

Transcription

“THE DOMINICAN SOUTHWEST:
CROSSROADS OF QUISQUEYA AND CENTER OF THE WORLD”

Martha Ellen Davis, Director
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- 0:00:00 [Views of lowlands and highlands of the Dominican Southwest, followed by scenes of human life of the region.
Accompanied by Dominican symphonic music representing the Southwest: “Carabiné and Mangulina” from the Suite “Recuerdos de Infancia” (Memories of Youth) by Luis Emilio Mena, performed by the Dominican National Symphony Orchestra directed by Manuel Simó. Live recording by M.E. Davis]
- 0:01:10 NARRATOR: The Dominican Southwest: today in the periphery of the nation; but during the time of the Taínos, this was the center and axis of the island they called Quisqueya.
- TITLE: THE DOMINICAN SOUTHWEST: CROSSROADS OF QUISQUEYA AND CENTER OF THE WORLD
- [Map of the island of Hispaniola of today (divided into the republics of Haiti and the Dominican Republic), focusing on the Taíno political center of island, today the Valley of San Juan in the Southwest region.]
- [Focus on the so-called “Corral of the Indians,” the Taíno ceremonial center, San Juan de la Maguana.]
- [A bas relief sculpture depicting Taíno life of the Corral of the Indians by Natalie Saxton de Pérez, situated in a public plaza in San Juan. The views are accompanied by an imaginary representation of music in a Taíno style, composed by M.E. Davis and performed by M.E. Davis and A. Guzmán.]
- Subtitle: The Corral of the Indians
- NARRATOR: For the descendants of Queen Anacaona, this is still the Center of the World.
- 0:02:00 [In the “Hole of St. John” which the residents consider the Center or Solar Plexis of the World, where the Earth bore St. John the Baptist; a church was constructed next to it. Maguana Abajo, San Juan.]

[“Missionaries” (=devotees), carrying out a monthly ritual of cleaning out the “Hole of St. John and drawing geometric figures in the area with wheat flour]

Song (repeated many times during the ritual):

[Don Juan de León Mateo:] *Beloved Sacrament, King of the World;*

[Doña Estervina Alejandro, his wife, responds:]

Embrace us, Lord, with your love!

[Don Juan:] Right now you are at the Center of the World, the Solar Plexis of the World; you can measure the same distance in all directions.

0:02:25 [Doña zunilda Alejandro:] Whatever they say, this is the Center of the World. The Hole of St. John is like this, like the birth channel of a baby....

Subtitle: Zunilda Alejandro (“Doña Zuna”), Maguana Arriba

...A wandering missionary found the child being born—from the earth! St. John was born from the earth! He was discovered half-way out. that’s why the second God on the earth is St. John the Baptist—Majesty and Lamb of Lambs!

0:3:30 [Don Juan, singing:] *I am asking St. Anthony in the Divine Tribunal:
May he grant me all I request of him.*

*Long live St. John the Baptist;
may his glory grow each day.
By the Holy Spirit,
may I be reborn.*

Subtitle: The “Hole of St. John” on “The Hill” at Maguana Abajo,
Province of San Juan

[Don Juan:] We are asking for mercy throughout the four continents of the world, for help and support for every needy person.

[Doña Estervina:] Amen. So be it!

0:04:09 NARRATOR: The Center of the World is the crossroads of the island of Quisqueya, a point of encounter between two countries and three races, which has developed its own culture: Haitian-Dominican border culture.

[Image of the cross and circle drawn with flour at the Hole of St. John, as a symbol of the cosmology of the region and thus symbol of the documentary: about the cycle of life in the region of the crossroads.]

[Images of the market of Comendador, Elías Piña, at the border with Haiti; of the superimposed Haitian and Dominican flags; and of the face of a borderlands woman.]

0:04:30

Vodú celebration

[St. Martha possessing the medium, the head of the celebration]:

Welcome, Consecrated Beings!

Subtitle: Vodú party for Santa Marta la Dominadora—St. Martha the Controller (Guedé Liá), San Juan de la Maguana

...Force and power! Welcome, Blessed Delegation of Divine Jesus!

[Spanish spoken by Haitian-derived deity, so as if by a Haitian créole speaker, with characteristic accent, errors, and inserted créole terms:]

With the power of “Papa God” and Damballah Wedó [the serpent deity], we are fulfilling a vow in this consecrated altar of Marta, to get what we need today, tomorrow, and always!

Papá Candelo (possessing a young man): Thank the Lord!

0:05:12

Market of Comendador, Elías Piña

Subtitle: Bilingual negotiation in Créole and Spanish.

[The saleswoman speaks Créole, then Spanish, concluding:] Two malt drinks?

Subtitle: Comendador, Province of Elías Piña

[After views of the market, she concludes the sale:] Fourteen—and six...

0:05:40

Haitian-Dominican border crossing

[“Palos” long-drums with Haitian-Dominican singer to accompany these views.]

