PAPA LIBORIO:
The Living Saint of Maguana
(Dominican Republic)

Director: Martha Ellen Davis

0:00:00 D. JOSÉ MATEO: Liborio was Christ’s Chosen One to speak through. Everything Liborio said was the word of Christ.

0:00:12 TITLE: PAPA LIBORIO
THE LIVING SAINT OF MAGUANA
[sung] …I am calling him…

0:00:30 SUBTITLE: DRUMS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
[sung] I am calling him [the Holy Spirit]
…in the spirit of this drum.
That’s the real truth.
Long live God!
I am calling him…

0:00:41 NARRATOR: In La Maguana, we were impressed by this beautiful folk-religious ritual and the fervor of its devotees.

0:01:05 It was a devotion to the Holy Spirit. And we were enticed by its drumming to delve into the past to better understand this Afro-Dominican religious brotherhood of the Holy Spirit,…

SUBTITLE: EL BATEY: CENTER OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE HOLY SPIRIT OF THE PROVINCE OF SAN JUAN
…the largest in the country, in existence since colonial times.

SUBTITLE: THE HOLY SPIRIT, PATRON OF THE BROTHERHOOD

0:01:30 [D. Andrés Medina continues singing]:
…Oh, when a brotherhood member dies,…
My God, save me from evil…

0:01:38 NARRATOR: The Chiefdom of Maguana also fascinated Father Las Casas in the earliest colonial times because of its natural beauty and also as the political and religious axis of the island of Quisqueya.
We discovered that Anacaona, Princess of Boechío and Queen of Maguana, presided over ceremonies and ritual games remembered to this day in the so-called “Corral of the Indians,”

SUBTITLE: THE “CORRAL OF THE INDIANS”

NARRATOR:…while her husband, Chief Caonabo, raised his spear against the Spanish Conquest.

0:02:08 [D. Andrés Medina continues singing] And that’s the real truth!

0:02:20 NARRADOR: Chief Enriquillo, in 1519, also fought against Spanish oppression with runaway Taino natives and African blacks as warriors. And in 1540, Sebastián Lemba lead fugitive slaves in a rebellion for freedom, strengthened by the devotion in their African hearts. So we learned that Maguana was a land of great natural beauty, spirituality, and rebellion since the time of the Tainos.

0:02:52 JAN LUNDIUS: Masters and slaves lived together and mixed very early.

SUBTITLE: Dr. Jan Lundius, Swedish scholar
Author of Peasants and Religion

Peasants from Andalusia and slaves from West Africa quickly joined the Taino Indians. And over time, a very unique culture developed here. There were also centers of resistance here in the San Juan Valley. The slaves escaped from the big plantations around Santo Domingo, Azua, and Port-au-Prince in what today is Haiti, fled toward this valley, to the “maroon” communities of escaped slaves, called “manceles,” where they could live as free people.

0:03:37 [D. Lorenzo de la Rosa sings a Salve de la Virgen]:

From Heaven to Earth
a host of angels descends,
with Christ in the middle,
singing “Glory!”

NARRATOR: The belief in the divine has sustained the dwellers of the San Juan Valley from generation to generation, through hurricanes, droughts, and the so-called Three Signs of the coming of a messiah to this place: Halley’s Comet of 1910, the San Bruno earthquake of 1911, and a civil war in 1912.

[D. Lorenzo continues singing]:

We give thanks
to the Virgin Mary,
which she receives
with great joy.
And Hail, Mary, conceived without sin. Amen.

0:4:09 NARRATOR: According to mythology, Saint John the Baptist appeared in the so-called “Agüita,” the spring in El Naranjal in the hills of La Maguana…

[MAP of the north-central part of the Province of San Juan]
…as the king of the Indian spirits that inhabit these sacred waters.
So it is not surprising that in this sanctified land of Indian deities, the Holy Spirit, and Saint John the Baptist, a spiritual leader might arise, as he did at the beginning of the 20th century. He was both religious and rebellious, considered by his followers to be an incarnation Saint John the Baptist and Caonabo. His name was was Olivorio Mateo Ledesma—a ffectionately called “Papa Liborio.”

0:05:00 SUBTITLE: Don José Mateo Heredia,
great nephew of Liborio
and administrator of “La Agüita” spring

DON JOSE MATEO: Christ asked Saint Anthony to descend to Earth to identify a man who he could speak through. Saint Anthony travelled the world over and returned to say, “I can’t find anybody; I’ve travelled the world over.” Christ said, “Look for him in the Center of the World; that’s where he is.” We think he chose Liborio.

