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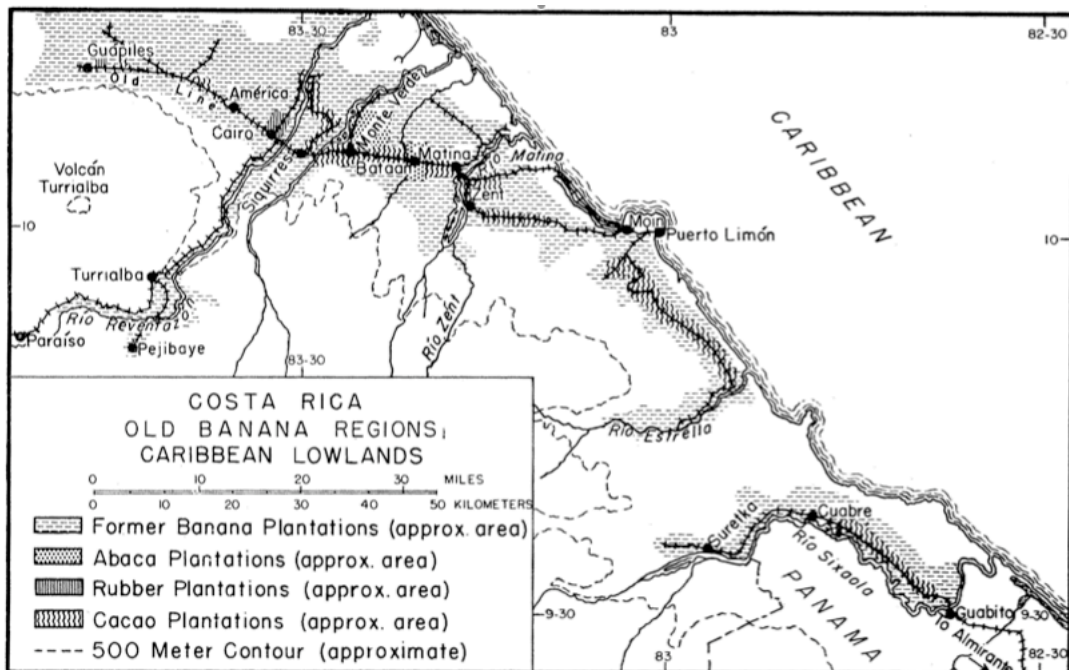
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Research Question

The United Fruit Company, in 1990 renamed to Chiquita Brands International, was founded in Boston in 1899 as a fusion of various smaller companies. Throughout the 20th century and until today the United Fruit Company (UFCo) functioned as an immensely influential political actor in the Central American Isthmus and parts of South America. Eager to attract foreign investments and to modernize local economies, Central American governments granted land concessions mainly to the UFCo and the Standard Fruit Company in exchange for infrastructure such as harbors and railways. Thousands of hectares of fertile land were transformed into monoculture plantations producing fruit exclusively for foreign markets, predominantly North America. Thus, the production and commercialization functioned as a direct prolongation of the North American market, the plantations operated politically independently, while greatly influencing the politics of the national states they geographically belonged to. The term “banana republic” emerged as an indication of the multinationals’ strong influence on political decisions and the countries’ growing dependence on the production and exportation of the fruit.

The first enclave of the United Fruit Company was established in Costa Rica, in the province of Limón, after Minor Cooper Keith, “the uncrowned king of Central America” (Dosal 1993: 55), had made his first contact with banana plantings. Immigrants from Jamaica and other Caribbean islands, who had arrived to Costa Rica’s Atlantic Coast in the 1870s to work on Keith’s railroad construction, started to plant bananas along the railroad tracks during delays in the construction work. The hot and humid climate of Limón proved suitable for the banana growing and, during the following decades up to 1913, the banana export from Limón boomed. Until the 1930s, the company operated almost freely and without state intervention in the region. The immigrants from the islands, mostly Anglophone blacks, descendants of former slaves or freedmen of the Caribbean sugar plantations, settled down in the province. The history of Limón and thus its present day appearance has been shaped by these migration movements and the UFCo’s expansion and subsequent withdrawal from the Caribbean Coast towards the end of the first half of the century.

In 2003, I spent six months in Puerto Limón, one of the most important harbors of the country, and the capital of the province. The noticeable difference between the Caribbean region and the rest of the country awakened my interest in the history of Limón and its people, which is so closely intertwined with the history of the *Yunai*, as the UFCo was and is referred to by locals.

When, a few years later, I spent a year as a visiting student in San José, at the department of history of the *Universidad de Costa Rica*, my interest in the subject deepened. The powerful fruit company played a crucial role in the history of Costa Rica, even though the effects of the company's political, economic and environmental influence were not as severe as in neighboring countries like Honduras or Guatemala, the UFCo is considered a symbol for oppression and exploitation. Especially in the first half of the 20th century, the company acted almost without state control, bananas were the major export product by that time and Minor Keith held a monopoly position over all means of transportation in Limón. The company seemed to have unlimited power.

Due to the company's seemingly unlimited power and the imperialistic character of its operations, my interest soon became focused on resistance movements against this situation of extreme exploitation. I assumed that, under such circumstances, resistance movements were bound to emerge, although during my year at the *Universidad de Costa Rica*, resistance among the black population had not been a topic of much interest. Even though the UFCo was so central to the country's development, and the Afro-Caribbeans of Costa Rica were so closely tied to the company's history, there is a tendency of historically neglecting the black population in Costa Rica and Central America. As Elisavinda Echeverri Gent points out: "[T]he Central America of books, and indeed of our imaginations, does not have very many black actors" (Echeverri-Gent 1992: 275). Even though the histories of the company and the Afro-Caribbeans in Costa Rica are inevitably intertwined, the company has received far more attention than the workers in historical studies concerning Central America. Further, a certain stereotype of the "docile negro" has added to the perception of the Costa Rican blacks as rather passive and submissive. In various sources the docility and obedient behavior of the Afro-Caribbean immigrant is mentioned. The *Gaceta Oficial*, a Hispanic Costa Rican newspaper, announced in

1874: “Los negros jamaquinos empleados en la obra de Limón son una colección admirable de hombres muy bien portados”. Another Spanish paper, the *Correo del Atlántico* showed consent with this statement by writing in 1915: “La colonia de Jamaica es de las más tranquilas y amantes de la paz que se conoce” (in Bourgois 1994: 94). In his study of the history of Limón Jeffrey Casey (Casey 1979: 112) states that relatively few acts of labor unrest among Afro-Caribbeans on UFCo plantations in Limón can be named and that the majority of the UFCo workers actually supported the exploitative system.

This seeming lack of resistance, the myth of the docile negro and the tendency of historically neglecting the Afro-Caribbeans, caused doubt as well as a series of questions I needed further research to find answers to. For this reason, I concentrated my first research on strikes, as I considered them an indicator of noncompliance and a rather easily traceable form of proving the existence of resistance among the Afro-Caribbeans. This first research showed that only one big strike of the banana workers was repeatedly mentioned: the strike of 1934 led by the Communist party, which, however, lacked participation of the Afro-Caribbean workers. As this lack of participation was not entirely explicable to me, and my approach to the subject based on Foucault’s assumption that “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault 1990: 95), the focus of my research shifted from the question of whether there *was* resistance, to the question of *how* this resistance was *expressed*. The term resistance had to be reconsidered, and other forms of voicing resistance than collective strike movements had to be taken into account. Further, based on a statement by William Rodman, a resident of Puerto Viejo de Talamanca, a town at the southern Caribbean Coast, the non-existence of strikes other than the famous strike in 1934 had to be doubted. Mr. Rodman asserts:

“Now people are saying that the first strike against the banana company was in 1934. They’re mad. Tell them I say they’re mad. You had strikes before I was born and recently after I was born.”

(William Rodman in Palmer 2005: 139)

With these uncertainties of whether there were strikes or not, and whether there was resistance or not, I was forced to first define what was to be understood by resistance

and to move away from an approach where the only considered strategy to express resistance were collective actions such as strike movements and uprisings.

Thus, my focus moved to those forms of resistance that often skip the historical record, the subtle and disguised forms of expressing noncompliance with the powerful, those forms of resistance, that in many cases do not find their way in official historiography: James Scott named them “everyday forms of resistance” (Scott 1990a: 45), indicating their continuous performance on a daily basis, not requiring planning, nor highly elaborate organizing and often carried out individually. More precisely, I hoped to find answers to the following questions: Which forms of everyday resistance were practiced among the Afro-Caribbean immigrant workers in Limón before 1950? How did the Afro-Caribbean immigrant workers express dissent with the system of exploitation and oppression they were living in? Which were the main social spheres where such resistance took place? Focusing on these questions, I hope to demonstrate, that although in a position of exploitation, the Afro-Caribbean immigrant workers found various ways of resisting the company’s power, managed to secure certain realms of self-determination and independence and found ways of acting in opposition to the company’s domination. I further intend to show how they shaped and changed their reality owing to those actions and how the Afro-Caribbean immigrants influenced the development of the Province of Limón and the United Fruit Company’s history in Limón and Costa Rica.

In the first chapter, the theoretical background of the study will be outlined. The term “resistance” will be discussed and the main methods of expressing resistance on a daily basis will be presented. Further, I will briefly describe the methods used and the various phases of the investigation process at the end of the chapter.

The second chapter consists of an overview of the existing literature on the topic of Afro-Caribbean resistance on UFCo plantations in Limón and short descriptions of their contents.

In the third chapter, the historical context of the study will be presented. First the Afro-Caribbean immigration to Limón, the reasons for the massive migration movement and the beginning of their settlement in Limón will be explained. I will then focus on the Afro-Caribbeans’ interactions with the United Fruit Company and their role in the beginning of the banana business. In a next step their daily realities

and working conditions as wage laborers or subcontractors of the company will be presented.

Chapter four will discuss the main methods of expressing resistance according to the previously determined categories. Firstly, the importance of folktales and legends will be outlined. Secondly various forms of petty acts of resistance will be presented. In a third step I will analyze the continuous abandonment and migratory movements and their relevancy in the company's struggle against constant labor shortage. Finally, the fourth subchapter will present the most important social realms of resistance carved out and defended by the Afro-Caribbean workers.

Chapter five will draw the conclusions of the previously discussed and give a short outlook of possible further areas of investigation.

1. Theories of everyday resistance

The image of the docile and obedient banana worker, peaceful and loyal to his employer, stands against the image of highly self-determined workers, objecting to the total control of the company and challenging their power by continuously organizing strikes and revolts in spite of the lack of unions and state support. How can such disagreement occur if not for the reason of a substantial difference in the understanding of the term *resistance*? Resistance, especially on plantations, is in many cases equaled with huge collective uprisings, mostly including violence on either side strikers as well as plantation owners. Such uprisings require a high degree of organization and participation in order to succeed. In Limón, this did not occur until 1934, when the Communist party finally supported the workers' causes and provided resources and support. This development can be partly explained by the growing number of Hispanic workers from the Costa Rican highlands involved in the business and employed on the UFCo plantations. In the earlier banana years in Limón, unions were unimaginable and the only occasional support the Afro-Caribbean immigrant workers received was provided by the British Consul of Limón. The people thus lacked resources as well as means of communication and a strike of this magnitude lay beyond their possibilities. As has been stressed, this does not mean that no resistance took place. If resistance is given a slightly broader meaning, a whole variety of forms of opposing the powerful opens and can be the subject of analysis. In an enclave economy, as immigrants without state protection, and with an employer as powerful as the UFCo, slightly different forms of resistance have to be used and thus searched for.

