

Changing Values in Cuban Rumba, A Lower Class Black Dance Appropriated by the Cuban Revolution

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In contemporary Cuba, a previously marginal cultural expression now publicizes new paradigms in a complex process of social change (1). Within institutional strategies of cultural preservation and re-education, rumba, a dance of predominantly lower class black-skinned Cubans in the nineteenth century, has emerged as a national symbol of twentieth-century Cuban society. The national status of rumba has been enhanced and institutionalized through a series of monthly public activities organized by the Castro government through the Ministry of Culture. Cuba has chosen to promote a new national and international image and it has done so through rumba more than through any other folkloric dance (2). Before the Revolution of 1959, Cuban ballet and modern dance received national acclaim while folkloric dances were not particularly encouraged to flourish. Since the Revolution, a shift of support and interest has occurred in Cuban cultural policies. Rumba, a dance and a dance complex, as I will discuss later, is now promoted to express identification with African-derived elements that permeate Cuban culture. It is supported to represent the interests of the working masses and to solidify participation of the artistic community in the social advancement of a new political system. Despite the appropriation of this important cultural expression of the masses by the socialist revolution, rumba is not common within all segments of the Cuban population. It remains a dance primarily performed by dark-skinned Cubans with relatively little direct participation from other segments of Cuban society (3).

Since 1979, rumba in Cuba has been promoted in ways that other dances have not. Other dances, such as *conga* and *son*, are easier to perform and involve the participation of a larger cross section of the total population. As rumba has been appropriated and formalized in its presentation to a national and international public, it has shifted from a spontaneous, improvisational dance to a prepared, manipulated dance. Yet, rumba continues to forcefully embody a significant aspect of national culture for the Cuban people. The goal of this paper is to deconstruct the meaning of rumba and its role in the forging of a new Cuban national identity.

What is Rumba?

The word, "rumba" or "Rumba," refers to an event, a dance, and a set of related dances, identified here as a dance complex. On the one hand, "Rumba" is a festive event or collective

celebration which is not generally related to religious rituals. It is believed that Rumba grew out of the social circumstances of Havana city and the surrounding provinces of Havana and Matanzas. Unlike the large areas of small farming typical of Cuban settlement in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and unlike plantation life which fully developed later in Cuba during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Deschamps Chapeaux 1971 and Ortiz 1963), the urban capital contained a variety of people: slaves, mulattos, colonists, and free blacks, especially from Spain. In the second half of the nineteenth century these groups, which were structurally linked by the mulatto class (Martinez-Alier 1974), congregated after work at the docks, in the marinas, within urban patios, and in *solares* (crowded living quarters). With the abolition of slavery in 1886, dark-skinned Cubans joined poor light-skinned Cubans in urban areas looking for jobs. All groups adjusted to the particular conditions of free people in a society based on color and class, but participated together from time to time in communal gatherings called Rumba or *Rumbon(es)*.

On the other hand, "rumba" is the name of a dance/music tradition that refers to a complex of related Cuban dances. There are many dances in Cuba that came with Cuba's Native American inhabitants, European settlers, and enslaved Africans, but the dances that evolved as Cuban creations are closely related in terms of movement, rhythm, and instrumental accompaniment. In the present essay these distinct dances are categorized and those that are related are collectively called the rumba complex (see Figure 1, Alén 1984, and León 1974:151-165). The complex comprises both dance and music structures because of the intimate relationship between both systems (4).

The rumba complex developed in the nineteenth century and was transported from Cuba throughout the world. Since the 1930s (Jahn 1961:84 and Benedict 1983:23) it has been mistakenly considered separately as a single dance, called "rumba" or "rhumba," which is a popular ballroom dance. The ballroom version uses traditional folkloric musical structure, but is decidedly different from traditional rumba dancing.

The Rumba gatherings, that is, Rumba as an event, provided seeds for the development of the rumba complex, that is, rumba as dance/music. There are three basic types of rumba: *yambú*, *guaguancó*, and *columbia* (see Martinez-Furé 1982

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<u>TYPES</u>	<u>STYLES</u>	<u>VARIATIONS</u>
<i>yambú</i>	<i>Matancera</i>	<i>rumba del tiempo de España</i>
<i>guaguancó</i>	<i>Habanera</i>	<i>batarumba</i>
<i>columbia</i>	<i>Santiaguera</i>	<i>giribilla</i>
	<i>de salon</i>	
	(ballroom)	
	<i>del campo</i>	
	(traditional)	

FIGURE 1
Rumba Complex

and 1986, Alén 1984, and Moliner 1986 and 1987). In the first two, rumba focuses on the improvised chase between a male and female dancer. In the third, traditionally a series of male dancers compete rhythmically with each other. Rumba spread throughout and beyond Cuba, but it evolved due to the circumstances of particular locales.