Subtitle: Haitian-Dominican border

0:06:15

NARRATOR: The sky, the mountains, valleys high and low, lakes, rivers, and the sea—all are intersected by the vertical axis of the Southwest: the tree and phallus of life, which unites ecological zones from Duarte Peak,

the highest in the Caribbean, to the depths of salty Lake Enriquillo, below sea level.

[Views of all these ecological zones and the Maypole dance = the tree and phallus of life.]

0:06:34

NARRATOR: The crossroads of the vertical and horizontal axes is the earthly plane, where nature converges with human nature and its sacred dimension.

[View of a planted field with a spiritual “service” in the middle, for protection.]

[View of a little boy with a hair braid in front as part of a vow.]

[Don Diógenes de los Santos:]

I have sure fought with bacás, but with me they always get screwed....

Subtitle: Don Diógenes de los Santos “Cola Blanca”

...I once tilled five acres of land for Nicasio in Salinas. When I finished the job, he didn't want to pay. That man had a *bacá*. He was a bad, evil man. The day I finished the job I went to him and said, “I came to collect my money because I'm a poor man and I need it.” But he was at the cockfight and didn't pay any attention. I said, “Pay me my money! It's already dark and I have far to go on foot in the mountains!” You know what he said? “I'm going to pay you your money” and he paid me.

But he had his *bacá* follow me to eat me up on the road. But I know three prayers that will help me fight 50 *bacás*! When I was crossing Naranjo River, a palm tree fell across my path. By now it was so dark I couldn't even see the palm of my hand. Then a huge pig appeared. It threw me three times against a bunch of mesquite trees, and the thorns stuck in my back. I thought: “I'm really screwed now!” When it threw me again, I remembered the first prayer. It was a Haitian woman in Haiti who had taught it to me, to defend myself. I said the first prayer. I turned my clothes inside out fast, and said the second one. About 25 yards from the mountain, in retreat, it said from the woods, “I'm leaving! Not even the Devil can beat you!” I said, “Come back and fight! Now we're really going to have it out! Come back!” But it left.

But then a little white banty hen started pecking at my heel. And that little hen followed me to the door of my house. That was the *bacá*, coming to eat up all my money. But it couldn't beat me. I've got three prayers that will make the house shake like an earthquake.

It's true that if you make a deal with a *bacá*, he will make you rich. He'll take the bloom off your crops and give it to me. Yours won't produce anything and mine will. The coffee growers in Polo say the same

thing. But if you don't do what he wants, he'll ruin you. He'll leave you flat broke.

0:10:04 [Don Andrés Heredia:] Don't ask me anything about that! I don't know a thing about *bacás*...

Subtitle: Don Andrés Heredia

...The only *bacá* I know is the one up there. That's the one I like. I don't want anything to do with those creatures. I follow the will of Christ.

0:10:20 NARRATOR: Around this crossroads revolve the natural and human life cycles of the Southwest.

[Image of a young man selecting pigeon pea seeds.]

[Diagram: The emblem of the crossroads with the circle, to develop a diagram to explain the cosmology—that is, the vision of the spiritual world—of the region.]

NARRATOR: The annual cycle of the sun and the monthly cycles of the moon tell people when to plant, prune, harvest, and cut trees for lumber.

[Don Andrés Heredia:] When the moon is full, we wait for the waning moon to plant. We wait for the good months to plant. We also wait for the moon in order to cut trees for lumber. You can't cut them during the new moon. No, the moon has to be perfect: the full moon. If you cut them in the new moon, they will rot and get worms. Because this is the will of Christ.

0:11:13 [Doña Reina Alejandro sings a Salve Regina at her altar in Maguana Arriba:]

Hail, Holy Queen – Father St. John;

[Response in chorus:] *Father St. John, give us your hand.*

Subtitle: Salve to St. John the Baptist

Doña Reina Alejandro Jiménez, Maguana Arriba

[Doña Reina continues with the Salve Regina]

NARRATOR: The solar cycle is intersected by the axes of the solstices and the equinoxes.

[Diagram: The emblem of the crossroads and the circle, to continue developing the cosmology: here re: the solistices and the equinoxes.]

NARRATOR: The winter solstice is the domain of Christ as the Baby Jesus; and the summer solstice, the height of the solar cycle, is the domain of St. John the Baptist, who baptized Christ and in turn was baptized by Christ.

[Doña Reina continues with the Salve Regina:]

*...in this valley of tears...
Father St. John, give us your hand.*

*...gracious Advocate, pray for us...
Father St. John, give us your hand.*

[Don Juan:] Since Jesus Christ baptized St. John and St. John baptized Christ, this means that Jesus Christ is God and St. John is a second God.

0:12:30

NARRATOR: The year is marked by sacred periods and days, mental calendars which vary according to region and family.

[Diagram: The emblem of the crossroads with the circle as an annual calendar, to be read clockwise, with the main saints of the region placed in calendrical order.]

[“Palos” drums of Las Matas de Farfán, singing:]

*E-e-é, e-é,
Long live God, long live Mary,
long live “The Man.” [=Holy Spirit]*

[Choral response:] *O-o-é, o-ó.*

*Long live the Holy Spirit
and the brotherhood members.*

[Image: Sacred dance with the banners.]