1.1. Interpretations of resistance

Before analyzing the various expressions of resistance on the UFCo plantations, thus, a few considerations about the term "resistance" and its meaning within the context of this study have to be made. Organized resistance that has revolutionary intentions and therefore questions the system of domination and subordination itself, contrasts with

unorganized, individual and opportunistic forms of resistance without revolutionary ends, acting within the system of domination. Unorganized and individual resistance might appear as mere self-help, whereas revolts that fundamentally question the situation of domination per se, are hard to find in history. In order to establish a starting point for this analysis, the following definition of James Scott is useful:

“Class resistance includes any act(s) by member(s) of a subordinate class that are intended either to mitigate or deny claims (for example rents, taxes, prestige) made on that class by superordinate classes (for example landlords, large farmers, the state) or to advance its own claims (for example work, land, charity, respect) vis-à-vis those superordinate classes.”

(Scott 1990b: 290)

Scott thus provides a very broad definition of what can be considered resistance, including petty, individual acts such as tax or rent evasion. He underlines, that acts of resistance do not necessarily intend to be revolutionary, and in many cases do not challenge existing relations of power. Eugene Genovese names this “resisting within the parameters of accommodation” (in Munro 1993: 24). If the total breakdown of the system is not within the realm of the imaginable, other ways have to be found and practiced. Thus, every act that intends to thwart existing structures and power relations can be considered resistance, according to Scott. He argues that the form of expressing resistance, either openly challenging the dominant, or secretly acting against them, depends on the degree of domination. The motives and aims behind the actions usually remain the same. A situation of almost total control, given in slavery or serfdom, requires different forms of resistance, than resistance among wage laborers or peasants. Among powerless groups, seeking to improve their living and working conditions, the forms of resistance might have an individualistic and spontaneous character. This does not imply, however, that they lack coordination or even effectiveness (Scott 1989: 51).

In *The Prose of Counter Insurgency* Ranajit Guha (Guha 1988) criticizes the myth of peasant insurrections being spontaneous and unprepared outbreaks of anger and frustration. He suggests that no insurrection, strike, revolt or uprising is an event,

which has not been preceded by some type of mobilization and organization. Many other forms of protest precede the actual and open declaration of war on the oppressors. Guha underlines that the peasants performed their actions consciously, and that there was a will and reason behind them. His perception is therefore contrary to metaphors that compare peasant uprisings to natural phenomena, that deny the subalterns' active participation and preparation and make them seem mindless and "external to the peasant's consciousness" (Guha 1988: 47). According to Guha, some form of mobilization and certain expressions of noncompliance precede all rebellions. (Guha 1988: 45). Thus, Guha's interpretation emphasizes that the visibility of resistance is not the sole evidence for the existence of opposition. He focuses on the subalterns' own will, criticizing the understanding of rebellion as a re-action and "instinctive and almost mindless response to physical suffering" (Guha 1988: 47). This perception of resistance, thus, includes not only collective action, but also less visible forms of opposing the powerful. Resistance is more of a state of mind and determination that the existing structures can no longer be tolerated, than an organized happening necessarily leading to a substantial change of the situation.

Lal Brij, Doug Munro and Edward Beechert's work on plantation workers (Lal et. al. 1993), offers various approaches to the term resistance. In terms of the Ethiopian proverb "When the great lord passes, the wise peasant bows deeply and silently farts" the authors point out the various subtle and silent ways of opposition that tend to be overseen. Maureen Tayal underlines that:

"[A]cts of resistance on the estates were usually individualistic, of a type which did not require premeditation, and almost always ineffectual except from the point of view of providing momentary psychological release from an intolerable burden of frustration."

(in Munro: 1993: 23f).

The individualistic characters of many forms of resistance are underlined by Scott as well, whereas the effectiveness is not given importance. Scott underlines that an act of resistance is not defined by its consequences. He considers resistance in most cases consisting of small and routinely performed actions, mostly hidden from the public:

“Observable resistance is much like the Tipp of an iceberg – simply a small fraction of the totality” (in Munro 1993: 30). The effect of these forms of resistance is marginal, the situation of exploitation remains, but it proves a general disagreement and noncompliance with the dominant system. This “everyday resistance” according to Scott, is not a less effective form of resistance; it simply lacks publicity and therefore tends to remain unseen. Everyday resistance makes no headlines, as the protagonists seek to keep it hidden. If it does become public, the protagonist tends to remain anonymous (Scott 1985: 36). Further, everyday resistance does not necessarily intend to challenge the source of oppression. In most cases, needs as food or land are more essential, and the subordinates’ priority is to improve their living standards or even to merely secure a living. A total breakdown of the system is not intended and resistance always happens within the dominant discourse, as “for anything less than completely revolutionary ends the terrain of dominant discourse is the only plausible arena of struggle” (Scott 1990a: 103). The immediate gains of the actions are thus given priority. Further, open rebellion in a situation of dependence or even repression is highly risky, and in order to ensure their own survival and prevent a possible violent response by the dominant, subordinate groups tend to avoid the open declaration of noncompliance. Therefore, Scott underlines, peasantries all over the world have historically made their presence felt through everyday resistance, coinciding with Eugene Genovese who suggests that only very few slave rebellions can be named (in Munro 1993: 23). Within the context of slave resistance, Scott underlines:

“ [Everyday forms of resistance] which rarely if ever called into question the system of slavery *as such*, nevertheless achieved far more in their unannounced, limited, and truculent way than the few heroic and brief armed uprisings about which so much has been written.”

(Scott 1990b: 34)

The term “resistance” gains a broader meaning by considering these approaches. Guha as well as Genovese and Scott point out that neither the effectiveness, nor the collectiveness or the visibility of dissident practices are to be considered preconditions for using the term “resistance” to describe certain actions. A historical

record of consent and submission, thus, does not necessarily implicate that no expressions of resistance were articulated and no critical opinion toward the dominant system existed among the subordinate. It rather leads to the assumption, that resistance was expressed in more subtle and veiled forms, which might not have found their way into the records.

1.1.1. Hidden Transcripts

A first step in the process of analyzing everyday forms of resistance is to find the valves, through which the hidden transcripts of the subordinate were made public and thus historically traceable.

As mentioned above, Ranajit Guha criticizes the perception of rebellions as natural phenomena, without previous actions and mobilization and denying the subordinates' consciousness, will and reason behind the uprisings. Scott's approach considered, the "spontaneous" uprising seems as such because the subordinate feign consent with the dominant system in order to avoid repression. For the public eye, the actions might be perceived as docile and peaceful, their attitudes as obedient. What is found "offstage", however, in spaces or situations where the subordinate are unseen and unheard, a different attitude is expressed. This difference between the behavior among fellow subordinates and the behavior in the presence of the dominant, is what Scott denominates the *hidden transcript* and the *public transcript*. In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* Scott repeatedly cites the Jamaican proverb "play fool to catch wise" (Scott 1990a: 3), which very accurately expresses the signification of the public transcript in a situation of domination. The expression "playing fool" indicates that some kind of information or knowledge is withheld from the dominant, a knowledge which is meant to remain unknown and is thus only expressed in the hidden transcript. The hidden transcript of the company workers, for instance, was only publicly articulated when no overseer or company official was nearby. It was produced for a different audience and under different constraints of power. However, hidden transcripts do not only contain speech, but a whole range of practices, such as theft, intentional shabby work, or poaching, pilfering and clandestine tax evasion. Further, the content of the hidden transcript can be expressed in the telling and re-telling of folktales, songs and legends. By these methods, a hidden transcript is

exchanged and passed on to descendants or other members of the subordinate groups. If the message is public, the messenger remains hidden, whereas the message tends to be encoded if the messenger speaks out openly. Which circumstances have to be given in order that the hidden transcript will “storm the stage” (Scott 1990a: 16) is unclear. Still, the sudden and completely unpremeditated outbreak of a revolt can be doubted. According to Scott, it is merely a question of opportunity if the hidden transcript becomes public, or remains in the shadows of trees or the privacy of taverns and alehouses (Scott 1990a: 14ff).

1.1.2. Carving out offstage social spaces

In order to be nourished and to spread, the hidden transcript needs offstage social spaces, where the open declaration of noncompliance out of the earshot of the powerful becomes possible. If an idea is never outspoken, it remains unreal, as any idea needs mutuality, the hidden transcript needs a public that excludes the dominant. Many places can serve as a stage for the hidden transcript: private rooms or sheds, secret assemblies, gatherings, sects, churches, lodges, pubs and taverns, carnivals and other festivities. Scott states that “neither everyday forms of resistance nor the occasional insurrection can be understood without reference to the sequestered social sites at which such resistance can be nurtured and given meaning” (Scott 1990a: 20). UFCo workers’ camps could serve as spaces for exchanging expressions of dissent as well as gatherings in public places, lodges or churches. However, social sites of resistance do not necessarily have to be tied to an actual physical location. Situations in which subordinates can express noncompliance without being heard or understood by the dominant can be regarded as social sites of resistance. Further, they can be social spheres of high self-determination, where the dominant struggle to maintain control. Dialects, codes or musical expressions can be considered such spaces, as well as the use of certain languages or codes (Scott 1990a: 121). As sequestered social sites “are won and defended in the teeth of power” (Scott 1990a: 119), their mere existence represents an act of resistance. The most striking evidence for the importance of these sites is the effort of the dominant to control or even erode them, as they state a threat to their power and authority.

“Slave owners in both the West Indies and North America took great pains to prevent the creation of sites where a hidden transcript could be created and shared. They were, of course, greatly aided by the fact that their subjects were a newly and traumatically assembled population torn from familiar contexts of social action.”

(Scott 1990a: 127)

Although the expression “newly and traumatically assembled population” is clearly meant to describe the realities of slaves recently brought to the Caribbean plantations, it can be adapted, to a certain degree, to the Caribbean immigrants in Limón. The workers were not natives, and had just recently arrived to the country, living a reality markedly distinct from their hopes and expectations. In Limón, too, the efforts of plantation overseers to avoid nightly assemblies had reasons beyond the fight against malaria, and the disapproval of the religious practices of the Afro-Caribbeans can be interpreted as efforts to erode offstage social sites. Plantation owners invested high amounts of money and energy into strategies to prevent the creation of sites, where a hidden transcript could be created and shared. Laws in order to forbid assemblies and meetings on streets and other public spaces were passed, and further, in the case of enclave economies where workers were predominantly immigrants, measures were taken to ethnically divide and separate them to avoid feelings of solidarity and thus collective action.

