

CHAPTER 1



ON CUBAN LANDSCAPES

[Islands are] the loci of imagination, desire, hopes and fears, the goal of dreamers and mystics and misfits, multiplying, drifting, disappearing and reappearing: malleable moulds into which cosmographers and cartographers could pour both art and science, material spaces which the merchant venturer, pirate, colonist, and governor could penetrate and exploit.

—DENNIS COSGROVE (2005, 302)

Cuba is at once a poetic place steeped in history and culture, and a tenacious vestige of land when contrasted with nearby continents. Seen off-shore of the Sierra de los Organos in the west, the Escambray Mountains in the south, or the Sierra Maestras in the east, Cuba's green-peaked ridges evoke a wind-whipped emerald sea. Henry Dana (1815–1882) observed in 1859 while approaching Cuba that the “fertile, undulating land comes to the sea, and rises into high hills as it recedes” (Dana 1996, ix). Cuba, not unlike the rest of the Greater Antilles (Haiti, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Cayman Islands), affords land observers a glimpse of its mountains and hills from almost any point on the many plains and flatlands interspersed between higher elevations (Richardson 2002, 15).

But how to approach a tangible and conceptual place we call the Cuban landscape? Indeed, the term “Cuban landscape” carries multiple meanings. Its usage spans the disciplines of architecture, art and art history, cultural geography, literature, poetry, and urban design over the past century or so. There are copious first-impression descriptions about this crescent-shaped island such as those often given by explorers and conquerors. Christopher Columbus—Cuba's first European discoverer—reportedly claimed it was

the “most beautiful land [his] eyes [had] ever seen,” though many Bahamians, Haitians, Dominicans, and Puerto Ricans claim that the Italian mariner made the same remark about their islands. Baron von Humboldt, known as Cuba’s “second discoverer” for systematically studying the island’s ecology and social organization, characterized it as “an island of sugar and slaves.” And the 20th-century Cuban anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Fernando Ortíz, known as the “third discoverer of Cuba” for reconstructing indigenous and African contributions to the island’s rich tapestry, claimed that Cuba was positively enriched by the contributions of Afro-Cuban culture. The island did not need to be rescued by outsiders. Understanding the Africanization of the island (Ortiz coined the term “Afro-Cuban”) meant understanding the material culture (plant names, toponyms, farming practices) and nonmaterial contributions (syncretism, language, music, street humor or *choteo*, folklore, botany) to the island’s heritage (Mañach 1969). He argued that the Africans’ contribution to Cuba stemmed from their long history of survival and knowledge of the land.

Many of the themes promulgated by these three discoverers appear elsewhere. Gonzálo de Quesada (1868–1915), a Columbia University-trained Cuban lawyer who worked in New York for Cuban independence, waxed eloquently:

Cuba! Beautiful “Queen of the Antilles,” the land of the cocoa and the palm—of the golden banana and the luscious orange—well may the hearts of thy sons and the dark, lustrous eyes of thy maidens glow and glisten with pride at the praises of thy sunny Isle! How few Americans there are who have formed any correct conception of “Life in the Tropics”! To the generality of us, Cuba suggests the idea of heat and yellow fever, of venomous reptiles and insects, slaves and sugar, oranges and ever-blooming flowers—an idea in a great degree erroneous. (Hazard 1871, 18)

Like the three discoverers noted earlier, Hazard also captures a defining feature of Cuba and the Caribbean at large: a tragic chapter in human history (slavery) juxtaposed against Garden-of-Eden-like prose, all of which is (often) defined by outsiders (North Americans and Europeans) who have historically felt a need to rescue these islands. Indeed, as analysts of Caribbean landscapes have long argued, the Caribbean is a cultural mosaic made up of incredible diversity and understated intricacy that has been conditioned by its colonial past (Lowenthal 1985, 2007).

To continental dwellers in North America and Europe, islands in general—and Cuba in particular—may offer some respite from the perennial booming of traffic, perhaps to be replaced by the constant booming of

surf. Nicolson (2007, 153) argues that an island is like an idea that begins, glows, and expands in the mind like a beam of possibilities.

The island looks like the place where that mixture of heaviness and insignificance might somehow evaporate, leaving life pure and rich. An island, in other words, concentrates the dreams of Arcadia with which civilization has always been haunted. It is a place defined by otherness, thriving on nothing more than its distance and difference from the mainland, to which it is opposed.

This holds true for Cuba. One is constantly reminded that Cuba is just 90 miles from the United States, though in fact the island is 90 miles from Key West, which is the end of an archipelago extending 120 miles from the soggy bottom of “mainland” south Florida.

Baldacchino (2007) conceptualizes islands as novelty sites. They are cast in the humanities and the natural and social sciences as quintessential places for experimentation (Gillis 2007; Gillis and Lowenthal 2007). A kind of mythical island geography, argue some, has helped Fidel Castro sustain a revolution for nearly 50 years, in essence making the nation an “island of communism” surrounded by a “sea of capitalism.” This island experiment in communism builds on the intoxicating fascination that islands are *tabulae rasae*, where anything is possible. Perhaps the relatively small size of islands makes them more malleable to grand designs than continental projects. In 1992, the Soviet Union dissolved but Cuba’s experiment continues. Cuban socialism may be small, remote, insular, and peripheral, but Cuba’s being an island on the “edge” of mainstream international (and continental) events has exposed the weaknesses of mainstream orthodoxies (e.g., Soviet communism), and has allowed Cuba to foment alternatives to the status quo because, as Baldacchino (2007, 167) suggests, “islands tend toward clairvoyance. They act as advance indicators for what will occur in the future, or as extreme renditions of what exists elsewhere in less exceptional form.”

Cubans make the best of a difficult situation imposed by a trade embargo that since 1962 has deprived the island of importing merchandise directly from the United States, or of securing goods from ships that might stop in nearby Miami or Fort Lauderdale. As citizens of a “quintessential site for experimentation,” Cubans have learned to innovate and make due with less-than-ideal conditions. Reconfigured Soviet washing machine motors turn grinding wheels, help cobblers mold tire treads into soles, or function as fans. Old American cars made in Detroit now run with motors adapted from Soviet-made Ladas. An extensive tool and dye industry, most of it informally operated, gives credence to Baldacchino’s notion that islands spark innovation.

CUBA AS LANDSCAPE

The study of landscapes is an eclectic discipline, requiring us to cast a necessarily broad net to capture the many nuances of Cuba and *cubanidad* (“Cubanness”). Some of the earliest noncartographic representations of the island of Cuba come to us in the form of landscape paintings. This genre departed from 18th-century European treatments of oil portraits, rooms, objects (flowers, vases, and quotidian features), gardens, and other smaller spaces. European landscape painters were particularly inspired by the island’s beauty, which was originally communicated by travelers’ diaries, journalistic accounts, and personal correspondences. The German naturalist Baron Alexander von Humboldt’s detailed account of his short visit to the island triggered considerable interest in Europe once his 1801–1802 descriptions were published in French in 1835 and then in English in 1856 (Humboldt 2001). Thus, it was no small accolade that perhaps the greatest explorer and scientist of the 19th century remarked upon his arrival on December 18, 1800, in Havana’s harbor that it was “one of the most picturesque and pleasing on the northern equinoctial shores of America” (Humboldt 2001, 4). Although his writings were not published for nearly 35 years, they served to fuel U.S. annexation of Cuba and in the 1890s to justify U.S. imperialism; it was used by the U.S. subsequently and erroneously to justify the Monroe Doctrine (1823). Cuba became “desirable,” in no small measure attributable to the German’s keen eye. His acuity and penmanship form a cornerstone of what is now the burgeoning field of Atlantic Studies, or what John Gillis (2004) calls the creation of “islands of the mind.” For Spain and other envious nations, Cuban landscapes would be more than silver specks in the Caribbean.