*I was on my way home,
and the Holy Spirit called me...*

NARRATOR: The greatest devotion in the Southwest is to the Holy Spirit, celebrated during Pentecost by Afro-Dominican religious brotherhoods...

[Diagram: The emblem of the crossroads with the circle again, and the calendar of saints, highlighting the Holy Spirit.]

[“Palos” continue, singing:]

The Holy Spirit is the dove...

[Image: The “queen” of the brotherhood in Las Matas de Farfán, Doña María Carrasco, dancing with a carved image of a dove.]

NARRATOR, CONT. ...in El Batey in the Province of San Juan, the largest in the country,...

[Image: Map of the region highlighting El Batey de San Juan.]

Subtitle: The Holy Spirit*, patron of the brotherhood in El Batey
[* here depicted as a doll, interestingly similar to the image of St. John the Baptist]

NARRATOR, CONT. ...in Las Matas de Farfán...

Subtitle: Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit, Las Matas de Farfán

[Images: Map of the region highlighting Las Matas; return to the dance with the image of the dove.]

NARRATOR, CONT. ...Elías Piña, and other sites.

Subtitle: Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit, Elías Piña

[Image: Map of the region highlighting Elías Piña]

[Image: Return to the brotherhood in Las Matas and the “palos”]

NARRATOR: The most sacred drum rhythm of the whole region is—the “drums of the Holy Spirit” –*los palos del Espíritu Santo*.

Master drummer sings: *I was in a deep sleep;
The Holy Spirit called me.*

...
The Holy Spirit is the dove.

[Image: At the same altar, praying:]

*...By the Sign of the Holy Cross,
From our enemies free us, O Lord, my God.
In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Subtitle: End of a Salve

[Antiphonal song: the section of “verses” added at the end of a Salve Regina:]

One group: *Receive this Salve with great joy!*
 The other group: *Say, "Hail, Holy Queen"! Long live Mary!*

NARRATOR: The faithful make vows or *promesas*, contracts with saints for divine healing, inherited from one generation to the next, and paid by organizing saints' festivals, ...

[Images: A young man with a vow before an altar; altars of saints' festivals.]

NARRATOR, CONT.: ... going on pilgrimage, ...

[Image: pilgrimage]

NARRATOR, CONT.: ... or dressing in the colors of the saint of one's devotion.

[Images: Various examples of women with vows dressed in the colors of their saints.]

0:15:21 NARRATOR: The cycles of the year are marked on the earth by pilgrimage routes, ...

[Image: pilgrimage]

NARRATOR, CONT.: ... which convege at holy sites.

[Image: Catholic Church of St. John the Baptist, Maguana Abajo]

Subtitle: Church of St. John the Baptist

Subtitle [for image inside]: St. John the Baptist (as a child)

[Image: Woman with a vow dressed in the colors of her saint standing next to the Hole of St. John.]

[Song: Further "verses" of the end of the Salve in Las Matas:]
...at night and during the day.

[Return to the altar at Las Matas]

0:15:56 NARRATOR: The most important pilgrimage of the Dominican Southwest is to San Francisco—St. Francis—in the sacred cave at Bánica, celebrated the fourth of October.

[Image: Map of the region highlighting Bánica]

[Don José Mateo:] Bánica, where St. Francis appeared, became a little town over the years...

Subtitle: Don José Mateo Heredia, Ex-Supervisor, “La Agüita de Liborio” [sacred spring]

... became a little town over the years. The shrine is a huge rock as large as half a hill, and you have to climb up that rock, sometimes with a ladder. It has an entrance, and when you enter, a drop of water falls on you. Above you there is an opening with a *copey* tree above and its root growing downwards...

[Image: St. Francis of Assisi]

...St. Francis appeared in that cave there in that rock, and so he was worshiped. Just like St. John is worshiped here [in La Maguana]. St. John appeared on “The Hill”[of Maguana Abajo]—there, where the church is. The Holy Spirit appeared in El Batey. And every place where a saint has appeared, people worship.

0:17:38 [Doña China Acosta:] ...Three drops hit me. And I went up to the cave...

Subtitle: Doña China, Tierra Blanca, Cabral

... There was a man up there in trance, and when I got inside the cave it was like a big house. He spoke a while with me, then said I should go in, through a narrow opening. I thought I couldn’t fit through. But a child grabbed me and pulled me through....

[Image: Chromolithograph of the Divine Christ Child]

... I didn’t see the child. But I was able to get through to the other side.

0:18:30 NARRATOR: Another pilgrimage center is “La Agüita de Liborio” — Liborio’s Spring—in El Naranjo, above Maguana Arriba, in the Province of San Juan.

[Image: Liborist musician playing the genre called the Comarca:]

Subtitle: Don Cirilo e la Rosa Cuevas “Hernández”

He sings: *At one o’clock the cock sings,
 At two o’clock the chickens sing,
 At three o’clock in the morning, Long live Papa Liborio!*

[Images: The famous photo of 1922 of Liborio Mateo, assassinated, wrapped in palm bark; devotees in La Agüita.]