However, eliminating all kinds of communication among subordinates is impossible and was not achieved even in the most oppressive and brutal forms of social control (Scott 1990a: 127). As the UFCo’s aim to control their workers’ private lives is hardly comparable to systems of control and oppression in slave societies, it can be assumed that many possibilities of exchanging dissident ideas were found and carved out by the Afro-Caribbean immigrant workers. Still, the dominant seek to control the subordinates’ offstage communication, while the subordinates seek to protect their social sites. Different strategies are used in order to do so, as for example to establish a system of peer pressure in order to prevent members of the subordinate group to “hobnob with the elites” (Scott 1990a: 130). Barriers between the dominant and the subordinate can help to establish a hidden transcript, and by applying various

strategies, such as “playing dumb” or intentionally lying can be strategies to hold up these barriers (Scott 1990a: 130).

1.1.3. Folktales and trickster figures

The mere existence of legends of bandits and tricksters plays a crucial role in practices of everyday resistance, as they transmit certain kinds of ideas and create social spaces. In the form of folktales, legends and myths, expressions of resistance can become public and remain veiled at the same time. As no direct oppression is intended, messages that are publicly delivered need more than one meaning, one of which has to be politically harmless. The expression of opposition through folk culture is much like “the smuggling of portions of the hidden transcript, suitably veiled, onto the public stage” (Scott 1990a: 157). Folk culture can be considered property of a certain class and shared characteristics of this class appear in their cultural life, such as rituals, dances, folktales and religious beliefs. The peasants themselves decide what is of use, what to transmit and perform. The realm of cultural life is not untouched by the dominant class, but it is a space where the power lies in the subordinates’ hands. Further, it is relatively easy to make a message accessible to only one social group. Even if the dominant grasp the hidden meaning of criticism, the subtle form of expressing it complicates repressive reactions (Scott 1990a: 157ff).

Special forms of such veiled expressions of resistance are tales of trickster figures. Trickster figures usually appear in the form of either human or animal characters that trick the dominant although their weaker position would normally make this impossible. According to Scott, in most peasant, serf or slave societies a form of legendary trickster figure is found (Scott 1990a: 162). The important element that those trickster legends contain, is that the figure does not win by strength but by wit: “De bukrah [whites] hab scheme, en de nigger hab trick, en ebery time de bukrah scheme once, de nigger trick twice” (in Scott 1990a: 163). The less powerful position is acknowledged, but not submitted to. In Limón, the tales of the small but astute spider Anansi were passed on from one generation to the other.

Another form of trickery that appears in legends and myths is the “social bandit”, a bandit who takes from the rich and gives to the poor, a Robin Hood figure

challenging those who dispose of power and control. According to Hobsbawm, banditry can be considered an expression of collective resistance (Hobsbawm 2007: 21) and although, he argues, most social bandits can be traced down to an individual and a location, their actual existence is of no importance. Social banditry is a phenomenon, which exists throughout countless societies, predominantly agricultural, marked by unequal distributions of power and resources. Even the most powerful empires considered normal a certain amount of banditry (Hobsbawm 2007: 28ff). One of the most important characteristics of a social bandit is that he is seen as a criminal by the authorities, whereas the fellow subordinates consider him a hero and symbol of justice. Further, Hobsbawm underlines that social bandits are no revolutionaries; they do not intend to restructure the system, their actions are merely an expression of their unwillingness to submit, a form of direct self-help and reforming (Hobsbawm 2007: 41ff). “They cannot abolish oppression. But they prove that justice is possible, that the poor men need not be humble, helpless and meek” (Hobsbawm 1981: 56).

Even under the highest degree of domination, legends and folktales are told and re-told by members of the subordinate groups. They carve out spaces for the expression of dissent without taking risks, and the climate of opinion is nourished by their contents.

1.1.4. Counter-moralities and petty acts of resistance

Domination is always linked with the appropriation of resources like land, taxes or infrastructure. The subordinate group is deprived of material resources, of food or of access to land. The most extreme case of such deprivation and total appropriation can be found in the relationship of slave and slave-owner. Still, as will be discussed in more detail, the plantation laborers’ working and living conditions showed some similarities to slave work, which can lead to the conclusion that similar forms of resistance occurred.

In a case of appropriation of land and resources, the simplest form of resisting the unjust distribution, is claiming rights to be included in the distribution of goods. The simple act of stealing from the dominant can express such a claim. Whether the subordinate steals because of plain need and starvation, or because of openly

expressing dissent with the existing structures does not influence the assumption, that he considered it his right to take what was deprived from him. An assumption discussed by Alex Liechtenstein (Liechtenstein 1988), who argues, that slaves developed a counter-morality in contrast to the dominant white morals, which justified stealing as well as pilfering, arson, poaching and other forms of acquiring the dominant's possessions. If slaves considered it their moral right to take from their masters' food storage and livestock in order to achieve sustenance, a similar consideration can be applied to the UFCo's employees, who in many cases lacked nourishment or land to grow their own crops. Liechtenstein describes this phenomenon with the term "moral economy", which he defined as "the notion that an oppressed group or class develops an autonomous conception of their economic and social rights, essentially drawing a line across which the ruling class cannot legitimately step" (Liechtenstein 1988: 415). Thus, the oppressed group does not only steal, plunder or poach in order to prevent starvation, but they understand it as their right. This does not imply, however, that they do not know and experience the consequences of these acts, but as Robert Falls, stated: "[Whipping] was easier to stand when the stomach was full" (in Liechtenstein 1988: 418). Even in cases, where sustenance was not the immediate cause, theft and plundering did happen, which allows drawing the conclusion that more than considered a right, theft of property can be interpreted as an act of resisting the dominant values and a way to satisfy aggression and the urge for revenge. The oppressed therewith create a counter-morality, where theft of property is not considered neither immoral nor a crime. Another statement underlines this approach, as Charles C. Jones mentions that in the United States "[to] steal and not to be detected is a merit among [slaves] ...And the vice which they hold in the greatest abhorrence is that of telling upon another" (in Scott 1990a: 188). Thus, what is regarded a crime from the dominants' point of view, is regarded a right and even a merit among the oppressed. Can, thus, the conclusion be drawn that theft of property was a strategy of actually threatening the existing power relations? It can be argued, that stealing is simply a method of coping and of satisfying hunger and expressing feelings of anger or the urge of revenge, and that theft left power "untouched and unchallenged" as David Matza argues (in Liechtenstein 1988: 414).

Scott as well as Liechtenstein assert, however, that more than just a coping-mechanism or, as put by Scott a “safety-valve” (Scott 199a: 177f), theft was a form of rejecting the existing structure, of expressing disobedience and the lack of the willingness to obey. This willingness to obey is seen as a precondition for the maintenance of power by Hobsbawm, who also underlines that social bandits meant to challenge those disposing of power and resources (Liechtenstein 1988: 421ff; Hobsbawm 2007: 24).

Further, the purpose of mere self-help does not lessen the effect these acts of theft can cause if practiced routinely or collectively. Whether it was intended to threaten whole systems of exploitation, or to simply secure a living, acts such as theft and plundering could always cause massive damage. Scott further names the example of massive tax evasion, a form of protest that could easily threaten a whole state. On plantations, methods such as slow or sloppy work could very effectively paralyze the production process, as especially in the banana business, the time schedule was tight. Whole shipments of fruit could be ruined if the schedule was not maintained. Further petty forms of resistance can be foot-dragging, dissimulation, feigned ignorance, smuggling, poaching, sabotage, murder, assault, or such simple things as refusal and desertion (Scott 1989: 34). Although desertion is an important and effective method in the context of wars and armies, its relevancy in enclave economies and exploitative wage labor seems negligible. The idea behind the action of deserting an army, though, can be comparable to some methods used by plantation labors or slaves. Scott mentions the phenomenon of flight in this context, which was “throughout the centuries one of the common man’s most frequent and effective responses to oppression” (Scott 1990b: 245). Also labeled avoidance protest, flight and the simple abandonment of a workplace, a plantation or a region expresses a high level of discontent. Whereas it would have been named “flight” in slave societies, a wage laborer on a plantation could simply “leave” and migrate to another location. This freedom of movement provided the laborers with an effective tool of protest and, as will be discussed in a later chapter, presented a great challenge to the company.

“Everyday resistance” in this study is thus understood as the package of symbolic resistance in form of folktales and songs, the creation and existence of offstage social spaces for the exchange and spreading of dissident ideas and the practice of small and

in many cases individual acts of theft, poaching, plundering, sabotage, refusal, tricking or simply abandoning the workplaces, which were practiced by the Caribbean immigrant workers employed or contracted by the UFCo in the Limón Province.

1.2. Method

The clandestine character of many forms of every day resistance seems to complicate their historical analysis. Rarely cases of theft, of desertion or intentional slow work, even small strikes turned into newspaper headlines. The hidden transcript exchanged in taverns, in nightly assemblies or during religious ceremonies remained oral in the majority of cases, and is therefore hard to reconstruct. The question thus arises, how the subordinates' voices can be perceived, and by which methods can the hidden transcript be at least partly revealed? The process of investigation following this question was divided into four phases.

The first phase of investigation consisted of a close examination of the works of James Scott on the subject of everyday resistance and a few additional inputs by authors such as Eric Hobsbawm, Eugene Genovese and Ranajit Guha.

This theoretical background guided the creation of certain categories of focus. The three main categories, symbolic resistance, social realms of resistance and petty acts of resistance, were created. The categories served as a first structuring of the results and provided a useful frame for the further phases of the investigation process.

I started the second phase by collecting and analyzing existing literature on the subject. Most literature was found through online sources in various Journals accessible through the University of Vienna. I managed to obtain various very useful publications in the bookstore of the *Universidad de Costa Rica*, and a smaller number of works in the library of the University of Vienna and the library of the *Arbeiterkammer Wien*. In this first literature search I concentrated on academically asserted literature dealing with the subject. I soon discovered, however, that some additional material would be necessary in order to discuss the research questions. I drew this conclusion mainly because, as before discussed, the actual practices of the

immigrant workers were to their majority intended to remain hidden. Thus, I decided to include fictional literature in to my research, as especially about the UFCo's history in Central America, a variety of fictional literature exists and is popularly known. I justified this decision by using the words of Martín Ruiz, who states, that "novels are the collective memory the common people" (Martín Ruiz 2006: 117) and Eric Hobsbawm, who points out that "bandits belong to remembered history, as distinct from the history of books" (Hobsbawm 1981: 133). As the remembered history was what I was looking for, this approach seemed adequate. In a next step, the academically asserted, as well as the fictional literature were systematically searched, based on the before determined categories. Especially the category "petty acts of resistance", however, needed further investigation.

For the above mentioned reason, the third phase of investigation took place mainly in the National Archive and the National Library of Costa Rica, in San José. The intermediary results achieved through the analysis of published literature served as a starting point for the collection of additional material. Therewith I gained access to some additional academically asserted literature. Mainly, though, the focus lay on obtaining access to primary sources relating to the topic and fitting into the categories. Initially, the main sources of interest were English language newspapers representative of the Afro-Caribbeans of Limón. The access to the newspapers proved very difficult due to their age and conditions and limited my research to those newspapers that were available on microfilm. Further, the newspaper as a primary source had to be critically examined, as, although in English, it was published and thus only revealed what could be read publicly.

