AFRO-HISPANIC MUSIC FROM WESTERN COLOMBIA AND ECUADOR
Recorded, Edited, and with Notes by Norman E. Whitten
Side 1

Band 1, Currulao "Bambuco" (3:02)
Band 2, Currulao "Bambuco" (3:01)
Band 3, Currulao "Bambuco" (3:00)
Band 4, Currulao "Agua Grande" (2:59)
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Band 7, 2 Alavados: "Santa Maria"
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Side 2

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Band 4, Arrullo "Falta el Uno" (1:30)
Band 5, Arrullo (1:20)
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Afro-Hispanic Music from Western Colombia
and Ecuador

RECORDED AND EDITED BY NORMAN E. WHITTEN, JR.
INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY NORMAN E. WHITTEN, JR.

The Setting

The Pacific Lowlands, inhabited primarily by three or four hundred thousand Negroes sharing a common culture and common forms of musical expression, extend from Darién Province in southeastern Panama through western Colombia to southern Esmeraldas, Ecuador. The 600-mile strip of dense rain forest forming the Pacific littoral varies in width from 50 to 100 miles (see map in West 1957:2).

The history of Negroes in and near the Pacific Lowlands begins with the conquest:

Negroes may well have accompanied the expedition of Rodrigo de Bastidas, who in 1525 founded Santa Marta, pioneer city of the Spanish Main. If not, they arrived soon afterward, for it is known that four years later certain rebellious slaves fired the straw huts of the new town (King 1945:301).

Soon after their arrival on the Caribbean coast of Colombia, Negroes entered the Pacific Lowlands. The first documented case is that of the Negro with Francisco Pizarro during his encampment on Gallo Island (Paredes Borja 1963:47) some time between 1526-27. There is strong documentation for the movement of slaves through Cartagena, Colombia, into the Pacific Lowlands from 1544 through around 1700 or later (West 1952:9-51, 83). For example, Negroes were brought into the upper Cauca River area as early as 1544, to the northern Chocó, near Riosucio, by 1583, and to the northern edge of the Popayán plateau by 1640 (West 1952:10-13, 37, Hernández de Alba 1946:927; 1948a:299-300; 1948b:331). According to the historian James King (1945:300) the early Negroes were bozales fresh from Africa, brought primarily to mine placer gold and to raise food for the miners. Other Negroes have followed the early imports: some arrived as hispanizadas slaves, others emigrated from the interior to the Lowlands; later, still others arrived in the armies of liberation.

Today, in their hot, rainy setting, the Negroes forage in forest, river, and sea, and come and go from the larger towns. Although a living can be made, and although some can accrue the economic, political, and social capital to climb up within (and eventually out of) Pacific Lowlands life, the majority of people are poor, and marginal to the larger societies of Ecuador and Colombia. Living in and on the edges of a forest and sea of wealth, life continues in tropical routine, punctuated by occasional boom periods revolving around banana, shellfish, mangrove, timber, and tagua industries.

Men must occasionally move to take advantage of new opportunities and to seek new land; women move with their men when they can, but are often less mobile and remain "behind" where they find another spouse without difficulty. And death, an imminent specter for adults, is a prominent part of child rearing. One never knows when a child will fall victim to epidemic disease or endemic malaria, or when a child will die of dehydration following an attack of dysentery brought about by worms or bacillary infection.

The Music

Although pockets of tribal Indians (Cayapa, Coaque, Noanamá, Choco) are found in the area there seems to be no discernible influence on the structure of music that can be traced to Amerindian origins. Rather, the music is in some respects strikingly African, in others the hispanic roots are evident. Provenience aside, the music of the Negroes can be regarded as a "cultural focus," defined as "that area of activity or belief where the greatest awareness of form exists, the most discussion of values is heard, the widest difference in structure is to be discerned" (Herskovits 1945:164-65).

As a "focus," the music reflects certain outstanding features of life on the littoral. It seems to represent the "matrilocal"ity of the familial relations (Whitten and Fuentes Contreras n.d.) and provides a vehicle of transition for children and adults as they leave this life. In the curulao, or marimba dance, men sing of their ability to move, to leave their women, to seek a new start, while women sing "good-bye to a man, I still hold my man," thereby expressing their personal ability to hold a particular man, while men in general are moving on. In the arrullo (spiritual) to a dead child, the angelito (little angel) is dressed in white and a wake is held all night following its death. People "know" that the child goes directly to Gloria, it goes in peace to be an angel, and it will not return. But in the post-interment wake for an adult, where music once more provides necessary expressive forms for interpreting death and the continuation of life, the people are less sure about the departed relative. Hence, for about seven days relatives of the deceased gather for the final wake (variously called último alavado, última novena, último rosario, última noche, or novenario) and sing alavados (dirges) in order to dismiss, graciously, but
finally, the ghost of the deceased person from the world of the living. It is hoped that the deceased goes to Gloria but there is no certainty as to the ultimate resting place. The major hope is that he will not return, and if he does return, that he will not witness the violation of social and cultural norms.

