

“BLACK RHYTHMS OF PERU”
AUTHOR: NICOMEDES SANTA CRUZ (1957)

**Rhythms of slavery
Against bitterness and sorrows.
Keeping time to the beat of the chains
Black rhythms of Peru.**

From Africa arrived my grandmother
Adorned with conch-shells,
They brought her, those Spaniards,
In a three-masted ship.
Marked by wax and fire – the
“carimba” scar was the cross she bore.
And in South America
To each strike, in her suffering,
The Black drums gave
Rhythms to that slavery.

For one coin
They sold my grandmother again
In Lima
And at Hacienda La Molina
She served the Spanish people.
With other Blacks from Angola
She earned for her tasks
Mosquito bites on her veins
Sleeping upon hard ground,
And nuthin’ ain’t no consolation
Against bitterness and sorrows...

On the sugarcane plantation
Was born that sad “socabón” dance
In the rum-press at the mill,
The Black man sang of Zaña.
The “machete” and the scythe
Cut his dark hands;
And the Indians with their reed-flutes,
The Black man and his tambourine,
Sang of their sad luck
Keeping time to the beat of the chains.

They died, those old Black folks...
But within the dried fibres of the cut cane
One hears the Zamacueca dance
And the distant Panalivio.
One hears the festivities they
Sang of in their youth.
From Cañete to Timbuktu,
From Chancay to Mozambique
They carried the clear pitter-patter,
The tap-tap-tap of those
Black rhythms of Peru.