The vast amount of records of letters between company and railway officials starting in the late 19th century, which were available in the National Archive proved a more valuable source. It was a private communication between employees of the UFCo and the Costa Rican railway, and thus presented a source of information on certain working routines and occurrences, which hardly ever received publicity.

With this phase of investigation in San José, the search for material was completed.

The fourth phase thus consisted in the analysis of all the collected information. The information was now assigned to the different categories and analyzed with reference to the research question.

2. State of the Art

A chance to gain insight on the United Fruit Company's history in Central America from the workers' perspective has been given mostly through fictional literature, Miguel Ángel Asturias' banana trilogy, set in Guatemala, being the most famous among these. In the case of Limón, mainly two works have had great influence on the public perception of Limón's history and on this study. First, Anacristina Rossi's novel *Limón Blues*, which tells the story of Orlandus Robinson, a young Jamaican who is sent to Costa Rica by his relatives in order to provide an income and to become an independent farmer. The story of Orlandus can be seen as a stereotypical biography of a Jamaican immigrant in Limón, arriving with the aim of becoming as independent as possible and finally being forced to indulge and work for the company. Rossi's work tells a fictional story about a fictional individual, but develops in a historical setting. Rossi based her interpretations mainly on English newspapers from Limón, published between 1903 and 1952. The main character of the book represents an individual far from docile and silently enduring a system highly unfavorable to him. Neither, however, is he a revolutionary ringleader. Resistance appears more often in Orlandus thoughts than in his actions, but through his interactions with the obeah-man Charles Ferguson as well as Marcus Garvey, he finds access to opposition and resistance against the exploitation of the Afro-Caribbeans in Limón.

The second fictional piece of literature used in this study is the autobiography of Carlos Luis Fallas, *Mamita Yunai*. Fallas was born in the Costa Rican Central Valley and migrated to the Caribbean lowlands to work on the UFCo's plantations. Through his personal account of the happenings on the plantations, valuable insight about the organization of work and the working and living conditions was gained. Further, he describes the situation of total dependence of the so-called "independent producers" of the company and the policy of rejection. Although not a member of the Afro-

Caribbean community Fallas' work contains certain significant information on resistance practices.

As far as scientific literature is concerned, the workers' history, and especially the black Jamaican and Caribbean workers' history has not been a very frequent subject of analysis. There are, however, a few works that have studied Limón and its people. For my purposes the most important works have been those of Aviva Chomsky.

Chomsky's detailed monograph *West Indian workers and the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica 1870 – 1940* analyzes the UFCo's history in Limón from the point of view of its workers. Chomsky outlines the system of oppression and domination the workers lived in, as well as indicates the leaks and wholes of this system. In the introductory chapter Chomsky states: "prototypical confrontation activities were labour unions and strikes, but workers confronted company policies on other, more subtle levels as well, and in a wide variety of ways" (Chomsky 1996: 11). Although not explicitly titled as a study of resistance practices, Chomsky provides detailed insight in how the company was constantly challenged by the Afro-Caribbean immigrant workers. She entirely dedicates one chapter to the subject of health and medical practices among the UFCo workers, where she clearly identifies medicine as a realm of resistance. Measures taken by the company's medical department, as the distribution of quinine pills for the treatment as well as prevention of malaria are presented less as a social measure than as a mechanism of social control, appeasement and the creation of dependence on company medicine. Her presentation of the workers dramatically differs from the image of the "docile negro" and the passive mass of banana workers enduring their fate without much resistance. She identifies the Afro-Caribbean cultural heritage as a basis for resistance strategies, which opens a wide field of discussion about the role, for example, of religions and sects as organizations where ideas could be spread. Chomsky's approach, which concentrates on the exploited Afro-Caribbeans as historical actors and puts them in the center of her analysis, is seldom found in Costa Rican labor history, especially concerning the history of UFCo laborers. Still, resistance practices have discussed by various other scholars.

Elisavinda Echeverri Gent studied the first generation of black immigrants from the Caribbean islands in Costa Rica and Honduras. Labor history has been mainly associated with, as she points out, white highlanders and blacks have been left out to

a great extent. Her article *Forgotten Workers: British West Indians and the Early days of the Banana Industry in Costa Rica and Honduras* (Echeverri-Gent 1992) aims to underline this disregard and to present the means of an oppressed population to confront the dominant. She points out that: “The high degree of intimidation to which the British West Indian labourers were submitted in Honduras and Costa Rica did not eliminate their efforts to act collectively in challenge to the United Fruit Co” (Echeverri-Gent 1992: 289). Echeverri-Gent mentions several collective outbreaks of discontent long before the strike of 1934 among the immigrant workers, which provides some new aspects to the discussion, that generally only names the one big strike of 1934. By stating that the Afro-Caribbeans did not only participate in, but also organized strikes well before 1934, in the first decade of the 20th century, indicates the need to discuss the definition of what is to be understood by “strike” and “organized resistance” in opposition to “spontaneous”, or “unorganized” resistance. To the discussion of what is to be considered a strike, Carlos Hernández has contributed with his study *Los inmigrantes de St. Kitts 1910, un capítulo en la historia de los conflictos bananeros* (Hernández 1991a). The 1910 strike of the St. Kitts workers is presented as a combination of well planned action and a spontaneous but collective reaction to horrendous working and living conditions. Another essay (Hernández 1991b) is dedicated to the Costa Rican banana workers in general, analyzing how and when resistance took place between 1900 and 1955. Hernández underlines that strikes took place throughout the years from 1900 to 1955 on different farms and plantations, depending on the economic situation that influenced the banana business and therewith the workers’ situations. Hernández understands this continuous struggle as an important factor in the configuration and stabilization of the Costa Rican democracy.

Philippe Bourgois’ analysis of the banana business in Costa Rica, *Banano, Etnia y Lucha Social* (Bourgois 1994) as well as Vladimir de la Cruz in *Luchas Sociales de Costa Rica* (de la Cruz 2004) put into doubt the absence of resistance on the UFCo plantations before 1934, and especially the absence of the Jamaican and other Caribbean immigrant workers. Although Bourgois’ study focuses on the Costa Rican communist party and the formation of labor unions, he gives insight in the emerging of the stereotype of the “docile negro” and the passivity of the Jamaicans. Bourgois dates the first confrontation of black immigrants workers with authorities of the

railway construction to the Atlantic coast in the year 1879, even before the beginning of massive banana plantings and twenty years before the founding of the UFCo.

Not explicitly a study of resistance, Steve Marquardt's essay "*Green Havoc*": *Panama Disease, Environmental Change, and Labor Process in the Central American Banana industry* (Marquardt 2001), is especially useful for the understanding of the early banana years and the Afro-Caribbeans' role in Minor Keith's first experiments with the cultivation of bananas. He points out, that the experienced Afro-Caribbeans delivered highly valuable input and can be considered a major factor for the starting of the business and its success.

Apart from works on strikes and the formation of unions, various authors have concentrated more on the daily lives and cultures of the immigrants.

Paula Palmer uses a slightly different approach in *What happen – A folk history of Costa Rica's Talamanca Coast* (Palmer 2005). Mainly through interviewing the older generation of Talamanca's inhabitants she lets them tell their stories and views of how the company dominated the region. Especially concerning medical practices of the people, new aspects of how important the self-determinedness of the social realm was to the inhabitants and how little they actually depended on company medicine. Further, Palmer lets some inhabitants retell the stories of Anansi the spider, stories about how the small and powerless can still win over the big and powerful with wit and intelligence. Even though resistance is not the topic of her work, it is implicitly underlined, how many realms of the Talamancan's social life was dominated by it. To understand how resistance was rooted in the immigrants' everyday lives, also the work of Carmen Murillo (Murillo 1999) is insightful, as well as Dorothy Mosby's study about Afro-Costa Rican literature (Mosby 2003). With this study, Mosby rescued what is usually hidden and veiled – the thoughts of the subordinate and their ideas of resistance and justice.

Also studied by Mosby and Chomsky as well as Palmer, Ronald Harpelle contributes to the study of resistance among banana workers by closely analyzing the various churches and religious sects that spread among the Caribbean immigrants in Limón. In *Ethnicity, Religion and Repression: The Denial of African Heritage in Costa Rica* (Harpelle 1994) he emphasizes the importance of religious cults, such as Obeah, Myalism, Pocomía or Cumina, in resistance practices among Afro-Caribbeans in

Limón. Especially his description of the harsh and repressive reactions of both the Costa Rican authorities and the UFCo to the open practicing of the cults, were insightful.

One of the most extensive studies of the immigrants daily lives and their relation with the company is Lara Putnam's *The Company They Kept – Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica* (Putnam 2002). Putnam's approach is the first to explicitly mention gender issues and especially focuses on women and their role in society. Putnam's approach to the subject is to study popular behavior among the migrants within the context of the enclave as well as the national state they were living in. In the context of everyday resistance, especially her point, that neither the company nor the state could really influence the personal behavior, the family values or the domestic order of the immigrants is interesting, as it again underlines the high degree of self-determinedness in many realms of the migrants' lives. Putnam even puts into question the direct relatedness of rising banana exports, the UFCo power and the Caribbean immigration.

3. The Afro-Caribbean immigrants and the United Fruit

Company in Limón

The focus of this chapter is to present the United Fruit Company's history in Limón from the workers' perspective. The main objective is to describe the relationship of workers and the UFCo from the beginning of banana cultivation in the 1870s, during the banana boom years and subsequent decline of exports before World War I, until the abandonment of the Limón plantations due to the Panama Disease in the late 1930s.

First, the reasons for the massive migration movement from the Caribbean islands to the Costa Rican Atlantic coast will be discussed. In a following step their role in the beginning and expansion of banana cultivation, and later the founding of the UFCo will be studied. Thirdly, I will describe their living and working conditions as workers and subcontractors for the mighty company, implying the main reasons for discontent and complaint.

3.1. Immigration to Limón

Orlandus Robinson, the protagonist of Rossi's novel *Limón Blues*, arrived at the Costa Rican Atlantic coast in 1904, sent there by his mother, who had instructed him to settle in the village of Cahuita, plant bananas and secure a living for him and his family in Jamaica: "Prince, tu papá sigue enfermo y en Jamaica no hay futuro. Youh plant bananas an send us de money" (Rossi 2007: 14). The fourteen-year-old protagonist arrives in Limón 5 years after the founding of the UFCo and during the time, when exports were increasing rapidly and large parts of the province of Limón were continuously turned into plantations. More than thirty years before his arrival, the massive wave of migration from the Caribbean islands to the Central American Isthmus had begun:

"A las dos de la tarde de hoy, fondeó en este Puerto, procedente de Jamaica, la Goleta Lizzie de 117 toneladas al mando de su capitán Crighir, 7 hombres de tripulación, y 123 trabajadores para la empresa del ferrocarril, y además 3 mujeres (...)."

