect the legitimate concerns of groups whose culture histories are the subjects of archaeological investigations." Questions of the responsibilities of archaeologists investigating the recent historic period in Hawai'i, where the archaeological remains left by many different ethnic groups are encountered, are beyond the scope of this paper but are certainly also important.

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