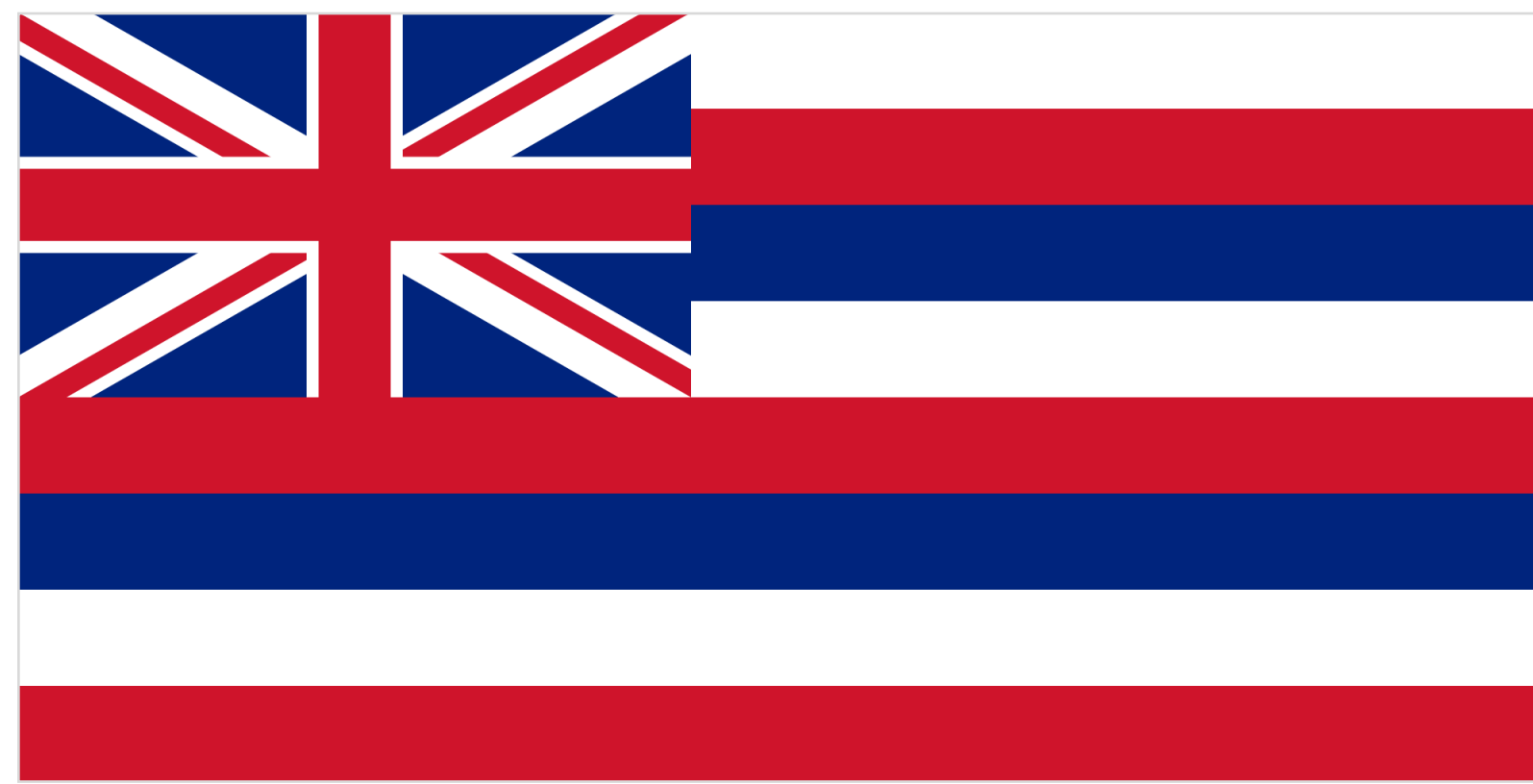


# Toward a writing system for Hawai'i Creole

## Introduction

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Hawai'i Creole (also known as Hawai'i Creole English, Hawai'i Pidgin, or simply just Pidgin among other names) is a language that originated from a need for a mutually intelligible system of communication on the sugar plantations of Hawai'i in the 19th century. Currently, there are about 600,000 people who use Hawai'i Creole either as a first (Simons & Fennig, 2018). Despite being officially recognized as a language by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2015, negative attitudes toward Hawai'i Creole remain. For example, locals often refer to Hawai'i Creole as 'broken English' implying inferiority to standard English (Drager, 2012; Sato, 1989; Yokota, 2008). Against the backdrop of these negative attitudes, writing and the emergence of a literary tradition in Hawai'i Creole have been identified as crucial ways that validate the local identity and raise Hawai'i Creole status and prestige (Romaine, 2005). Thus far, however, local writing in Hawai'i Creole has been done in an ad-hoc fashion without any widely agreed upon orthography or spelling rules. Even with the advent of the Odo Orthography in the 1970s by Carol Odo, linguists (not locals) have been the primary users (Sakoda & Siegel, 2003). Furthermore, the resemblance of Hawai'i Creole writing to standard English reify notions of