There is much debate regarding exactly where or when the dance complex began; there is now some agreement, however, that it originated in Havana and Matanzas provinces in the late 1860s (5). The two couple types emerged in urban areas and the male solo competitive type evolved in rural regions. The male dance development suggests the imbalance of males and females in rural areas resulting from the character and length of Cuban slave trading (Fraginals 1984:10-14) (6). The male competitive rumba is also reminiscent of male solo dancing that takes place in secret society gatherings, called "Abakuá" or "Carabalí" in Cuba. The relationship goes further than two conforming structures of male solo dancing; the connection between Abakuá and *columbia* is pronounced due to rumba gestures and movements that directly relate to the gestures and movements of Abakuá dancing.

The instrumentation and musical motifs, that is, drumming patterns, of the rumba complex also suggest evidence of Kongo-Angolan influence throughout Cuba. Each type within the complex is distinctive, however, but all utilize a *capella* singing (singing without melodic instrumentation), specific percussion, and distinctive movement patterns.

Rumba, both as a dance and as an event, emerged as a Cuban creation, a Creole expression of the lower classes, an artistic product of the streets and barrios (7). It fused bits of popular material: songs from current hits of the day, local news or gossip, chants of *Arará Yoruba* or *Palo* (African-derived religions, see Bascom 1950, Cabrera 1954, 1958, 1974, and 1986, and Dailey 1950) and various street cries or hollers.

Spanish influence contributed language, vocal stylization, song structure, and principles governing the relationship between instruments. African heritage is displayed in call and response patterns, inclined and flexed postures, polyrhythms in the music and the body, the manner of playing instruments, and an emphasis on torso-generated movement and isolation of body parts. Both heterogeneous cultures, Spanish and African, injected an affinity for improvisation and rhythmic elaboration.

Rumba is one of two dances which have national significance for the general Cuban public. The other, *danzón*, often

called the Cuban national dance of the nineteenth century, is a social couple dance. It is accorded one day of recognition (Danzón Day) and rumba is accorded one-two weeks for a festival (Rumba Festival). Each of Cuba's thirteen provinces celebrates its own culture once a year (Culture Week) with festivities that include rumba. In Havana and Matanzas provinces, Rumba events including rumba occur twice monthly in addition to Culture Week and the Rumba Festival. No other dances have an official place on the Cuban calendar; it is extraordinary and noteworthy that dances, but particularly rumba, are given prominence through celebration along with national heroes and important historic holidays. Probably *danzón* was not encouraged because of its association with ballrooms and an elite segment of the social structure (8). This left rumba as a prime example for identification with the masses.

The Basic Types and Variations of Rumba

Yambú is rumba that is characterized most often by the sound of a box drum, *cajon*. The terms "box rumba" and "*rumba de cajon*" refer to the use of boxes when drums were prohibited by law. Historically, people used closets, table tops, spoons, and especially codfish boxes to create accompaniment for their songs. In *yambú* the mood is danced seduction. Both men and women actively partake of an enticing chase, displaying charm, poise, and attractiveness; the dance is pure flirtation.

In *guaguancó*, a faster rumba with a different identifying basic rhythm, the *vacunao*, or "vaccination," is the goal. Cubans coined the word *vacunao* from *vacunar*, meaning "to vaccinate, join or unite," which, in the dance, is seen as a gesture made by the man towards the woman—generally a pelvic thrust, an elbow jab, a kick, or the swift whip of a scarf. Women dance with grace and seductiveness, but always try to avoid the *vacunao* by placing their skirts, hands, or scarves in front of their genital area or by turning around completely to deflect the men's attempt. *Guaguancó* is a chase, discussed in terms of a metaphor in which a rooster stalks a hen.

