Fat Maria

By Gerardo Ortega Rodríguez

Maria la Gorda, the beautiful beach of Western Cuba, bathed by the waters of the Ensenada de las Corrientes, is named after a legend that over time has been enriched with various versions. All of them, however, start from their pirate origin and coincide in telling us about a beautiful young woman who was kidnapped and was left, as part of the booty, along with other women, in the power of the pirate who made this place his usual camp.

Some contradict each other about Maria, pointing out her Portuguese or Spanish origin and locating the plundered population and therefore, starting point of the legend – in Venezuela or Honduras. The criterion of its Portuguese origin is supported by the fact that a pirate named María Cruz, from that nation, actually existed around 1820 and visited this coast frequently.

The beautiful legend wants Maria, shortly after the kidnapping, to have remained with her companions in this place, under the care of the second in command of the pirate who never returned... that with her arts and charms has convinced her guardian and then dominated the rest, becoming herself a pirate and later, already thick and old, has been owner of warehouse, inn and inn for filibusters and smugglers. The use of her old companions and other younger ones, in the entertainment of her regulars, accuse her in another version, of having directed the westernmost lupanar of the Caribbean, for the solace of the so-called "Brothers of the Coast".

Legends and historical references are intertwined with the beauty of the beach and the rugged surroundings, each sunset, always on the sea.

And there remains the image of that thick woman, cooking for diners always cheerful by the company of wine and women at this point of the toponymy of Guanahacabibes.

It was still this place, back in 1830, the Guanal de la Vigía Antigua, in the letters of seasickness, but since 1880, nobody wants to call it by another name than the one it has now: María la Gorda.