being an inferior variety of standard English (Romaine, 2005). In order to address these orthographic issues related to Hawai'i Creole, this project proposes a majority-non-romanized writing system which reflects the ethnic diversity in Hawai'i. After all, Sebba (2009) states that "[w]riting systems are also potent symbols for the languages they encode to the extent that, in the public mind, a language and its writing are often the same thing" (p. 39).



## Methodology

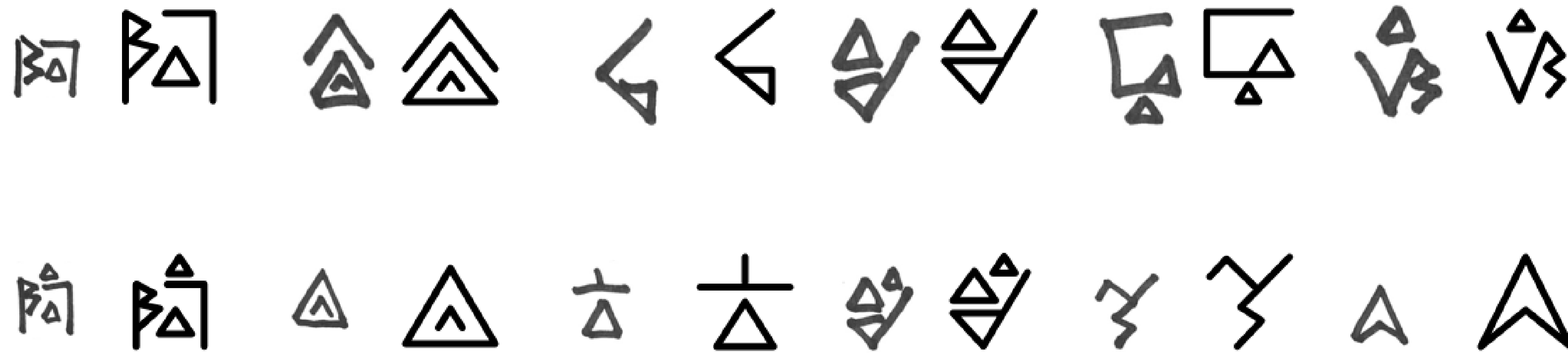
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Graphemes were borrowed and modified from writing systems/orthographies associated with Chinese, Filipino (Baybayin), Hawaiian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Thai, Vietnamese, and Spanish (with the exception of two pictographic graphemes ≡ and ≡≡ that were then used to represent phonemes) to devise a phonemic writing system for Hawai'i Creole. The writing system is called Hawai'i Pidgin (for now) because locals more commonly know Hawai'i Creole as Hawai'i Pidgin or simply Pidgin. Graphemes were first handwritten, then digitized and rendered into a typable font via IcoMoon (an app that allows users to build and use their own icon packs). A modified form of the Odo Orthography served as the basis upon which Hawai'i Pidgin is mapped on to a keyboard so that it can be typed. Thus far, the Hawai'i Pidgin font is compatible with Microsoft Word, Microsoft Publisher, and Adobe Acrobat.