The basic steps for the man and woman in both *yambú* and *guaguancó* are related. The musical structure, the purpose and the expressive qualities, however, differ. In *yambú* the dance consists of a cautious or calculated entrance of the woman with a slow, undulating pattern. The torso bends forward from the hips and lowers as the knees flex and the body turns slowly from side to side. The feet move alternately with side or front touch/step patterns (the whole foot touches in a parallel position). Physical contact between partners is very limited. Men and women touch when they exchange large scarves around the shoulders, when the man puts his hand on the woman's shoulder or waist as they execute the lowering pattern, or when they exit the dance space. In *guaguancó* the couple dances in a more upright position and performs multiple gestures. These gestures serve as potential distractions aimed at the woman. There is an emphasis on the chase and the constant attempts to *vacunao*. One dance is lyrical and the other is filled with bursts of energy and dynamics; both are fluid with body undulations, especially in terms of women's movement. The movement for men in *guaguancó* is developed in travelling steps and percussive

movements.

Columbia is danced by consecutive male soloists. It is the fastest of the three main types and displays virtuosity, male prowess, and danced competition. This dance has very complicated, small, running steps (*pisao*), isolated vibratory movements, quick changes in qualities and rhythms, and often splits, jumps, and other acrobatic feats. It is improvisational and the dancer responds to the improvisational drumming that alternately initiates and accompanies. The order in which individuals dance is dictated by virtuoso ability and challenging gestures made by men (for example, pointing the index finger up or down while executing *pisao* movements in front of the solo dancer).

Rumba del tiempo de España (rumba from the time of Spanish colonial control), or *rumba de los viejos* (rumba of the old people), is a separate category of old mimetic variations which may be either *yambú* or *guaguancó*, but which tend to be between the two in terms of speed.

Batarumba is one of the latest innovative variations. It was formulated about 1985 in Matanzas province and weaves the vast array of Yoruba religious songs, rhythms, and dances into the already dense Creole fabric of Cuban rumba (9). After the sung section of rumba many dancers enter the circular space in front of the drums with *guaguancó* steps. This differs from the three basic types where a single couple or men dance in a series. The dancing couples can shift from the rumba chase to partnering with men holding women in ballroom position, the *son/casino* portion of the dance (10). For example, couples alternate between rumba, *guaguancó*, *son*, and *casino*. A series of turns and passes develop the improvisational choreography as the drumming signals the inclusion of *bata* rhythms. With the addition of a refrain from a Yoruba chant, the dancers switch to the characteristic gestures and rhythms of Yoruba deities. A dancing couple shifts between three complexes (rumba, Yoruba, and *son*) and combines styles (traditional or *del campo*, *Santia-guera*, Havana, Matanzas, ballroom, or *de salon*, etc.). Both males and females have choices regarding when to shift and which type of dance to dance, although for *son* style, the male will usually initiate the partnering.

Giribilla is the fastest variation of rumba and relates most to *columbia* musically (11).

Changing Values

Dance is not specifically designated as a national concern in contemporary Cuba. Rumba is not among identified political nor economic policy statements. Yet, upon thorough socio-cultural analysis of Cuba's aesthetic system, dance surfaces as a vehicle through which national political objectives can be articulated and publicized. Within domestic organization and in the international arena, Cuban ideology emphasizes collective solidarity, self-determination, and values that attempt to erase hierarchical perspectives embedded in a history of slavery, colonialism, and capitalism before the Revolution of 1959. Because the ideology of the Revolution is committed also to previously marginalized and exploited segments of society, an effort is being made through cultural channels to identify with the working masses and to rectify historical social inequality within the population. Rumba is encouraged

in the hopes of gathering and maintaining commitment to the new values of the revolutionary government.

Rumba performance is guided indirectly by the Ministry of Culture and directly by the administrators of dance companies. An examination of Ministry organization reveals the extent of its influence and the ways in which it can encourage or limit performance opportunities. There is an organization of dance and dancers that follows district, city, province, and, ultimately, national organization. The Ministry oversees all artists, both professional and amateur, as well as students who are training to become professionals. The Ministry is in charge of all performance venues and there is even a programming division within the Ministry, which suggests the content of performances is established and approved by Ministry officials in addition to being approved by directors of dance companies. The Ministry is therefore aware of professional, traditional (12), and amateur performances and is ultimately responsible for the proliferation of rumba performance—in neighborhood cultural houses (*casas de cultura*), at provincial cultural events, on national holidays, and during international academic, artistic, and political exchanges (13).

A shift from the street corner or home patio to the stages of patio-like theaters and community centers has occurred as a direct result of new and multiple performance opportunities made possible by government cultural programs through the Ministry of Culture. Each neighborhood has a culture house that offers a variety of events including classes and performances. Rumba is taught along with many other traditional and modern dances (as well as with other entirely different courses).