Cuba surely epitomized the changes brought on by industrialization and rising international trade. However, the industrial revolution in the first half of the 19th century meant replacing animal- or slave-driven sugar cane grinding mills (*trapiches*) with steam-powered ones (*centrales*). Commercial agriculture accelerated quickly during the first half of the 19th century. This expansion was ignited by the Haitian revolution of 1791, which sent sugar growers to Cuba and New Orleans in search of new acreage (Marrero 1972). Cuban coffee production, much “gentler” on the land than sugar, jumped in production from 1.25 million pounds in 1804 to 44 million pounds two decades later. Cuban sugar mills doubled, from about 500 in the year of the Haitian slave revolt to 1,000, by 1827 (Martínez-Fernández 2001, 7). Accordingly, landscape paintings captured, if not in unduly romantic fashion, fragments of a changing look of the land and a dying way of life.

Cuba's meteoric rise as a world sugar producer between 1800 and 1850 was dealt a severe blow by the Independence Wars (1868–1898) (Marrero 1950, 341), especially the Ten Years' War (1868–1878). This war came between two improvements in sugar production: The first was a revolution driven by rail and steam, which took hold in the early 19th century. A second occurred after the decade-long war and responded to mounting sugar beet production in Europe and the United States. The arrival of what would become "agribusiness" separated the small plots for small-farmer use and an indentured farmer system from the *latifundia* (plantation) system. Corporate farming teased out the traditional *ingenio* (simple sugar mill) from the plantation, replacing the *latifundia* sugar system with a single industrialized central system (hence the Spanish term, *centrales*). The plantation system continued to work, in that tenant farmers (*colonos*) could contract with the modern sugar mills. Despite this economic and technological restructuring, economic hardship brought on by war seemed to engender a special appreciation for what the land could offer. José Martí captures this sentiment in his essay "Memories of the War: Conversations with a Soldier," penned in November 1893. His description of the ragged colonial army, especially the common soldiers (*mambises*), highlights how these soldiers (mostly former peasants) foraged and gathered whatever the land could offer them:

In came the officers, nearly every one of them naked, one using his hat as a fig leaf, the other, two tanned *jutia* [rodent] skins, one north, one south. Bare-footed, or in cowhide sandals. They had made themselves hats of yarey, or *yuruy-guana* [yuraguano], which is more pliable, or a cap of *cataure* [*catauro*]; their machete belts were twisted vine, or a strip of cowhide.... When we were drilling we were sometimes so hungry that I have had men faint on me, unable to stand up from hunger. Food? Sometimes it was very good and sometimes very bad.... The fact of the matter is that after a long march or a hard skirmish, or a retreat over the savannah, there's nothing like a piece of fresh cane or a nice ripe mango. The mango is a great fellow; when they were in season we ate them every way you can think of, raw, baked, boiled, fried ... [and] one day a fellow was in bad shape, with pains and stomach ache, from eating too many *piñas* [pineapples]. "I'll never touch *piña* again." "Yes you will," I said to him. "Yes you will. *Piña* is the only thing that's like a woman." It was a banquet when we sat down to roast *jutia*.... And for coffee, we had either "monkey tail," which was orange leaves steeped in water, or *cuba-libre*, which was honey water. Only the bees must be native, and not from a Spanish hive, because the Spanish bee stings. Ours is noisy like the Cubans themselves, but it's considerate, and does you no harm. The Spanish bees, when they sting, die, and their guts pull out with the stinger. (Martí 1968, 304–305)

Martí's description not only underscores both the travesty and resourcefulness that war imposes, but shows a deeper connection to the land in ways that tens of thousands of *mambises* might have never known.

Nineteenth-century Cuba was also a time when the colony—in addition to struggling for independence—forged a strong sense of nationalism that centered on human–environment relationships. Louis A. Pérez Jr. (2001b) cogently documents the rise of nationalism on the basis of how Cubans supported each other before, during, and after hurricanes. Specifically, his aim was “to insert the phenomenon of mid-19th-century hurricanes into the larger circumstances of the Cuban condition as one more variable in the formation of nation.” His environmental history studied how the catastrophic storms of the 1840s molded socioeconomic developments in 19th-century Cuba. He shows how the powerless (peasants, slaves, common folks) and powerful (the Spanish colonial authorities) reached compromise in preparing for tropical storms, surviving them, and rebuilding in the wake of the storms. In this way, then, Cuban respect and admiration for the forces of nature take firm hold well before Independence (1898) and the socialist government (1959–), while also cutting across class lines.

Although it is true that the hurricane (also noted as *huracán*, *huracán*, *yuracns*, and *yorocán* by indigenous Caribbean people¹) and cyclone (*ciclón*) leave undeniable marks on the geographical, economic, political, social, and moral fabric of all Caribbeaners, Cubans have always judged themselves and their governments on their comportment when facing these natural disasters. Pérez argues that

so much in the character of economic conditions, social relationships, and cultural forms bear the distinctive imprint of the hurricane. The very notion of nationality, no less than the idea of nation, evolved from the experience and the encounter and contributed [in] decisive ways to the people Cubans have become. (2001b, 155)

Hurricanes also reshape the physical landscape: Shorelines, 1,600 keys and islands, river courses, and landslides often change dramatically after hurricanes (Iñiguez-Rojas 1989). In this way, Cuba's insularity and vulnerability to hurricanes have been a defining feature of Cuba's physical, political, and social fabric.

LANDSCAPE PAINTING IN 19TH-CENTURY CUBA

In the United States, the Hudson River School of landscape painting developed in the 19th century in response to modernity and industrializa-

tion, reflecting a romantic clinging to the nation's older established eastern seaboard. While America's frontier moved ever westward, the Hudson River painters found an enthusiastic American public that increasingly appreciated the older settlements. Many of their paintings were forcefully theatrical, often depicting moral or literary themes. In both the United States and Europe, this new school of painting was partly a response to the rise of industrialization and was surely recognition that mechanization was capable of transforming the look of the land in unprecedented ways. Industrial production, driven by smoky steam engines in factories, mills, and railroads, left sooty plumes across cityscapes and countryside alike (Burtner 2002). Cuba was also responsive to this new genre of painting, which altered the initial European influences on its culture.

A few landscape painters stand out in 19th-century Cuba. Esteban Chartrand's 1877 work *Marine Landscape (Paisaje Marino)* and Valentín Sanz Carta's *The Malangas (Las Malangas)* capture the pristine countryside of colonial Cuba. Chartrand (c. 1824–c. 1889), the son of French immigrants who resided in Matanzas, about 100 kilometers east of Havana, is widely acclaimed for bringing a subtlety and accuracy to his landscape portraits of a nation not yet widely marked by sugar cane planting and great urbanization. He crafted nostalgic, romanticized, and idealized landscapes that were often washed in twilight. Unlike the European painters, gazing at the island through continental lenses, he included the common peasant (*guajiro*) as opposed to the trappings of the economic elite (Figure 1.1). Elements in his paintings emphasized *lo cubano* (Cubanness) and highlighted such cultural elements as *bohíos* (small and simple farmhouses), *ingenios* (simple sugar mills) and *palmas* (the *palma real*, in Spanish—or royal palm, *Roystonea regia*—is the national tree). His massive ceiba trees appear majestic and his palm trees are always svelte. Sanz Carta, a Cuban who hailed from the Canary Islands (called an *isleño* in Cuba), depicted the Cuban countryside more realistically and often bathed his works with strong doses of tropical sunlight (Museo de Bellas Artes 2001).