Blessing by a “missionary”:

May God be with you and protect you and free you of evil.

NARRATOR: La Agüita is associated with Liborio Mateo, a great folk healer who arose at the beginning of the twentieth century, and is the most important messianic leader in Dominican history.

[Images: Devotees in La Agüita; photo of Liborio alive]

“Hernández” continues singing:

*All of us Liborists
Are going to have a good time;
And the money that we spend
We didn't ask anyone for.*

0:19:42

NARRATOR: In the Dominican Southwest, subsistence agriculturalists are aided by animals enhanced by hand-crafted tools and accessories of wood, leather, basketry, and iron.

[Images of a horse and rider and utensils of various materials.]

Subtitle: Don Uladislao Luciano, “Lao the Blacksmith”,
Las Matas de Farfán

[Don Uladislao Luciano:] I have been making plows for over 40 years, and my plows are guaranteed for three or four years. Apart from agricultural tools, we make iron doors, gates, and balconies.

[Don Ramón Carrasco:] People come from all over the country to order plows we make here: ...

Subtitle: Don Ramón Carrasco, trained by Don Lao

from Monte Plata, Puerto Plata, the Capital, Santiago, the whole Cibao region, the entire nation. We guarantee them for one or two years. When they get old, they can break because they get weakened. When the blade, the base, or the plowshare break, we make a new one or we fix the old one. The plowshare can be repaired but the blade and the base can't.

[Images of him working the iron of the plows.]

This is called the cultivator. It has its chain, its yoke, and its whip. You yoke the two oxen, the chain goes in between, and you attach the plow

behind. When you plow, you tap the oxen with the whip, to make them walk. At the end of the row where they need to turn, you stop them saying: “Oooh! Come!” and they turn back, plowing the soil.

0:21:33 Work songs, Cabral, Barahona

[Sequence of images below: views of the countryside in the Southwest and its agricultural production, in the sequence: cultivation, harvest, sale in the market, cooking, and blessing of the food.]

[Doña Prenda Reyes:]

I stopped by your house;
and you didn't offer me a chair;
Because you know that what I want
is the “marriage seat.”

Subtitle: Courtship through improvised verse:

“Coplas” in the agricultural work context

[Don Valdemiro:]

The “marriage seat”
I cannot give you;
Because I'm too little
and I don't fit in it.

NARRATOR: Agricultural labor is traditionally accompanied by song, the rhythms and styles varying according to the task and the cultural origin, whether Taíno, African or European.

[Don Valdemiro:]

Because you have your own house, [stanza not subtitled]
I'd love to sleep in your bedroom;
You have everything at hand
for us to be very happy.

[Doña Prenda:]

Take a look out the window
and you'll see a lovely sight;
Give me a glass of water,
I'm very thirsty.

[Doña Prenda answers herself:]

I have neither a cup nor a glass
to give you a drink.
Let me put some casabe with coffee
right in your mouth.

[Doña Prenda continues:]

Your lips' desire
must be fulfilled.
May someone take your hand
since I am not able.

[Don Valdemiro]

I put my hand in your bosom,
I put in my hand and pulled out:
a Catalonian rose,
and a Dutch-style button.

[Views of women and women's tasks, then the market, the place to buy exotic things.]

Whoever's left can sing now;
I'm stopping here.

[Doña Prenda:] The little pig can't eat
the ripe fruit dropped from the palm;
But he gets it into his mouth
and he can manage it.

0:24:00 The blessing of the food

[Image: Blessing of the food at a saint's festival, as a culmination of the food cycle previously depicted.

Note: The woman who blesses the food is the same one who was in trance at the vodú festival depicted earlier (0:04:30+); the footage is from the same event]

[Image: Removing small portions from each pot as an offering.]

Heavenly Father, bless those who have provided this holy food.
Heavenly Father, bless each and every one who deserves to partake of this sacred food, and all good Christians are indeed deserving. May it be a healing food, materially as well as spiritually. And if, in this sacred moment, beloved Father, there is someone who has not partaken of the bread of this blessed day, I ask you, beloved Father, that you find it propitious that he, like us, may partake of the blessed bread of today and during the coming days as well. We ask this in your blessed name and in the name of your son, Jesus, who is God and who lives and reigns for ever and ever, Amen. And to thank you, blessed Father, like good Christians, we join in a chain for the prayer you taught us Christians: 'Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name...'

[Image: fade into the sunset]

0:24:42

CASE STUDY: THE TRADITIONAL CULTURE OF TIERRA
BLANCA, CABRAL, PROVINCE OF BARAHONA

NARRATOR: Cabral, a municipality of the Province of Barahona, is one of the oldest and most traditional towns of the Dominican Southwest.

[Music: The typical Southern “priprí” ensemble: the manguina, “Stinky goat” performed by Belí y sus Muchachos (Belí and the Boys). Tierra Blanca de Cabral, Barahona. Archival recording: M. E. Davis]

Goat, goat, goat,
damned old goat;
Let’s kill it
and let’s eat it salted.

Stinky goat, stinky goat;
The more you wash it,
the stinkier it gets!