As described above, rumba has been incorporated into national foci through its position on the national calendar and its repeated performance throughout the year, especially in Havana and Matanzas. Cuban rumba has emerged as a method of emphasizing and, thereby, supporting national goals. As a minuscule part of a mammoth undertaking towards education, cultural awareness, and most importantly, social cohesion, rumba has been politicized, that is, rumba has been used to express national heritage and to promote public ritual. Rumba performance in Culture Week activities throughout each province, in an annual national festival, and in countless neighborhood community centers throughout the nation serves as an educational force that suggests and publicizes new values.

Rumba plays a part in the effort to change values. Pre-revolutionary values emphasize distinctions and thereby, division within the nation; values of the new government attempt to emphasize inclusion and cohesion. Values supported by the Revolution include Cuban identity, social equality in the domestic sphere, and self-determination and solidarity in the international sphere. At the world view level of analysis, rumba expresses Cuban identity and encourages solidarity, specifically with "the working class" (14). Simultaneously, however, at the choreographic level of analysis, segmentation is emphasized and social inequality is displayed.

Contradictions Surrounding Skin Color and Class

Historically, rumba represents dark-skinned Cubans. With public recognition and national identity focused on rumba today, dark-skinned Cubans are acknowledged. Their affinity

with all Cubans is invoked when they and their dances represent the nation. The official support of rumba has political implications; it is an attempt to erase racism of a previous era, to affirm a classless society in the present, and to assist the eradication of racism (in terms of skin color) in the future. In rumba performance one segment of society experiences equality with other segments by means of dancing their dance of social identity, by means of other social segments according respect and prestige, and by means of all segments uniting under the symbol of a previously degraded dance of the streets. Rumba, celebrated in calendar festivities and promoted in community cultural events (all sponsored by government agencies), expresses official commitment to all Cubans regardless of color or status. On these occasions rumba also illustrates present contradictions. Rumba becomes an instrument which can be used to verify the presumed equality of Cuban ideology and the lingering prejudice that exists in Cuban reality (see McGarrity 1990 and Moore 1989 for current African American/Caribbean perspectives on racism in Cuba today). I present the following data regarding rumba and skin color based on travel throughout several provinces of Cuba over the last five years (15).

In non-official performing spaces and among the people, rumba is both admired and neglected, depending on skin color and occasion (e.g., social/recreational or cultural/educational events). Both dark and light-skinned dance professionals participate in and teach rumba to others in neighborhood cultural houses. Amateur rumba performance is promoted in every neighborhood, district, city, and province throughout the island (*organización municipal y provincial*) and professional rumba performance is part of most programming for theaters.

Most light-skinned Cubans are still hesitant to adopt rumba as their preferred dance. Older light-skinned Cubans (over 35 years old) prefer *son* (traditional, folkloric), *casino* (modern), and *conga* (traditional, folkloric), and will dance often and enthusiastically. When asked about their favorite dance they state their love of dancing and their preference for modern over traditional dance styles. When asked about rumba, they often affirm the importance of rumba to Cuba by saying, for example, "There is no Cuba without rumba," but they also claim to not know how to dance it.

Among younger light-skinned Cubans (16 to 35 years old), *casino* is more often performed than any other dance. Young Cubans do not generally dance rumba; they dance what they see on television and on videos from Mexico, Spain, Italy, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Most will "sit out" a rumba presentation, but will become tremendously responsive when popular Cuban bands, such as, Irekere, VanVan, or Ritmo Oriental, play a section of rumba within a *casino* piece. At these moments, crowds of young light-skinned Cubans will scream with delight, deepen into rumba position, and dance modified versions of (usually) *guaguancó*.

Most dark-skinned Cubans identify rumba, *conga*, and *casino* as their favorite dances. Rumba is both danced and admired among dark-skinned Cubans, even though a few dark-skinned Cubans also claim to not know how to dance it. At social gatherings in predominantly Afro-Cuban areas *ca-*

sino is usually danced first, but rumba follows, either as a full dance and music structure or as an abbreviated musical structure with singing and drumming, that is, without dancing. Older dark-skinned Cubans state their preferences more precisely in terms of which type of rumba they prefer. They also point to particular community members that are known for talent in performing rumba. Younger dark-skinned Cubans dance *casino* more often than rumba, but they are equally proficient in both (16).