Although our purpose here is not to digress into the subtleties of Cuban art history, these landscapes, as representations of place, are important because they present an image to the rest of the world depicting the allures the island held for curious travelers. Both Chartrand and Sanz Carta flourished at a time when there was a growing appreciation for local aesthetics and beauty as well as a turn away from elitist and Spanish-based views of local life. This trend in painting rose in tandem with the independence wars and helped to establish certain iconic elements of *cubanidad*—ranging from depictions of huts, wild-growing fruit, palm trees, castles and fortresses, and other natural and cultural elements—that might at one time have been considered too plebian to paint.

Copy



FIGURE 1.1. The painting *Landscape* (1880), by Esteban Chartrand (1840–1883), focuses attention on key elements of the natural landscape; at right, detail of Cuban *bohío* and *guajiro* on horse. Courtesy Museo Nacional de Cuba.

Travel literature and its icons are wellsprings for geographical knowledge and form a key part of the new cultural geography (Duncan and Gregory 1999). Although iconic attractions and writings about Cuba (bucolic tropical landscapes, sandy beaches and blue water, cigar-filled rum saloons, Spanish castles, “fiery” mulattas) would change over time, they rightly or wrongly became symbols in the island’s tourist industry over the next century (Schwartz 1997). Curious (and affluent) Americans and Europeans would come to the island in search of these landscape elements. Pen-and-pencil sketchings could be electrotyped inexpensively and then printed in American and European newspapers and magazines. Samuel Hazard’s drawings of daily life in Cuba were especially popular beyond the island, as he captured romanticized and pristine versions of Cuba’s subtropical forests at about the time the Ten Years’ War (1868–1878) began (Figure 1.2).

Consumer items sold in the United States in the 19th and early 20th centuries, such as the five-cent Cuban cigar, “were among the most sought after in the western hemisphere,” with their “classical graphic idioms to reflect a real or mythical heritage . . . [and whose themes included] a requisite number of pastoral vistas, female personas, and waving flags” (Levi and Heller 2002, 86). These eye-catching embossed chromolithographs became collectible artworks (Figure 1.3). Indirectly, they fired the imagination and aesthetics among a growing middle class in Europe and North America who were increasingly pursuing leisure and travel.

LANDSCAPES AT LARGE

Landscape is a concept tied to the study of places in disciplines as diverse as geography, biology, landscape architecture, urban planning, and the fine arts. “Landscape” refers to the arrangement of the land and how humans have modified it. The concept includes many elements that express themselves as visual representation. Landscape’s essence, however, is not limited to the lofty confines of academe. In fact, its rise as a popular medium for describing places can be traced back to the Renaissance and merchant capitalism of 15th-century Flanders and Venice (Aubu-Lughod 1984; Morris 1981). Painters played a key role in bringing exciting, if not romanticized and somewhat distorted, images of faraway places to the elite of their era. These images, in turn, found their way to the masses in reproductions and popular media.

Cuba’s sugar potential in the late 18th century evoked much interest in the European elite because of the possible profits (Scarpaci and Portela



FIGURE 1.2. The Falls of the Rosario (also known as Soroa Falls) captured in the late 1860s by Samuel Hazard. “Rosario” refers to the Sierra Rosario in Pinar del Río Province. From Hazard (1871, frontispiece).



FIGURE 1.3. Carmen Flor Fina cigar label, 1900. A pastiche of exotic, pastoral, and tropical themes beautified the individual cigar and boxes of 25. This ancillary form of artwork prospered soon after lithographic printing began in Havana in 1822. Few globally consumed items did as much to disseminate a representation of the island of Cuba as did the Cuban cigar ring, box, and packaging in the 19th and 20th centuries. From Levi and Heller (2002, 92).

2005) and a certain exoticism; Cuba was American *criollo* (creole), but it was also imbued with more than three centuries of Spanish rule. Unlike the ornate and abundant religious architecture of Mexico and Peru, the only highbrow architecture the colony could boast was of a military nature: fortresses, castles, bulwarks, and ramparts, all of which had become obsolete by the middle of the 19th century. Havana in the early 19th century was a busy port, the gateway to an industrious and prosperous island (Figure 1.4).

In a prephotographic age, landscape portraits and their subsequent dissemination through lithographs became important media in casting the essence of places and territories (Burtner 2002). Cuban landscape paintings embraced Western notions of land, art, and nature (Figure 1.5). Some art historians argue that 19th-century landscape paintings everywhere enlisted a simple dichotomy of culture versus nature, the mundane and contaminated versus the pristine. However, Narciso G. Menocal (1996) has carefully shown how depicting the landscape and common folks characterized a key part of the colonial independence project. Cuban art was not a mere extension of European trends and themes. Rather, it established “national imagery through a search for the characteristic and exploring national identity.... Nationalism made Cuban art *sui generis* in style and general appearance, but perhaps more interestingly, in the manner in which it should be read and interpreted” (Menocal 1996, 187).

“Landscape” would eventually find its way into the English language as a derivative of the Dutch term *landschap* and the German word *landschaft*. Over the past 500 years or so, the term has moved from one largely



FIGURE 1.4. Detail of *General View of Havana*, 1856, drawn by Eduardo Barañano and lithographed by Eduardo Laplante. This bird's-eye view of the port from the north shows Castillo de Los Tres Reyes del Morro and its lighthouse (left foreground), La Cabaña fort (left midrange), La Punta castle (right foreground), and the walled city of La Habana (right midrange).

confined to the fine arts to a concept that is imbued with meanings of power, politics, and ownership (Creswell 2004).

In cultural geography, Carl Ortwin Sauer introduced the term to North American scholars in his seminal 1925 essay, "The Morphology of Landscape." Sauer proposed the study of landscape as an alternative to the prevalent philosophy of environmental determinism, which emphasized the role of their surroundings (environment) in shaping the material development of a people or region. Sauer's notion was that the landscape could be studied scientifically and that one could elucidate the role humans played in modifying it—the antithesis of environmental determinism (Sauer 1963). In using cultural history and artifactual analysis, one challenge in studying the transformation of a natural landscape into its contemporary condition (cultural landscape) is that it remains daunting to reconstruct the original natural landscape and to designate seamlessly where the mark of one group of occupants on the landscape ended and where another

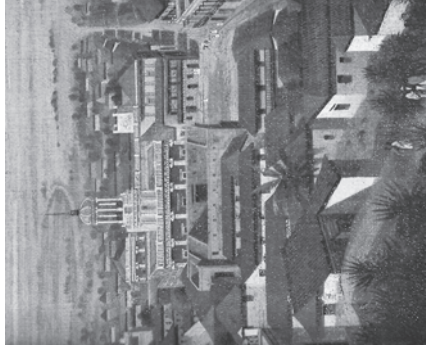


FIGURE 1.5. *View of Trinidad from Mount Vigía, 1852*, by Eduardo Laplante. Laplante captures the rise of the sugar industry in this southern central town set back 11 kilometers from the Caribbean Sea, and a gentrying “sugarocracy,” in the words of Moreno Fraginals. More than a score of small mills (*ingenios*) lined the Sugar Mill Valley (*El Valle de los Ingenios*) just to the west (left) of the image. The detail at right enlarges the main plaza and reveals a turrett used by a wealthy slave trader. Courtesy Museo Nacional de Cuba.

began. Subsequent cultural geographers such as D. W. Meinig (1979) and Wilbur Zelinsky (1973) worked with these Sauerian themes in studying the human imprint on the surface of the earth. Their works were highly informative because they synthesized a great deal of information about places and regions and their books reached both academic and general readership. However, such approaches to landscape were often criticized because good description alone—devoid of theory—could not make substantive contributions to basic research (see Soja 1996).