[Response:] Abobó* [* Yoruba sacred word used in Haitian vodoun]

NARRATOR: It lies in a strategic location, at the crossroads between the lowland resources of the Rincón Lagoon, a freshwater lake, and the highlands of the Bahoruco Mountains.

[Views of scenery and resources of the region.]

[Dr. Leónidas Temístoles Félix Suearez, physician, in the Cabral cemetery:]

Cabral was founded in 1795...

Subtitle: Dr. Leónidas Temístocles Félix Suárez,
King of the “Cachúas” (carnival maskers) of Cabral

... At that time, the town was called “Hot-Pepper Corner” because of its intrepid warriors....

[Image: The tomb of Temístocles’s grandfather, a judge in Cabral, one of those intrepid men of yesteryear.]

...The name of Cabral is from General José María Cabral,
head of warfare in the South....

[In front of a gravesite:]

...Here we have the burial place of one of the greatest men of the last century, General Nicolás Cabuya. He had an entire community under his command; all the men obeyed his orders. Every time the warriors from other towns came to Cabral, he would fire a single shot to gather the men of the town at his house. To distinguish themselves from others, the warriors of Cabral wore just their undershirts. At that time, there was no formal settlement. Every time warfare erupted, the people took to the hills. So the population in Cabral was unstable.

NARRATOR: The lowlands of Cabral and its surroundings have important aquatic resources in the Lagoon and abundant subterranean waters, and significant mineral resources of salt and limestone, with one of the largest salt deposits in the world.

[Views of the area and its water resources and activities, including fishing, and mineral resources.]

NARRATOR: The Bahoruco Mountains are the abode of mystical beings. And in colonial times, these mountains provided a secret refuge for Taínos and Africans united in their flight from slavery.

[Views of a strange personage of the mountain, petroglyphs of the Taínos of the region, and etchings of military attacks against the black slaves.]

0:27:45

[Don Diógenes de los Santos “Cola Blanca” speaking of some of the “mystical beings” of the mountains:]

The Ciguapos...were ancestors who escaped [from slavery] and took to the hills and dispersed. They say that they have their toes pointing backwards and their heels in the front.

They say that the Ciguapos were real people! --male and female. I heard this from the old people who have died. They whistled to one another—in the fields—looking for something to eat. I have heard them with my own ears, lying in bed right here. They were real people, but they escaped [slavery].

The same as the Indians. The Indian grabs you and takes you to his cave, they say, and in seven years he lets you go. They say that the Indian takes you to a party. He impregnates you and lets you go in seven years, after you have given birth. He gives you a belly like this...

0:29:30

NARRATOR: The slopes above Cabral support subsistence agriculture, and the higher mountain area has plantations of coffee picked by peasant farmers, who are employed seasonally as salaried workers.

[Views of the mountains and country people riding in a truck.]

[Don Valdemiro Félix “Valdé”:] I’ve done a lot of agricultural work since I was little, my dad and I, and my mom...

Subtitle: Don Valdemiro Félix, Tierra Blanca, Cabral

... cutting down the forest, farming; planting corn, beans, yam, taro, all kinds of crops; raising chickens with a lot of eggs, lots of corn --that we didn’t sell; we gave it to the hogs—raising hogs, raising goats. My mother and grandmother worked the land here, in Tierra Blanca, Cabral, and in La Lajita, on the way up to Polo, which is where we had our fields. It was our land to farm, but in those times it was government-owned.

There were two months—May and June—when it rained so much that, to cut a bunch of bananas, you had to take off your clothes, or go in with old clothes. It rained a lot, night and day. There weren’t bad storms at that time--they came later--just a lot of rain. Wherever you dropped some beans or a sugarcane stalk, a plant grew. My dad, my mom, and my family had a lot of land planted then, just like Prenda did.

0:31:13

[Doña Prenda Reyes:] My father left me when I was 12. My mother had given birth just 20 days before....

Subtitle: Doña Prenda Reyes, Tierra Blanca, Cabral

...My poor mother! We had work parties and did all we could to help our mother raise that baby, left when he was just 20 days old. My father had left some partly-cleared land, with trees so big they were four-axe trees. Although I was little, I took an axe, my brother José Altagracia took an axe, Papasote an axe, and Tino an axe: We were four people for that one tree. They had me start the song, Manuela, on this side of Pueblo Arriba and the late Chiquitico would say: “Come hear this young lady sing!” and I would take my axe to cut that four-cornered tree:

*The tree is big--
It’s a “four-cornered” tree;
And inside it bears
the divine Cross.*

Subtitle: Chopping song (“Coro de hacha”)

*Where is the tree-chopper,
where could he be?
José Altagracia
went to get him.*

Me and my axe! I was just 12, but I was strong!

*The tree is big,
Strike it hard,
So that it falls
Toward the river.*

*The tree is big--
It's a "four-cornered" tree;
And inside it bears
the divine Cross.*

The tree fell!