SONG IN CHORUS [REFRAIN OF A SALVE DE LA VIRGEN]

When Liborio was travelling about,
always hungry and very cold,
[he said] “Don’t you mess with me;
I’ll leave that to the Jews!” [i.e., the heretics]

0:05:20 LUSITANIA MARTINEZ: “Liborism” has three aspects, although linked in a single characteristic:

SUBTITLE: Prof. Lusitania Martínez
Author, Palma Sola: opresión y esperanza
[Palma Sola: Oppression and Hope]

It has an aspect of social protest; it has an aspect of the recovery of cultural identity; and it has the unique aspect of being a messianic movement. Each of these aspects is channeled through religion. Religion is what allows the achievement of their revolutionary objectives, although the people were unaware of their truly revolutionary nature.

SONG IN CHORUS, REPEATED:
When Liborio was travelling about,  
always hungry and very cold,  
[he said] “Don’t you mess with me;  
I’ll leave that to the Jews!” [i.e., the heretics]  

0:06:27 NARRATOR: He was a miraculous and charismatic healer, and the most important messianic leader in Dominican history.

LUSITANIA MARTINEZ: A messianic movement has three typical characteristics, although it may also have others which vary from movement to movement and place to place. But there are three features present in any messianic movement: Its followers are a group of dissatisfied people, rural or urban. In this case they were obviously rural. It is also characterized by their awaiting a millenium, by hoping for a different world in which all human beings will enjoy equality without privilege. And the third characteristic is that it is directed by one or more messiahs. In the case of the “Liborist” messianism of the beginning of the 20th century, we know that there was just one messiah or religious leader of the movement, Liborio Mateo Ledesma.

0:07:34 NARRATOR: During this period of social unrest, “Liborism” coincided with movements of the “Gavilleros” in the East, Desiderio Arias in the North,…

SUBTITLE: Desiderio Arias

…and Charlemagne Péralte of the guerrillas called “Los Cacos” in Haiti.

SUBTITLE: Charlemagne Péralte

All four were movements of resistance against the power of the wealthy in detriment of the poor, dispossessed of their lands.

0:07:58 NARRATOR: In the Southwest, the resistance took on a spiritual tone: “Liborism” fused the native Taino, the Spanish, and the African heritage into a single belief system, which welcomed all human beings. It promised the return to an idyllic past of equality, peace, and brotherly love.

LUSITANIA MARTINEZ: They wanted to return to a so-called “natural state,” a state that supposedly occurred before humans organized themselves into society. It is a state of innocence, there is no private property, all people are equals, there is no malice…

0:08:42 NARRATOR: The erudite of the time wrote publications to discredit the man now called Maestro or even Santo or Dios Liborio –maestro, saint, or god-- because they saw him as a threat to their interests…

SUBTITLE: E. O. Garrido Puello
SUBTITLE: Don Wenceslao Ramírez,
the caudillo [biggest landholder and leader]
of the San Juan Valley, with his sons

…and did not acknowledge his mystical dimension and apparent divine light.

0:08:57 NARRATOR: This is the testimony of the illiterate followers of Liborio, whose voices have never been heard until now.

DON ANDRES MEDINA: What Liborio preached on this earth was the word of God.

SUBTITLE: Don Andrés Medina
Liborist “missionary” and drummer

It was Christ himself who woke up Liborio and placed the light of enlightenment in him so that he could foresee everything that was going to happen in the world. This means that Liborio was really Christ himself. He never said anything that didn’t really come true, for he spoke the word of God. And because of his enlightenment, the whole town emptied out and went to see him. If he tried to send them away, they still stayed by him because everybody loves a person who is truly good. They said, “Oh, no, we can’t abandon Liborio!” Because everybody loves a good person.

0:10:00 DON ANTONIO MATEO: People started to gather here in San Juan….

SUBTITLE: Don Antonio Mateo
Liborist

…They were saying that there was a god up in La Maguana who cured people. He never did evil nor made accusations against anybody. What he did do were a lot of miracles.

0:10:18 DON HERMELIO LUCIANO ENCARNACION: For me, Liborio was a prophet,…

SUBTITLE: Don Hermelio Luciano Encarnación
Protestant Liborist

…with the highest wisdom, but we can’t say whether celestial or human. Only God knows whether his wisdom came from Jehovah or was human.

0:10:46 NARRATOR: Some writers of today at last give Liborists a voice and thus do justice to Liborio.