Novel tenets of cultural geography that were grounded in landscape analysis appeared in the 1980s and 1990s. This “new cultural geography” added social and cultural theory to interpret changes in landscape (Back, Kunze, and Pickles, 1989). By emphasizing political and sociocultural processes, this new cultural geography also considered how landscape shapes political and sociocultural processes in a particular region (Schein 1997). No theoretical lens consistently informs these new studies of landscape. Cosgrove (1998), for instance, enlists Marxian analysis to characterize his study of place and landscape, giving particular emphasis to ideology and how it shapes the way social classes view property and land. Others (Duncan and Duncan 1988; Price and Lewis 1993) have furthered this work by focusing on how landscape forms a key ingredient in cultural, political, and social systems. Graham, Ashworth, and Tumbridge (2000, 31) “regard landscape less as places shaped by lived experience than as largely symbolic entities.”

We believe this new cultural geographic analysis lends itself nicely to the study of Cuba because of the island’s striking historical periods that spawned distinctive political economies: the colonial period based on raw material extraction and slavery (1514–1898); the republican era witnessing the domination of United States investment in sugar, communications, and overall infrastructure, as well as political support and sugar price-fixing for exports (1898–1958); and the socialist era (1959 to the present). Throughout this book, we refer to several examples of *vernacular* or *ordinary landscapes*. These make up the everyday environment of the island, its elements ranging from schools, streetscapes, sugar cane fields, and rural settlements to the shaded suburbs of its large cities and the increasing blend of tourists with locals. Vernacular landscapes are “lived in” and shape the perceptions, values, and behaviors of the Cubans who occupy them. In Cuban towns and cities, for example, vernacular landscapes include the distinguishing automobiles, largely older Soviet-made Ladas and Moskvich models, as well as American cars of the 1950s and earlier (Figure 1.6).

Today these automobiles give the country a museum-like quality (Baker 2004; Schweid 2004). The neighborhood landscape is peppered with the state-run food stores (*bodegas*), primary care clinics (*policlínicas*),



FIGURE 1.6. One of the predominant features of Cuba's contemporary and vernacular landscape is the presence of American cars from the 1950s. Paint for maintaining the bodies of these relics is often stolen from shipyards or is surplus household latex paint, resulting in strong hues. Havana, 2006.

and schools, and many settlements are marked by high-rise public housing complexes (*vivienda social*) built after the triumph of the Revolution in 1959. In the countryside, traditional rural housing based on the pre-Columbian structures of the *bohío* are common visual markers whose virtues are praised in literature, song, and poetry (Figure 1.7). Vernacular or ordinary landscapes are also celebrated in such popular songs as José Fernández Díaz's adaptation of José Martí's lyrics to form the composition *Guatanamera*. This famous song, brought to an English-speaking audience by Pete Seeger's adaptation, evoke images of a pristine, bucolic landscape and the virtuous men and women who live there.

Adhering to the tenets of the new cultural geography, we also point out *symbolic landscapes* in this book. Unlike vernacular landscapes, symbolic landscapes portray the values and power of those agents that finance and modify them. Up until independence in 1898–1902, Cuba was seen as a place where many capitalists could “rationalize” imperialism, whether for economic gains, political domination, or a “benevolent civilizing process.” Leland K. Jenks, a U.S. business writer contributing to a series titled “American Imperialism: American Fund for Public Service Studies



FIGURE 1.7. Typical rural dwelling made of palm thatching, palm wood (sides), and a zinc roof modification on front porch, Ciego de Avila Province, 2003.

in American Investments Abroad,” described three aspects of this notion plainly:

1. Merchants and bankers recognize the opportunities for pecuniary gain in certainly relatively backward political and economic areas.
2. Their penetration is followed by appeals to the foreign offices of their respective states.
3. These requests lead immediately to military intervention and the political administration of such areas. (1928, x)

It was often popular in European circles to refer to colonial Cuba (before the massive introduction of slaves, railroads, and sugar cane) as “a lemon not worth squeezing” because it lacked the gold and silver of Alto Peru and Mexico. However, Jenks’s summation about conditions in the early 20th century indicates a sharp change in opinion about the island. Its proximity to the United States created a strong movement toward annexation in the U.S. Congress and a belief, bolstered by the Monroe Doctrine, that perhaps Cuba really should form part of the Union. American politicians saw Cuba as presenting an opportunity to complete the expansion of the U.S. Atlantic seaboard into the “American Mediterranean” and expel Spain forever from the Western hemisphere (Herring 1960).

In the republican era, strong elements of a market economy and concentrations of a consumer society in Havana and selected provincial capitals manifested U.S. affinity through print and radio advertising, billboards, clothing stores, automobile dealerships, and other venues. Promotion of the island as a safe yet exotic tourist destination (Figures 1.8 and 1.9) in the early 20th century drove a growing steamship industry, with steady traffic between U.S. ports and Havana, Matanzas, and Santiago (Schwartz 1997).

Other representations by or for non-Cubans formed a powerful force in the electronic media of the 20th century. Although the contemporary tourist landscape is explored more fully in Chapter 5, this historical pause may provide useful background for the reader. The Hollywood motion picture industry, Broadway musicals, songs, and other forms of U.S. popular culture played a huge role in disseminating an image of Cuba, arguably very distorted, to a global audience (Table 1.1). These representations included a set of practices through which meanings about the island of Cuba were constituted and communicated. And although the socialist government would embark on a long process of contesting these images and reconstructing new social identities of Cuba and Cubans, the “Cuban sensation” worldwide was deep and enduring. Cuba was different: It had swing and pizzazz; it was sexy and tempting.

During Prohibition in the United States, for instance, Cuba was cast as a forbidden but accessible place, as Irving Berlin made popular in his song “I’ll See You in C-U-B-A” (© Copyright 1920 by Irving Berlin; © Copyright Renewed. International Copyright Secured; All Rights Reserved; Reprinted by permission):

Not so far from here
There’s a very lively atmosphere
Everybody’s going there this year
And there’s a reason; the season



FIGURE 1.8. This 1953 guidebook cover has all the trappings of promoting Cuba as a safe yet exotic destination. The man is wearing a (dark midlatitude) suit and hat; the Capitolio building (completed in 1930) stands as a (familiar) replica of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC. Perhaps the only difference setting the two cities apart is the appearance of the palm trees and bouquet of flowers that proliferate in tropical climes. From Levi and Heller (2002, 39).

Opened last July
 Ever since the U.S.A. went dry
 Everybody's going there,
 And I'm going too;
 I'm on my way to
 [Refrain:]
 Cuba—That's where I'm going
 Cuba—That's where I'll stay

Cuban musician Ernesto Lecuona (1895–1963) was a versatile artist known as a composer, arranger, and bandleader. Exotica lovers sought his music for the rhythms, excitement, romance, and mystery they conveyed. He was a popular crossover artist between Latin and big band musicians of the pre-World War II era. Some called him a “Latin Gershwin,” though his



FIGURE 1.9. This 1940 postcard reinforces the safe-but-exotic theme. It promotes “gay” Havana as “The Paris of the Western Hemisphere” and juxtaposes familiar leisure activities such as casino entertainment and horseracing against castles, cathedrals, and European-like promenades (the Prado). From Levi and Heller (2002, 31).