Rumba is chosen primarily as the favorite dance by those connected directly or indirectly to folkloric dance/music, both dark- and light-skinned Cubans. Other Cubans will select rumba when asked to choose their favorite *folkloric* dance. Professional and traditional folkloric dancers and musicians (with their extended families) relate a preference for rumba over other folkloric dances that are African or Spanish creations (found in Cuba, but varied in comparison with their African or Spanish antecedents). These performers, and especially dance teachers, are creating change.

The Ministry has made sure that each segment of the Cuban populace will have access to rumba instruction and potentially will be able to dance rumba or be thoroughly acquainted with it. Through systematic organization of professional dancers, many of whom can *not* enter the five professional Cuban dance companies, the Ministry of Culture has created a new group of *rumberos* (people who dance, sing, and play rumba). Generally, it is young dance professionals, but light-skinned ones in particular, who now enter the rumba circle with darker-skinned Cubans, and who can demonstrate correct rumba style and form. They join in the competition of male solo dancing or improvisational singing, roles that have previously been reserved for dark-skinned performers. These light-skinned rumba performers particularly represent a growing number of Cubans that are being trained to dance rumba (Cashion 1989). Through these young professionals and their influence within light-skinned segments of the population, the marginal effects of dance politicization are shown. Some light-skinned Cubans dance rumba at official functions and also at local social gatherings, such as school celebrations of Teachers' Day and at neighborhood street parties; however, most Cubans still do not dance rumba.

Despite tremendous organization and proliferation of rumba and despite trained personnel who implement cultural programming, rumba is just beginning to show signs of increased popularity, in terms of dance performance, among sectors beyond those of dark-skinned Cubans. Rumba is still identified with a non-prestigious group, the former lower class, and many Cubans do not readily adopt its practices. Rumba is identified simultaneously with official support and prestigious connections through *casas de cultura* and the Ministry of Culture. The government has encouraged the elevation of a cultural expression through institutional strategies that address national goals, social ills, and political interests. It is striving for solidarity and re-education of values, an identity as Cubans that acknowledges their Afro-Latin heritage, hence rumba. It is faced, consequently, with deep attitudinal biases that suggest division.

Contradictions between Female Liberation and Machismo

At the rumba group level or level of choreographic analysis, the rumba complex also indicates persistent values of inequality from the past in conflict with examples of equality in the present. Rumba is a performed contradiction in terms of dance, expressing both respect and honor of the sexes through courting/chase sections and simultaneously expressing inequality and oppression through limited movement and participation by females.

As directors, chiefs, supervisors, and “bosses,” women are now entering customarily male domains in Cuba (Randall 1974 and 1981 and Stubbs 1987: 61-67). This is true also of rumba. *Columbia*, traditionally reserved for men, today is danced more often by women. In this way, but only occasionally, female dancers express equal status and exhibit new power through rumba. What is more common, however, is male dominance in rumba rather than a few, but revealing, examples of female assertiveness.

Rumba is a perceived contradiction at the social level, where customarily the gaze is on the female. In reality, attention is on the male. At first glance, rumba seems to focus on the female dancer, giving the impression that she is dominant, powerful, in control, or at the very least, the central attracting figure. This is not so apparent under close scrutiny. The male *rumbero* personifies Cuban maleness and perhaps Cuba itself; he is *guapo*. *Guapo* is courageous, valiant, bold, daring, resolute, enterprising, good-looking, handsome, neat, elegant, ostentatious, vain, or in another sense, a dandy or a bully. These traits are associated with the behavior of tough, street-wise men of the taverns, bars, ports, marinas, and *solares* of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They are especially associated with *los negros curros*, free blacks and mulattos, who wore a specific style of dress (very decorated, fancy, and reminiscent of rumba costuming today), spoke a particular dialect, and were reputed to be very daring and challenging, even to the death (Ortiz 1958).

In *yambú* and *guaguancó* the male leads by inviting the female to dance, engaging in the danced chase, and usually initiating the exit. During the dancing his arm, leg, and shoulder movements cause the female to be distracted, and thereby facilitate the *vacunao*. The floor pattern shows a chase, and it is the man who selects directions and paths of pursuit. His knee clapping movements, his sweeping arm gestures, his vibrating shoulder actions, and his expansive locomotor patterns form dynamic visual magnets from which the female attempts to escape. The movements draw attention toward the male, not the female.