0:33:20

[Don Valdemiro Féliz:] We had to clear the woods—we cut huge trees with axes, then worked with machetes, wide machetes, and then planted with a pick. Felling the trees had its own song. The wide machete for weeding had its song. And the pick for picking had its song. I need someone to sing with, and the youngsters now don't know how to sing the response. Some old people can sing it. There is one man—but he's old and sick now—who used to join the four axe-men and take the part of the tree. We chopped, and he leaned down, and we chopped more, and he leaned even further. When the tree fell, he fell, too! But he's old and sick now. And there were a lot of dancers of *mangulina* and *carabiné*--but their legs are bad now. One of the best was that fellow called Gardillo, but he can't do it any more. He didn't sing; we sang, but he took the part of the tree.

We had some songs that went like this:

*Hombe - This tree is tough,
Hombe - But I'm tough, too!
Hombe - I'll chop it now,
Hombe - And it will fall right away!*

Subtitle: Chopping song

*Dolores! Don't cry!

Don't cry any more!
This tree is tough,
This tree is tough,
But I'll chop it down. [erratum on subtitle]
Me with my axe,
I'll cut it down.*

Like that. That's what our songs were like. This one was for chopping.

The one for weeding has another style:

Pedro Cabuyén says:
"I'm not going back to the hills." [to work agriculture]

Subtitle: Weeding song

*Prenda, come over here,
 To help respond to my song,
 Because Ofelia is coming over,
 But it's you she wants to see.*

Two or three of us got together with picks. We worked for Public Works, building the highway. We build the highway by hand! With a pick, a shovel, and a wheelbarrow. I worked a lot on the roads, on a road near El Limón in a place called Puerto Escondido.

0:36:28 [As they simulate coffee-bean picking:]

[Doña Prenda:] *They say I'm spoiled,
 But I don't deny my color;
 Of all the spices,
 Cinnamon is the best.*

Subtitle: REENACTMENT: Coffee-bean picking

Response: *Fly, dove, fly!*

--*Cinnamon is the best.*

*I was the one who turned
 the roasted green plantain;
 And if you don't like it,
 You can look for another one.*

Fly, dove, fly! -- You can look for another one.

*Get married and you will enjoy
 the first three years;
 And then you will be wanting
 the single life again.*

Fly, dove, fly! --The single life again.

This branch is very stiff; I can't lower it.

[Don Valdemiro:] Let me lower it for you. Pick them well!
 [Doña Prenda:] Can't I pick everything?
 [Don Valdemiro:] No! Just the ripe ones, and no sticks and leaves!

[Doña Prenda:] *When a cloud passed by,
 a star rose in the sky.*

Ay, ay, Virgen of High Grace!

[Don Valdemiro:] Pick them well!

[Doña Prenda:] *Virgen of High Grace,
 when she is sleeping.*

Ay, ay, Virgen of High Grace!

[Don Valdemiro:] Don't pick any leaves!

Subtitle: REENACTMENT: Labor dispute

[Doña Prenda:] Don't be so bossy! The administrator told me that I am the only boss here. You're the foreman, but that's all.

[Don Valdemiro:] I have to carry out my orders, lady!

[Doña Prenda:] What orders? I have more orders than you do! If you want, we can fight right now!

[Don Valdemiro:] Respect me!

[Doña Prenda:] I'll even take your cap!

[Don Valdemiro:] Respect me!

[Doña Prenda:] Let's fight!
 I'm more in charge than you are! Don't you know that the administrator is the husband of my eldest daughter?

[Don Valdemiro:] What does that have to do with me?

[Doña Prenda:] What does that have to do with you? Tomorrow you will be fired!

0:38:50 NARRATOR: Life in the Dominican Southwest is celebrated in the *priprí* dance.

[Image: Belí y sus Muchachos playing, accompanying dancing]

Subtitle: Don Belisario Feliz ("Belí"), Tierra Blanca, Cabral

[Don Belisario Félix “Belí”:] The first type of music established in the South is this music: mangulina, carabiné, and valse. There were no dance bands here [erratum: should be “no radio”], no juke boxes, nothing!

[Everybody:] Nothing!

0:39:28 [Don Diógenes de los Santos “Cola Blanca”:]

Subtitle: Balsié

Nobody else here knows *carabiné* and *mangulina*, just me. I learned to play this stuff on a tin can. I started when I was about 10, on a tin can! I learned it from a man called Francisco, my brother-in-law. When I moved here, I learned from Belí. I make this from avocado, *yagrumo*, or *almácigo* wood. This is goat skin.

[Image and sound: playing the merengue rhythm on the balsié]

0:40:55 Southern priprí music and dance. Example: a mangulina.

Subtitle to designate the musicians: Belí y sus Muchachos (Belí and the Boys), Southern “Priprí”: “Stinky goat” – mangulina

Subtitle to designate the dancers: Don Valdemiro Félix and Doña Rafaela Félix Cabuya

[Don Belisario Félix:]

Stinky goat, abobó, stinky goat!
Stinky goat, abobó, stinky goat!

I've got a goat
and I am going to tie it up;
It's being a nuisance--
Let's play some music!
It's being a nuisance,
I'm going to tie it up.

