

VOLUME ONE

ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4281

THE ISLAND OF QUISQUEYA

Music from the Dominican Republic



Recorded by Verna Gillis With Ramón Daniel Perez Martinez



Side 1

- Band 1: A Novena
Guiro, two palos, one stick
Band 2: "OReina"
Palo Mayor, Palo Menor, Maraccas
Band 3: Instrumental, with vocal
Palo Mayor, Palo Menor, Guiro
Lead singer - Isabel Jimenes
Band 4: A Novena

Side 2

- Band 1: "Apagame La Vela"
(Put Out My Candle)
Accordion, Guiro, Tambora
Band 2: Merengues
Accordion, Guiro Marimbola
Band 3: "Cuando Yo Vine del Cibao"
(When I arrived from Cibao)
Guitar and vocal, Maraccas, Tambor
Band 4: "Julio Ven"
(Julio is coming)
Accordion, Balce, Guiro
Band 5: "Las Mujeres Son El Consuelo de los Hombres"
(Women are Men's Comfort)
Accordion, Guiro Tambora
Band 6: Merengues
Accordion, Guiro, Marimbola

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THE ISLAND
OF QUISQUEYA
Music from the
Dominican Republic
Recorded by Verna Gillis
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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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THE ISLAND OF QUISQUEYA

Music from
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Vol. 1

Lying mid-way between Puerto Rico and Cuba in the West Indies is the Dominican Republic, which occupies the eastern two-thirds of an island, the other of which is Haiti. It is the largest of the Greater Antilles.

The aboriginal name of the island was *Quisqueya* which means "mother of the earth." When Columbus discovered the island in 1492 he re-named it "Espanola." Santo Domingo, founded in 1496, is the capitol city.

In this oldest city of the New World one still sees the remains of the first church built in America. Its foundations were laid in 1502. Here is the house where Cortes kept the court records before he had ever heard of Mexico. From here Ponce de Leon set out in search for the Fountain of Youth. Here lived Pizarro before he went to Panama and sailed down the west coast to conquer the Inca Empire. Here, Padre de las Casas entered the priesthood and, ironically, in indignation because of the abuse of the Indians by the Spaniards, began to import slaves from Africa to make work lighter for the Indian laborers. Here was founded the first University in the New World when in 1538 a royal charter was granted for the establishment of the University of St. Thomas. Here, a tribal queen named Anacaona gave the earliest demonstration of native dances in the New World. Here we have the first attempted insurrection in the New World.

There were two main Spanish settlements in two separate areas — one in and around Santo Domingo, and in the north in the lowlands of the Cibao. The rapid destruction of the indigenous population by epidemics of disease introduced by the Spanish colonialists took away the very basis of economic prosperity in "espanola" and greatly changed the livability of the island in Spanish terms.

Half a century before the discovery of the Dominican Republic, there had been a series of explorations and discovery voyages initiated on the western coast of Africa. These voyages were patronized and encouraged by the Portuguese. This in turn led to the discovery of Guinea and to the slave business. There was a slave company that worked via Seville and which supplied the Americas with slaves brought from Guinea, Angola, Cabo Verde, Congo, etc. The Spanish seem to have shown a preference for slaves from Guinea as the Spaniards considered them as the "...happiest and most musically inclined ones."

In connection with the declining indigenous population, by 1518 the importation of slaves really began to increase and statistics dated 1606 give a breakdown of the population as follows:

Total Population -	10,817
White	1,069
Black	9,748
Slaves	9,698
Free blacks	50
per cent of blacks	81%
per cent of slaves	80%

