

Studies on the limitations of *folklore* and the reach of *traditional popular culture* in Cuba

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THE DIFFERENT discourses on the claim for national and regional cultural values in face of the increasing invasion of foreignizing messages through manipulative information multinationals, have mobilized many scholars in Latin America and the Caribbean to question the etymological root of terms and concepts from other latitudes, so as to adapt them to a permanently changing reality. That is, to graft them onto the trunk of the republics of Our America, as proposed by José Martí in his historical text.

One of such discourses involved the discussion of whether the disciplinary field devoted to the study of popular traditions should or should not continue to be called folklore and its necessary replacement by a more operative category, close to the reality of Latin America and the Caribbean.

In the case of Cuba, prestigious authors such as Carolina Poncet y de Cárdenas (1879-1969),¹ Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969)² and José Luciano Franco (1891-1989),³ to name a few, had used the term *folklore* in its positive sense, as referent for the study and dissemination of different aspects of Cuba's popular traditions. This term was subsequently used by other renowned authors such as María Teresa Linares (1920-),⁴ Rogelio Agustín Martínez Furé (1937-)⁵ and Miguel Barnet (1940-),⁶ among others, who contributed important thoughts on the heritage value of folklore and as a substantive factor of national identity.

An important advocate, researcher and promoter of these expressions was also undoubtedly Samuel Feijóo (1914-1992), who in 1958 took over the editing of the *Islas*⁷ magazine from the Central University of Las Villas and directed the Department of Folklore Studies, in addition to collaborating with various periodicals. Besides his work as a man of letters and essayist, his primary relation with ethnology and folklore stands out in the compilation of oral traditions of Cuban peasants. He also founded and directed, since 1959, the *Signos* magazine, which has maintained this editorial profile.⁸

In the late 1970s, the critic, editor and translator Desiderio Navarro

(1948-) published an important text entitled *El folclor y unos cuantos peligros*,⁹ in which he underscores, within the scope of the study, the dangers of empiricism: the tendency of folkloric works to non-sociological and non-class-oriented approximation, and the lack of historicism in conceptualizing the historical fate of folklore. In this regard, the author adopts a circumscribed concept of folklore that includes only “popular artistic creation whose traditions began in pre-industrial societies and which, in many cases, remain alive to our days”.¹⁰ A concept also used by other prestigious authors such as Gúsev and Kagan, mentioned by Navarro. This point of view distinguishes Navarro from other Latin American authors who use a broad category in relation to the everyday culture of the humblest social sectors, limiting themselves to their artistic content.

Also in the 1970s, the musicologist and pedagogue Argeliers León (1918-1991), who had published several studies using this same positive concept,¹¹ wrote a script for the television show *Art and Folklore*, in which he presented a critical argument about the class-oriented connotation of folklore. After a review of the historical origin, the considerations on the romantic curiosity of preserving the folklore and features of these expressions, the author summarizes:

Folklore is nothing more than the set of cultural expressions that occur in the dominated class, historically conditioned by the nature of the class situation (development of class struggle and its peculiarities) and whose products (expressions) because of that very class composition have a use value over the exchange value, to the point that the latter is reduced to the first. When the exchange value appears it is because of its often crippling use by capitalist enterprises that lead the dominant class.¹²

With this criterion the author proposes to study *culture* in its broadest anthropological sense as a system of social relations at six interlinked levels: production relations, community relations, participatory relations, circumstantial relations and family and supernatural relations, which he explains very succinctly. This general idea ranks within the category of *culture* that which under other historical conditions was known as simple “knowledge of the people” and not as knowledge that is essential for the cultural continuity of human groups; that is, as their collective memory.

In parallel, the studies by choreographer Ramiro Guerra (1922-), dedicated to the *dramatization of folklore*, focus on the heritage valuation of the artistic contents of theatrical and dance and music tradition of different expressions of Cuban traditional popular culture in various contexts, especially those unrelated to its usual spaces.¹³ In this sense, the author highlights four stages in the identification of the so-called “folkloric fact”:

- He identifies as “folkloric focus” the expression in its purest state: that internally connected to a rite, a recreation habit, a tradition or a social imperative;