LEOPOLDO FIGUEREO: Liborio Mateo Ledesma is the main folk hero of the twentieth-century Dominican Republic….
...Why? First, because during his years as a healer, he voluntarily served thousands and thousands of people from the entire country. Second, because he was a permanent opponent of the injustices of the generals of the San Juan Valley, who exploited the forests to get rich. You all see them today in San Juan with fortunes from the natural resources of San Juan, because they did whatever they wanted. Liborio confronted the first Italian family to come here, in 1911, who took the land from the peasants. Liborio confronted those people. That’s why they will always hate him. Liborio protested against the Convention of 1907; he was the first Dominican to protest. And Liborio confronted the American Occupation in 1916. He opposed disarming the peasants, he opposed the rape of the women. But those who want to discredit him say that not only was he crazy; they accuse him of promoting free love! Yet some of the men who accused him were studs who had up to 80 kids. They thought they should have as many women as they had horses!

0:12:36 Da. REINA ALEJANDRO singing: “...and were the nation a thousand times enslaved, a thousand times it should also be free!” [end of the Dominican national anthem]

0:12:48 NARRATOR: In the 21st century, Liborio’s memory is still honored and his power venerated as a Living Saint, to whom many miracles are attributed.

0:13:05 NARRATOR: Our visit to the so-called “Calvary,” where Liborio was born, showed us the people’s profound love for their “saint.”

0:13:14 Da. REINA ALEJANDRO: “In the name of the Father, of the Son, and the Holy Spirit:…

SUBTITLE: Doña Reina Alejandro
Caretaker of the “Calvary of Liborio” [where Liborio was born]

...Olivorio Mateo, receive these sheep who come in pilgrimage and are going to the spring to be baptized. May they be blessed by Liborio, the Holy Spirit, Father St. John the Baptist, and Queen Anacaona. Holy Mother, cover them with your cloak, Omnipotent God, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

0:14:02 NARRATOR: Olivorio Mateo was an unknown peasant laborer until the time of a terrible storm, when he became lost and was given up for dead.

DON JOSE MATEO: “They” came and grabbed him and took him up that mountain, to a place called Macutico. They kept him there for three days, while the people down here were searching for him. After three days they took him
back down the same mountain. And when he turned up again, he said to the people, “Darn! You all were looking for me and I was watching you all!”

0:14:49 Da. VENTURA AGRAMONTE: When Liborio came back,…

LETRERO: Doña Ventura Agramonte
Librist

…people said, “Don’t you know that Liborio was lost for three days? And when he showed up and was taken home, he had gone crazy? Because he said he was preaching the Word of God?”

015:08 DON MARCOS MATEO: Liborio disappeared, that is, he got lost….

LETRERO: Don Marcos Mateo
Librist

…And the people said, “Liborio’s lost, Liborio’s lost! He’s died and been eaten by the dogs!” But, no, he was alive! And after seven days he returned to his family. “Liborio’s come back, Liborio’s back!” But he was speaking of strange things. So the people said, “He came back all right, but he’s gone crazy.” But, no, he wasn’t crazy; he was predicting things that are happening today!

0:15:58 NARRATOR: He returned with a divine gift of clairvoyance and powers of healing the sick and poor.

DON ANDRES MATEO: When he was up in Macutico, they put a half-moon shaped thing in his hand. And they told him: “Liborio, with this you can destroy the world, and then you can create it again. You don’t have to do anything you don’t want to do. But you have to suffer like Christ; you have to be crucified like him. And all of this he accepted. Well, when he returned home and started preaching –because he used to be a very ignorant man, so shy he hardly talked to people… So when he returned talking a lot and preaching, people said, “Liborio’s gone crazy!” But when they saw the miracles that he was doing, they said, “No, he has great powers.”

0:15:58 Da. CARMELA MATEO: The first miracle that my father was going to do –let me tell you about it:…

LETRERO: Doña Carmela Mateo
Daughter of Liborio

…When my father was lost, he was lost for eight days; nobody knew where he was. And during those eight days, my grandmother died, the mother of my mother, who was named Tomasina Valdez. She had just died when Liborio returned. When they said, “Liborio’s back!” –in the middle of the wake— “Liborio’s back, Liborio’s back!,” from inside the bedroom, my mother, weeping
for her mother, said, “Oh, please make some sugar water for him. He’s been lost eight days without a bite of food.” They made it and gave it to him behind the house, and he drank it up. He said, “This tastes like mana from Heaven!” Then he went in the house. He stood in the doorway of my grandmother’s house where she had just died, and said, “Carlitos Mateo” – to an uncle of his— “Have a respectable girl stand at the head of Tomasina, and place a pitcher of water under the bed.” And he left for the cemetery.