TABLE 1.1. Sampling of Popular Music and Motion Pictures in the United States about Cuba, 20th Century, before the 1959 Revolution

Medium	Title	Year	Authors/actors
Music	“On the Shores of Havana, Far Away”	1898	Paul Dresser
Music	“The Cubanola Glide”	1909	Vincent Bryan and Harry von Tilzer
Music	“There’s a Girl in Havana”	1911	E. Ray Goetz and A. Baldwin Sloane
Music	“I’ll See You in Cuba”	1919	Irving Berlin
Music	“Cuban Moon”	1920	Joe McKiernan and Norman Spencer
Music	“Siboney”	1929	Ernesto Lecuona; English lyrics by Dolly Morse
Music	“The Cuban Love Song”	1931	Herbert Sorhart, Jimmy McHugh, and Dorothy Fields
Music	“Maria My Own (Maria la O)”	1931	Ernesto Lecuona
Music	“El Frutero”	1932	Ernesto Lecuona
Music	“Cuba Cabaret”	1933	Eduard Herpman, Bert Kaplan, and Reggie Childs
Motion picture	<i>Havana Widows</i>	1933	Glendal Farrell, Guy Kibbee, Joan Blondell, Lyle Talbot, Allen Jenkins, and Frank McHugh
Music	“Street in Havana”	1935	Don Marzedo
Music	“Cubanita: The Daughter of Mam-inez, Rhumba”	1939	Lew Ambrosio, Lew and Dolph Ambrosio, and Juliet Flores
Music	“Little Havana Girl”	1942	Lewis Brown
Motion picture	<i>Moonlight in Havana</i>	1942	Allan Jones, Jane Frazee, Marjorie Lord, Don Terry, William Frawley, and Grace and Nicco (dance team)
Motion picture	<i>Holiday in Havana</i>	1949	Desi Arnaz and Mary Hatcher
Music	“Cuban Pete”	1952	Desi Arnaz
Music (album)	<i>La Sonora Matancera</i>	1955	La Sonora Matancera with Celio González
Music (album)	<i>Cha Cha Cha</i>	1955	Monchito and the Mambo Royals
Motion picture	<i>Ole Cuba!</i>	1957	Julito Díaz, Tete Machado, and Alicia Ricú
Music (album)	<i>El Bárbaro del Ritmo</i>	1958	Beny Moré
Music (album)	<i>Lecuona Cuban Boys</i>	1958	Lecuona Cuban Boys

Note. Data from Levi and Heller (2002).

music was exceptional in its own right. Through some 850 compositions, he cultivated a remarkable number of musical forms such as *pasodoble*, waltz, *habanera*, *bolero*, and *son* (de León 1995). Reflecting his homeland, his hybrid musical form borrowed widely and integrated a variety of genres.

Perhaps no single Hollywood actor and executive did more to bring Cuban music into American households, including that of Ernesto Lecuona, than did Desi Arnaz, born Desiderio Alberto Arnaz y de Acha III in 1917 in Santiago, Cuba. Desi's father was a rich rancher and politician. He owned several farms and served as the mayor of Santiago. However, the 1933 uprising by Sergeant Fulgencio Batista led to the overthrow of the dictatorship of Machado, and young Desi's family assets were seized and his father was imprisoned. Desi and his mother, Dolores, sought exile in Miami, where he worked various jobs until graduating from high school, then working with Xavier Cugat's band. One of his most famous Broadway and cinematic scenes was his famous Conga line, which he performed in theater in 1939 and 1940 in the musical *Too Many Girls*. In his autobiography, *A Book*, Arnaz writes about his struggles in getting American musicians to conform to his Cuban rhythms:

After that whachamacallit group and I struggled with a few rumbas, they didn't sound like anything. It was a pitiful sound. The boys weren't bad musicians but we had no arrangements, they had never played Latin music, and the instrumentation was all cockeyed for it. . . . And my mind did a flashback to the yearly carnivals in Santiago, when thousands of people in the streets form a conga line, and they go all over the town, singing and dancing for three days and nights to the beat of African conga drums. They also use frying pans, nailed to boards, bottom side up, which they beat with hard sticks, making a sharp ding-ding-ding it-ding it-ding-ding sound, keeping tempo with the conga drum going boom-boom-boom-BOOM. It's a simple beat. You can hear this sound approaching from ten blocks away and it keeps getting louder and louder and more exciting. (1976, 59)

What debuted on the U.S. scene as a conga line in the film *Holiday in Havana* in 1949 would years later become an annual tradition during carnival celebrations throughout the Americas. The three-shuffle step progression, derived from African slaves who were chained together, allegedly brought an ensemble of nearly 120,000 dancers to Little Havana, Miami, on March 13, 1998 (Longest List 2006). Arnaz's successful partnership with Lucille Ball allowed snippets of Cuban culture to be portrayed, such as the conga line in the hit syndicated show *I Love Lucy*, which was launched in October 1951 and reached an unprecedented 44 million U.S. households in 1953—an astounding figure in television's infancy. That series, moreover, lives on in reruns, especially through the syndicated

cable television network TV Land. Arnaz introduced millions of viewers to Latin pop music and the fictitious Tropicana nightclub on television and perhaps planted a seed for future tourists to visit the real Tropicana in the Marianao district of Havana (which has been operating continuously since 1939; see also Pérez 1999).

In addition to Arnaz's music and memories of Cuba, other images of gaiety in the island can be found in songs such as *The Cubanola Glide*: "Way down in Cuba where skies are clear/Where it is summertime all of the year." All of these sparked the tourist's imagination and representation of Cuba, forged both within and outside the Caribbean.

In contemporary socialist Cuba, only the state has the power within the realm of national culture to invoke symbolic values, and naturally its intentions are largely political and represent the ideology of the Cuban leadership and the Cuban Communist Party. The island's relative lack of commercial advertising and limited private enterprise (Peters and Scarpaci 1998) have provided ample opportunity for political slogans and pronouncements to line the walls of factories, schools, and government buildings, as well as the occasional billboard (Figure 1.10), which we explore further in Chapter 6.

Symbolic landscapes dominate contemporary Cuba because the state has replaced the market as the principal source of ideological dissemination. Instead of visual markers about private businesses, shopping centers, and private retail stores, government institutions mostly dominate the



FIGURE 1.10. Political billboard in the countryside that reads "They showed us the road to follow ahead" and consists of colonial (from left, Antonio Maceo, Máximo Gómez, Ignacio Agramonte, and José Martí), Republican-era (a.k.a. neocolonial), as indicated by José Antonio Echeverría, third from right (an anti-Batista student leader who was killed by security forces in 1957), and socialist political figures (Camilo Cienfuegos and Ernesto "Che" Guevara, second and first from right). In a globalized world of mass marketing, the Cuban landscape is conspicuously void of commodity and service advertising.

public realm. These include political billboards, painted murals with slogans, neighborhood vigilante groups (Committees for the Defense of the Revolution), clinics and schools, busts of José Martí (the 19th-century “apostle” of the Cuban Independence Wars), and uniformed police. Within this realm of symbolic landscapes, we identify two manifestations of power that are at once apparent. At one end, we see landscapes of power that include military and security (police) personnel and facilities. At the opposite extreme, there exist “landscapes of despair” that include the most destitute of Cuban society who reside in urban and rural penury and who stand in contrast to the achievements of social equality that the socialist government portends. Within those extremes there are, on a daily basis, scenes of uniformed Cubans such as white-shirted and red-kerchiefed grade schoolers (*pioneros*) (Figure 1.11), militiamen and women (*militiamos*), and others whose symbolic manifestations of the state are readily identifiable.



FIGURE 1.11. Elementary school children, many of whom become *pioneros* when they join the José Martí Union of Pioneers at the age of 7, enter their school in Habana Vieja, 2006. Busing children to school is rare in Cuba, and parents often escort children to and from school. The red jumpers and white blouses (short pants and shirts for boys), as well as their colored kerchiefs are transient but major components of socialist Cuba’s vernacular landscape. They symbolize the state’s commitment to free and universal education in a country where private education does not exist. However, this commitment comes with a dose of patriotism—some would say “indoctrination.” This is evidenced by the school-age saying “*¡Pioneros por el comunismo!*” (Pioneers [young students] for communism!) and “*¡Seremos como el Che!*” (We’ll be like Che!).

A PLACE CALLED CUBA

Geographers' concern with the study of place and territory has a long-standing tradition. Cartographers, kings, military architects, and formal decrees often impose boundaries over the surface of the earth, which are later contested, traversed, negotiated, and renegotiated. Borders between nations are examples of "formal regions," such as the divide between Mexico and the United States or between Ecuador and Peru. However, these are artificial lines on land—continental bodies at large—whose physicality is much more subject to negotiation, conflict, and change than that of islands. These formal regions contrast with "functional regions," which are the lived-in spaces identified by a distinct activity or attribute and ignore political divisions.