- In what he calls “folkloric projection”, the expressions arising from the first are captured in their formal aspects, such as values related to music, dance, literature and fine arts, but detached from their original content, i.e., which have lost validity in the cultural context of the group that exercises them or of the time that relives them;
- The so-called “folkloric dramatization” is a technical and specialized activity that develops and expands, with the necessary stylizations, folkloric expressions, without straying from the landmarks or boundaries that can deform it or scale the communicative focus of what is called theatrical show; and
- It is located within the artistic creation, inspired by the national folk language. Here the artist manipulates the folklore tradition according to his loyal knowledge and understanding: he takes, retakes, and uses it as the subject of the most daring musings, whose success or failure depends on the individual talent of the creator. He can use all licenses, but legitimacy will be determined by the ability to reinvent tradition, reshape his standards, without getting lost in the use and abuse of imagination (Guerra, 1989, p.5- 8).

As we can see, except in the *identification* of the first stage, in the other stages proposed by Ramiro Guerra several levels of manipulation occur. This is valid as a reason for artistic creation of any kind, either professional or amateur, but the scenic result will be different. In “folkloric projection”, systematic learning is confined selectively to values related to music, dance, literature and fine arts; i.e., the part one wants to project to an audience familiar or unfamiliar with the fact of reference. In “folkloric dramatization”, stylizations are required to transform folklore into a theatrical show, which inevitably erases the cultural boundaries that served as its reason. In the fourth stage, the challenge is to create freely from allegories that are closer to or farther from the source of inspiration.

This is undoubtedly a very delicate topic, with extremely wide variation in results, ranging from Ramiro Guerra’s choreography or the outstanding work of art of the Maraguán Artistic Ensemble, from Camagüey to the performance put on almost daily by and for international tourism in which, for example, the *orichas* (deities) stop being respectable deities to become flashy cabaret models. This is highly questionable from the ethical point of view as regards the opinion and feelings of believers, as many of them would not accept (and this is another example) to see virgins and saints of Catholicism used in artistic performances showing skin and in full lascivious commotion, naked from the waist down.¹⁴

In this context, *Revolución y cultura* magazine also offered its pages for various works. In it a group of authors addressed the importance of valuing traditional popular culture as a substitute for the Anglicism *folklore*, because of the implications highlighted in the aforementioned text by Argeliers León and in certain specific expressions.

Authors such as Rafael Cerezo (1930-) and Martha Ezquenazi (1949-) published the partial results of the study that was being conducted during the first phases of the *Atlas etnográfico de Cuba, cultura popular tradicional* (Ethnographic Atlas of Cuba, Traditional Popular Culture) in order to make these cultural values visible to the public. Cerezo addressed the work of a popular self-taught painter,¹⁵ while Ezquenazi took several transcriptions and examples from the *punto cubano* and altar chants that would soon enrich the documentation of the topic on music.¹⁶

In 1976 Dennis Moreno (1939-) published an article which, after evaluating the conceptual limitations of folklore as a cultural fact and a field of study, refers to the above mentioned study by Argeliers León and reflects on certain operational aspects of research identified as “material culture” and “intellectual culture”, two interactive subsets that provide information ranging from personal attire and constructions to cuisine and its knowledge.¹⁷ In this case, the most important is the meaning of these expressions in the Cuban context. In line with his ideas, the author has published several articles and monographs on traditional popular culture in Cuba.¹⁸

In my case, the first article published was about the “significación de la cultura popular tradicional,”¹⁹ already related to the beginning of the preparation of the aforementioned *Atlas*. The intention of the article was to point out that the category of *traditional popular culture* was not a mere construction of three terms that could be arbitrarily placed in a semantic context, but that this is the syntactic (and not another) order. This is because *culture* is a key noun of the very human condition with the qualities of the *popular*, in the creative aspect, and of the *traditional*, in the enduring aspect. This notion of culture is not limited to strictly artistic aspects, but rather involves them, as we use in our article the anthropological concept of culture in its holistic dimension. Accordingly, we allow ourselves to paraphrase and summarize what has been said so far:

This set of created values is culture, as it fully reflects its way of life and comprises the totality of its expressions, that is, the various forms of its social relations; it is popular because the people is the creator and bearer of its values, which it transmits from one generation to another, values in which it participates, consumes and uses; and traditional because tradition is a regularity that characterizes the endurance of cultural expressions over time, as well as their level of development from a continuous process of assimilation, denial, renewal and change to new traditions.