Another context of musical expression is that defined by a special day devoted to the propitiation of a Saint. Such saint’s days occur irregularly in the Pacific Littoral, and the degree and intensity of musical expression is also variable. Prominent Saints (outside of Mary, Joseph, Jesus) include San Antonio, the Virgen de Carmen, the Virgen de La Laja, the Virgen de Belén (not the same as María), and the Virgen de Atocha.

The curraulos, arrullos, and alavados, in a variety of presentations, make up the bulk of this record.

Musical Instruments and Musicians

The bombo is a large double-headed drum beat with head-beater and side-beater; it is either suspended from the rafters or hung around the drummer’s shoulders. One is used in an arrullo (to frighten the body-snatching ghost, Tunda), two in the curralo, and more may be used in a street parade in which spirituals to Saints are sung. The cununo is a single-headed cone-shaped drum which is played with the hands. Normally two cununos are played in arrullos and curraulos, though more may be introduced for large events such as street parades. The cajita is a small cununo, sometimes used in arrullos. All of these drums are played only by men. Women normally make and shake maracas and guásás, the latter being one or two sections of dry bamboo with a dozen or so hardwood nails driven through the side of the resonating chamber to slow down the flow of corn or seed within, and to give it a fuller sound. Maracas and guásás are used in arrullos and curraulos; neither they nor drums are used in alavados. In the Chocó, platillos (iron cymbals) are played by men.

Finally, the marimba itself is a percussion instrument which is central to curraulos and is sometimes used in arrullos. The marimba may have from 18 to 26 bars, the tuning of which is still questionable (it may be nine tone in some areas, eight tone in others). It is suspended from the rafters of the casa de la marimba (marimba house) which is simply a thatched Negro pile house of bamboo, or wood, except that many such houses have a larger central room that may extend to 80 feet or more in length and range to 50 feet in width.

Flutes are played by Negroes in parts of the Chocó and in the southern coast of the Pacific Littoral, but the author has no recordings of flute playing.

Cantadoras are women singers who sing at arrullos and alavados, and serve as respondedoras during the curraulo. In the curraulo there are two respondedora roles: the solista sings the melodic response, and the bajonera harmonizes with her. Cantadoras make their own maracas and guásás.

Marimberos are male musicians in the marimba orchestra. The most important is the glosador who leads the singing, gives the gritos (stylized shouts) and indicates to the respondedoras what they should be singing at any given time. An outstanding marimbero is known by the term Cullimocho whether or not he is a good glosador. Two musicians play the marimba, the bordonero who plays the melody on the lower half of the instrument and the tipleo who plays harmony and counterpoint on the upper half. Other musicians for the marimba, less specialized, include the bombero, who plays the bombo, and the cununero, who plays the cone-shaped cununo.

Notes on the Recordings

Side 1 Band 1

This curraulo, recorded in Buenaventura, Colombia, is the type called “Bambuco.” The curraulo, or marimba dance, is the most strikingly African music to be found in the Pacific Lowlands.

The "bambuco" is the most common curraulo, although at least a dozen other dances are known and there are a number of different songs and variations to each dance. In the bambuco the woman takes the lead in asking the man to dance. Sometimes two women ask the same man and all three wheel around the floor together. The woman first "tempts" the man by waving her handkerchief, which she holds in her right hand; the man waves his handkerchief or hat and pursues, but as he hears her she turns to him and he retreats with the woman following. The woman keeps a steady advance and retreat pattern while the man becomes more and more excited, occasionally leaping into the air, banging his feet in time with the bombo, and indicating excitement in other manners.

Side 1 Band 2

Another example of a curraulo, type called bambuco, from Buenaventura, Colombia.