Cuba's insularity has been a key feature in the nation's political geography. Early maps emphasized ports and bays so that merchants and navigators could access the hundreds of transshipment points for the exportation of sugar and precious woods to the world beyond (Figure 1.12); this feature has led many writers to reflect tragically on "the cursed circumstance of water everywhere" (Mosquera 1999, 23). Although Spain preferred to interpret Cuba's lingering 19th-century status as a sign of the colony's loyalty to the Spanish Crown, Martínez-Fernández (2004) argues that the Spanish American liberators' lack of a navy impeded the ability of Cuba and Puerto Rico to resist Spanish domination. To be sure, the *criollo* elite knew that being a colony meant Spanish protection against possible black uprisings and the continuation of the slave trade. Moreover, a Spanish Cuba was perhaps preferable to an independent Cuba that might align itself with either England or the United States; Cuba and Spain likely formed a tacit agreement on this point. However, insularity was of singular importance when, in about 1820, the liberation of Spanish American colonies, through the efforts of Simón Bolívar and José San Martín, was fought for in land wars throughout Mexico, Central America, and South America. Although Spanish territories, ranging from the Great Salt Lake of Utah all the way to Tierra del Fuego in Argentina, had thrown off the yoke of colonialism by Spain, Puerto Rico and Cuba would have to wait until 1898 and the Spanish-American-Cuban War to capture their independence. Even then, true independence and sovereignty were subject to debate; Puerto Rico became a possession of the United States and then a Free Associated State in 1952 (*Estado Libre Asociado*), and Cuba was occupied by the United States from 1898 to 1902. The Cuban Revolution of 1959 would interpret the 1902–1958 era as the "neocolonial" period versus the "republican" period, the traditional label used by others. Louis

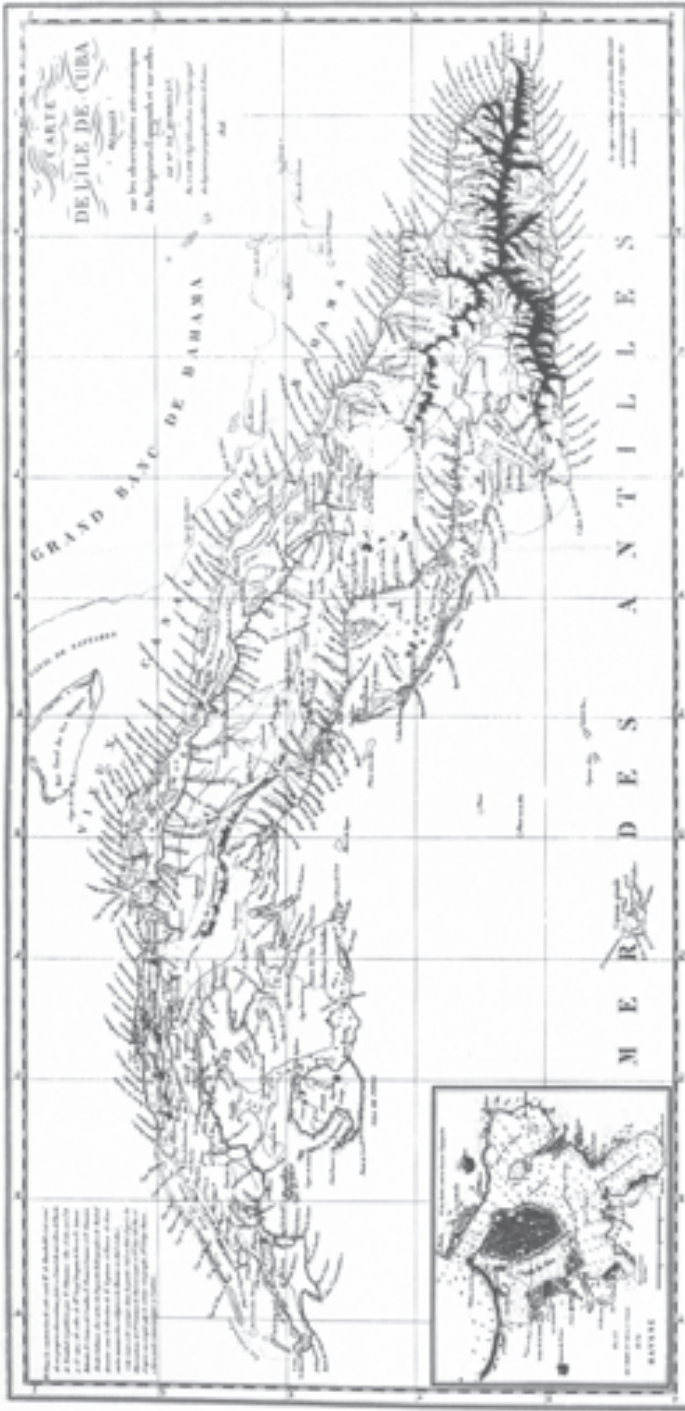


FIGURE 1.12. Map of Cuba, 1814. Almost all of the toponyms identify ports, bays, keys, coves, beaches, capes, peninsulas, estuaries, and other littoral features even though this is not a maritime map. *Atlas Géographique et Physique des Régions Équinoxiales de Noreau Continent*, sheet 23. Librairie Grecque-Latine-Allemande, Paris, 1814. From Humboldt (2001, 2).

A. Pérez (1999) argues that the Revolution was a partial response to the Cubans' dissatisfaction about the way America achieved rampant modernity while Cuba did not. With the island geographically discrete and disconnected, insularity, then, has conditioned Cuba's geopolitical fortunes in undeniable ways.

Insularity also defines the ways in which the island has historically responded to its surroundings, or "relative location," as geographers might describe it. Although its attribute as an island has proven to be a strong allure in developing a tourism industry, neither colonial, republican, nor socialist Cuba has always welcomed insularity. Pirates, corsairs, buccaneers,² and European navies lurked offshore in the colonial era. In the republican phase, proximity to the United States might have ensured a steady flow of tourists and investment, but it also established a small part of the island as a corner point in a triad of gambling and prostitution that included Miami and Las Vegas (Scarpaci, Segre, and Coyula 2002, 77; Schwartz 1997). Proximity to the United States during Prohibition (enacted by the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1917) triggered investment in molasses production and rum running between the island and the southeastern states, at least until the 21st Amendment ended Prohibition in 1933. And the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion of April 1961 by nearly 1,500 Cubans who were trained by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) resulted in good measure from Cuba's closeness to the United States. In October of the following year, 1962, the world was brought to the brink of nuclear war as Nikita Khrushchev and John F. Kennedy had a showdown about the presence and removal of nuclear weapons on the island. The Cuban Missile Crisis stemmed from Washington's objection to Soviet-supplied missile systems in Cuba. That these missiles could strike targets in many areas of the United States once again underscored the importance of Cuba's relative location and geographical character. Even though its insularity had impeded land invasions by foreign armies, it also made the island vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the Cold War when intercontinental ballistic missiles rendered the 90 miles between the United States and Cuba meaningless.

PHYSICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Cuba's shape and surface features derive in large measure from diverse rock formations. They generally appear as folded and overthrust belts of limestone, marble, schist, tuff, serpentine, granite, and amphibolites. The sedimentary coat forms the relatively ample plains of Pinar del Río,

Havana and Matanzas, Ciego de Avila and the Cauto River valley. It is a generally gentle sequence of limestone and marls whose only deformations correspond with some minor vertical horst and graben ruptures (caused by fault lines or cracks in the crust). With 109,886 square kilometers (42,444 square miles) Cuba remains a small, long, and narrow island comparable in size to the state of Tennessee (42,143 square miles) or the European nation of Bulgaria (42,683 square miles) (see Figure 1.13, a general map for this and later chapters).