Thus, the notion of *traditional* should not be understood in a conservative or static way, as a return to the past or in the past, but as a dynamics that changes over time and does not lose the essential qualities related to the mechanisms of transmission; i.e., it must be interpreted in its dialectical complexity.

The essay “Hacia un enfoque sistemático de la cultura cubana”²⁰ summa-

rizes the interactive relations of the various ethnic components and processes that gave rise to the development of the Cuban nation, where the components and processes that make up the historical genesis of traditional popular culture are also studied, in contrast to other expressions more restricted to dominant social sectors.²¹ Subsequently, in co-authorship with Idalberto Suco (1949-) we address some key topics about *El arte popular tradicional*.²² For example, because of the political and cultural circumstances of the time, the movement of amateur artists was mistaken for a large number of carriers of traditional popular culture, who were not amateurs, but precisely carriers or protagonists of customary traditions in their daily lives. Traditions, in many cases, inherited from the colonial or republican times.

Similarly, during the preparation of the *Atlas etnográfico de Cuba: cultura popular tradicional*, several meetings and exhibitions were held to disseminate the new partial results of the study. In due course, the professor and researcher Lázara Menéndez included in the already mentioned *Selección de lecturas* for students of these subjects at the University of Havana, the text of the speech delivered by the Minister of Culture, Armando Hart Dávalos, at the closing session of the Second Symposium on Traditional Popular Culture, which took place during the Sixth Popular Art Exhibition in the city of Sancti Spiritus, on September 18, 1983. In his speech, the minister evaluated positively the process in which the research was being conducted:

The work of cultural research, by province or municipality, carried forward with rigor, as you and your colleagues working in the Atlas have been doing, is directly related to the work of the communities and their cultural heritage and, finally, to the so-called traditional popular culture. This concept goes beyond folklore and comprises all expressions of the art and culture of the location, when presented as direct expressions of the population and influence or condition the very way of being of each one of them. This concept of “traditional popular culture” does not express simply an idea from the past, as it could be inferred from the term “traditional”. It is an art and a culture immediately created by the people over a historical process which remains subject to change, according to the possibilities of change and development involving social goals and the very aspiration to enrich and expand art. The foundations of this art and this culture lie on the local cultural heritage, but not to leave it static or stratified as an item in a dead museum, but rather to show it as museums should do it: in its vitality and with its present and future possibilities.²³

This is a key idea that should help us understand the dynamic and changeable meaning of what we then call *living cultural heritage*, in clear opposition to the expression “*immaterial cultural heritage*” or “*intangible cultural heritage*”, which in the institutional jargon is known simply as “immaterial heritage”. In other words, there is a dangerous ablation of its core, *culture*, emptying the

concept of its main content.²⁴ This confusion remains and will remain in many people and institutions of good will, but who do not have anthropological or philosophical background related to the current advances of the physical and biological sciences.

In 1988 *Signos* magazine devoted a monographic issue to “La cultura popular hoy”, which gathered various essays by renowned Latin American authors such as the Mexican Guillermo Batalla Bonfill, the Spanish-Colombian Jesús Martín Barbero, the Argentine Néstor García Canclini and the Venezuelan Tulio Hernández, related to this problem in Latin America as part of a decolonizing discourse, its conflicts, power and populism, and criticism of the “Charter of American Folklore”, linked to the Second Technical Meeting on Traditional Popular Culture held in Caracas on July 20-24, 1987.²⁵ *Signos* magazine itself published in 1996 another monographic issue dedicated to “Folclore: signos y reflexiones”, in which I took part along with other Cuban authors, addressing topics on oral traditions, festivities, games, popular medicine and religiosity.²⁶

In turn, *Islas* magazine, from the Central University of Las Villas, in Villa Clara, published a text by Manuel Martínez Casanova, in which the author emphasizes the value of traditional popular culture within the scope of cultural identity. After analyzing the dynamic and complex role of cultural identity, the author states:

Popular culture, traditional par excellence and totalizing for its extent, offers elements capable of being shared by the members of a certain people or nation, regardless of the differences that tend to establish social strata, living standards and unequal education and opportunities.²⁷

The experience accumulated over three decades of research by the working group of *Casa Del Caribe*, in Santiago de Cuba, has given rise to several interesting and current studies on the subject. In 1988, *Del Caribe* magazine, from the institution itself, published an article by Orlando Vergés Martínez, its current director, on “Rasgos significativos de la cultura popular tradicional cubana.” The article is preceded by cartographic information on 23 groups, carriers of traditional popular culture, which are part of the research conducted by *Casa Del Caribe*. In the text, the author reflects on the dynamics involved in the identification of people, groups and communities that are carriers of certain cultural characteristics susceptible of being studied in their context. The author also says:

