
Hawaiian Language

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*Aloha mai e nā kama'āina a me nā
malihini, nā kumu 'ōlelo Hawai'i,
nā haumāna 'ōlelo Hawai'i a me nā
makamaka a pau o ka 'ōlelo makuahine.
Aloha mai kakou.*

One evening while accompanying some of our students from Kamehameha to the University for a PEACESAT program, Karen Knudsen asked me what I taught at Kamehameha Schools and I answered that I taught Hawaiian Studies courses, namely, the Hawaiian language. She remarked that I was just the person that she needed and then she asked if I would be a panel member for this year's Pacific Islands Studies Conference, "Hawai'i in the Contemporary Pacific."

Upon finding out who the other panel members were, I wholeheartedly agreed. First of all, because the other two members of the panel are like 'ohana to me. Elie Williamson of the Bishop Museum and I met for the first time as actors in a Hawaiian language play written by Jean Charlot, in which Elie played my mother. The play was called Laukiamanuikahiki and was done for the Hawaiian Historical Society in the early sixties, when I was a struggling first year Hawaiian language student.

From then on, Elie became a very special person to me and it was on account of her that I became an employee of the Bishop Museum through my undergraduate years and up until the time that I went on to teach at the Kamehameha Schools. I was very fortunate to have worked with Elie in the recording laboratory of the Bishop Museum with its thousands of miles of tape recordings of native speaker informants, one of whom is my maternal grandmother, a full-blooded Hawaiian from East Moloka'i. As a serious student of the language, there wasn't a better place to work. The second panel member and I are hula sisters, having graduated together from the Halau Hula o Maiki a decade ago, colleagues in Hawaiian Studies at Kamehameha and also the best of friends.

The second reason for accepting to be a panel member was because the three of us represent three of the key institutions responsible for the preservation and perpetuation of Hawaiian Studies - the Bishop Museum with its storehouse of treasures and resources, the University of Hawai'i and its Hawaiian Studies and Pacific Islands Studies Program, and of course, the Kamehameha Schools, founded

almost a century ago to educate children of "part or pure aboriginal blood." All three members of this panel have been or are presently associated with all of these three institutions.

And thirdly, all three of us are biologically and culturally Hawaiian and Pacific women, who like Ka'ahumanu, are not to be underestimated. And, of course, with Abe Pi'ianai'a at the helm, there should be smooth sailing. Like the rest of the panel, for me, Abe is also like 'ohana. Like a kupuna, he is always there when you need someone to listen, he is always there when you want to engage in stimulating discussion, and he is always there with an encouraging word. There could be no other comparable first director of the Hawaiian Studies Program, in my opinion, than Abe Pi'ianai'a, a true kama'aina, kupa o ka 'aina, ka 'oiwi o Hawai'i.

STANDARDIZING HAWAIIAN ORTHOGRAPHY

In the preface to their first and second editions of the Hawaiian-English dictionaries, Puku'i and Elbert summarize for us in chronological order, the names of contributors from Cook on. They also list the numbers of words written in Hawaiian reflective of their British, Spanish, Russian, and French nationalities. Puku'i and Elbert go on to say that in 1829, "the missionaries decided to end this spelling diversity, and they adopted by vote, an alphabet with vowels corresponding to the so-called continental sound values and with the usual English values of the consonants."

In reviewing the attempts at writing a dictionary by others such as Andrews, Hitchcock, Parker, to mention only a few, Puku'i and Elbert declared that many problems arose during the years of work in the production of their own work, one of which was spelling, hence ORTHOGRAPHY.

According to them the principle difficulties involved: 1) the indication of the 'okina or glottal stop and the kahako or macron, 2) the spelling of loan words and 3) the indication or

omission of the w-glide. Suffice it to say, those who use the dictionary regularly are aware of the determinations of Puku'i and Elbert.

MOVING AHEAD WITH DETERMINATION

In 1975 the University of Hawai'i Committee for the Preservation and Study of Hawaiian Language, Art, and Culture, today known as the Hawaiian Culture Committee, approved a proposal by Pila Wilson to undertake a project to standardize the glottal/macron orthography used by Hawaiian language teachers as well as to look into problems regarding word divisions and those terms whose spellings were in question. Upon the completion of this project, a report was to be submitted to Hawaiian language teachers along with a nomination sheet whereby a teacher could submit or nominate a spelling different from those in the report. With the close of the nominations, a ballot was to be made out. All the spellings recommended in the report were to be considered automatic nominations. Only those terms with more than one nomination were to be placed on the ballot, all terms with only one nomination were to win by default and terms for which no spelling had been nominated were to automatically adhere to that given in the third edition of PE Hawaiian-English Dictionary.

Ballots were to be collected and tabulated and the results of the selection were to be distributed to the participants, namely the Hawaiian language teachers. The final results were to be considered as a standardized written Hawaiian to be used by all participants in writing the language, teaching the language and in their publications. However, before the report was to be sent to the participating language teachers, it was submitted to the aforementioned university Hawaiian Culture Committee for approval. For many reasons the University Committee postponed voting to support the report indefinitely.

A year later I became a member of

this Committee and upon hearing of this report, requested a copy. At subsequent meetings of the Committee, I asked why the Committee would not approve it and said that I was in support of the report. The Committee then appointed an Orthography (as the report was referred to) Subcommittee, of which I was a member, to study it further. In January of 1978, Pila Wilson, the project coordinator and a board member of the 'Ahahui 'Ōlelo Hawai'i (A.O.H.) and myself, representing the Orthography Subcommittee and also a board member of the A.O.H., sent a letter to our colleagues in Hawaiian language instruction inviting them to participate in a series of sessions to produce an interim Hawaiian spelling guideline to be used by the A.O.H. and associated groups.

There were five, four-hour Saturday sessions held in my classroom at Kamehameha. We laboriously, meticulously and conscientiously went through a portion of the report and in July of that year came out with a document called "Recommendations of the 'Ahahui 'Ōlelo Hawai'i 1978 Hawaiian Spelling Committee."

Time does not permit me to elaborate on the details of this document but hopefully in the question and answer period to follow, my fellow committee members in the audience and myself could help answer your questions.

I would like to say that we are not suggesting that we know it all or that

this document of recommendations will not change, because we know it will. What we are suggesting is that there be consistency in the spelling of Hawaiian to lessen the confusion on the part of students studying the language and to give credibility to Hawaiian as a language. As participants in the establishment of a standard writing system, we are in no way fixing the pronunciation of the language and as teachers it is our duty to explain differences in pronunciation that occur. All of the members of this Orthography Committee committed themselves wholeheartedly to the project and have been at the receiving end of compliments and criticisms, but through it all we were led on by the wise saying or 'ōlelo no'eau Momoe aku i mua Move ahead with determination!

Before I close I would like to mention the members of the Orthography Committee, "the twentieth century missionaries":

Pila Wilson
Kauano Kama'ā Wilson
Lokomaika'i Snakenberg
Noelani Losch
'Ioli'i Hawkins
Kalena Silva
Kauano Kimura
'Ilioloha Quick

Mahalo.