

SHIFTING SANDS OF AN ARCHIVE

Jampa Dorje

ON THE LEFT: PHOTO FROM DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE VIA AP. BREITBART.COM CLAIMS: THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION IS UNDER FIRE FOR A RECENT PHOTO THAT SHOWCASED DOCUMENTS THE BUREAU SEIZED FROM MAR-A-LAGO SCATTERED ACROSS THE FLOOR, LEADING SOME TO CALL OUT THE PHOTOS FOR BEING “STAGED.” ON THE RIGHT: THE VIRGINIA KELLY KARNES ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS RESEARCH CENTER KEEPS MANY PURDUE ARTIFACTS. THESE ARE BOXES THAT MAKE UP THE NEIL ARMSTRONG COLLECTION.



THE FBI RAIDS MAR-A-LAGO

On August 8, 2022, the Federal Bureau of Investigation searched Mar-a-Lago, the club-like residence of former U.S. President Donald Trump in Palm Beach, Florida, for documents that were a part of the national archive. The warrant was requested by the attorney general of the United States and was approved by a federal judge. Trump's allies likened the FBI's search to political persecution. The terms "Nazis" and "banana republic" were bantered about.

DOCUMENTS DESTROYED

A letter dated February 18, 2022, sent by archivists at the National Archives to the House Committee on Oversight and Reform detailed how President Trump's staff had not preserved many social media records and that many paper documents had been destroyed by the former president. The letter went on to reveal that after Trump left the White House, the torn-up paper records had been transferred to the agency. The letter claimed that "Although White House staff during the Trump Administration recovered and taped together some of the torn-up records, a number of other torn-up records that were transferred had not been reconstructed by the White House."

[Bill seeks to strengthen presidential record keeping, citing Trump | MyStateline.com](#)

CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS


According to an August 13, 2022, article in The Washington Post, by Josh Dawsey, Rosalind Helderman, Jacqueline Alemany, and Devlin Barrett: “What began as a low-level dispute over the Trump White House’s chaotic and haphazard record-keeping had morphed into a deeply serious probe of whether the ex-president had endangered national security by hoarding highly classified documents, some potentially related to nuclear weapons.” [Trump’s secrets: How a records dispute led the FBI to search Mar-a-Lago | Flipboard](#)

PSYCHIC POWERS

Throughout these revelations, Trump insisted that the documents were his personal property. He also claimed that the top-secret documents were declassified by his thinking them to be so and that there was not a necessary protocol for doing this. In an article published on November 22, 2022 in Truthout, Chris Walker writes: “In an interview with Fox News’s Sean Hannity on Wednesday, former President Donald Trump claimed that he could have declassified government documents he removed from the White House upon leaving office simply by using his mind. ‘There doesn’t have to be a process, as I understand it,’ Trump said. ‘You’re the president of the United States, you can declassify just by saying it’s declassified, even by thinking about it.’”

SHELL GAME

In a November 14, 2022, article in Raw Story, Travis Gettys says, “Donald Trump's attorneys argued this week that he automatically designated government documents as personal property just by taking them to his home at Mar-a-Lago. The former president's defense team filed a new legal brief arguing that he was authorized to designate those records as his own property because he was still in office at the time, and they insisted that his designation cannot be challenged in court. The Justice Department disagreed, saying Trump was playing a ‘shell game’ with the presidential records and trying to have it both ways. [Trump claims classified documents automatically became his property by taking them to Mar-a-Lago \(msn.com\)](#)”



WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS HULLABALOO?

The action was unprecedented because it was the first time in U.S. history that the residence of a former president had been searched for violations of the Espionage Act and for his destruction or concealment of records that are the property of the people of the United States of America and not the property of a single individual

([Wikipedia.org/FBI Search of Mar-a-Lago](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FBI_Search_of_Mar-a-Lago)).

WHAT IS AN ARCHIVE?