Some indicators that facilitate recognizing carrier entities in the dynamics of traditional popular culture:

- I. The definition of carrier entities includes isolated individuals, groups and even certain communities, as long as these communities show high levels of integration into a socially recognized traditional conduct.
- II. In the collective expressions of traditional Cuban popular culture, the following features are noticeable:

Relative territorial demarcation linked to primary forms of economic survival and to particular forms of settlement of minorities or groups, in which the various expressions which are now considered typical of some region, territory or community emerged.

Hierarchical structures with high levels of definition and exercise of leadership, particularly among the expressions linked to the practice of popular religions.

Presence of strong blood and kinship ties among the members of the same group, as well as affinity of ethnic-cultural traits.

Affinity of interests around a particular traditional socio-cultural practice which gives it a representative meaning and an effective functional value.²⁸

The text represents another breakthrough and has the explicit intention of avoiding, as had happened before, mistaking the movement of art amateurs for the thousands of carriers of traditional popular culture who were not amateurs, but precisely carriers of customary traditions in their daily lives. The field work, as rightly claimed Vergès, confirmed the complexity of the topic and presented new criteria to meet this important component of cultural heritage, especially when it comes to an action plan to facilitate the cultural continuity of these expressions. The same magazine published in 2000 another article by Vergès in which he analyzes the problem of traditional popular culture and its ongoing interaction with modernity. In a fundamental part of the text, the author states:

The Revolution marks the opening of a new chapter in the relationship between tradition and modernity, which can be considered a non-adversarial conflict, although not without some trauma.

Despite the claiming nature of the revolutionary transformations, the inclusion of Cuba in the socialist camp caused tensions around the need to transform the status quo on the basis of our traditions and history.

A strange tendency to social development models alien to our reality was also felt in the exercise of a dogmatic and imitative cultural practice, which sought homogenization and standardization at the expense of the diversity that has characterized Cuban culture.²⁹

This issue is central to avoid misidentifying the unity with the supposed “uniformity” of its cultural expressions, but rather to identify it with the complexity and richness of cultural diversity, as appropriately demonstrated by the work of traditional popular culture.

In parallel, the work of Joel James Figarola (1940-2006), founder and first director of *Casa Del Caribe*, pointed to the validation of traditional popular culture from its historical dimension and its instrumental use as a force in development and change. In the text “Historia y cultura popular”, after analyzing passages from the life of various protagonists of the struggles for anticolonial liberation



such as Martí, Maceo and Gómez, the author summarizes what is needed:

Fernando Rodríguez. Mis dioses mi familia, 1993.

To see traditional popular culture as the socially understood result of the entire human creation, accepted as established with collective reach, without the need for intermediation by professional resources, habits, customs and criteria of appreciation and appropriation of reality. Likewise, we could see popular culture as emerging from traditional culture and nourishing it at the same time; as formed by expressions and tendencies largely shared by the popular sectors [...]³⁰

Although at first the author uses the concept of traditional popular culture, the operational division he makes between “popular culture” and “traditional culture” is debatable for its polysemic reach, since the former has been largely manipulated by the mass media and mercantile system of capitalism in its most abhorrent trivialization,³¹ and the latter, for its meaning, can refer to either popular or subaltern aspects, as did Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), and to the most elitist and exclusive traits of a social group.³²

On the occasion of the sesquicentennial of the birth of the Apostle of Cuban independence, José Martí, another interesting text by Joel James was

published, entitled “José Martí, la cultura popular tradicional y el equilibrio del mundo”,³³ in which the author highlights Martí’s bonds with the traditional popular culture of his time, both in the Cuban context and in other contexts, as well as the reflection in his writing of works ranging from *Crónicas norteamericanas* to *Diario de Montecristi a Cabo Haitiano*. The testimony of Marcos del Rosario has a special symbolic meaning, as it recounts how, after landing in Playitas de Cajobabo, Máximo Gómez kneels and sings three times like a rooster, as if announcing the resumption of the fight and predicting victory.