Rumba dancing reveals females who generally react and respond to male initiative. Women strategize in movement, but mostly defensively, rarely offensively. Sometimes older women challenge the men by opening their arms above their heads, backing into them, interrupting their path, or traveling forcefully and quickly through the space. These movements, in effect, dare the man to attempt the *vacunao*. On these occasions men typically express indignation—“What’s this? (*?Qué cosa es ésta?*)”—and they leave the circle to allow another male to enter. If another man does not enter quickly, in other words, if the female is not handed to another male, the



The public joins in rumba; Cuban male joins professional dancer (Deborah) of Folklorico Nacional; April, 1987. (Photograph by Yvonne Daniel.)

musicians, who are usually men, stop. Attraction towards the male is a constant in the dance and to a large extent in the culture.

The dance type dictates the personnel and focus of the dance and these have not changed significantly despite strong currents of female equality and liberation elsewhere in the public sphere. Policy is being carried out by men and women, but in an atmosphere of lingering machismo—the emphasis on being a male, male virility, superiority of men over women. Men are still the dominant group in Cuba. Notions of superiority and deference are embedded in their attitudes and behaviors and both Cuban men and women are products of an historic *machista* culture, as well as a new egalitarian culture.

The choreographic analysis points out the lived contradictions that exist within the public and private domains. These are not easily revealed in daily life or public social observations. *Yambú*, *guaguancó*, and *columbia* display an accommodation to gender stratification of the past. *Batarumba*, the latest version of rumba, offers a more equal chance for females to maneuver. Female posture is the same as male posture. Women can independently choose to dance in rumba style or in Yoruba style and are only slightly dependent when *casino* style is selected. Also, women can select, initiate, or terminate styles, just as men can. In *batarumba* and on those occasions when females dance *columbia*, rumba demonstrates an alteration of rules and behavior, as well as changing values. The rumba complex illustrates a transition that is in progress in Cuban society and the values that are both stimulating and inhibiting change.

Culture is dynamic and changing rapidly in Cuba. The entrance of competitive female dancers in *columbia* has been applauded on occasion. Whether women will dance *columbia* and make it, also, a type of rumba for females is not clear at this time. Although Cuban women have been known to dance together (that is, alone without men, such as in *casino*) when

men were not around or when men were slow to invite a female partner, it is highly unlikely that females would dance *columbia* together. Male virility would be challenged and women in Cuban culture are properly cautious, even when dancing/acting in the public arena.

Conclusions

To obtain solidarity in a society with conflicting cultural attitudes within thirty-two years is a complex process (witness black/white relations in the United States for the last 214 years; cf. Hintzen 1979 for a more comparable Caribbean example; see also Christopher 1979). The phases of re-education and rectification are many, but they begin with acknowledgment of the contradictions that exist. At the world view level of analysis, Cuba portrays itself as a small, but strong nation, a united people sharing its heritage and values. It has abolished racism institutionally in an effort to create unity and it has welcomed the politicization of rumba towards this end. At the societal level of analysis, however, rumba has not been entirely successful in displaying solidarity nor equality. Rather, rumba has revealed a continuing schism between the values of dark- and light-skinned Cubans which is seen in terms of participation in rumba dancing. The government has minimized or overlooked crucial problems and the analysis of rumba points to these.

With more Cubans able to dance rumba and with the proliferation of performance opportunities, increased rumba participation can be expected, but very gradually. Rumba is seen more frequently than ever in performance venues. It shows some signs of growth in terms of participation beyond the dark-skinned segment of Cuban society. Rumba was not taken from the people and given to paid performers as a meaningless symbol. Rather, the government paid the people who formerly danced rumba from time to time to perform it more frequently for the nation. And there is little resentment from those who always enjoyed rumba because rumba is even more accessible to them.

The larger segment of the population which does not participate in the dancing itself is slow to accept new and previously lower class values. To do so would point to an African identity which is still avoided in many instances of daily and official life, irrespective of official efforts to the contrary and irrespective of popular sayings that refer to "a hidden grandmother," suggesting that most Cubans have a profoundly intimate African heritage. This segment of the

population includes young, light-skinned professionals who know how to dance rumba and who are teaching and encouraging others to learn.

While there is reluctance from the public at large to dance rumba, the rumba complex is still an intimate part of Cuba historically and an important connection to all that is exciting and powerfully Cuban today (*cubanía* or *lo cubano*). Rumba is important because it expresses fundamental Cubanness, which most Cubans admit, both old and young, light- or dark-skinned. Rumba establishes visual images and aural signals that have historically connected pleasure, pride, and fun with the essence of being Cuban. Rumba allows all participants to experience Cubanness physically or kinesthetically. Rumba remains the social and physical body of the Cuban people. It is a melange of singing, dancing, and drumming that stimulates attention, light-hearted suspense, and, for the most part, diverts tension and pressure. In the process of playing, dancing, or watching rumba, participants feel its power. It demonstrates a living and evolving artistic form that has resisted social pressures that would disregard or eliminate a lower class expression. It is now supported in hopes that its positive, engaging aspects can help to undermine the racism and sexism of its origin. The extent to which light-skinned Cubans dance or play rumba fully and enthusiastically with dark-skinned Cubans is one indicator of changed values. The extent to which women dance *columbia* is another.