The word archive has its root in *arche*, an Ancient Greek word for beginning and, by extension, commencement. For Aristotle, arche is the principle of a thing, which “although indemonstrable and intangible, provides the conditions of the possibility of that thing” (Barry Sandywell, *Presocratic Philosophy*, Routledge New York, 1996, Vol. 3, p, 142).

Arche also means command, as well as an authority (i.e., an archbishop), and by extension order. Anarchy is disorder.

KEYWORD: *PROVENANCE*

An archive, as defined by bing.com, is a collection of documents such as books, letters, photographs, digital data, etc., that are organized in such a way as to provide information about a place, institution, or group of people. In archives terminology, the organization of the documents is determined by *provenance*. Provenance is a fundamental principle of archives, referring to the individual, family, or organization that created or received the items in a collection. The principle of provenance or the *respect des fonds* (archival integrity) dictates that records of different origins (provenance) be kept separate to preserve their context.

<https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/provenance.html>

REASONS TO KEEP ARCHIVES

According AIDCSC (All India Deprived Community Support Centre), archives are important for three reasons: personal reasons, cultural reasons, and official or administrative reasons. Regarding personal reasons: “Man is a selfish animal, and he calculates for himself for the benefit or the loss before entering into a public affair.” Regarding cultural reasons: “Since [an archive] is the emporium of all the activities of mankind from time immemorial to the present, it depicts customs, conventions, and usage of people.”

OFFICIAL REASONS FOR KEEPING ARCHIVES

“Archives are considered as the knowledge of past administrations. They furnish information pertaining to the day-to-day administrations of the prior governments and their attendant administrative system. In Judicial matters, judgment is based on previous judgments. For judicial decisions, documents in the judicial department and in law reports and law journals are produced to substantiate their claims.”

[In short, historians and other writers are fully dependent upon the documents and records of archives for portraits of the life and activities of their predecessors.” Importance of Archives | AIDCSC \(indiancommunities.org\)](#)

ARCHIVES ARE IMPORTANT FOR THE CONTINUATION OF CIVILIZATION

TIBET

According to my lama, Nankhai Norbu Rinpoche, when Atisa, an 11th c. Indian scholar, discovered the store of Sanskrit texts at Pekar Kordzoling, the library of Samye, he was amazed at that the degree to which Vajrayana Buddhism had spread in Tibet beyond what had occurred in India.

ISLAM

We owe a debt to the 12th c. Islamic philosopher, Averroes, for writing his commentaries on the Greek philosopher Aristotle, whose works had been abandoned after the fall of the Roman Empire and without which a strong foundation for scientific inquiry would have been lost. (Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, Simon & Schuster, NY, 1945).

IRELAND

According to Thomas Cahill, author of *How the Irish Saved Civilization* (Hachette, UK, 1996), everyone today owes a debt of gratitude to the Irish monks of the 5th century, who stored the written record of western civilization and kept it safe during an era of anarchy and constant warfare.

GROUND OF DEMOCRACY

At this level, an archive is a metaphysical foundation of a government and the source of the narrative of that government. To quote Abraham Lincoln, from his Gettysburg Address, the United States of America is a “Government of The People by The People for The People.” This is the definition of a democracy. Trump’s claim that the archival records of his administration are his personal property is the claim of a monarch. The notion that Trump can say that the presidential records are his personal records is fallacious. In simple terms, when he became a regular citizen, he stole public property.

GOOD NEWS – BAD NEWS

Giving the ex-president the benefit of the doubt, Rachael Maddow reported on November 15, 2022, that officials in the F.B.I, believe that there is the possibility that “we appear to be left with a good-news, bad-news situation. The good news is the former president apparently didn’t intend to sell or misuse the classified secrets he took. The bad news is, the reporting presents Trump as some kind of man-child who saw official documents as toys and trophies that he couldn’t stand the thought of losing — despite the fact that they didn’t belong to him.” [Maddow Blog | Officials reportedly think they know why Trump took classified docs \(msn.com\)](#)

IN CONCLUSION

I've heard it said, "History is written by the victors." I've never heard it said, "...by the losers."