In his “Opening Words. XXVI Festival of the Caribbean”, which he left written for a new edition of the event and, unfortunately, was unable to read, the author again stresses the historical and patriotic meaning of traditional Cuban popular culture. In a key passage of the speech the author says: “The only way to fight against colonization is by fighting through the expressions of our traditional popular culture, so as to give voice, among all of us, to those who are never heard; anonymous men and women who also make history”.³⁴

Issue 48-49 of *Del Caribe* magazine, dedicated to Martí’s life and work, publishes some synthetic “Reflexiones sobre la cultura popular tradicional”, arguing that:

There is no official subject of traditional popular culture. Traditional popular culture builds and rebuilds itself through the anonymous impulses of equally anonymous men and women of the peoples. In strictly eidetic terms, it is a miracle, and at the same time, a mystery. Let us welcome this miracle and hope that it will never be discovered. To talk about all these issues, we researchers and scholars gather on different occasions.

Let us continue to do that with all respect and freedom, which are determining factors of Cuban history and culture.

Individual consciousness, collective consciousness and national consciousness are successive levels of traditional Cuban popular culture, which may reach the stage of universal consciousness, in agreement with Martí’s statement that humanity is our Homeland.³⁵

This idea is essential to rethink cultural policy priorities and the proper preservation of traditional popular culture as a heritage of the nation, as the issue is not focused on revealing the “mystery” in all its details, but rather in enabling the “miracle” to withstand the onslaught of time and the threat of oblivion. That is perhaps why at the end of the text the author states: “traditional popular culture has a *raison d’être* in itself: to provide a definition of national sovereignty and with it a resource for the defense and independence of the country”.³⁶

Temas. Estudios de la cultura magazine was founded in 1983 as a body of the Scientific and Technical Department of the Ministry of Culture. It has published, among other texts, some of the results of various studies on traditional popular culture which later would become part of both the *Atlas de los*

instrumentos de la música folclórico-popular de Cuba and the *Atlas etnográfico de Cuba*, which were being prepared at the time.

Among the articles published was a long text by a group of authors from the Center for Research and Development of Cuban Music (CIDMUC in the Spanish acronym) about music in rural areas, so as to prevent it from being mistaken for the so-called “peasant music”, limited generally to the Hispanic strain. In the article the authors propose taking into account the diversity of expressions typical of the social and class structure of non-urban areas, as well as the cultural significance of the carriers of musical expressions in relation to those that reproduce and perform these expressions at the amateur and professional level.³⁷ This study served as a reference to the section on instrumental ensembles of the *Atlas de los instrumentos...* and at the same time proposed a set of thirteen recommendations to improve the cultural policy for rural areas of the country regarding traditional popular music produced by both amateurs and professionals. In the same context the magazine also published an article by María del Carmen Victori on “Fiestas tradicionales del campesino cubano”, in which she proposes a classification that would later be systematized and expanded in one of the topics of the *Atlas etnográfico de Cuba*.³⁸

After the deep crisis of the 1990s, *Temas* magazine (*Nueva Época*) re-emerges in a larger format and expanding its editorial profile that contributes to the dissemination and discussion of these issues. A meeting mediated by the magazine’s director, Rafael Hernández, was held in 2006, with the participation of Ariel Fernández, Julio Espinosa and Jesús Guanche. The various experiences of the participants focused on providing brief answers to questions such as: “What is popular culture?”; “Is it different from the concepts of folklore and heritage?”; “Is it a sign of national identity?”; “How is it related to the so-called ‘high culture’?”; “Who creates the popular culture of a country?”; “Is it totally spontaneous?”; “How is it influenced by cultural institutions, the media, the school?”; “Is it discriminatory to use the term folklore?”; “Is popular creation opposed to market?”; “Are Cubans losing their ability to create popular expressions?”; “What is the role of the cultural promoter?”; “Is it possible to channel popular culture without affecting its authenticity?”; “How to address the criticism of alienating expressions that could be contained in it?”.³⁹

It is a set of intelligent questions with a multitude of nuances that lead to a deep reflection on the subject and bring up not only theoretical issues, but especially the problems that still exist in addressing the proper consideration of this “zone of culture” as a heritage of the nation, to use the magazine’s term.

The completion of the *Atlas de los instrumentos de la música folclórico-popular de Cuba*, in 1997, and of the *Atlas etnográfico de Cuba, cultura popular tradicional*, in 2000, marks the coming of age of these studies in Cuba, not only for their wide application in various educational levels and multiple contacts with Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe, but also because for the first

time ever we had a national sampling of these popular expressions that highlight a wealth of cultural diversity.