Side 1 Band 3

This bambuco, another curraulo, was recorded in San Lorenzo, northwest Ecuador, and is the most popular bambuco there. It is called "Adiós Berejú,” good-bye Berejú. This particular rendition is not transcribed. However, the glosador for this song, Gumercindo Bárta, told me that the strophes being sung by the respondedoras and by himself included the following:

Grito, given by the glosador:
Chorus—sung by the respondedoras:
Adiós Berejú
Adiós Berejú
Good-bye Berejú
Good-bye Berejú
Verse—sung by respondedoras:
Allá vien uno
Allá vien do
El uno es el Diablo
El otro Occó
There comes one
There come two
One is the Devil
The other Occoro
Verse—sung by glosador:
Allá va la Hilaria
Con su remeneo
A buscar remedio
Para Dios y Te Deo
There goes Hilaria
Wiggling up and down
To look for help
For God and Te Deum
Side 1 Band 6

"Adiós primo hermano" is the alavado, or hymn, from the last wake for a deceased adult, which usually ends the ceremony. After seven days of singing alavaados to the interred relative, Costeño of the Pacific littoral reach a consensus that the spirit of the dead man has indeed departed and, they hope, will not return. "Good-bye first cousin" symbolizes this departure and normally marks the end of the ceremony. In this rendition, Teófilo Potes sings the dirge, something which very few Costeños will do out of the context of an actual second wake.

Adiós primo hermano
Primo hermano Adiós
Te vas y me dejas
Solitá con Dios

Good-bye first cousin
First cousin, good-bye
You go and leave me
Alone with God

Al que está llorando
Dejeno llora
Que esos con los coros
Que mi Dios nos da

To whoever is crying
Let them cry
"That those are the choruses"
"That God gives us"

Adiós primo hermano
Primo hermano Adiós
Te vas y me dejas
Solitá con Dios

Good-bye first cousin
First cousin, good-bye
You go and leave me
Alone with God

Side 1 Band 7

Although Negroes in the Pacific Lowlands of Colombia and Ecuador are very reluctant to sing alavaados out of the context of an ongoing wake, some of the emigrants are less reluctant. In the following two alavaados, two Chocóanas from the Río Baudó region of western Colombia sing "Santa María" and "Santo Dios, Santo Fuerte." The latter is frequently the first alavado sung during the week following the death of an adult.

Santa María

Verse:

Estando grave de muerte
La Virgen me confeso
Y ella misma me llevo
A la presencia de Dios

I am fatally ill
I confess to the Virgin
And she carries me
To the presence of God

Santo María

Ruego por los pecadores

Saint Mary

Beg for the sinners

Siendo pariente y hermanos
Padres, hijos, y hermanitos
Y la hora de la muerte
Me toca el mi solito

Being kinsman and brothers
Father, sons, and ghosts (of relatives)
And at the hour of death
I play my solo

Santo María

Ruego por los pecadores

Santa María

Ruego por los pecadores

Santo Dios, Santo Fuerte

Christ Baptized St. John
And St. John Baptized Christ
And in the river there developed
That which had never been seen

Chorus:

Santo Dios y Santo Fuerte

Holy Spirit, powerful Saint
Holy Spirit, powerful and mortal
Holy Spirit, powerful and mortal

Side 1 Band 8

In the Chocó of Colombia, more than elsewhere in the Pacific Lowlands of Colombia and Ecuador, the inhab-
La chicha la bebemos
Y el guaro lo quemamos
Adios pues muchachos
Los dos ya nos vamos

The text of the improvisation, as transcribed and roughly translated by the author is:

Tomasito, gla!
de Guapi está
a la orilla de Tumaco
Comó a los cinco minutos
Cogió un ejempló
Un hermoso bocachico
Pasando el mar Rojo
Cayó al agua y ¡ta!
se ahogó, ¡rat!

Cayó la cadena
Cayó hacia el mar
Cayó la carrera
Y ¡viva! lo cogí
Y salí para a ver
Y cuando la policia
Oyó esa vana
"A ver, qué pasa aquí?"
Le dice el personal "¡há!
"Aquí no pasó nada
Sino que nos estamos
Dando con la punta al palo!

