



Facing the Spears of Change: The Life and Legacy of John Papa `?`? (Indigenous Pacifics)

Marie Alohalani Brown

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Facing the Spears of Change takes a close look at the extraordinary life of John Papa Ii. Over the years, Ii faced many personal and political changes and challenges in rapid succession, which he skillfully parried or grasped firmly and then used to fend off other attacks. He began serving in the household of Kamehameha I as an attendant in 1810, when he was ten. His early service took place in a time when alii nui (the highest-ranking Hawaiians) were considered divine and surrounded with strict kapu (sacred prohibitions); breaking a kapu pertaining to an alii meant death for the transgressor. As an attendant, Ii was highly familiar with the inner workings of the royal household. He went on to become an influential statesman, privy to the shifting modes of governance adopted by the Hawaiian kingdom. Ii's intelligence and his good standing with those he served resulted in a great degree of influence within the Hawaiian government, with his fellow Hawaiians, and with the missionaries residing in the Hawaiian Islands. At the end of his life, he also became a memoirist and biographer, who published accounts of key events in his own life and in the lives of others during the sixty years that he served his kings, his nation, and his people. As a privileged spectator and key participant, his accounts of alii and his insights into early nineteenth-century Hawaiian cultural-religious practices are unsurpassed. In this groundbreaking work, Marie Alohalani Brown offers a meticulously researched, elegantly written, and compelling portrait of an important historical figure in nineteenth-century Hawaii. Brown's extensive archival research and use of Hawaiian and English language primary sources from the 1800s allows readers to access information that would be otherwise unknown but to a very small circle of researchers. While recent scholars have to varying degrees noted Ii's importance in Hawaiian history, his life has been largely neglected as a topic of study. The few scattered lines devoted to him have been merely tombstone epitaphs in relation to the vast archive available about his life, his political achievements, and his cultural contributions as a writer.

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