Notes

- 1 See the editions of *El romance en Cuba* (1914, 1972, 1999).
- 2 From the author's extensive bibliography on the subject, special mention should be made of the book *Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore de Cuba* (Havana, 1981).
- 3 The text *Folklore criollo y afrocubano* (Havana, 1959) is a good example of this topic.
- 4 Among his extensive work on musical folklore, we can highlight: *La música popular* (1970); *La música y el pueblo* (1974); "La música como materia prima" (in: *América Latina en su música*, 1978); *Musicología Latinoamericana* (1982); *La música entre Cuba y España*; *La ida* (1998); *Álbum Regio* [revision and anthology] (1998); *El punto cubano* (1999); and "La guaracha, imagen del humor criollo" (in: *Catauro*, 1999); in addition to an important production of records and CDs.
- 5 See "Diálogo imaginario sobre folklore" (In: *Diálogos imaginarios*, Havana, 1979, p.257-75).
- 6 See "Folklore" (in: *Bohemia*, Part I, Havana, v.56, n.43, p.24- 6, Oct. 1961; Part II, v.56, n.44, p.25-8, Oct. 1964; and Part III, v.56, n.45, p.30-2, Nov. 1964); "Al pueblo lo que es del Pueblo" (*Gaceta de Cuba*, Havana, v.2, n.24, p.2-3, 18 Aug. 1963); "Carolina Poncet: el folklore como ciencia" (in: *Autógrafos cubanos*, Havana: Editorial Artex, 1999 p.55-65); and "Los estudios del folklore en Cuba" (in: *La fuente viva*. Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1983, p.108-39).
- 7 Let us use as examples the following texts: Bogas, R. S. "El folklore, definición, ciencia y arte" (*Islas*, Santa Clara, v.10, n.1, p.157-61, Jan./Mar. 1968); and Alfaro Echevarría, L. "Perspectivas sociolingüísticas del análisis del texto y el discurso folclórico" (*Islas*, Santa Clara, n.113, p.176-85, Jan./Dec. 1996) .
- 8 From his extensive bibliography we can highlight, for example: *Cuentos populares* (1960-1962), 2v.; *La décima popular* (1961); *Refranes, adivinanzas, dicharachos, trabalenguas, cuartetas y décimas antiguas* (1962); *Mitos y Leyendas en Las Villas* (1965); *Del piropo al dicharacho (Folklore oral de Cuba)* (1981); and *Mitología cubana* (1985). Recently we delivered to various Cuban institutions a digital collection with 136 photos on these topics, prepared by Samuel Feijóo and recovered by Dr. Gema Valdés, who kindly lent them to be scanned for circulation among researchers and educators.
- 9 See *El Caimán Barbudo* (Havana, n.125, May 1978, and n.131, November 1978); and Menéndez, L. (Comp.) *Estudios afro-cubanos. Selección de lecturas* (Havana, 1990, v.1, p.295-323).
- 10 Ibidem, p.310.
- 11 See, among others: "Pantomimas y bailes en el folklore de Cuba" (*Revista de Artes-Plásticas*, Havana, 1961); *La fiesta del carnaval en su proyección folklórica* (Havana: Consejo Nacional de Cultura, 1973).
- 12 The text was later published as "El lazo de amarrar el haz" (*Temas. Estudios de la cultura*, Havana, 1985, p.19); and in Menéndez, L. (Comp.) *Estudios afro-cubanos. Selección de lecturas*. (Havana, 1990, v.1, p.265).
- 13 See Guerra, R. *Teatralización del folklore y otros ensayos* (Havana, 1989). The book inclu-

des five texts written throughout the 1980s based on the author's long experience in the National Folkloric Ensemble and the National Dance of Cuba, which he had founded.