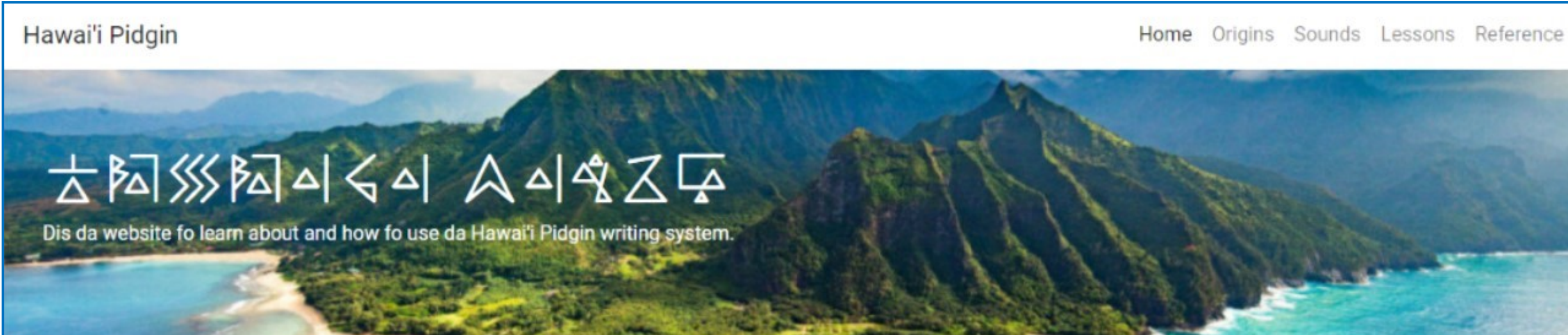
## Graphemes and Origins

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Grapheme	Sound (Odo)	Borrowed Symbol	Ethnic Origin
△ □	i	이	Korean
△ □	e	え	Japanese
△ □	a	阿	Chinese
△ □	æ	阿	Chinese 阿 with added diacritic on top
△ □	aw	o	Vietnamese
△ □	o	ô	Vietnamese
△ □	u	우	Korean
△ □	r	R	English
△ □	long vowel	々	Japanese
△ □	t	ㅌ	Korean
△ □	d	ㅌ	Korean ㅌ with added diacritic on top
△ □	n	ㄴ	Korean ㄴ with added diacritic on bottom
△ □	k	derived pictogram	Hawaiian pictogram for ocean water 'kai' borrowing the first sound [k]ai
△ □	g	derived pictogram	Hawaiian pictogram for ocean water 'kai' with added diacritic on top, changing [k] to voiced sound [g]
△ □	h	ㅎ	Korean
△ □	f	發	Chinese
△ □	s	Ꞗ	Filipino Baybayin
△ □	z	Ꞗ	Filipino Baybayin Ꞗ with added diacritic on top
△ □	sh	シ	Japanese
△ □	zh	シ	Japanese シ with added diacritic on top
△ □	ch	ฉ	Thai
△ □	j	ฉ	Thai ฉ with added diacritic on top
△ □	p	Ꞗ	Filipino Baybayin
△ □	b	Ꞗ	Filipino Baybayin Ꞗ with added diacritic on top
△ □	m	Ꞗ	Filipino Baybayin Ꞗ with added diacritic on bottom
△ □	ng	~	Portuguese
△ □	l	Ꞗ	Filipino Baybayin
△ □	y	や	Japanese
△ □	w	川	Chinese/Hawaiian. In Chinese 川 means river, which flows in it fresh water. The Hawaiian word for fresh water is 'wai' of which the first sound is borrowed [w]ai
△ □	v	川	Chinese/Hawaiian. 川 with diacritic on top to turn [w] into [v]
△ □	D	ㄷ	Japanese
△ □	th	ㅌ	Spanish
△ □	dh	ㅌ	Spanish ㅌ with diacritic on top
△ □	‘	‘	Hawaiian 'okina which is shown in the sound column to the left



Samples of hand drawn graphemes to digitization using Sketch



## Future

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This ongoing project welcomes any feedback from locals and outsiders alike. The goal is to allow Hawai'i Creole to be used in literary form without the stigma that it's just a form of broken English. In the next few months, teaching materials will be developed and will focus first on mastering the sound to symbol correspondences, then steadily moving on to words, short sentences, short passages, and short stories with comprehension exercises. Since the teaching of the writing system will most likely not be carried out face-to-face in educational institutions, this project will rely heavily on technological affordances such as websites and apps to teach those that share interest in reading/writing in/with Hawai'i Pidgin.

A separate project to develop a comprehensive Hawai'i Creole dictionary is also in the beginning stage. This dictionary is envisioned to be crowd-sourced and is currently compatible with the Hawai'i Pidgin writing system. The purpose is to 1) provide a not-yet-available comprehensive dictionary for Hawai'i Creole and 2) to make entries written in the Hawai'i Pidgin writing system as a resource for reading/writing. Hopefully the efforts in this project will be able to inform language revitalization projects elsewhere.



## References

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