(*Gaceta Oficial* 1872 in: Duncan and Meléndez 2005: 86)

The mentioned group of 123 workers that arrived on a ship from Kingston at the harbor of Port Limón in 1872 was one the first group of immigrants from the Caribbean islands who traveled to Costa Rica. These immigrants, in most of the literature referred to as *West Indians*, *Afro-Caribbeans*, or *Afro-Antilleans* for the most part consisted of descendants of slaves, or freedmen themselves, who had been brought to the islands to work on sugar plantations during the transatlantic slave trade. After the abolition and with the decline of the sugar industry, work had become scarce on the islands and strategies in order to secure subsistence had to be looked for elsewhere. A relatively easy and convenient journey from the islands to Costa Rica with ships operating frequently between several Caribbean harbors and Limón was undoubtedly one crucial factor for the determination of their destination.

One of the main reasons for the massive migration movement, however, can be considered the construction of a railway line from the Costa Rican Central Valley to the Caribbean Coast. In the 19th century coffee exports constituted the country's main income. The transportation of coffee from the plantations located in the highlands, to the country's main harbor in Limón stated a considerable challenge. Thus, the project of constructing a railway line from the highlands to Limón was initiated in order to provide coffee growers cheaper access to the North Atlantic markets. After the project had started in 1870, the construction works came to a halt after only 2 years, the country highly indebted in London, and the railroad company bankrupt. After Costa Rica's president Tomás Guardia struggled for a few years to complete the line, Minor Cooper Keith, a North American Entrepreneur and the younger brother of Henry Meiggs Keith the man originally in charge of the railroad construction, obtained the concession to build the remaining stretch of line (Putnam 2002: 38). Keith renegotiated the debt in London and, in exchange, the Costa Rican government granted to Keith 800,000 acres of uncultivated, public lands, an area which corresponded to roughly 7% of the nation's territory. Keith obtained the lands together with the natural wealth upon them. According to the contract, he was entitled to use land adjacent to the railroad line or in any other part of the nation. The property rights to the lands used for the railroad and its accessories were limited to 99 years, the property rights to the land used otherwise were not subject of restrictions. This contract, signed in 1884 by Bernardo Soto, Minister of development, and Minor Cooper Keith, constituted the basis for the highly unregulated and almost boundless exploitation of land and labor in Limón until late into the 20th century (Kepner 1936: 71)

The Limón Province was scarcely populated in the 1870s and 1880s and the small indigenous population was generally not willing to give up subsistence farming for wage labor. As the railroad construction demanded an extensive workforce, Minor Keith was obliged to recruit workers from farther away. At the beginning of the railroad construction works mainly Chinese workers were recruited. Further, groups of workers from Italy arrived, but were repatriated relatively quickly. The immigrants from the Caribbean islands soon formed the biggest and most significant group of railroad workers (Chomsky 1996: 24, de la Cruz 2004: 28ff.)

Thus, the construction of the railway line to the Atlantic coast was an important factor favoring the migration movements to Limón. The existence of social networks, as pointed out by Putnam, however, is a factor frequently underestimated by historians working on the subject of labor force formations in enclave economies. She underlines, that the movements of migration were not mere one-way shifts from the islands to the mainland but argues, that a constant movement existed among the Afro-Caribbeans between Kingston, Colón, Bocas del Toro, Port Limón, Santiago de Cuba and various other ports, especially at the turn of the century. In many cases personal relations determined the migrants' destinations, rather than reasons such as availability of work, or higher wages (Putnam 2002: 10f). It is difficult to determine the immigrants' exact origins, due to the lack of documentation. Popularly, they were referred to as "Jamaicans", presumably because ships were reported to have come from Kingston. These ships, however, usually stopped in several other Caribbean ports on their way to Limón, which gives reason to believe that Jamaica was by far not the only point of departure. Elisavinda Echeverri-Gent suggests that, apart from Jamaica, the immigrants originated from Barbados, British Guiana, Grand Cayman, St. Kitts, Leeward Islands, Trinidad and British Honduras. Carmen Murillo further mentions locations as distant as New Orleans, Belize, the Caribbean Coast of Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, Panama, Cartagena and Suriname as well as Aruba and Curacao (Echeverri-Gent 1992: 284 and Murillo 1999: 190).

The migrants left their birthplaces in order to earn enough money to return, buy land and start a life of independent, subsistent farmers. Aviva Chomsky suggests that the great majority of the migrants did not intend to stay on the isthmus to settle down. Their original intention had been to remain in Costa Rica only for the time necessary to save an amount of money, which would enable them to gain independency in their countries of origin. A Baptist Reverend, visiting Jamaican workers on the Panama Canal in 1883 affirmed:

“[F]ully five - sixths of the people I spoke to in the various sections have been less than six months on the Isthmus ... I am safe in saying that not one in fifty of those whom I spoke to intends to remain there. They have gone to earn money, which they cannot – as they say – earn in Jamaica;

and as soon as they realize a little ready money, they will return to Jamaica.”

(in Chomsky 1996: 42)

Although initially the objective had been to return to their native lands, a census in 1927 counted 18 000 Afro-Caribbeans living permanently in the province of Limón (Duncan and Meléndez 2005: 97). This striving for independence, thus, may not have resulted in their actual repatriation after some years of work, but can be considered crucial to their behavior and resistance strategies as workers and subcontractors for the company. A heterogeneous, multicultural, multilingual group of immigrants who were aware of and knew how to use their freedom of movement as well as their social networks, which connected them with various points in Central American and the Caribbean, and who was striving to gain independence began to establish communities in the province of Limón. The heterogeneity of the immigrants and the difficulty of determining their origins stated a challenge to the authorities.

“Even the apparently simple question of geographic origin could occasion multiple responses. A woman might list her place of birth variously as the island of Jamaica, the British empire, and the parish of St. James (...) to a census maker, she might simply be “una negra (...).”

(Putnam 2002:15)

This example of an Afro-Caribbean woman freely varying her origin indicates a certain awareness of how to use social belongings in different social contexts. In many cases, referring to themselves as British subjects could mean advantages for the Afro-Caribbean population. Support was requested from the British Consul of Limón in cases of oppressive measures by the Costa Rican authorities or the UFCo, as for example during the protests of the St. Kitts workers, as will be discussed in the following chapter. Thus, among the Afro-Caribbeans of Limón both feelings of solidarity and hostility prevailed. A clear social divide existed between the Hispanics and the Afro-Caribbeans in Limón, they pejoratively referred to each other as “pañás”, derived from “español” and “Chumecos” for “Jamaicans” (Putnam 2002: 16).

Although a multitude of languages, cultures and beliefs arrived to Limón with the immigrants, the Jamaican heritage soon became the dominant one, as smaller groups, dialects and languages like garífuna and francophone patois dialects were silenced. English became the dominant language in Limón among the immigrants, which was one of the reasons why the UFCo soon favored the Afrocaribbean workers. The communication with the mostly North American company officials and overseers was substantially easier. The Spanish language did not spread among the Afro-Caribbeans until the second half of the 20th century, as parents usually favored English-speaking schools. The official state-run Spanish schools were hardly frequented. The social divide of Hispanics and Afro-Caribbeans was further expressed by the different religious beliefs and affiliations. While the Catholic religion was predominant among Hispanics, various Baptist, Anglican and Methodist churches spread in the Afro-Caribbean dominated areas. Aside from the churches, though, religious cults gained importance in Limón. The most discussed and well-known among these were Obeah, Pocomía, Cumina and Myalism, all four of them African-based cults which involved beliefs in the supernatural, spirit possessions, aspects of witchcraft and wizardry and healing powers (Murillo 1999: 190ff).

Hence, the population, which constituted the majority of the UFCo's workers and subcontractors showed signs of noncompliance from the time of their arrival to the Central American Isthmus. A closer look at the highly heterogeneous group indicates that it was not a defeated mass of migrants desperately searching for employment. Their social ties, that reached beyond the borders of the province and the country, as well as their affiliation to religions, sects and lodges objects to the image of the easily dominated and uprooted workers. The preservation of their beliefs and their language and their insistence on English schools can be considered an expression of noncompliance to the Hispanic culture and beliefs. And further, their continuous high mobility favored by their social networks as well as their original intention of returning to their countries of origins, handicapped the UFCo in controlling their workforce and contributed to the constant problem of labor shortage.

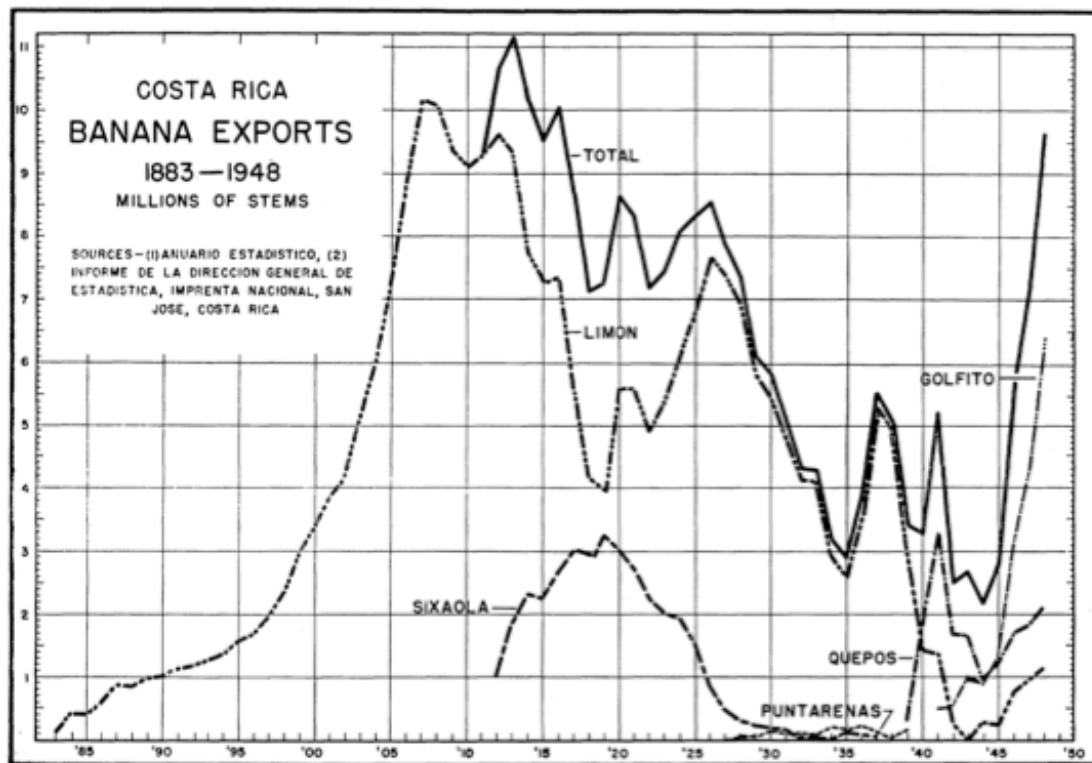
3.2. Afro-Caribbeans and the founding of the United Fruit Company

According to Charles Koch (in Marquardt 2001: 55) the Afro-Caribbean immigrants played a significant, even decisive role in the expansion of the banana business in Limón, and the subsequent foundation of the United Fruit Company in 1899.