Cuba's landscape diversity strikes visitors and specialists alike. A trip from the coast to the inland reveals dry (xerophytic) marine terraces carved in limestone and bored by caves, mangrove wetlands, and boney hills. There are a series of low karstic mountains in just a few miles of cross section. Geology and isolation account for such diversity. The island is part of an intricate folded belt created by the collision zone between the North American and Caribbean tectonic plates, which were formed by a series of orogenic (i.e., mountain building) episodes lasting from the mid-Eocene to the Quaternary period (roughly 1.8 to 15 million years ago).

Two main and neatly distinctive groups can be identified in the island's geology. The first is a complexly folded sedimentary and volcanogenic belt encompassing Early-Middle Jurassic to Late Eocene rocks (about 30 to 200 million years ago) with frequent inclusions of ultramafic and granitic rocks. This ancient folded belt stretches from east to west for most of the island and is partially covered by a thin deformed coat of sedimentary rocks, mostly carbonated and ranging in age from the Oligocene (24 to 33 million years ago) to the present (Iturralde-Vinent 1998). This diverse geological foundation is essential for the development of the rest of the physical geographic components of the landscapes and directly or indirectly determines the characteristics of the relief, soils, runoff, and natural vegetation. It also sets a frame for the cultural shaping of the landscapes.

Cuba's ample plains rise from 0 to 200 meters high (650 feet) and in some cases reach 260 meters (845 feet). Terraces at different heights grade these largely marine or deltaic plains. On the surface, they often show the scars of karstic dissolution. For a predominantly flat island, a small group of elevations rising several hundreds or thousands of feet above the surrounding lands gain immediately the sometimes pretentious category of mountains (Figure 1.13). There are in Cuba four mountainous areas: the Sierra Maestra and Nipe-Baracoa mountains in the east, the Guamuahaya mountains (more often called Escambray) in the center, and the Guaniguanico range in the western end. They rise abruptly from the surrounding plains or the seashore to a top altitude of 1,974 meters (6,476 feet) at the Pico Turquino in the Sierra Maestra; 1,231 meters (4,039 feet) at Pico

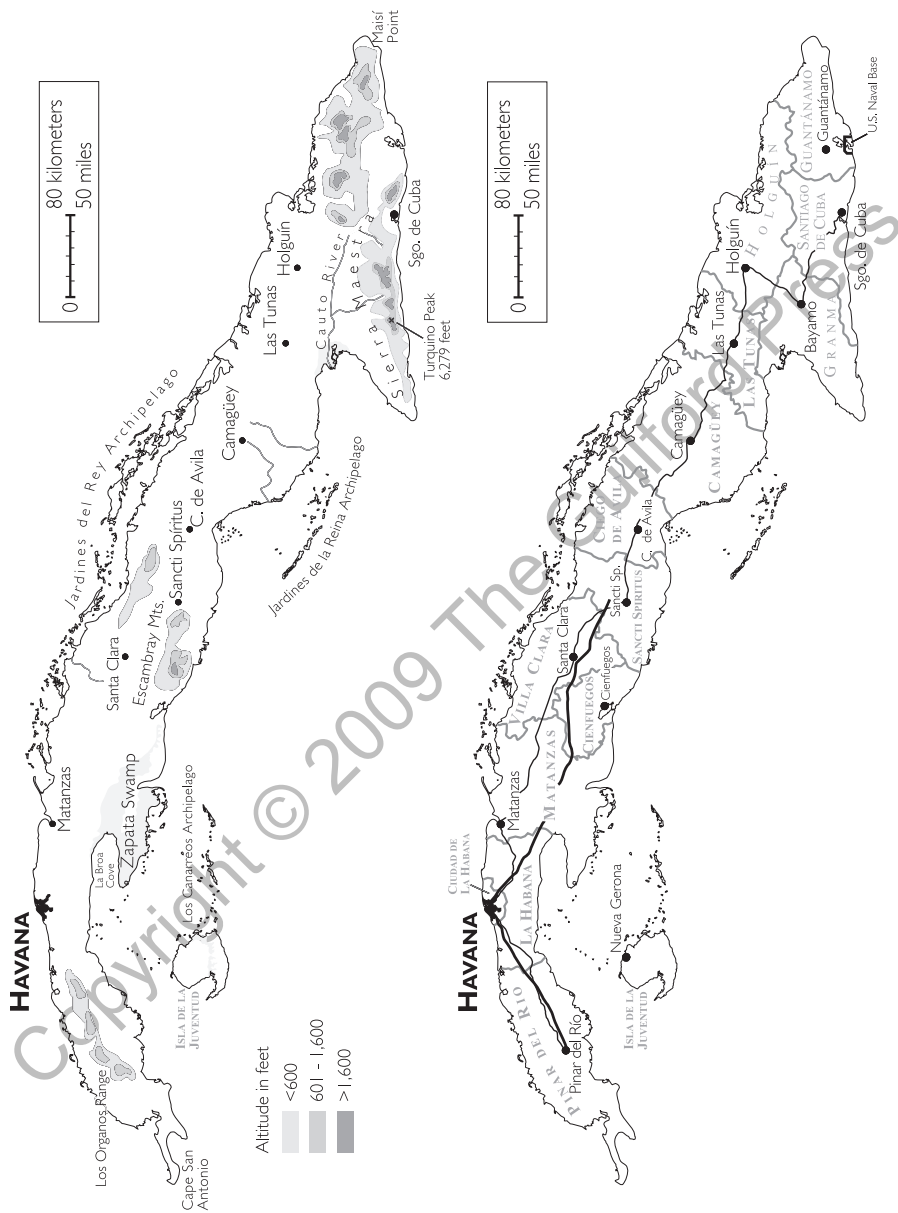


FIGURE 1.13. General political and location map of Cuba.

Cristal in Nipe-Baracoa; 1,140 meters (3,740 feet) in Guamuha at Pico San Juan, and 692 meters (2,270 feet) at the Pan de Guajaibón in Guaniguanico.

Cuba lies in a climatic zone characterized by a high hydrothermal balance. The annual average temperature is 25.2°C (77.4°F), and average rains reach 1,375 millimeters (54.1 inches) annually. A wet season, extending from May to October, accounts for roughly 80% of the precipitation, and a dry season, from November to April, includes the rest. Droughts are not uncommon and often inflict serious damage on crops and the economy. However, some years are extraordinarily humid, especially during the hurricane season (June 1 to November 30). Extreme rainfall generally associated with hurricanes can be catastrophic, as evidenced by the deluge that accompanied Hurricane Flora in October 1963; it dropped 1,500 millimeters (59 inches) of precipitation in 3 days and changed the course of some rivers and the shorelines in eastern Cuba.

The rich medley that constitutes Cuba's roughly 7,000 plant species, more than half of them endemic to the island, results from its proximity and one-time connection to North, Central, and South America. It is not surprising, therefore, that certain pines, palms, and hardwoods found in Cuba also exist in Florida, Hispaniola, Mexico, and Central America. It is estimated that about 90% of the island was forested in 1492. However, tree clearing for sugar cane and citrus production, cattle ranching, shipbuilding, and urbanization have today reduced that surface area to just under one-fifth. Nearly 75% of the island is in the form of cleared plains or savannah, just less than one-fifth is confined to mountains, and about 4% is swampland. Other vegetation types include a variety of scrub (upland, rain forest, coastal) and those that are unique to the bedrock found in the limestone outcrops of tobacco-rich Viñales in the western province of Pinar del Río (Figure 1.14).

