

# Holo Wa'apā

Swing eighths

Words & music by Lena Machado, 1944

Recording transcription



1. Kā - u - a i ka ho-lo wa - 'a - pā La - we
2. Kō ma-i 'oe a kā- mau i ka ho - e Ko - hu
3. Hō a - 'e ka i- hu i ka ma - ka - ni No-
4. Ha - 'i - na 'i - a mai ka pu - a - na La - we



- mā - li - e ka li - ma i ka ho - e I  
 ma - nu 'i - wa i ka pi'i i mu - a Ko - hu  
 wi - ki, no - we - ke, kau - we - ke Ka  
 mā - li - e ka li - ma i ka ho - e I



- mu - a a i ho - pe pa - 'a ke kū - la - na Me - a  
 Mi - ne ku - 'u li - o ho - lo nu - i Kū - paia-  
 ha - na i - a lā o ka mo - ku Port-  
 mu - a a i ho - pe pa - 'a ke kū - la - na Me - a



- 'ole nā 'a - le i ka lu - li mā - li - e  
 na - ha ē ka ha - na a nā 'a - le  
 hard ma - i 'o - e i ka ho - e  
 'ole nā 'a - le i ka lu - li mā - li - e.

# *Holo Wa'apā*

Kāua i ka holo wa'apā  
Lawe mālie ka lima i ka hoe  
I mua a i hope pa'a ke kūlana  
Mea 'ole nā 'ale i ka luli mālie

Kō mai 'oe a kāmau i ka hoe  
Kohu manu 'iwa i ka pī'i i mua  
Kohu Mine ku'u lio holo nui  
Kūpaianaha ē ka hana a nā 'ale

Hō a'e ka ihu i ka makani  
Nowiki, noweke, kauweke  
Ka hana ia lā o ka mo'ku  
Porthard mai 'oe i ka hoe

Ha'ina 'ia mai ka puana  
Lawe mālie ka lima i ka hoe  
I mua a i hope pa'a ke kūlana  
Mea 'ole nā 'ale i ka luli mālie.

*Let's you and I take a canoe<sup>1</sup> ride  
Take up your oars  
Row forward then back, steady as she goes  
Feel the gentle swaying of the waves<sup>2</sup>*

*Draw and hold the oars steady  
As she pitches forward like a bird  
Just as if I were riding a horse<sup>3</sup>  
I could feel the workings of the waves<sup>4</sup>*

*Turn the bow into the wind  
Northeast, northwest, southwest  
As the canoe makes its turns<sup>5</sup>  
"Porthard" is the command, hold the oars*

*This story comes to an end  
Take up the oars  
Row forward then back, steady as she goes  
Feel the gentle swaying of the waves.*

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Source: Text from the collection of Pi'olani Motta, © June 12, 1944. Orthographic editing by Kīhei de Silva. Translation by Pi'olani Motta and Lena Machado.

1. Although *wa'apā* is translated here as "canoe," the word's meaning is "boat made of boards." A more literal translation, then, might be "skiff, rowboat." The Western connotations of *wa'apā* are upheld later in the song's translation of *hoe* as "oar" (not "paddle") and in the song's use of *moku*—"boat"—as a second reference to the vessel in which we are riding.

2. A more literal translation of this line might be, "The waves matter little because of the gentle rocking."

3. A more literal translation of this line might be, "Like Minnie my speedy horse." Machado is probably alluding here to "Inā 'O Mine Ku'u Lio," a much older song about a high-spirited horse named Minnie.

4. A more literal translation of this line might be, "Wondrous is the work of the waves."

5. A more literal translation of this line might be, "These are the actions of the boat." All told, the Motta-Machado translation of "Holo Wa'apā" is deceptively innocent and generalized, and clearly meant to steer the casual listener into believing that the song describes little more than a tourist's exciting but somewhat confused experience (is it a canoe or a boat, a paddle or an oar?) on a Waikiki canoe ride. This is classic Hawaiian misdirection and is the source, therefore, of more than a few Hawaiian chuckles.