When he returned, he returned with a host of angels and the soul of my grandmother. They made a buzzing sound, like when there are two or three beehives together.

And when he came in, he asked, “Carlitos, did you do what I asked you to do?” Carlitos said that, no, he hadn’t done a thing. Liborio replied, “I was going to revive Tomasina to live many more years! That was to be my first miracle in the world! But because you didn’t do what I asked, she’s left again with her soul.” And the host of angels left with her. My mother says that tears ran down her dead mother’s face. That was the first miracle that my father was going to do: revive my grandmother!

And you know all that that man did later on, all of his miracles: Cripples came to him; they were carried in. And he made them stand. They ran out of there and could walk for the rest of their lives. They took him a lot of blind people. He sprayed their eyes with a mouthful of rum and suddenly they could see!

0:19:25 Don FELIX CAAMAÑO: The Maestro had a big water jug and a pitcher, and gourd scoop on a stick. The Maestro dipped out the “tirindanga,” which is what he used to heal his people. And he said, “Get going, you’re cured; get going, you’re cured!” In those days there were no roads in the country; there weren’t any highways. To get up to the Maestro, you had to go on paths. But hundreds and hundreds of sick people from everywhere went to see the Maestro. Why did they go see Maestro Liborio? Because Maestro Liborio was doing good works. There was a doctor here, Doctor Alejandro Cabral, who complained because he was losing patients; there were a lot of complaints.

0:20:18 DON JOSE MATEO: He warned his apostols that they dare not take a cent from the people he healed. Because there is no charge for God’s work; that is done out of love. And whosoever dared charge a cent for anything was selling the Word of God. He forbade that. Because God is love. Everything to do with God is love, never self-interest.

0:21:01 DON ANDRES MEDINA: God punishes because of self-interest. God is unhappy with what is happening in the world: the fact that a few people have a lot, and a lot of people have nothing, and those who have a lot don’t want to share with those who have nothing. So when you see that something happens—a mudslide or something like that—it is prophetic. Because He who made the world is not happy with it because of the lack of consciousness he sees in it. Look, some people have days when they must go without a piece of bread to feed their children. While others have so much bread stored up that it rots; yet they
won’t give some to a poor person who needs it. These are things that—apart from the religious aspect—must be addressed by those who hold the power of the world in their fist. We all must look out for the needs of the weakest, so that God may take pity on us today and always. Because if we don’t, it’s no use singing and it’s no use praying, unless we fulfill this obligation.

0:22:14 [Doña Reina Alejandro sings:]  
Olivorio-é, Olivorio-á,  
These are the Salves  
that are going to heal us.

We sing to all the saints,  
and the Virgin of High Grace;  
may she envelop us in her cloak,  
so that she may heal us.

Olivorio-é, Olivorio-á,  
These are the Salves  
that are going to heal us.

0:22:35 NARRATOR: He healed with his hands. He never charged a cent. He dispatched the patient, cured, saying: “Out with evil [illness], and in with good [wellbeing]!”

[Unintel.] of the altar,  
[Unintel.] of the altar;  
Mary was conceived without original sin.

Long live God, and away with evil!  
Long live God, and away with evil!  
Up with the Liborists, walking in procession!  
Up with the Liborists, walking in procession!  
Up with St. John the Baptist! Liborio came with him.  
Up with St. John the Baptist! Liborio came with him.

Liborio came with him!  
Liborio came with him!

Liborio was raised in the hills; he who avoids fights is no coward.  
Liborio was raised in the hills; he who avoids fights is no coward.  
Liborio ate heart of palm, but he robbed no one.  
Liborio ate heart of palm, but he robbed no one.

He robbed no one!  
He robbed no one!

Tell Mary to come, I’m waiting for her here.
Tell Mary to come, I’m waiting for her here.
Beneath this little tree, I’m getting wet all alone.
Beneath this little tree, I’m getting wet all alone.

I’m getting wet all alone!
I’m getting wet all alone!

Long live God, and away with evil!
Long live God, and away with evil!

Long live the Catholic rule of Liborio Mateo!

0:25:00? [REZADOR – FOLK PRIEST]
...Oh, how many captive souls have been buried!
Oh, how many women have died in childbirth!
The Son of God suffered, his feet and hands nailed
until he died on the Cross!
...
Requiem in pacem. Amen.

Oh, flowers white and crimson,
give alms to the souls,
give alms to the souls,
with pain they implore.