Rumba simultaneously points to equality and inequality. Official efforts promote it and support the proliferation of rumba, but the efforts themselves display a lingering failure to address prejudice (surrounding skin color) and discrimination (regarding the position of women). To say, "We're all the same" or "There is no racism in Cuba," is to mask difference and potentially to permit prejudice and discrimination to fester. Rumba illuminates the problems of the state in its attempt to link respect and prestige among all Cubans. Rumba performance visually affirms the persistent reality of its origins in the nineteenth century *and* the present unresolved situation.

The potency of rumba is its source—Cuba—and its capacity to valiantly embrace contemporary ideology that comes in conflict with cultural realities and to persistently encourage change. As a genuine Cuban expression, rumba, and thereby dance, echoes and manifests bodily a situation in contemporary Cuba where values have not entirely changed, but are slowly changing.

NOTES

1. I was privileged to live in Cuba in 1986-87 and am grateful to the Cuban Ministry of Culture, International Relations Department, for its assistance during fieldwork. Despite the strained political relations between the United States and Cuba, I was invited to study and to document Cuban dance. I am also particularly indebted to Professors Percy Hintzen and Michel Laguerre, University of California at Berkeley, whose ideas have shaped my understanding of the Caribbean. Both read earlier drafts of the manuscript and offered suggestions; however, neither is responsible for the present analysis.

2. "Folkloric" in Cuba refers to traditional items, particularly music, dance, art, furniture, costume, and so on, that come from a combination of European, African, and Haitian heritages which comprise the matrix of Cuban culture. Additionally, it refers to more recent patterns and material items, all of which strongly emphasize a Cuban identity. Maria Teresa Linaris (1989:1-7) uses the term as both the products and legacies of people which are transmitted orally and through imitation. Fernando Ortiz (1951:29-36) defines it as the products and behaviors of ordinary people, as well as those of the more privileged strata of society. Both Cuban researchers emphasize that folklore comes from the higher as well as the lower classes, from the cities as well as the rural areas, and from contemporary times as well as antiquity.

3. I am avoiding the use of "form," which would ordinarily be used to designate the three basic categories of rumba. For example, when the term "*guaguancó* form" (a form of rumba) is used, Cubans immediately understand: 1) specific instrumentation, 2) a differentiated musical structure (best exemplified in the clave or key rhythmic unit that holds both the music and dance activity together), 3) a specialized movement pattern for both male and female dancers, and 4) a reference to a particular ethnic legacy in Cuba.

4. Dances related to rumba and the rumba complex are found throughout the Caribbean and Latin America, e.g., *samba* of Brazil, *bamba* of Mexico, *malambo* of Peru, *zembra* of Argentina, *columbia* of Colombia, *bandamban* of Suriname, as well as *cumbia* of Puerto Rico. These dances generally involve flirtation, a chase, and/or the approaching, thrusting, or bumping of the pelvic area. All stem from Kongo-Angolan culture in Central Africa.

5. According to Fernando Ortiz, the foremost authority on Afro-Cuban folkloric traditions (1951:433), and Rogelio Martínez-Furú, ethnologist for the National Folkloric Ensemble (1980:114-115), it is possible that rumba began in Cuba as remembered fragments of songs and steps from the Ganga or Kisi people in Cuba. Janheinz Jahn (1961:82) suggests that the dance came from the Sara peoples of Northern Nigeria where rows of boys dance in front of rows of girls, getting closer and closer until they touch and then separate from one another. In Cuba, however, *yuka* and *makuta* are rumba's antecedent dances. These are dances of Kongo-Angolan ancestry, that is, from the BaKongo, Luba, Lunda, and un-

doubtedly other central African peoples in what is now Congo, Angola, and Zaire (cf. Lopez-Valdes 1989; Fu-kiau 1990; Daniel 1989:85-91, 355-356). Touching or bumping of the thighs, navel, or pelvic areas among male and female dancers is characteristic of *yuka* and *makuta* and is also prominent in rumba.