- 14 We can mention as examples of some recent acts of "cabaretization" or misrepresentation of folklore in hotels in the north of Villa Clara (Cayo Santa Maria), in the performance of split, in the peasant dance "Caringa", in which the dancer is lifted up in order to show the buttocks of the *oricha* (deity) Oxum, thanks to the kindness of the *thong*. Personal communication provided by the researcher Edelberto Rollero Moya, from Remedios, in March 2008.
- 15 See Cerezo, R. "El arte de Petrona Cribeiro" (*Revolución y Cultura*, n.42, p.60-7, 1976).
- 16 See Esquenazi, M. "El punto cubano" (*Revolución y Cultura*, n.46, p.28- 35, 1976); and "Los cantos de altares" (*Revolución y Cultura*, n.60, p.28- 3, 1977).
- 17 See "De la cultura popular tradicional y su contenido" (*Revolución y Cultura*, Havana, n.49, p.46- 56 Sep. 1976).
- 18 See Moreno, D. *Forma y tradición en la artesanía popular cubana* (Havana, 1998); *Cuando los orichas se vistieron* (Havana, 2002); and *La proyección de lo tangible* (Havana, 2005).
- 19 *Revolución y Cultura*, Havana, n.85, Sept. 1979.
- 20 *Revolución y Cultura*, Havana, n.90, Feb. 1980.
- 21 This synthesis was based on the introductory texts of the two Atlases, which in 1996 and 2008 were published as *componentes étnicos de la nación cubana*.
- 22 *Revolución y Cultura*, Havana, n.5, May 1986.
- 23 Hart (1990, p.335-6).
- 24 See as an example *Memorias sobre el VII Encuentro para la promoción y difusión del patrimonio inmaterial de países iberoamericanos*, held between 17 and 22 October 2006, in Venezuela, published in Bogotá; and *Memorias sobre el VIII Encuentro para la promoción y difusión del patrimonio inmaterial de países iberoamericanos*, held between 8 and 14 September 2007 in the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, also published in Bogotá; or the lamentable pseudo-concept of Fundación ILAM (Latin American Institute of Museums) about the supposed "intangible heritage", which shows total ignorance about the current scope of physics and of the not necessarily corporeal matter. Visit: <<http://www.ilam.org>> . <<http://www.ilam.org>>.
- 25 See *Signos*, Santa Clara, n.36, July/Dec. 1988.
- 26 See *Signos*, Santa Clara, n.42, Jan./June 1996.
- 27 Martínez Casanova (2001, p.56).
- 28 Vergés (1998, p.33).
- 29 Vergés (2000, p.24).
- 30 James (2001, p.25).
- 31 See, among others, García Canclini, N. *Las culturas populares en el capitalismo* (Mexico, 1989); and Kottak, C. P. "La cultura popular norteamericana" (in: *Antropología. Una exploración de la diversidad humana con temas de la cultura hispana*. Madrid, 1994).

- 32 In the strict sense, both the consumption of ostrich eggs by small groups of nomads in Southern Africa, and the kung, the refined and luxurious Japanese kimono with a special pattern for ladies of the nobility and worn in festivities and special occasions, can be identified as “traditional culture”.
- 33 *Del Caribe*, Santiago de Cuba, n.42, p.3-5, 2003.
- 34 *Del Caribe*, Santiago de Cuba, n.48-9, p.6, 2007.
- 35 Ibidem, p.8-9.
- 36 Ibidem, p.11.
- 37 See Alén, O. et al. “La música de las áreas rurales: líneas de desarrollo y perspectivas” (*Temas. Estudios de la Cultura*, Havana, n.4, p.35-42).
- 38 See Victori, M. del C. “Fiestas tradicionales del campesino cubano” (*Temas. Estudios de la Cultura*, Havana, n.4, p.83-93, 1985).
- 39 See “Cultura popular: entre el patrimonio y el folklor” (*Temas*, n.45, p.79-94, Jan./ March 2006).

Abstract – The various studies of traditional popular culture in Cuba have many precedents, dating from the late 19th century to the present. The development, over two decades, of the *Atlas de los instrumentos de la música folclórico-popular de Cuba* [*Atlas of Cuban folk-popular music instruments*] and the *Atlas Etnográfico de Cuba: cultura popular tradicional* [*Ethnographic Atlas of Cuba: traditional popular culture*], represent the coming of age of such studies in Cuba, not only because they are widely applicable in several levels of teaching and establish a multitude of contacts with Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe, but also because, for the first time, we have a national sampling of these popular expressions that revealed a wealth of cultural diversity. As in much of Latin America and the Caribbean, this experience called into question the disciplinary limitations of folklore and expanded the anthropological reach of culture.

Keywords: Folklore, Traditional popular culture, Living cultural heritage, Cultural carriers.

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