Stinky goat, abobó, damned old goat!
Stinky goat, abobó, damned old goat.

When you leave,
I'm going, too!...

I had a fainting spell
because I'm so old...

*Ay, my little goat,
look where he is!
He's being a nuisance;
we've going to tie him up.*

*Doña Rocío [the sound technician],
I'm going to ask you:
Please be nice to old man Belí.*

*Those who look at me
Don't know me any more...
Listen, pal,
I'm a sad sack.*

*Doña Rocío, tell Martha for me [the director]
--if you see her around--
To go to the shop
And bring something for me.*

*When you leave,
Here's an idea:
Let's discreetly
Both leave together.*

*Look, Miguel [the videographer],
tell Rocío for me:
That I have gotten old
because I've lost my "umph."*

*Damned old goat,
Stinky goat, abobó, abobó!*

0:44:24 NARRATOR: Part of the cycle of life is death, sometimes premature. The baquiní is the wake for an angelito—a “little angel,” whose soul flies directly to Heaven because he or she died too young to accumulate sin.

[Image: “Dead” child covered with a cloth and boughs, surrounded by “family” and neighbors]

Subtitle: REENACTMENT: A child's wake

[Don Valdemiro:] *Ay, rondé – Mother, don't cry for your child;*
[Group response:] *Ay, rondé [after each phrase]*

*your child has died.
You all should know*

*that he was born to die.
What is left to him [erratum in subtitle]
is this song that I sing.*

[Doña Prenda:] *Mother, don't cry for your child;
your child has died.
The only thing we regret
is the milk that he suckled...*

Subtitle: A Salve for the dead

[Don Valdemiro:] *Hail, Holy Queen...*
[Response:] *So that the souls may rest; [after each line]
Mother of Mercy,
Our Life, our Sweetness,
and our Hope.
To Thee do we cry,
mourning and weeping,
poor banished children of Eve,
to Thee do we send up our sighs...*

The song to raise the child from the place of the wake. [Unintelligible]

[Simulated “attacks” of grief.]

0:46:30 NARRATOR: The annual cycle in the Dominican Southwest is a cycle of life and death. Death is symbolized by the death of Christ, and the rebirth of life by His Resurrection.

[Image: The emblem of the documentary of the crossroads and the circle, here with the principal saints of the region, once more, highlighting Christ crucified.]

Christians abstain from carnal pleasures during Lent, when they contemplate the death of Christ. In other towns, Carnival is the farewell to pleasure before Lent. But the Carnival of Cabral celebrates the return of life after Good Friday. During three days the streets are filled with “*cachúas*,” youngsters who don masks with cattle horns or *cachos* and are armed with whips.

[Images of the carnival of Cabral.]

[Dr. Leónidas Temístocles Félix Suárez]: It's not clear when our tradition of carnival in Cabral began. But because of certain of its elements, such as the mask and the whip, we do think that our carnival has a maroon

[runaway slave] influence. The *cachúas* (maskers) were feared, because when they came by, people were scared and dropped everything and headed for the hills. If they were cooking, they left the pots on the stove. The “cachúas” scared away the people with their masks, their whips, and their growl. So they took the food in the pot, the uncooked plantains, and if there were any animals, they took them, too. The Civilian was the antithesis or the opposition to the *cachúas*. When the *cachúas* came out, they took over the town. The Civilian was excluded. So he had to confront the *cachúas* to claim his position.

Subtitle: Archival footage, 1986

[Images of *cachúa* games; and the conglomeration of *cachúas* on Easter Monday and their run to the cemetery.]

NARRATOR: In the late afternoon of Easter Monday, carnival in Cabral finishes with an homage to the former *cachúas*—the ancestors of carnival—by cracking whips on their tombs. And the *cachúas* punish Judas for the death of Christ.

[Images of cracking the whips on the tombs and running around the cemetery, carrying, then dragging, a burning effigy of Judas, gradually demolished by the whips.]

[The *cachúas* chant:] “Judas, Judas, Judas! They killed him as a traitor!”

0:49:27 Sugar cane, the economic basis of the lower Southwest in the 20th century:

NARRATOR: The provinces of Bahoruco and Barahona are a dry tropical forest whose rich lands flower with irrigation.

[Image: cane fields with an ox cart loaded with cane]

[Don Pedro Méndez:] This was a sugarcane area. Here, everybody used to plant sugarcane. But people ground their cane not to make sugar, but to make *raspadura* [rustic brown sugar in blocks]. This produced income for them....

Subtitle: Don Pedro Méndez
Administrator, Rural Museum, Los Ríos, Neyba

To grind the cane, they used the *trapiche* sugar mill, like this one. It was pulled by oxen. The oxen walked in a circle, and the mill squeezed out the sugarcane juice, which ran out over there and into the cauldrons, that had a fire under them to render the *raspadura*. I used to grind in one, and so did he [turning the floor over to Don Aurelio Cuevas].

Subtitle: Rustic sugarcane mill
 [Images: Rustic mills]

[Don Aurelio Cuevas:] That is true. My father was the one who made the *trapiche* mills....

