

**Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism**

by

Noenoe K. Silva

Durham, Duke University Press (2004).

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Whenever another Native Hawaiian scholar releases a book, we celebrate. There are simply too few Native Hawaiian scholars publishing too few books. So in this regard, any text by a Native Hawaiian scholar possesses an inherent value within the budding discourse by Hawai'i's indigenous academics. Yet, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* stands out, both for its content and for its methodology, as a text that promises to become a foundational pillar in the discourse on Hawaiian history. Noenoe K. Silva has written a masterful text that illustrates with stunning clarity the importance of archival work, knowledge of the native language and a willingness to challenge western historical narratives by returning to primary documents to illuminate first-hand the struggles against colonization.

Silva commits her text to dispelling the “myth of nonresistance” (2004) among Native Hawaiians as American politics and capitalism engulfed the islands throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. To achieve this task, Silva systemically poured through the Hawaiian language newspapers written throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Silva becomes the first Native Hawaiian scholar to extensively employ this method – mostly due to the banning of the Native Hawaiian language in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which left the vast majority of Natives unable to read or write in the native tongue. Silva discovers through her research that “[when] the Hawaiian-language materials are examined . . . it is immediately apparent that throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was resistance to every aspect of colonialism”, that “for every exertion of oppressive and colonizing power there was resistance” (2004). *Aloha Betrayed* is devoted to illustrating the variety of forms this resistance embodied.

Silva's textual analysis begins with the emergence of the first Hawaiian language newspaper controlled by Native Hawaiians. Prior to the establishment of *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika*, the Hawaiian language newspapers in existence were largely subject to the influence of foreign missionaries. This influence resulted from the fact that prior to western contact Native Hawaiians relied on oral traditions and indigenous epistemologies. It was western missionaries who introduced the written language to the Native island population. This introduction of a foreign epistemology, along with numerous other factors like disease and religion, led to the cultural colonization of the Native people, including control over most of the printed materials generated during this era. Silva describes how, in comparison to other Hawaiian language newspapers, which were associated with (and thereby controlled by) missionaries, *Ka Hoku a ka Pakipika* became “one site of Kanaka Maoli resistance to the rising colonial capitalism that the U.S. Calvinist missionaries supported and in which they

participated and that the ali'i nui both opposed and facilitated in different ways" (2004). Through the comparison of these newspapers, we see the vigor and the ferocity of the discursive battle that took place in 19<sup>th</sup> century Hawai'i. A stunning revelation considering that the historiography of Hawai'i claims that the colonization of the islands occurred without resistance.

Silva continues on to illustrate the many forms of this resistance. She looks at the role of King David Kalākaua in preserving and revitalizing the traditional, indigenous culture. Silva notes: "The enactments of tradition that Kalākaua undertook that strengthened the identity of Kanaka Maoli as a people proud of their past and of their achievements made him more popular, and his legacy of national pride has persisted to this day. Kalākaua is particularly revered by practitioners of hula and traditional religion, who call him the Merrie Monarch" (Silva, 2004). The effort to illustrate resistance in its various forms emphasizes the range of the text. Silva draws upon different sites of discursive struggle, such as the print media and cultural practices, and ties them together. This is an ambitious work that culminates in the final two chapters, which deal with the annexation of Hawai'i. Here, Silva emphasizes the intersection between the discursive struggle in the print media and cultural colonization. The emphasis on this intersection works particularly well in these chapters because Queen Lili'uokalani involved herself directly with the textual and cultural resistance that marked this period. She would use newspapers and she would use music to note the struggle of her people. Of the Queen's political writing and mele (songs), Silvia observes: "Her mele worked differently from the other genres of resistance. The formal protests; articles in newspapers; publication of books; and presence in Washington were directed at U.S. politicians and American public, but her mele were primarily for her people" (2004). Therefore, the actions of the Queen herself best emphasize and explain Silva's methodology, because it is a non-traditional methodology. This innovative discourse analysis will hopefully be the beginning of more scholarship that looks at the intersections of colonial discourses, instead of remaining limited by traditional media analysis or music ethnography. *Aloha Betrayed* is a prime example of how disciplines inform each other and how decolonization is fundamentally reliant on such interdisciplinary work.

Both for its content and methodology, *Aloha Betrayed* is essential reading for anyone studying colonization. This is not to say that the text is perfect, but my criticisms are few. In that this topic (the colonization of Hawai'i) will be foreign to many readers, a longer introduction would have been useful. I would have enjoyed more of Silva's analysis of the implications of her work for the modern struggles of Native Hawaiians. In this same vein, a conclusion would have been appreciated (the text has none). It feels that, in relocating the voice of subjugated Native Hawaiians, Silva lost sight of the importance of her own voice. Silva is clearly a brilliant scholar who possess the ability to help revolutionize the methodologies of postcolonial studies. I look forward to the scholarship she will generate once she realizes this.