0:26:01 NARRATOR: Like Christ and the martyrs of ancient Rome, Liborio was brutally
killed and exhibited, dragged like a hunting trophy through the streets of San
Juan.

[REZADOR, CONT.]
...so that mass may be said
for those crying out [from Purgatory]

Oh, flowers white and crimson,
give alms to the souls,
give alms to the souls,
with pain they implore.

0:26:04 NARRATOR: At the end of the 19th century, life had changed abruptly for the
peasants of the San Juan Valley.

JAN LUNDIUS: Before this time, the land had had no value. Everybody had
communal lands. Cattle wandered freely from one place to another; and they
were sent to market in Port-au-Prince. But then the businessmen here wanted to
survey the land. Because if they surved the land, it would acquire value, and then
they could buy it. Buying the land meant that they could fence in the cattle and
also raise agricultural products that could be sold in the South, in Azua and
Barahona, where, during that period, big sugar plantations were being developed by the Americans.
The dictator at that time, “Lilís” Heureaux, build a lot of public works here in the Dominican Republic, for example railroads and wharfs. And to pay for those projects, he went into debt to France and the United States.
So the United States, which was interested in controlling the Caribbean during that period, bought the debts. They placed customs houses in Santo Domingo, San Pedro de Macoris, and Puerto Plata, and the closed the entire border with Haiti.

D. FELIX CAAMAÑO: The customs houses in the country were occupied by the Americans; they were the ones who collected the duties…. 

SUBTITLE: Don Félix Caamaño
Liborist

…At that time, Liborio and his people did their trading in Haiti, such as through a Haitian named Jean Desamor (?), who was a friend of Liborio. Everything that Liborio’s people bought was from the Haitians and they sold their cattle to the Haitians.
At that time, the city of San Juan was just 1,800 homes, not like it is now. The bulk of the people lived in the country, raising animals, raising cows. They sold the cattle directly to Haiti; my father himself sold a lot of cattle.

D. PEDRITO DE LOS SANTOS: Liborio’s people sent for me….

LETRERO: Don Pedrito de los Santos
Last living friend of Liborio

…Liborio said to me, “I can’t find anybody willing and able to join me.” I said, “I’ll join you, because I’m a mountain man who knows these hills.” So he was interested in my joining him. And we were together a long time. He would say to me: “Build me a hut, for me to take shelter…” and I would do it.

NARRATOR: Then came the unfortunate American Occupation of 1916 which supported the businessmen and large landholders.

D. FELIX CAAMAÑO: There was a problem with the government so we had to fight in this region--the war of 1912. This is how Liborio got the weapons with which he armed himself. But he didn’t fight at that time against the government in power; rather, he stored his weapons. Then, when the American Occupation came in, Maestro Liborio used them against the Americans who occupied the country.

NARRATOR: Liborio and his followers rebelled against this other brutal offense against the peasantry.
D. FELIX CAAMAÑO: General Victoriano Alcántara of El Batey gave Maestro Liborio a purebred grey horse on a visit that the Maestro made to El Batey. In return, the Maestro prepared a spiritual protection for General Alcántara—who was nicknamed “General Gran Bayé”—so he wouldn’t die in battle. Then General Wenceslao Ramírez and General Victoriano Alcántara (“Gran Bayé”) confronted each other in battle in Bánica.

When Maestro Liborio was on his way there, he was met by a bunch of [Ramírez’s] women who tried to trick him with poisoned rum. Maestro Liborio was frightened and he said three times: “Get back, get back, get back! I’m the Maestro! Be careful with that rum!” And he knocked it out of the hands of all those women!

So the Maestro continued alive and kicking. Listen to what Maestro Liborio sang to the Ramírezes when they did what they did. It goes like this:

Once I used to be  
the sweet grass at your house.  
Now I’m bitter crabgrass  
because I have fallen into disgrace”.

“Get back, get back, get back!  
I’m the Maestro, dammit!”

0:31:46 NARRATOR: This is the place where Liborio was entrenched during his final days.

D. FIDEL CONTRERAS:

SUBTITLE: Don Fidel Contreras  
Liborist “maroon” (hermit)

[SONG]:  
I’m alone here in the mountains,  
I have no companion;  
and I’m not looking for one,  
because I don’t want any.

I wouldn’t want one out of obligation,  
but I would out of love;  
because I believe—for sure—  
I’m here because of the Divine Redeemer.

0:32:28 NARRATOR: Let’s hear about the Hell Hole.