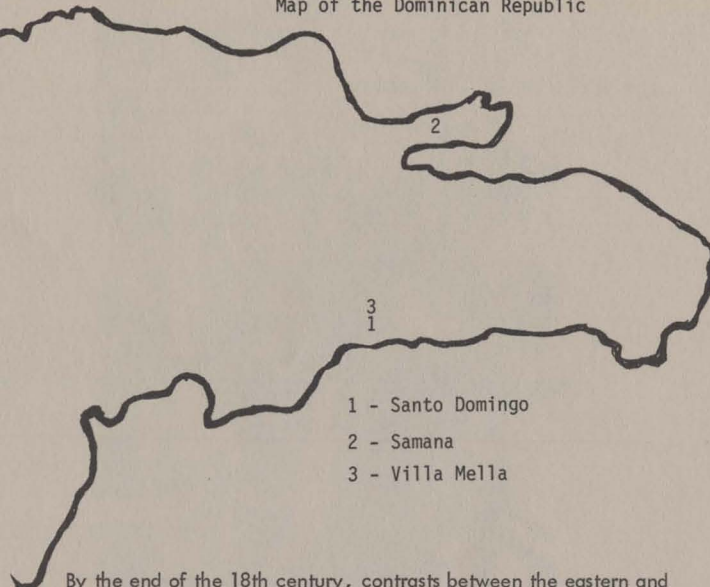
Today, of the total population, it is estimated that only 15% is of pure European origin; blacks make up about 15% of the total and mulattoes make up about 70%.

During the government of Diego Colon, Christopher Colon's (Columbus') brother, it was decreed that all slaves should be christians. It was also authorized that each inhabitant should have a female slave for domestic services.

In 1522 the first insurrection in the New World took place by the Isabel River in Azua. This insurrection failed.

After 1550 the Spaniards were attracted elsewhere and the communities on Espanola were neglected. In the Cibao, where the indigenous population had been growing tobacco long before the arrival of Columbus, this crop continued and was the main product of export. Today, sugar is the main industry and export item.

Map of the Dominican Republic



- 1 - Santo Domingo
- 2 - Samana
- 3 - Villa Mella

By the end of the 18th century, contrasts between the eastern and western parts of the island began to appear. In Haiti, the French colony, 88% of a total population of 524,000 were slaves brought from Africa. In the Dominican Republic there were 103,000 inhabitants of whom 30% were slaves.

The last decade of the 18th century was one of violent disorder leading to the ruin of the colonial economy. Ownership of Espanola passed from Haiti to the Dominican Republic and back and forth again. In 1804 Haiti declared its independence from the French. The Spanish colony declared its independence from Spain in 1821 and with this slavery was abolished. At this point Haiti invaded and took control of the entire island. The island was then ruled by President Peter Boyer. In 1824 he contacted a black immigration from Philadelphia and offered them the privilege of civil and political rights. That same year, 6000 black American immigrants landed in Santo Domingo on November 29th and December 4th. They were sheltered in an old convent called "Las Mercedes" which they used as a Methodist Church. They were distributed to many parts of the country. The three main settlements were in Samana, Puerto Plata and Monte Criste. The black immigrants to Samana were the first to bring Protestantism to the Dominican Republic which is a Catholic country.

It wasn't until 1844 that the Dominicans were able to push the Haitians back and finally gain the status of an independent country. In 1869 the people of the Dominican Republic voted to ask for adoption by the United States but at that time the United States didn't want the responsibility of additional territory.

In 1916 the United States illegally occupied the Dominican Republic. This was during World War I and the U.S. reason for these actions was the necessity felt by the government to secure approaches to the Panama Canal. This foreign occupation ended in 1924.

In 1930, General Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molino was elected president. The "tyranny of Trujillo" lasted thirty two years, ending with his brutal murder.

In 1965 the United States military landed for the second time in the Dominican Republic. This time it was in an "attempt to normalize" a government that was being threatened by a leftist attempt to take over the government. This brief occupation ended with the election of Pres. Balaguer who is still in office.

