

Aloha Betrayed



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In 1897, as a white oligarchy made plans to allow the United States to annex Hawai'i, native Hawaiians organized a massive petition drive to protest. Ninety-five percent of the native population signed the petition, causing the annexation treaty to fail in the U.S. Senate. This event was unknown to many contemporary Hawaiians until Noenoe K. Silva rediscovered the petition in the process of researching this book. Histories of Hawai'i, with few exceptions, have been written using only English language sources. They have not taken into account the thousands of pages of newspapers, books, and letters written in the mother tongue of native Hawaiians. By rigorously analyzing nineteenth-century Hawaiian-language texts, Silva fills a crucial gap in the historical record. In so doing, she refutes the long-held idea that native Hawaiians passively accepted the erosion of their culture and loss of their nation, showing that they actively resisted political, economic, linguistic, and cultural domination. Silva demonstrates that throughout the nineteenth century, print media, particularly newspapers, functioned as sites for broad social communication, political organizing, and perpetuation of the native language and culture. The basis of her study is a large archive of more than seventy-five Hawaiian-language newspapers produced between 1834 and 1948. She brings to light not only overtly political articles and essays but also chants, stories, poems, quilts, songs, and hula performances. Silva is attentive to the subtleties of the Hawaiian language itself, pointing out how the native texts are rife with veiled meanings intended to elude deciphering by colonialists. Her readings illuminate the heretofore unacknowledged mass participation in politics by Hawaiian women. A powerful critique of colonial historiography, *Aloha Betrayed* provides a much-needed history of native Hawaiian resistance to American imperialism.

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