Dale los cabos
Cabalero que la policía
Y enra
Dale los cabos caballero
Que la policía viene ya
Y al que encuentres
Con el palo
A la carcel va a parar
Y al que encuentres
Con el palo
A la carcel va a parar
mmmmmmmm
Suena la sirena
Y llegando por allá
Le dice agn
Hermanos que llevas en el trito
Qué llevo es a Dofia Juana
Pásame la movida
Que yo vengo de allá
Pa que tu vaas viene
Entonces lo cogemos
Los dos y la quienmos
Aquí en el cuarto
Duchar y ¡dí ¡tri tra!
Llegamos allá
Y somos amigos
Contigo mmmmmmm
Tan tan tan tan tan
Trae los cabos caballero
Que la policia viene
Ya y el que encuentre con ella
A la carcel va a parar
Y el que encuentre con ella
A la carcel va a parar

Several lines of "scoopt" singing
Ay me poco
De ver a Pascoa
Coméndose la bobitana
Y yo sin ella
Y acá lambando
Un guaco sin tumbá
Así me gusta
Pisarla
Así para ponerme buen moso
Para ir a Hongkong
Subir a la luna
Engima de las nubes
Así en un satélite
Pa conocí la famosa
Que vina, que tal

Musica y flauta
Y Hongkong frentica
Y pobre tambor
Rio Grande, Narezo y tal

Vamanos, vamanos, muchachos
Porque esto va a parar en nada
Para que lleguemos hasta el cielo
Allá donde está Matanza
Hongkong, Sinoevo, y Maríahuacca (other bars)

A donde está Villavicencio
Para conocí la famosa
mimimimimim
pa pa pa pa pa pa pa
Adiós Policía
Que te vaya bien
Porque yo manana
Me voy para mi casa

Thomas, gla!
is from Guapi
By the breeze from Tumaco
Gla
approximately five minutes
I set a precedent
Beautiful Bocachica
Facing the red sea
He fell into the water, rat!
He drowned, rat!

The chain entangled him
He fell toward the sea
I fled
and, ran! I grabbed it
And I wanted to see
And when the police
heard this thing,
"Look, what's going on here?"
I said, "rat!"
"Nothing is going on here
Except we are
starving a brick"

Hurry up,
man, the police
come now
hurry up, man,
the police come now
And who he gets hit with
the stick
ends up in jail
And who he gets hit
with the stick
ends up in jail
Noisy sirens
and arriving there
that one said
"Brothers, what do you carry in the bag?"
That which I carry is for Dona Juana
Take it off
I come from there
For you see he comes
Then we grasp it
Together and dispose of it
Here in the double room
and, Rat! Rat!
We arrive there
And are friends
Together mmmmmmm
Tan tan tan tan tan
Bring the stuff, man,
The police come
Now, and who he is caught with her
Winds up in jail
And who he is caught with her
Winds up in jail

Soy la luna, y también el sol
Lavando Pañales, para el niño Dios
I am the moon and the sun
Washing diapers for the son of God

Music and flute
and frentied Hongkong
and poor drum
Rio Grande, Narezo, and such (these are names of bars)
Let's go, let's go, boys
Because this is getting us nowhere
So that we arrive in heaven
There, where is Matanza
Hongkong, Sinoevo, and Mariahuacca (other bars)
Where is Villavicencio?
To know the famous woman (famous whore)
mimimimimmm
pa pa pa pa pa pa pa
Good-bye police
Go well
Because tomorrow
I am going home

Arrullo, spirituals for saints and for the death of a child, are common in the Pacific Lowlands. This particular arrullo is perhaps the most common of all. One of the many arrullos to San Antonio, this particular piece is sung at Easter, Christmas, sometimes at the death of a child, and at San Antonio's saint's day in June or July (the exact date varies with local custom). There are many variations of this song, the one here coming from San Lorenzo, northwest Ecuador. Although the marimba is not commonly used in arrullos, it may be, as is the case in the following rendition.

The lead cantadora is Petra Caicedo, the marimbero is José Mina.

Chorus (sung between each four verses):
U rru rru rra
San Antonio ya se va
Ya se va, ya se va
San Antonio ya se va
Verses:

Y ahora si me va gustando
Duro yo debo cantar
Su palabra con la mia
Por allá le va el compás
Cuando toca una cotea
Me da gana de cantar
Pero cuando no la toca
Me da gana de llorar
San Antonio se ha perdido
La madre lo anda buscando
Pregunta si no le han visto
Un lucero reflebrando

A shining morning star

This arrullo is normally heard at Easter, and is entitled "La María Soy." The author had the good fortune to record this the day before Easter in Barbacoas, Colombia, while the people were preparing for the next day's festivities in which this arrullo together with others would be sung in a street parade. Barbacoas is the community to which slaves were directly imported between 1600 and 1684 (West 1954:18) to mine placer gold. "La María Soy" is sung with the rhythm "Bambucoado,"

Common verses in this rendition include:

Soy la luna, y también el sol
I am the moon and the sun
Lavando Pañales, para el niño Dios
Washing diapers for the son of God

The chorus is:

María, la María soy
Yo soy la María, la María soy

María, I am María
I am María, I am María
During the chigualo, which is a wake for a dead child, a frequently heard arrullo is "Aurora de la Mañana." This arrullo, one of the most popular for chiguales in the Pacific Lowlands, was recorded in Barrio Venencia, Buenaventura, Colombia. The cantadora sang this at my request, accompanied by her teen-age son on the bombo.