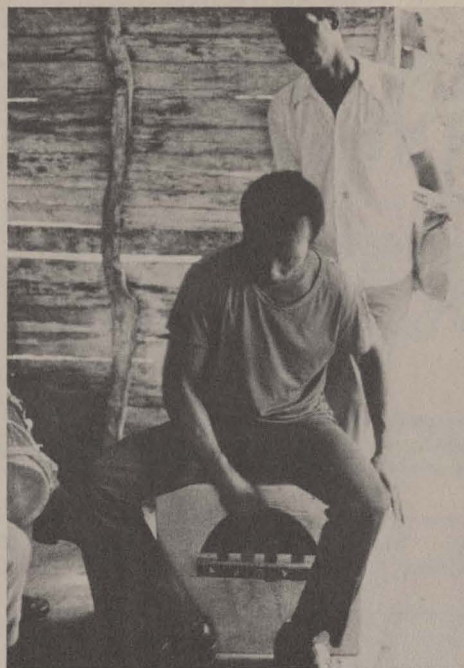
Recorded in January, 1976 by Verna Gillis with Ramon Daniel Perez Martinez
Cover photograph by Verna Gillis
All other photographs by Verna Gillis and Ramon Perez
Editing and notes by Verna Gillis

Suggested Bibliography

- Lizardo, Fradique. *Danzas y Bailes Folkloricos Dominicanos*. Taller Press, Santo Domingo, 1974
- Roberts, John Storm. *Black Music of Two Worlds*. William Morrow & Company, Inc., New York, 1974



Palos in La Pascuala, Samana



Goyo Caminero playing
the marimbola

Volume I - Dominican Republic

Side I The entire side I is devoted to Palos - or drums of African origin, which can be heard throughout most of the Republic. The Palos are cylindrical drums carved out of a single piece of wood. They are hollowed out and covered with a goat skin. They are of Yoruba origin because the skins are attached with nails as opposed to the Bantu palos that have peg fastened heads. They come in two basic sizes - Palo Mayor is approximately five feet high, with a head 11" in diameter. Palo menor is approximately 34" high and 9" in diameter.

Band 1

A Novena, recorded in Seccion Acosta, Samana

Guiro, two palos, one stick.

The guiro is a scraper that was originally made out of a gourd. The one in use throughout the Dominican Republic is made of metal and scraped with a metal stick. The Patron Saint of the Dominican Republic is the Virgin of Altagracia. Her Patron Day is January 21st and the Basillica built for her in Higüey is the second largest Basillica in the world.

The Novenas are nine nights of celebration leading up to January 21st. This recording took place in the home of Mr. Amable who lives in a rural area populated with simple wooden clusters of houses, lit only with the light from a kerosene lamp. People from the whole community attended.

In one room were the two palos. The musicians leaned the drums against a wall and played them with their bare hands. At the same time the palos are struck on the side with a stick by another person.

Band 1 "Apagame La Vela" (Put Out My Candle)

Recorded in Santo Domingo

Accordion - Nicola Guitierres

Guero - Porfirio Rosario

Tambora - Santo Peña

The tambora is a two-headed, barrel shaped drum, played with the hands and a stick.

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Band 2 - Recorded in Samaná

Accordion - Seseco Martinez

Guero - Bicoló Avila

Marimbola - Goyo Caminero

The marimbola has metal thongs placed on a hollowed out wooden box. The length of the thongs differ for differing pitches. The player sits on top of the box and keeps rhythm. It is of African origin and functions as our western bass.

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Band 3 - "Cuando Yo Vine del Cibao" - (When I arrived from Cibao)

Recorded in Los Cacao, Samaná

Guitar and vocal - Tomás Aguino de León

Maraccas - Maria Isabel Trinidad

Tambor - Licinio Modesto

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Band 4 - "Julio Ven" (Julio is coming)

Recorded in Villa Mella

Accordion - Erasmo Errera

Balcie - Julio

Guero - Virgilio Errera

The balcie is a single headed drum, placed between the legs of the musician who straddles it or sits on it. It is played with the sole of the foot that regulates the depth of sound, and the hands that play the rhythm.

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Band 5 - "Las Mujeres Son El Consuelo de Los Hombres" (Women are Men's Comfort)

Recorded in Santo Domingo

Accordion - Nicola Guitierres

Guero - Porfirio Rosario

Tambora - Santo Peña

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Band 6 - Recorded in Samaná

Accordion - Seseco Martinez

Guero - Bicoló Avila

Marimbola - Goyo Caminero

Cover Photograph : Erasmo Errera, Villa Mella