D. FELIX CAAMAÑO: I spoke once with a solder who had been sent by the government of the American Occupation in the Dominican Republic to find out everything that Maestro Liborio did. What did he tell me? That they made a map with the route to locate Maestro Liborio in the Hell Hole, where they finally killed him up there, on July 22th in 1922 [actually June 27th].
D. MARCOS MATEO: When they were walking along that hill, the rural mayor told me that Liborio supposedly turned around and said to his sons, “Eleuterio and Cecilio, come here. When I leave, which one of you is coming with me?” “Oh, Papa, both of us.”
Liborio says to Cecilio: “No, you’re not coming with me, not you. The one who’s coming with me is Eleuterio.”
Then they started to eat, but Liborio wouldn’t eat anything. His men said, “What’s the matter, Maestro? Why are we eating and you don’t want to eat. Eat up, so we can get going right away!”
He said: “No, you all go ahead and eat; I’m not here anymore” --because he foresaw his death, you know.
And when he said that, a man — I think it was the mayor— said, “Fire on him! Now’s the time to get him. Didn’t you hear him say that he’s not here anymore?” So they opened fire! Bang-bang-bang-bang-bang! People started running around all over! Eleuterio went in one direction and Cecilio went in another — the son Liborio said wasn’t going with him.
Liborio was far ahead, but they shot down his son Eleuterio. And when they shot him, they heard him ask, “Papa, are you going to leave me behind?” Liborio looked back. When he saw his son on the ground, he turned around. He pulled out a little revolver he carried and started shooting at the government. But those soldiers were sharp shooters; they shot at him like they were hunting game.
But the bullets didn’t enter him; they singed his chest but not a one entered his body….

0:35:38 NARRATOR: Was Liborio a rebel — or a healer? Or all of this and more? -- a healer, a defender of justice, and a messiah, who, from those proud hills, promised liberation for us all?

D. MANUEL FIGUEREO: What we call “Liborio’s Woods” is over there in La Sabrosa. Many men have tried to cut it down but they have not been able to. Some cut themselves, others get sick, another might get a cramp, and another might whack himself with his machete. Then somebody else gets the idea of cutting it down, and the same thing happens. He gets a fever, his hand starts trembling, he cuts himself with his axe, or he falls down drunk, etc. In conclusion, nobody knows why it can’t be cut down.

[praying]:
Oh, Maestro Liborio, you are so mysterious and we believe in your word, even if we didn’t know you before now. But the old people said that you were a good man. For us, you are a good man. We have come here following somebody’s directions; and, thank God, you helped us find the place. We want you to light the way for us, and defend us from all evil, so the force of evil can’t act against us. Protect all our children and everyone worthy of protection. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
NARRADOR: Here in La Agüita, a legendary spring of holy waters, Liborio has come to occupy a place more important than that of St. John the Baptist or the Indian spirits. When we visit here, we feel like we are in the most vibrant and mystical heart of this country.

D. ERNESTO MANUEL JIMÉNEZ: We hope that Liborio Mateo and all the sacred forces we are appealing to in all directions,…

SUBTITLE: Don Ernesto Manuel Jiménez
    Liborist “missionary”

…listen to us and open the way so that these children of God may receive grace and blessings and the light of enlightenment, and each and every day make progress on their journey. Wherever they may be, may the spirit of Liborio Mateo and may the patron, St. John the Baptist, envelop them with grace, protect them, and bestow upon them liberation, peace, tranquility, and happiness, and every day may they have greater success in their journey of life. And may God bless them.

D. CIRILO DE LA ROSA CUEVAS “HERNANDEZ” [in trance]: There are many who got their wisdom from the Water of Liborio Mateo….

SUBTITLE: Don Cirilo de la Rosa Cuevas “Hernández”
    Liborist “missionary”

…There are many who cure illnesses with the Water of Liborio Mateo. There are many who exorcise spirits with the Water of Liborio Mateo. But if the Water of Liborio Mateo did not exist, no one would exorcise spirits, no one would cure illnesses, no one would do any good works in this land. So let’s everybody give thanks – to whom? To Liborio Mateo! To Liborio—
[Public]: Mateo!
Long live Liborio Mateo! And long live us all!
Welcome, everyone, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
May you all receive the blessings of Liborio, the Holy Spirit, St. John the Baptist, and the blessed Three Kings who travel throughout heavens and earth and wipe out all the evil on earth. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

NARRATOR: The contradictions between Liborio as miraculous healer and Liborio as social leader is still seriously debated.