Koch suggests that the Afro-Caribbean railroad workers started the cultivation of bananas during the frequent delays of the railway construction work on small plots of lands they had received from Keith. A notorious shortage of labor and money marked the construction of the railroad, and, when the constructions of the Panama Canal started, workers frequently left, attracted by higher wages. Keith urgently needed laborers and therefore started to offer small plots of land for cultivation in order to keep the workers from migrating (Chomsky 1996: 27).

Banana cultivation was far from new in the Caribbean, especially in Jamaica: the Gros Michel variety, the standard cultivar of international trade until the 1960s, had been introduced in the early 19th century and had subsequently been cultivated by freedmen on abandoned sugar plantations, first for internal trade and since the 1870s even for exportation (Marquardt 2001: 55, Chomsky 1996: 29). With all the financial problems and the long and tedious process of construction, Keith was obliged to search for additional income. Influenced by the workers' small cultivations and taking into account their experience, Keith made his first attempts of banana growing. He obtained banana rootstalks from Panama and started cultivation in the Matina Valley, adjacent to the railroad tracks. As soon as the plantings started to bear fruit, he used the finished sections of the railway to transport the fruit to Port Limón and began exporting the first bunches to New Orleans and New York in the late 1870s (Jones and Morrison 1952: 3). With the Soto-Keith contract of 1884, Keith obtained more land concessions, founded his own Tropical Trading and Transport Company and continued to expand the territories for cultivation. By the 1890s, even before the official founding of the UFCo, over one million bunches of bananas were exported from the Limón harbor to the United States (Duncan and Meléndez 2005: 120, Jones and Morrison 1952: 2ff). Therefore, by the time the United Fruit Company was founded, the banana trade was already a booming business and exports to the United States were steadily rising.

Figure #1: Banana exports from Costa Rica by ports of origin, 1890 – 1945.



(source: Jones and Morrison 1952: 2)

The company was finally founded in 1899 when Minor Keith's Tropical Trading and Transport Company merged with the Boston Fruit Company, owned by the Boston fruit trader Andrew W. Preston (Casey 1979: 22f). Keith and the UFCo disposed of a monopoly over the means of transportation, had obtained vast land concessions and found perfect climatic conditions for banana growing in the hot and humid lowlands of the Limón Province.

The railroad workers increasingly started to settle down in Limón attracted by the small plots of land conceded to them by the company. The Costa Rican government encouraged this settlement especially of migrants of Afro-Caribbean origin. Bernardo Soto, the Minister of Development announced in 1884:

[I]n order to attract to the Atlantic coast African immigrants, the only ones who can resist the elevated temperature of those localities, the government expanded ... the land concessions made previously with that same goal, removing all restrictions and facilitating the means of acquiring property."

(in Putnam 2002: 49)

With this active recruitment of workers and settlers, the dynamics of immigration had been somehow turned around: initially, the Afro-Caribbeans had been attracted by relatively high wages, but with the beginning and the expansion of banana cultivation, Keith increasingly depended on the workers agricultural skills, their profound knowledge and experience in banana growing. He was forced to implement measures in order to restrain the Afro-Caribbean workers from abandoning the province and his plantations, as their reluctance of remaining on the same plantation for a long period caused a constant stream of migration away from Keith's plantation. Company literature frequently refers to Jamaicans as people "raised among bananas" pointing out their advantage in knowledge about banana growing (Marquardt 2001: 58)

The initial intention of the immigrants to earn money in order to be able to settle down as farmers, was partly satisfied by land concessions, implemented as a strategy to tie the Afro-Caribbeans to the province as well as to outsource the production process. By working their own land and selling the fruit to the company, a form of independence could be obtained. This policy of land concessions strongly influenced the characteristics of banana production in Limón. It constituted the basis for the system of subcontraction, a system of outsourcing the production process to small farmers permitted to work the company's land, as well as landowners. Subcontraction contributed to alleviate the problem of labor shortage in a very efficient way, a problem, however, that remained throughout the UFCo's history in Limón.

Steve Marquardt describes the very complex relationship of the workers and their overseers, a relationship of inter-dependence where, on the one hand, hierarchy was clearly visible, but on the other hand, the workers' expertise and the overseers' ignorance concerning the production process allowed the workers to excel a position of control and power:

"While Jamaican workers had considerable control over the labor processes of cultivation, they were held in check by their status as racially suspect aliens in

Hispanic Central America and by the Company's absolute control over shipping and marketing.”
(Marquardt 2001: 59)

Still, the workers were as dependent on the company's facilities as the company depended on the workers' knowledge. Before the construction works for the Panama Canal started, there were practically no other possibilities to earn money than working on the company's plantations or producing the fruit and selling it independently. Due to the monopoly over all means of transport in the region, however, independent selling was hardly an option and very limited. When the Panama Canal offered better wages, however, the company needed to put considerable effort into recruiting workers from the islands, and immigration continued up to World War I. From 1900 to 1913 about 20,000 Jamaicans and a smaller number of other Afro-Caribbeans migrated to Costa Rica to work for the UFCo, but, as shown in the table below, a considerable flow of outward migration can be observed.

Table #1: Jamaican Migration to Costa Rica

Year	Jamaica to Costa Rica	Costa Rica to Jamaica
1901	1687	1129
1902	1831	1218
1903	2795	1134
1907	3512	2022
1908	2619	2060
1909	1788	841
1910	292	176
1911	1688	450
1912	2903	279
1913	2313	1017

(source: Proudfoot 1950 in Chomsky 1996: 44)

Thus, the beginning of the banana business in Limón must be analyzed in a close relationship with the immigrants who arrived from the Caribbean islands to work for Minor Keith's railroad construction and later for the UFCo's possessions in Limón.

The knowledge about banana growing of these immigrants led to the first small intents of cultivating the fruit, and constituted the basis for the later rapid expansion of production and export. The company disposed of the lands, but the workers disposed of the necessary skills and experience, and they made use of their freedom of movement. These factors created an interdependence between two groups in highly unequal positions of power. For understanding everyday resistance it is important to consider this special position between power and powerlessness of the Afro-Caribbean workers in Limón.

3.3. Working and living conditions of workers and subcontractors

In the early 1900s, banana cultivation spread from the railroad line to Reventazón and Banano Rivers, but when in 1908 the Panama disease hit the region, the company expanded their holdings further south, to the Estrella Valley and private growers expanded to the north, along the Parismina River. In the valley of Talamanca the UFCo cleared vast areas of land and pushed the indigenous population deeper into the mountains (Putnam 2002: 47f). During these years of increasing demand for bananas the Company continuously had to expand the territories for cultivation and therefore turn virgin forest into grounds for cultivation. Entire forests had to be cut down, undergrowth had to be cleared, using simple tools like machetes and knives. The forests were full of insects and snakes, and no kind of infrastructure had yet been installed on these new grounds of plantations. This initial working phase was one of the most dangerous and strenuous periods, where most unrest and discontent rose among workers (Bourgois 1994: 98). Aviva Chomsky mentions several statements of United Fruit Company doctors commenting on the grueling working conditions under which the workers had to fulfill their tasks:

“Working under the tropical sun, wading in the mud during the rainy seasons when frequent showers keep your back well drenched; being ordered by an overseer to move about, while fever, chills and headache are urging you to lie down and die.” (UFCOMD in: Chomsky 1996: 42)

Carlos Luis Fallas, born in 1909 in the Costa Rican highlands, migrated to Limón to work on the Andrómeda plantation in Limón and was one of the strike leaders of the 1934 strike. Fallas described life on the plantations as “horrible infierno” in a speech given in 1955 during a solidarity assembly with the strikers of Puerto González Víquez, a plantation on the Pacific Coast (Fallas 1955).

The organization of work on the banana plantations did not only, however, uniquely consist of wage labor. The family of William Rodman, born on the Margarita plantation in the Sixaola division in 1926, gives insight on the various forms of employment:

“His godfather worked all his life for United Fruit; his father was an independent contractor in association with the Company; and his maternal grandfather leased a farm from United and produced bananas “independently”, although the only buyer was the multinational.”

(Palmer 2005: 128)

The traditional form of wage labor existed throughout the operations of the UFCo in Limón, but the contracts increasingly changed to subcontraction, on either owned or leased land. Different forms of employment created different forms of oppression and required different forms of wielding power over the workers in order to keep control of the production process.

3.3.1. Subcontraction

Additional to tying the Afro-Caribbeans to Limón, the company used subcontraction as a safety measure in order to become less vulnerable to market changes in the instable banana business. The process of seeding and harvesting was delegated to independent farmers. By the time the fruit was ready to be cut and shipped, the company collected the bunches and transported them to the harbor (Chomsky 1996: 61). The company rented the land to the planters, or, if those already possessed lands, provided money in order to initiate the planting process. William Rodman describes the formalities of subcontraction:

“The Company owned all these lands, but they didn’t work them. They leased the lands, a symbolic lease, I would say. They leased any amount of land for one dollar. It was just formality, so that you know the land is belonging to the Company.”

(in Palmer 2005: 130)

In most cases, as pointed out by Mr. Rodman, the lease of the UFCo consisted of a symbolic sum, merely to underline that the company still owned the lands. In *Mamita Yunai*, Carlos Luis Fallas mentions, that around the year 1909 the UFCo still charged rent from the indigenous population of the Talamanca mountains, even though the company had abandoned the territory years before (Fallas 2007: 73). The same can be assumed for subcontractors who continued working their lands after the UFCo’s abandonment of Limón.

In exchange for the land leased to them by the company, planters signed contracts obliging them to sell the fruit exclusively to the UFCo. Considering the immigrants’ striving for independence, this system might seem to have advantages due to the self-determined character of the work. As Fallas mentioned in his speech, however, in the particular cases of small, mostly Afro-Caribbean planters in Limón, their position was one of almost total dependence. The company disposed of the monopoly over practically all means of transportation, which meant that after harvesting the fruit, planters depended on the company as there was no other way of selling or transporting the fruit (Fallas 1955). William Rodman recounts a process of banana collection on his father’s farm. As a subcontractor of the UFCo, the position of exploitation becomes clearly visible in his description:

“My father leased three camps of Company houses and about 60 hectares of land where he planted bananas. The Company put all the risk to the *arrendatario*. I remember when I was a boy I would see up to 300 bunches of bananas, maybe 400, on the track line waiting there, and the company didn’t accept even 50. And I knew bananas better than any damn inspector, because I grew up in that, and they were saying, ‘too thin; too full’, but you could see it was perfectly good banana. The proof of it is, you put the same

banana out at the next port when the train is coming down and the cars don't full because they reject too much, and they would select 80 per cent of the same banana they reject before."

(in Palmer 2005: 139)

Although the contract obliged the planters to sell the fruit exclusively to the UFCo, no obligation of buying a specific minimum amount of fruit on the part of the company had been established. Further, before delivering the fruit, farmers were obliged to report the exact number of bunches, so the Company always knew the number in advance and knew how many bunches they could expect and how many they would reject. Thus, the Company could simply refuse to buy fruit in case the demand for bananas in North America decreased and therefore the system of subcontractation enabled adaptation to a highly fluctuating market (Fallas 1955, Putnam 2002: 49). While the system worked fairly well in times of high demand, a decrease had disastrous effects on the small independent farmers. Planters were unable to sell their fruit elsewhere and had no other source of income whatsoever. In 1913, the *Limón Times* published a complaint, which revealed:

"[N]owadays, if a bunch of bananas is brought out and happens to show the fingers on the side which faces the rising sun a little higher in color than the other side, it is dumped as diseased ... For the most time one full fruit cutting is given for the week and at that the fruit are either dumped for too full, or bruised, while it is evident that no farmer can live on one cutting per week."

