

Culture Box

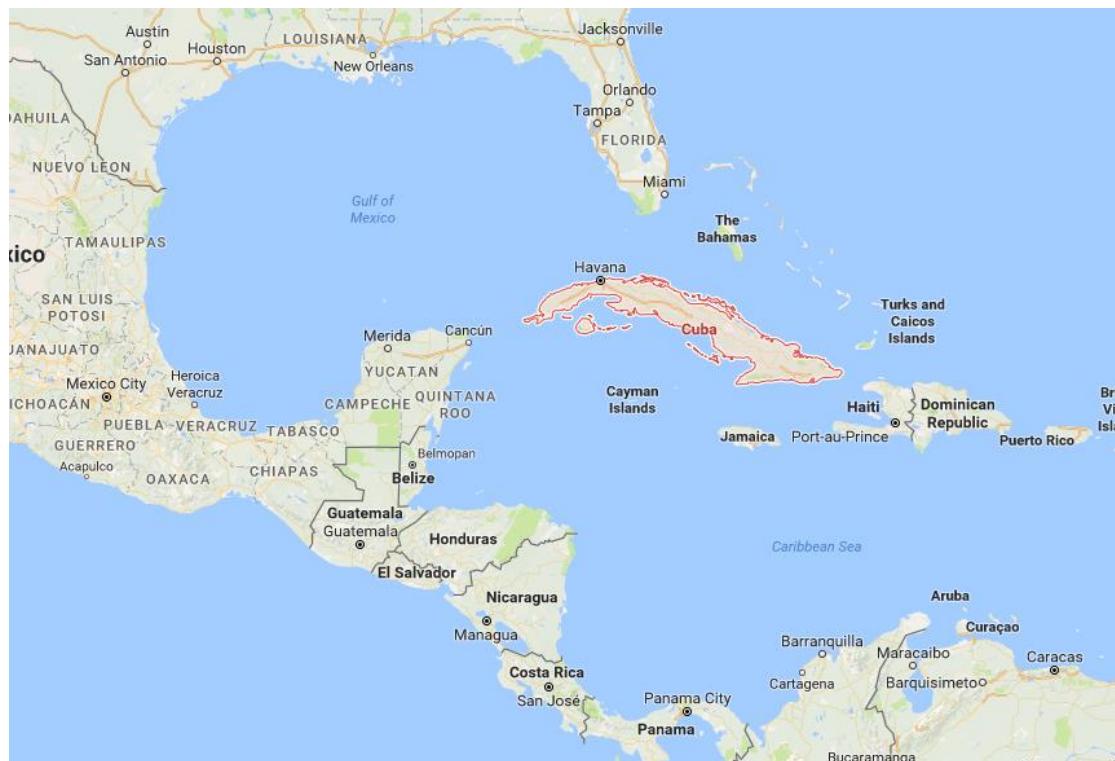
CUBA



VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

*Center for Latin
American Studies*

INTRODUCTION: Cuba is an island country in the Caribbean. It is mostly tropical and flat, with mountains in the southeastern portion of the country. It is a communist country with a state-controlled economy. This culture box aims to provide resources for approaching Cuba in a multidisciplinary way, featuring items that tell stories of Cuba's past and present.



THIS BOX INCLUDES:

1. National Flag
2. Beret
3. Che Guevara Bag
4. Seed Beads
5. Cuban Pesos
6. Claves
7. Shekere
8. Images from Cuba



FLAG OF CUBA



DESCRIPTION

The three blue stripes on the flag represent the states in which the island was divided in 1849, when the flag was created. The two white stripes symbolize the force and dedication of the soldier for independence. The triangle signifies liberty, equality and fraternity, and the red symbolizes the blood that was shed in the struggle for independence. The white star, also known as the *La Estrella Solitaria* (the Lone Star), represents independence and freedom.



CHE GUEVARA BAG



DESCRIPTION

Che Guevara was a prominent communist figure and left-wing hero in Cuba and around the world. He was born in Argentina and studied medicine at Buenos Aires University. During this time he traveled across the continent and witnessed widespread poverty and oppression. Guevara met with Cuban leader Fidel Castro in 1955 and ultimately played a key role in the Cuban Revolution (1956-1959). He was executed by the Bolivian army in 1967 and has since been regarded as a hero. Guevara's image remains a prevalent icon of rebellion, leftist radicalism and anti-imperialism.



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BERET



DESCRIPTION

The lone red star is a common symbol of communism. This style of hat was popularized by Che Guevara, as he was wearing a similar hat in his iconic photo. (example: see “Che Guevara Bag”)



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CUBAN PESOS



DESCRIPTION

The main currency of Cuba is the Cuban Convertible Peso, or CUC, and the Cuban Peso, CUP. Both are legal in Cuba and are available for anyone to use. The CUC is mostly used by tourists and for buying luxury items, while the CUP is the currency in which is used for common commodities and food, and the currency in which Cuban citizens are paid.



CLAVES



DESCRIPTION

The clave is a percussion instrument that consists of a pair of short, thick wood dowels. Claves are common in Cuban music, particularly *son* and rumba *guagancó*.

Son reached Havana from eastern Cuba in the early 1920s, where it adapted to a more urban style but its roots reflect a distinctly African sound which utilizes instruments such as bongos and claves.

Guagancó is considered to be the rumba of the streets, which is performed as a metaphorical mating between a rooster and a hen, or a chase in which the woman tries to avoid the advances of the man.



SHEKERE



DESCRIPTION

A percussion instrument originally from Africa, and is found in popular Cuban music including the rumba. Rumba is thought to have originated in the ports of Matanzas, Cuba among the descendants of slaves brought from West African to work on the sugar plantations. The *shekere* is made of a dried hollow gourd and is covered with a net woven with shells and/or beads.

What is the difference between a maraca and a shekere?



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SEED BEADS



DESCRIPTION

These seeds are found in the region and are dried to make beads. These beads are used by the locals to make jewelry, typically sold to tourists.



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