D. FELIX CAAMAÑO: Maestro Liborio was born in 1876 on the 19th of April. That is why every 19th of April, in La Maguana, they celebrate the Day of the Maestro, the fiesta for Maestro Liborio Mateo.

D. JOSE MATEO: The first question that I want to ask the public is: Is it true that Liborio was really killed? If someone is killed and the next day he is not in his tomb, what does that mean? Is there anybody who believes that they really
killed him? It seems that Liborio’s case was just like Christ’s. Liborio is not known as a prophet because his work was not done during the time of Christ. But if it had been during the time of Christ, Liborio would have been one of the greatest prophets of all time.

Da. VENTURA AGRAMONTE: Liborio is not dead! Liborio was sanctified by Jesus Christ and He has kept him alive!

D. ANTONIO MATEO: Carmito Ramírez was a surveyer. [son of General Wenceslao Ramírez, greatest landholder of the San Juan Valley] And around about the 1940s, a man had inherited some land here in Higüerito, Maguana Arriba [upper Maguana]—Encarnación, the father of Bienvenido. And Carmito came up to measure the land in order to buy it.

In Maguana Arriba a lot of people get together because we have always played dominos there. That day there were forty or fifty men gathered, and Carmito was there with them with his surveying equipment, waiting for the man.

And he said to one of them, “Come over here, sir; I want to tell you something.” I was there listening. He said, “Look, you all are Liborists by family tradition. Well, you are right to believe in Liborio because Liborio is alive!” They asked, “Why do you say he is alive?”

“Because when they killed Liborio in the Hell Hole, as they called the place, and they brought him down from the mountain wrapped in palm bark, since I was a friend of his who visited him here in La Maguana, I put a handkerchief over his face [so the dirt wouldn’t touch his face]. And I swear that around midnight or two in the morning, Liborio called me to return my handkerchief!”

D. MARCOS MATEO: I give this testimony about Liborio: The other day, about three months ago, I’m here at home and a woman comes to the door. “Is this the place Marcos Mateo lives?” I answer her, “Yes, ma’am, he lives here.” “Where is he?” I say, “Marcos isn’t here.” But when she says, “Well, tell Marcos…” I say to the woman, “You’re talking to Marcos; I’m Marcos!”

She says, “I must tell Marcos that Liborio sends him the message that he is still alive!” And the answer that I gave her was: “Well, tell Liborio that I am waiting for him!”

0:44:15 NARRATOR: At the same time, the rituals of folk religion in the San Juan Valley still commemorate Liborio despite the continued persecution and injustice against him and his noble messianic cause.

SUNG CHORUS: [peasant Liborists of the Palma Sola Movement from Media Luna, Carrera de Yeguas, Las Matas de Farfán] [Salve to Liborio – the Salve Regina]

_Hail, holy Queen_  
_Queen and Mother_
Mother of Mercy! Our life, our sweetness
and our hope! Hail, holy Queen!
To thee do we cry, poor banished
children of Eve, to thee do we sent up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this valley,
this valley of tears. Turn, then, most gracious advocate,
thine eyes of mercy toward us....

NARRATOR:

In the rural community of Palma Sola or “Lone Palm” near Las Matas de Farfán
during another chaotic period following the assassination of Trujillo, the Liborist
cult is reborn in 1961, lead by the “Mellizos de Palma Sola” – the Twins of Lone Palm.

CHORUS CONTINUES:
...show unto us the blessed fruit of they womb Jesus;
O clement...

NARRATOR:

Liborists invoke their Living Saint to continue combating the social exclusion of
the peasantry and to create a Christian utopian community.

CHORUS CONTINUES:
...Pray for us,...
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.
Amen.

Receive this Salve with great rejoicing.
Hail, holy Queen! Long live Mary!
Sing to Mary, without pain nor pity.
May your verses say: “Hail, holy Queen!”
May Christ be with us,
to delight in your kingdom,
the Kingdom of Heaven,
of Joseph and Mary.
So hail Mary, in grace conceived,
Conceived in grace, Mary of grace.
We give thee thanks, and we hail thee, Mary.
May she receive this with great rejoicing.

Three times:
When Liborio was traveling around,
always hungry and very cold,
[he said:] “Don’t you mess with me;
I’ll leave that to the Jews.” [i.e., the heretics]
And Hail, Mary, full of grace,
Conceived without sin. Amen.