(in Putnam 2002: 78f)

In 1927, the *Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País* submitted various complaints to the Costa Rican government and the UFCo. It has to be considered significant, that this society submitted complaints, as they consisted mainly of white Hispanic large-scale landowners, who were not as severely affected by rejections as the small Afro-Caribbean planters (Chomsky 1996: 79). Even before the depression of 1929, when exports were still high, the small and so-called independent planters had to live with the risk of not being able to sell their fruit. Contracts expired, some districts were completely abandoned by the company and prices tended to vary. When from 1930 to

1932 prices dropped about 70%, farmers could not even cover operating costs anymore (Kepner 1936: 98f).

Only the loss of the monopoly in Limón could put a limit to this exploitation of small planters and the arbitrariness with which the company rejected the fruit. When, in 1912, the Atlantic Fruit Company offered to buy crops from the farmers on better terms than the UFCo, many of them eagerly signed contracts. As described in Anacristina Rossi's novel, planters that had signed the contracts even carried the bananas destined for the Atlantic Fruit Company to the railway line, where, however, the fruit was rejected by the UFCo's railway employees, obeying, as they stated, the orders of their company. In the novel, a group of men destroyed the bananas, and explained that "todos los que cultivaban en "no name land" tenían compromiso eterno con la United a través de Keith" (Rossi 2002: 113). "No name land" referred to land that had been conceded to Afro-Caribbean railway workers by Minor Keith. The monopoly over the means of transportation handicapped any competitor attempting to gain access to the market (Rossi 2002: 112f).

The table below indicates the high number of Jamaican independent planters and the relatively small size of their farms. Fewer Hispanic planters contributed more to the percentage of total production. The total number of independent production was high, indicating the importance of this form of contracting laborers. From the beginning of banana plantings in the late 19th century, until the company abandoned the Costa Rican Caribbean, the number of independent planters rose steadily (Chomsky 1996: 60).

Table #2: Independent planters and their origins

Group	Number	Average size	Bunches/plant.	Prod. / hectare	% of total prod.
Jamaicans	69	6 hs	1794	264 r/	14.4. %
Hispanics	16	20 hs	9818	268 r/	18.2 %
Foreigners	8	450 hs	61.210	84 r/	14.2 %
Big companies	3	6425 hs	458.017	83 r/	53.29 %

(source: ANCR 1928 in: Casey 1979: 82)

3.3.2. Wage labor

The wage laborers were as vulnerable to the market changes as the independent farmers: Banana prices as well as the demand for the tropical fruit varied significantly throughout the first half of the 20th century. In the period of this study, two world wars and one major financial crisis convulsed the international markets and therewith the price and demand for bananas. From the start of the century, the salaries continuously decreased, and the UFCo slowly took over total control, due to the increasing number of available manpower. Later in the first half of the 20th century, especially after 1919, workers from highland Costa Rica as well as Nicaragua and other Central American countries joined the Afro – Caribbeans. From 1913 on, this tendency became clearer, as by that time the peak of exportation had been reached and the banana business slowly started to decrease. In addition to the decreasing salaries, life in Limón became more expensive. In 1919 the cost of living was 100% higher than in 1914, which meant that the UFCo employee's purchasing power considerably declined (Hernández 1991: 7f). Especially after the financial crisis of 1929, wages again decreased severely while imports became more expensive. Workers on salary wage basis received two cuts in 1932, one of 20% and private planters had to endure reductions in purchase prices. The general average was around 50 cents a day (Kepner 1936: 136f). The social organization of the work was mainly based on a task system where workers were paid for the fulfillment of certain tasks assigned to them (Casey 1979: 112).

Apart from this situation of steadily decreasing wages, the UFCo implemented the strategy of coupons, used in most plantations economies throughout the Caribbean. The coupons were given to workers instead of salaries, they could be used to buy food or other goods in the company owned stores and other company owned facilities. The company was able to recuperate part of the salaries by turning their employees into their costumers. Usually wages were paid at the end of the month, the only way to get them earlier was to accept the coupons. If the workers used the coupons in stores that were not owned by the UFCo, 25% of the original value was discounted (Hernández 1991: 9, Casey 1979: 116). A correspondence letter from the Chief engineer to Mr. McGrigor, UFCo official, sent in September 1909, gives evidence of this practice:

“I will mention here just one example, and that is New York Farm, drain work, No 12. Benjamin Morrison earned \$5.00. He was given \$4.19 coupons, and this after deducting Hospital Fee, left only 31 cents to be paid him by Paymaster,” (INCOFER: 4833)

Hospital Fees were deducted from the workers’ wages on a regular basis, even if they did not use any of their facilities. Additionally workers had to buy medicine from the company stores. In *Mamita Yunai*, Carlos Luis Fallas recounts that the Medical Service which was regularly deducted from their wages, was of such poor quality, that the workers of the Andrómeda preferred to buy their own medicines in the company store, where as he stated: “lo que valía cinco en las ciudades se pagaba a nueve en la Línea” (Fallas 2007: 134). “La Línea” was the Hispanic term for working at plantations along the railway line.

In cases of sickness the workers could not expect compensation. Again, a description of Mr. Rodman allows insight:

“There was nothing like compensation when you get sick. If you can’t work, you don’t get no money, unless you were monthly-paid people like foremen, time keeper, railroad foremen (like my godfather), clerk. They were the only monthly paid, and they were very few. Everybody else on the farm were piecemeal job or contract. So if you can’t work you get no pay.” (in Palmer 2005: 133).

This philosophy of “no work – no pay” was not only applied in cases of sickness or accidents. Even hours of waiting during working time, as for example due to the lateness of trains, or even the time on trains between stops, were not counted as working time. A letter in May 1930 by a railway employee gives account of the UFCo’s policy of only paying actual working time as it stated: “We paid the whole gang for one half hour while they were doing nothing” (INCOFER 4825).

In addition to the unfavorable situation of wages, the strict salary policy, the extreme tediousness of the work and the hot and humid climate, Philippe Bourgois mentions

the factory-type of labor the plantations required, due to the extremely tight time schedule and the numerousness of workers on one single plantation. The “tyranny of the clock” undoubtedly was one factor that contributed to the tediousness of this kind of plantation work (Bourgois 1994:96). Time schedules were tight, as the fruit needed to be shipped within twenty-four hours after cutting and work often went on all night long (Chomsky 1996: 39ff). In October 1907 the following description of the working conditions on the UFCo plantations was published in a local Newspaper:

“[L]as horas de trabajo que tiene son todas; a merced de los trenes, unas veces trabaja seis u ocho, otras 36 o 40 sin dormir y mal comido, siempre urgida por la fruta que falta recoger, cuando termina pronto la faena, se le ve llegar rojo como un tomate por el sol (...) los ojos inyectados de sangre por las partículas de carbón que ha recibido dentro de ellos.”

(El Correo del Atlántico, Oct 27th 1907)

Apart from the working hours, the article mentions the low quality of food and the constant exposure to the tropical sun. Many times, laborers worked for the company for their whole lives, but received only minimal pensions. Mr. Rodman recounts the life of his Godfather, and “thousands of others who gave a lifetime of service to the company”: Rodman’s godfather had worked in the Sixaola division his whole life, three years of which he was contracted on the Panama side. At the time of his retirement, the UFCo only paid a month’s salary as a pension to the old man, as they only recognized the three years he had been working on the Panama side. He adds: “The company never give pensions. What they really did was repatriate some of the old workers back to Jamaica or wherever it was they sign the contract” (in Palmer 2005: 141).

Despite the high salaries the company promised and which attracted the workers, the envisioned independence remained an illusion for the vast majority of the Afro-Caribbeans. The wages were partly paid in coupons and various reductions left only so much for them to survive, and even after years of working for the company, the pensions were minimal or non-existent. Even the apparently independent

subcontractors remained dependent to a certain extent, as their contracts obliged them to sell uniquely to the UFCo.

3.3.3. *Health*

Malaria was one of the biggest threats the UFCo had to face. Still, as Aviva Chomsky points out, Malaria was a threat mainly for the white, mostly North American or Hispanic, employees of the company. Although the Afro-Caribbeans were affected and many of them died from yellow fever and malaria, they had a better genetic resistance to the fevers because of their heritage of generations living in a similar environment. Blacks died mostly of respiratory diseases like pneumonia or tuberculosis. However, Malaria was the main issue of concern for the United Fruit Company healthcare, because, as Chomsky puts it: “[n]ot only did tropical diseases such as malaria fail to respect wealth, they seemed to actually select white victims, who lacked the inherited or acquired immunities of West Indian blacks” (Chomsky 1996: 110). The fact that malaria was the company’s major concern, even though it did not cause most deaths among the workers, indicates the UFCo’s lack of concern for their workers’ health. Further, one very effective and yet quite easy measure against malaria was the screening of houses, a measure which was applied to every single management house, to the workers’ houses only in a very few cases. The company did not invest much in the prevention of the disease, it limited its actions to selling quinine pills to the workers. Company officials explained this by stating that the uneducated and illiterate workers could not be trusted with the regulations that the screening of houses involved, and argued that the screening was of no use if workers did not refrain from gathering publicly and meeting during the hours between sunset and sunrise when the danger of infections by mosquito bites was greatest (Chomsky 1996: 109).

Another example of the company’s lack of interest in the workers’ health is the immediate removal of hospitals and medical centers in case the company withdrew from a certain area, which happened quite frequently as soils were quickly exhausted. The newspaper *La Tribuna* described workers’ camps in Guácimo, an abandoned

banana region, as follows: “[T]he company laborers’ camps were so unsanitary as to be the foci of terrible and mortal diseases (...)” (in Kepner 1936: 121).

The example demonstrates, that the poor housing conditions were, in many cases, the reason for the spread of diseases among workers. Workers’ houses were generally overcrowded, dirty and hygienic devices lacked in most cases. Malaria could spread easily due to swamps or pools of rainwater everywhere, for example on abandoned fields. For independent producers the situation was even more severe, as they depended on what the state provided in terms of health: numerous workers were obliged to travel to San José to receive medical treatment, as the company hospitals were for direct employees only. The first health care centers that provided healthcare for everyone did not appear until 1930. In the earlier years and during the boom of the banana industry, Port Limón was described as a dirty and smelly city, no money was invested in improving the living conditions. Running water was a luxury, people often had to collect water in containers and thus provided the mosquitoes yet another place to breed. In 1923 the governor of Port Limón affirmed that: “[f]or many years not even the most insignificant work has been carried out which would indicate progress in the area of hygiene” (in Chomsky 1996: 120), pointing out the disastrous state Limón was in (Chomsky 1996: 118ff).