**Chorus:** (repeat between each verse)
- **Aruila**
  - Ya aurora de la mañana
  - Arrulla
  - Ya aurora de la mañana

**Verses:**
- Del cielo cayó una rosa
- Y una estrella soberana
- El romero estaba seco
- De pronto se enverdeció
- Jesú Cristo estaba muerto
- De muerto resucitó

This arrullo was recorded during an ongoing chigualo for a dead child in San Lorenzo, Ecuador. These wakes continue until dawn. The texts cannot be transcribed from the ongoing chigualo, and in San Lorenzo no cantadora would repeat them out of the context of death.

**Side 2**

In Barrio Venencia, Buenaventura, Colombia, a former colegio teacher, Teófilo Potes, who comes from the Río Naya and who has lived for some time in Guapi, is trying to transform folk music to another style. With the aid of a young boy, son of Margarita Hurtado C., a poetess from Guapi, also resident of Barrio Venencia, Potes sings "La Golpe de la Cajita" which is a popular arrullo for chiguales.

**Chorus:**
- La golpe de la cajita
- Del enduro al robobante
- Levanten pastora
- Vamos pa' delante

**Verses:**
- Yo soy la primer magrina (madrina)
- Que me vengo a presentar
- Y si el niño tuvió dormido
- Yo lo voy a recochíbar
- A la magrina (madrina) de niñó
- Digan que digo yo
- Que si no tenía bebida
- Para que me convídobo

**Side 2**

"El Niño Quiere" is an arrullo sung mainly during the Christmas season. This one is recorded in Buenaventura, Colombia, and is another example of the attempt to expand the folk music of the Pacific littoral into a style of broader, more popular, scope.

**The phrases repeated in the verse are:**
- Este Niño quiere: This child wants
- Ay quiere, que le canten: Ay he wants them to sing
- Tomadas alegres: Lively tunes
- Ay versos, elegantes: Ay, elegant verses
- Orro, niño del cielo bajó: Orro, the child descends from heaven
- Orro, the child descends from heaven
- Corre, corre, presurosa: Run, run, quick
- Yo me voy para Belén (or, Ay, me voy, para Belén)
- I am going to Bethlehem
- Camina la Virgen pura: The Virgin (Mary) walks
- Del valle para Belén: From the valley toward Bethlehem
- Lleva en los brazos un niño: She carries in her arms a child
- Que es un cielo se le va: That is a heaven to behold
- En la mitad del camino: In the middle of the road
- Pendió (piddò) el niño agua a beber: The child asked for water to drink
- No pidas agua mi niño: Don't ask for water my child
- No pidas agua mi rey: Don't ask for water my king

**Side 2**

One arrullo rhythm to which people sometimes dance is the "bunde." This particular bunle, called "Vamos Arrullar" is usually heard at Christmas, and at the death of a child. It was recorded in Buenaventura, Colombia. The chorus is:

U San Antonio, vamos arrullar: Go San Antonio, let's sing arrullos
Ay San Antonio, vamos arrullar: Ay San Antonio, let's sing arrullos

**Side 2**

"Al La Mina No Voy" would appear to be a folk song of protest relating back to the days when placer miners of the Pacific Lowlands revolted against their bosses. But the singer insists that this is a false interpretation—he claims that the song is new, and that it is the kind of music which folklorists like to 'discover' and to exploit as indicative of the soul of a people. Whatever the origin of the song, it is stirring as sung by Teófilo Potes, from Buenaventura, Colombia:

- Manque (aunque) me amo me mate: Although my master would kill me
- A la mina no voy: I am not going to the mine
- No quiero morir: I don't want to die
- De un cañalon: In the waterway (of gold placerings)
- A la mina no voy: I am not going to the mine
- Mi amo pegado, yo lo digo: My master punishes, I say it,
- Con justicia y con grador: With justice and with willingness
- A la mina no voy: I am not going to the mine
- Que a los hombres no "e venden": Don't sell the men
- Porque tienen corazones: Because they have courage
- A la mina no voy: I am not going to the mine
- Manque (aunque) me amo me mate: Although my master would kill me
- A la mina no voy: I am not going to the mine

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