6. Male dancing could also be interpreted as an outlet for the expression of homosexuality, however, homosexuality is not a prominent feature nor an apparent issue when viewing this particular dance.

7. In this essay, "Creole" is used to identify a new entity born or exhibited in Cuba from the mixture of African and European influence, but which is decidedly Cuban.

8. The *danzón* complex includes *danza*, *danzonete*, and *danzón*.

9. This particular weaving of separate complexes, that is, rumba complex and Yoruba complex, is attributed to Pedro Tapanes (Pello) and Francisco Zamora of Afro-Cuba, a traditional rumba group. It follows other rumba developments by combining elements of secular and sacred material. Here, however, both the dance and the music systems are fully combined. Both types of drums are used simultaneously (congas and *bata*), both types of songs (rumba songs and Yoruba chants) and lyrics are sung alternately, and three types of dance are integrated alternately—rumba, Yoruba, and *casino* (a dance similar to what is known in the United States as *salsa* dancing). Videotapes of this dance and other examples of Cuban dance are available through Images, Northampton, MA 01060.

10. *Son* is a complex that comprises many twentieth century social, popular dances, including *mambo*, *chachachá*, *mozambique*, *casino*, etc. *Casino* is the most recent of *son* examples. Related to *salsa*, it is often danced in a square or circle of couples with a caller for specific steps (for example, *rueda de casino*).

11. At the time of my research, this variation of rumba was not danced nor discussed frequently. Many informants did not recognize the term and others said that it was so fast that practically no one could dance it; only musicians could play it. Still others said it was more typical of Santiago de Cuba.

12. The Ministry of Culture differentiates between professional and amateur dancers, but includes traditional performers as amateurs. "Traditional" in this sense refers to dancers and musicians who have not trained formally in schools. I consider these traditional dancers to be professionals who are often masters in particular dance complexes and who serve as models and *informantes* for professional company members (see Daniel 1989:4-7, 175).

13. I spoke with five Ministry officials, several directors of

dance and theater companies, many dancers and musicians, and the common people to ascertain whether the selection of rumba was from the top down or bottom up. The vast majority cited the National Folkloric Company as the initiator of professional rumba performance. I have concluded that this came about in both ways: from the administrative level down, but also from the people/workers' level up (see Daniel 1990 for evidence of the influence of tourism in promoting rumba). There is tremendous participation in ground level organization, that is people/workers (*assembleas*), by Cuban dancers and musicians where consensus must be obtained for efforts, trends, and programs to go forward. The workers are constrained, nevertheless, by national ideology, mass communication programming, and peer pressure towards uniformity with official statements. The emphasis to promote rumba particularly began at the administrative level of the National Folkloric Dance Ensemble, specifically with Rogelio Martínez-Furé and Teresa González, the ethnologist and director respectively. Their affinity for Afro-Cuban traditions and their professional interests in generally improving the National Folkloric Ensemble matched national objectives in cultural terms. Their suggestions and plans are approved by Ministry officials at the programming level of organization.

14. In this paper I follow the methods of Allegra Fuller Snyder (1988) in analyzing rumba, but at only two levels; the complete analysis, including seven levels, is the basis of a dissertation (Daniel 1989) and a forthcoming book (Indiana University Press).

15. I lived in Havana among tourists and predominantly light-skinned Cubans for one month in 1985. In 1986 I returned to Cuba for one year of study, living for four months in Havana among light-skinned Cubans while working with mostly dark-skinned Cubans. I then began alternating between Havana and Matanzas, living and working among predominantly dark-skinned families. During that year, I travelled to Santiago de Cuba, Camagüey, and Holguín for short visits (1-2 weeks at a time) living among light-skinned Cubans and working among dark-skinned Cubans. On these shorter trips my accommodations were often in tourist hotels, but my steady household arrangements in Cuba for that year were my Havana apartment (in a building for long-term foreign workers) and my second family's household in the Matanzas marina, a predominantly Afro-Cuban area. On subsequent visits in 1988 and 1990, I lived in tourist accommodations while travelling between my Cuban families, both dark- and light-skinned Cubans in Havana, Matanzas, and Santiago.

16. My comments are guarded relative to young, light-skinned Cubans. I lived much of my field experience among dark-skinned Cubans or within the folkloric dance community, which is predominantly dark-skinned. I did not spend much time specifically among younger Cubans, particularly light-skinned ones. Cuban society, however, is not so highly structured in terms of generational groups; all age groups are usually represented at most social events.

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