Subtitle: Don Aurelio Cuevas

...He made about six mills here in Los Ríos. He also made the ones in La Descubierta, in Neyba, in Villa Jaragua, and many such places. Every sugermill around here was made by my father.

[Don Pedro Méndez:] Everybody had his sugarcane. But the mill belonged to an individual. Anyone who wanted to grind his cane, rented the mill. We were very happy then. We didn't have a lot of things, such as we see now, but a man with his sugarcane, with his hog, his cow, lived well.

But the government decided to charge taxes. The people didn't have any way to pay them, because the sugarcane yielded just enough for us to get by....

Subtitle: Colonial sugar industry with a slave labor force

...At the same time, sugar started to be industrially produced. And people saw that the sugar was better than the *raspadura*, so they quit making it.

Subtitle: Modern sugar industry with a Haitian labor force

0:51:56 NARRATOR: Today Haitian culture has entered the heart of the Dominican Southwest. The Barahona sugarcane mill or "*ingenio*," started at the beginning of the twentieth century, has introduced Haitian seasonal workers or *braceros* to cut the cane, and many have stayed.

Subtitle: Archival images, 1986

Subtitle: Sugarcane workers' communities (*bateyes*) of the Barahona Sugar Mill

[Images: Haitians washing clothes in an irrigation ditch; traveling down the highway that connects the sugarcane communities (*bateyes*); tractor maneuvers; the *gagá*]

[Image and sound: the ritual with the stone, abode of the *Petró* deity patron of the *gagá* "Estrella del Cielo" (Star in the Heavens) of Batey Isabel]

Subtitle: Batey Isabel

Subtitle: Archival images, 1986

NARRATOR: At the same time as Carnival is celebrated in Cabral, Haitian-Dominicans in the *bateyes* or communities of sugarcane workers celebrate the cycle of death and renewal of life, including human life and fertility, through their religious societies called “Gagá.”*

[* the Dominican pronunciation of the Haitian “Rará”]

[Son of the ex-head of the gagá of Batey Isabel:] My father was the head of this gagá. My father turned it over to Noël [the current head]. So there can't be any other gagá here. Because this gagá is protected by God, Blessed Mary, and the Virgin of High Grace.*

[* demonstrates a cosmology and religious life truly bi-culturally Haitian-Dominican]

0:52:24

Examples of gagá societies of the Barahona Sugar Mill: from Batey Isabel and Batey Santana

Subtitle: Archival images, 1986

[Image: The train that carries the sugarcane to the Barahona Mill; sound: the bamboo trumpets of the gagá musical ensemble]

Subtitle: Batey Santana

NARRATOR: The ceremony of The Chair—“*La Silla*”—honors the officials of the gagá heirarchy.

[Images: Batey Santana: Keeping evil at bay with a whip at the entrance to the grounds; the “raising” of Doña Totó Benoit]

Subtitle: Doña Totó Benoit, Queen, Gagá of *Batey Santana*

NARRATOR: In almost every batey, there is a Gagá society: carnivalesque on the outside, but mysterious on the inside.

[Image: Don Noël, head of the gagá of Batey Isabel, with the water blessing (“echando puntos”) at the entrance to his grounds.]

Subtitle: Batey Isabel

NARRATOR: In Gagá, life and death are not opposite extremes, rather coincide at the same point on the cycle of life.

At dawn on Good Friday, the death and resurrection of Christ is replicated through the “birth” of the lead dancers or “*mayores*”:

Four are carried out, one by one, like cadavers in death shrouds, or like fetuses in “cocoons.”

The head of the “gagá” society breathes life into them, and they break out of their shrouds—or cocoons--to fly free like colorful butterflies.

[Image: The “birthing” of the “mayores.”]

NARRATOR: On Holy Saturday, the *gagás* set out to visit other friendly *gagás* and confront enemy *gagás* encountered on the roads that link the communities.

[Images: The *gagás* on the road and visiting other bateys; again, the train bearing the sugarcane.]

0:55:00 Conclusion

NARRATOR: At the Crossroads of Quisqueya and the Center of the World, the children are the link between tradition and future.

[Image and sound: Children playing drums and in other activities.]

They are the product of the crossroads of ecological zones, races, and cultures. And their hands will give the impulse to the future cycles of life of the Dominican Southwest.

Final song (end of a Salve): (3x)

Powerful Hand, protect me;

I truly believe in Her, and in Her I believe. [=Virgin Mary]

And Hail Mary, full of grace; conceived without sin. Amen.

0:56:00 CREDITS

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MUSIC

Symphonic music:

“Carabiné y Mangulina” from the Suite “Recuerdos de Infancia” of Luis Emilio Mena

National Symphony Orchestra, Dominican Republic

Manuel Simó, Conductor (1972)

Southern “Priprí” ensemble:
Belí y sus Muchachos
Tierra Blanca, Cabral, Province of Barahona (1983)

Recreation of Taíno music by Martha Ellen Davis
Performed by Martha Ellen Davis and Arturo Guzmán

ART
Relief sculpture representing Taíno life:
Natalie Saxton de Pérez (“Tali”)
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