D. LEON VENTURA:
I am a Liborist since before I was born, since I was in my mother’s womb. . . .

SUBTITLE: Don León Ventura,
“El Mellizo de Palma Sola” (The Twin of Palma Sola)

. . . And my family and I were made to suffer very much for that. But when I
returned from solitary confinement, I came back strengthened in Mary, Christ, and
Liborio. And every day I am stronger than before, although I lost all my family,
and I don’t mind dying myself!
This persecution can only be resolved by men. Why can it be resolved only by
men? Because men of means could facilitate their money so industries and
businesses give people work.
And if they don’t do this, one way or another we are all going to fail—all the men
and all the women.
But—I can’t do anything about it, and neither can you. This is the responsibility
of the men of means, the governments, the industrial leaders, . . .

SINGING AS CONGREGATION:
[hymn from the modern Catholic mass]
I will praise, I will praise,
I will praise my Lord . . .

NARRATOR:
The surviving leader of the Palma Sola Massacre of 1962, who, like a good
Christian, has pardoned his persecutors, speaks to us today with the voice of
Liborio.

D. LEON VENTURA:
Liborio was sent to this land by the Eternal Father on high, to get us to carry out
his plan and his work and for us to realize that we are all children of Adam and
Eve. Therefore, we should all be brothers and sisters, as we were as followers of
Liborio and as we were in Palma Sola.

NARRATOR:
Today the State has stopped harassing the Liborists and has come accept and
respect them for their extraordinary power of survival over the years as an
authentically Dominican religion, a defender of the poor of yesterday and today.

SUBTITLE: Tony Raful, Dominican Secretary of Culture (2000-2004)

D. LEON VENTURA:
In this era of liberation through works and words, the authorities have changed. Now there is mutual respect in the entire world, and our work [as Liborists] is recognized worldwide.

LUSITANIA MARTINEZ:
Today we can say that the confrontational division between the institutional Church and popular religion is no longer present, because a receptiveness and openness has developed on the part of the pro-Hispanic institutional Catholic Church toward folk religion, in this case, toward the Liborists in the southwestern region, particularly the Province of San Juan.
So this way the conflict is mitigated and a messianic response is postponed. But if cultural oppression occurs again, with confrontation between the two types of religion and other factors that we do not have in mind at present, there might be a third messianic response.
So we cannot say that the last chapter of Liborist messianism has been the chapter of Palma Sola. Messianism is sneaky and can continue on subliminally; and at any time it can explode again.

0:51:59 [SONG] DON AMERICA RAMIREZ VALDEZ:
Here in Dominican land, I say,
we will triumph with the help of God.
St. John and Liborio
will help us win.

SUBTITLE: Don Américo Ramírez Valdez

The children of Liborio,
with his help, will never lose.
For he is Jesus Christ himself,
who came to save the world.

They say that Martina is a witch,
and Liborio is a sneaky snake.
At the Second Coming of Liborio,
we don’t know how many followers there will be.

God will give us a hand
and St. John is going to help.
The children of Jesus Christ
will liberate us.

0:52:51 NARRATOR:
Is this Living Saint, admired and venerated by thousands of Dominicans, a legend? Or are we standing before the conscience of our long-abused nation?

LONG-DRUMS, RHYTHM FOR THE DEAD, WITH THE DECEASED POSSESSING A FAMILY MEMBER:
SUBTITLE:
THE DECEASED, POSSESSING A FAMILY MEMBER: “Water! Water!”
“Bring him [the deceased] water!”
SUBTITLE:
DRUM SOLOIST:

*Long live God, long live Mary and Eternal Glory.*

[From the rosary for the dead:]

*For the soul of the deceased I shall pray...*

NARRATOR:
For rich and poor, large and small, Divine Justice offers our Papa Liborio, who says, “Out with evil, and in with good!”

0:53:43 CREDITS

[SONG] D. Andrés Medina:

They say that Liborio has died;
Liborio has not died at all...

DEDICATION
To the memory of *Don* Pedrito de los Santos, the last friend of Liborio Mateo, who died as we were filming this documentary at the age of 102.

CREDITS

Ministry of Culture, Dominican Republic
Tony Raful, Minister of Culture, 2000-2004

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0:55:08 [Epilogue]

DON ANDRES MEDINA (spoken):

That’s it! I’m stopping it here!
Long live Christ!
Long live Papa Liborio!
And long live all the powers of the Holy Spirit!

[coming out of trance]
Thanks for everything.

[He explains:] This may seem a little crazy, but it’s harmless. It’s just so we will love each other as brothers and sisters, that’s all.
And, as I said a while ago, whoever can give a piece of bread to someone who has none, give it to him! And if we don’t, nothing else matters and we’ll all be sorry.
It’s that simple: Give to him who has nothing!