There are hardy savannah vegetation formations that survive quite well in nutrient-deprived silica soils, as well as drought-resistance (xerophytic) woodlands and scrublands found along the "rain shadow" areas of southern and southeastern Cuba (Figure 1.15). More than 30 species of palm trees have generated more than 20 million palms on the island. One species, the royal palm (*palma real* in Spanish, or *Roystonea regia*—its Latin botanical classification), forms part of the Cuban coat of arms (Barredo 2003, 21–22).

High levels of endemism and biodiversity also characterize Cuba's fauna landscape. The Atlantic coast traffic of migratory birds relies heavily on Cuba for food, water, and rest as the birds island hop from North America to South America. Cuba's abundant wetlands, especially along



FIGURE 1.14. Limestone formations called *mogotes* (haystacks) in the Viñales Valley sprout a unique vegetation cover growing in bare vertical cliffs and on soil where some of the world's finest leaf tobacco is produced.



FIGURE 1.15. Cacti and other drought-resistant plants (xerophytes) thrive in the rain shadow of Cuba's southern coast, along the Caribbean Sea, in Guantánamo Province, and on the lee side of the Nipe-Baracoa mountains.

the north coast, provide ideal habitat for both resident and migratory birds (Figure 1.16). The island is home to more than 13,000 bird, reptile, amphibian, insect, fish, and mollusk species. Barredo (2003) argues that the island's natural landscape is unique because of the number of small animals located there. He cites the froglet (*Eleutheraodactylus limbatus*), dwarf bat (*Nyctiellus lepidus*), and bee hummingbird (*Calypte helenae*, no larger than a grasshopper at just 2 grams) in this diminutive category. Cuban coastal waters contain nearly 900 species of fish, most of which are edible, even though the island remains a net importer of fish (Silva 1997). The vast array of species forming Cuba's natural heritage has, according to Linden (2003, 2), given Cuba "by design or by default" some of the best-kept wildlands in the Caribbean. One explanation for this wildland condition is that Cuba boasts a very low population density, despite a population boom in the 20th century (noted later in this discussion). With just 97 persons per square kilometer, only five other island-nations are less densely settled (Table 1.2).

Soon after the 1959 revolution, the government reconceptualized the relationship between society and nature. The sudden disappearance



FIGURE 1.16. Pink flamingos, a.k.a. Caribbean flamingos (*P. ruber ruber*), Cayo Coco, Ciego de Avila Province, 2004. The island's extensive archipelago with saline lagoons and muddy lakes provides a fine habitat for a variety of fowl.

TABLE 1.2. Range of Caribbean Population Densities in Ascending Order

Country	Rank	Population density (people/km ²)
Anguilla	24	20.9
Bahamas	23	27.8
Turks and Caicos Islands	22	34.9
Dominica	21	88
Virgin Islands, British	20	93.3
Cuba	19	99.6
Montserrat	18	130
Antigua and Barbuda	17	145.5
Cayman Islands	16	146.2
Saint Kitts and Nevis	15	156.1
Dominican Republic	14	165.3
Trinidad and Tobago	13	217.7
Netherlands Antilles	12	221.9
Jamaica	11	243.2
Guadeloupe	10	243.8
Haiti	9	246
Saint Lucia	8	249.2
Grenada	7	282.4
U.S. Virgin Islands	6	338.1
Aruba	5	352.3
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	4	352.9
Martinique	3	384
Puerto Rico	2	430.5
Barbados	1	602.3

Note. Data from International Center for Tropical Agriculture (2003).

of private property, along with the centralization of the economy and the launching of large-scale, compulsive, and often erratic campaigns for the transformation of the countryside, left a lasting imprint on the landscape. This relationship developed after centuries of agriculture had led to intense and widespread erosion. With a diffuse runoff of 5–10 liters/second/square kilometer (Lebedeva 1970), it is not surprising that the upper horizons of soils are gone, especially those lying in slopes of more than 3° inclination. Herrera and Seco (1986) calculated the erosion reaching 21 tons per hectare per year in tobacco fields, and Karasik (1989) estimated the leaching

of 20–100 tons per square kilometer per year in the plains, a figure that can be doubled or tripled in the mountains. One quarter of the island is heavily eroded, meaning that the soil horizons A and B (anywhere from 1 to 3 feet) in the profile have disappeared. More than 68% of the soils devoted to sugar cane suffer from some form of erosion; in tobacco the figure reaches 97% (Karasik 1989).

Deforestation, massive river damming, and soil erosion changed forever the landscape in Cuba. Although it was largely forest covered upon the arrival of the conquistadors in the 16th century, today Cuba is probably 18% forest covered (authorities claim 21–23% coverage, but the veracity of the official estimate is arguable). More than a quarter of the total water resources in Cuba are controlled. Nearly 9 billion cubic meters (2.3 trillion gallons) of water are retained in dams, and underground aquifers are exploited to the limit. Salinization hampers the natural productivity of 15% of the agricultural soils in Cuba (Arcia Rodríguez 1989).

Because of its long history of human impact on the environment, no natural ecosystems remain on the island. All of them have been transformed by human activity, sometimes with devastating consequences, especially in the 20th century, following the expansion of the sugar industry. The demographic boom in the past century (the population soared from 1.5 million in 1899 to nearly 11 million in 2000), along with the agricultural and industrial growth, deeply altered all the ecosystems in the plains and hills, leaving some natural remains in the most intricate mountain ranges, the peripheral keys, and the swamps (Iñiguez-Rojas 1989).

CONCLUSIONS

Landscapes, those eclectic elements that define our everyday existence, can be approached several ways. This introductory chapter has offered glimpses of these cultural geographic interpretations through sampling a smattering of travel logs, diaries, landscape paintings, field notes, music, film, cigar labels, posters, responses to disasters, wildlife ecology, geology, and population data to outline some of their defining features in Cuba. Our approach has been deliberately broad, encouraging the reader to take an equally catholic view of vernacular and symbolic landscapes. The former, we noted, include the lived-in and everyday spaces, and the latter are decidedly imbued with doses of ideology. Such ideological underpinnings are not confined to just the socialist government in power since 1959. Rather, Cuba's broad political epochs—colonial, republican, and socialist—lend themselves to displaying the values and power of those agents

that finance and modify them. Its history of slavery, capitalists' pursuit of sugar profits (and the subsequent rabid deforestation of the island), and socialism's elimination of consumerism have etched their marks on Cuban landscapes. These forces have given a poetic birth to the island's vernacular and symbolic landscapes embody *cubanidad*, and thread out among the wider interests of Cuba's social geography, the foci of the chapters ahead.

NOTES

1. Landsea (2008) claims even more names: "Hurricane derived from 'Hurican,' the Carib god of evil ... alternative spellings: foracan, foracane, furacana, furacane, furicane, furicano, haracana, haraucana, haraucane, haroucana, harycain, hauracane, haurachana, herican, hericane, hericano, herocane, herricao, herycano, heurricane, hiracano, hirecano, hurac[s]n, huracano, hurican, hurleblast, hurlecan, hurlecano, hurlicano, hurrican, hurricano, hyrracano, hyrricano, jimmycane, oraucan, uracan, uracano, and urycan."

2. Though these three terms are often used interchangeably, there are historic distinctions. "Pirates" refers to plunderers who commit violent acts at sea or on shore. "Corsairs" is often used synonymously with "pirates," though the latter are technically from the Barbary Coast (Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, derived from the sociocultural term "berber"). Corsairs were also known as Arab slave traders. The term "buccaneer," derived from the French *boucanier* (literally, one who barbecues), is largely associated with pirate raids in the Atlantic and Caribbean, especially in the late 17th century. Buccaneers were also known as naval mercenaries and learned their meat-cooking skills from the Arawak peoples of the Caribbean who smoked meats on wooden barbecue frames called boucans. For a lucid account of these distinctions, see Rogozinski (1999, 34–44).