The low wages lead to another major problem among the immigrant workers: a good and healthy diet was not affordable, though necessary to prevent diseases and a requirement especially for plantation labor. UFCo doctors continuously pointed out the importance of good and varied nutrition as a preventive for diseases, but no actions followed, rather was the malnutrition blamed on workers themselves. The workers were forced to limit their diets to what was sold in the company stores, which can be considered a result of the company policy of turning their workers into costumers and to prevent them from subsistence farming. When the company introduced milk powder as a new product to their stores in the 1920s, doctors promoted artificial feeding to the workers; the product had to be sold. The results of this new measure – supposedly to reduce infant mortality – had disastrous results; still, the company continued to blame the Afro-Caribbeans for not even being able to properly feed their children (Chomsky 1996: 122-127).

When the Panama Disease appeared on the UFCo's banana empire around the 1920s, the work regime of the company changed drastically. The dependence on the skills and knowledge of the Jamaican workers was replaced by a dependence on agronomists and technicians. The company pointed to Panama disease to justify the planned abandonment of the Limón territories. Until the appearance of the fungus, as discussed earlier, a big part of the control over the banana growing process was in the workers' hands. The disease though, brought changes: plantations were abandoned earlier than usual, the life expectancy of a typical plantation dropped considerably. Intensive scientific studies and new technologies needed to be introduced to battle the disease, the production process was rationalized and the UFCo no more relied on the Afro-Caribbeans' knowledge, the workers' autonomy was rather seen as a part of the problem. The task-based wage system became more and more a system of specialized crews for certain tasks, detailed instructions were given to what was left to the workers' judgment before.

Additional to the changing of the work regime, the ethnic composition of the workers changed during this period. Hispanics slowly started to replace the Afro-Caribbeans, which facilitated the transition to the new system. An increased anti-Jamaican tendency among the Costa Rican population also slowed the new Afro-Caribbean immigration. One effect of this tendency was the growing number of Afro – Caribbean private planters from 50 % before World War I to 75 % by 1930 (Marquardt 2001: 69). Costa Ricans and Nicaraguans replaced them as direct employees on the plantations. Working conditions on the plantations worsened with the financial crisis in 1929 and the spreading of Panama disease; hospitals were abandoned, wages steadily decreased and company houses were not taken care of anymore. The famous strike of the banana workers in 1934 can be considered a result of the disastrous living and working conditions of the UFCo's employees at this time (Marquardt 2001: 49ff).

From the very beginning of banana cultivation until the outburst of the Panama Disease and the subsequent decline of banana production in Limón, the Afro-Caribbean immigrants constituted the major work force of the UFCo. The knowledge they brought with them considerably influenced the UFCo's further development in the region. Their early settlement alongside the railroad tracks and the soon dominant

Jamaican heritage they brought with them, gave the Province much of the characteristics that still persist today. The histories of the workers and the company are closely linked, but, as I have tried to point out in this chapter, not always did the company assume the more powerful role. Already some aspects of the company's dependence on the workers have been elaborated. The next step will be to analyze the numerous methods the workers adopted in order to challenge the seemingly unlimited power of the UFCo and to influence and change the conditions under which they had to work and live.

4. Expressions of resistance

This chapter intends to outline the patterns of resistance expressed by UFCo workers in Limón, it tries to give insight on some strategies that were used and the hidden transcript underlying them. First, the basis for resistant practices, the symbolic and fictional aggression against domination, expressed in folk tales, songs and legends will be discussed. In the second part of the chapter, actual social sites as well as social realms where resistance took place, nourished and spread will be outlined. Thirdly, various forms of openly expressed resistance practices, as theft and trickery, will be analyzed. In part four of the chapter, the constant labor migration among UFCo workers and its consequences for the UFCo will be the topic of discussion.

4.1. Folktales, tricksters, songs

The tales of brother spider, Anansi, the most famous trickster tales known throughout the Limón Province emanate from an oral tradition of West-Africa, mostly of Ashanti origin. The tales were brought to the Americas from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century during the Atlantic slave trade. As slaves were dispersed on various plantations throughout the Caribbean islands, the stories spread in the region and adapted to the slaves' reality. They became allegories of plantation life and were used to transmit lessons of survival in a situation of institutionalized oppression. The tales expressed the necessity of being cunning and smart in order to survive as a slave

on a plantation. Astuteness was a condition for survival “[p]orque los tontos siempre cargan con el lastre” (Duncan and Meléndez 2005: 223). The slaves taught their children that cleverness and ingenuity was a virtue if one was black and lived in a racist and oppressive society (Mosby 2003: 34ff).

A typical trickster figure, Anansi tricks the bigger and stronger animals in order to secure its own survival. With its wit and intelligence, the spider manages to outsmart the more powerful creatures and therewith carves out some benefits for itself in spite of its disadvantaged and weaker position. The enemies are usually those animals that supposedly represent the most powerful ones: the lion, the tiger or the elephant. Their role is that of a much stronger enemy, that cannot be outplayed by physical strength. The Africans, brought to the Caribbean as slaves, needed strategies to mitigate the power of the slave masters. Without openly declaring dissidence, the Anansi tales were examples of ways to strike back against the masters. Dorothy Mosby explains: “The order of the plantation is subverted in these stories, whereby the powerful master, represented by one of the physically strong creatures, is outdone by the small, simple spider or the plantation slave” (Mosby 2003: 37).

The Anansi tales thus traveled from the Caribbean sugar plantations to the Central American mainland during the wave of labor migration around the turn of the century, as part of a Caribbean oral tradition.

In a story told by Walter Gavitt Ferguson, resident of Cahuita and one of the best-known Limonese Calypso-singers, Anansi tricks “Brother and Sister Tiger” by making them believe the stones Anansi took from the riverside were beans, and if Sister Tiger provided him with pork, yam, onion “and all them things”, he would make a big soup for her with the beans. “And that’s the way Anansi live off Tiger. Every day he carry a lump of those stones and poor Sister Tiger never know better. So he strain off the stones, fix up the soup, and live off Brother Tiger” (in Palmer 2005: 203). Anansi thus manages to take food from a more powerful animal without even having to conceal it. Not just a matter of improving its diet, Anansi achieves a victory over Brother Tiger by tricking him into voluntarily giving food to him. As discussed earlier, the access to food is crucial to an oppressed group, and by taking food from the powerful oppressor, both a basic need can be satisfied and a statement of disagreement with the dominant structures can be expressed.

Another tale, rescued by Duncan and Meléndez, recounts the story of how Anansi manages to turn Brother Tiger into his personal horse and thus publicly humiliates him. Anansi likes the village girls, but is always in disadvantage compared to the strong and elegant Tiger. He thus spreads the word, that the Tiger, in spite of his strength and beauty, is nothing more than the spider's personal riding horse. Furiously, the Tiger locates Anansi and orders him to publicly announce the wrongness of the rumor. Anansi, however, pretends to be ill and explains to the Tiger that the only way he could possibly manage to get to the village to do the announcement is on the Tiger's back. This is how Anansi proves, that Brother Tiger is nothing but the spider's riding horse (In Duncan and Meléndez 2005: 226). The supposedly stronger Tiger thus is completely ridiculed by Anansi's simple trick.

Such allegories of tricking and betraying the powerful commonly appear in societies where openly declared dissidence is met with repressive methods and the risk of severe punishment is high. As the Anansi stories evolved from a situation of almost total repression, in slavery, this "fantasy aggression" (Scott 1990: 163) was bound to appear. Afro - Caribbeans throughout Limón were familiar with the stories that were passed on to them from their ancestors. The knowledge and oral reproduction of such stories give reason to believe that among the immigrant workers critical opinions towards the existing power relations prevailed.

Another indicator of an oral tradition, which conveyed ideas far from deferent, are the poems of Alderman Johnson Roden, the "poet of the people". Roden was born in 1893 in Jamaica and migrated to Port Limón in 1911 to join his father. In one of his most famous poems, "The Outlaw", Roden presents the legend of Joe Gordon, a folk hero among the UFCo workers of Limón. Joe Gordon is the symbol for the struggle against exploitation and domination in the banana enclave. As a version of a Limonese Robin Hood, he steals from the UFCo in order to give to the poor. The legend says that Joe Gordon, a worker for the UFCo, was dismissed because of saving a fellow worker instead of a cart of bananas. As a revenge for the dismissal and the mistreatment of all others UFCo workers he plans an attack against the exploiters. He robs the company store to redistribute wealth to the most needy and

poorest of the community (Mosby 2003: 50). The verses cited by Mosby describe the beginning of Joe Gordon's desire for revenge (in Mosby 2003: 51).

*He had a grievance that he nursed
Against the bad white man
He nurtured it until it worsened
And grew clear out of hand*

*Joe Gordon could not understand
This man's arrogance and pride
It galled, as did his oppressive hand
And would not let him bide*

*Thence Joe went on to plunder
The Fruit Company's store,
With skill and without blunder
He would "even the score".*

*And very many were the poor
Who at morn did arise
To find a fortune at their door
And scarce could believe their eyes.*

*It was a present from their "Joe"
Left there during the night.
Thus Joe stole from the hated foe
To relieve the oppressed poor's plight*

A feeling of hatred and aggression against the “bad white man”, the plantation owners and overseers, leads Jo Gordon to plunder the UFCo store, with the intention to take from it what the poor justly deserve. He then distributes the stolen goods among the poor as a present. The mentioning of such phrases as “evening the score” hint at the perception of injustice and an urge to compensate this injustice. Further, Joe Gordon obviously intends his act of theft as both an act of self-help for the poor and oppressed, but at the same time pursues the intention of harming the company and explicitly expresses his discontent with the existence of company stores. As already mentioned, the company stores were subject of many complaints by the immigrant workers. Their implementation reinforced the company’s position of power, as wages were turned into coupons, which could only be used in company owned stores. Therewith, the company could influence their workers’ diets and partly recover the paid wages. By stealing from the company stores, Joe Gordon clearly expresses more than just the need to provide enough food. All the more, he openly rebels against the UFCo policy of turning their workers into their customers and thus taking from them what is left of their independence. The Robin-Hood-like latter distribution of the goods to the poorest members of society underlines his heroic action and justifies the act of theft Joe commits. The morality of his actions is not questioned, he clearly acts morally correct from the subordinates’ point of view.

The Anansi tales as well as the Joe Gordon legends are two examples of the hidden transcript becoming partly public in the form of folktales. In both cases the satisfaction of nourishment is the apparent goal, and in both cases there are many more aspects to the heroes’ actions than simply hunger. The struggle over food represents a struggle over the satisfaction of basic needs as well as an expression of rebelling against the highly unequal distribution of resources and goods.

Surely, Anansi as well as Joe Gordon were fictional characters, a trickster figure and a social bandit as described by Hobsbawm, but as Scott repeatedly underlines, the mere existence of such stories and tales is highly significant to the subordinates’ resistance practices.

4.2. Theft, trickery and clandestine cultivation of subsistence crops

Theft and robbery did present a problem on the UFCo plantations in Limón, and while determining the extent of actual acts of robbery on the plantations in Limón proves difficult, some assumptions can still be made. Based on a correspondence between railway and company officials, various cases of theft can be reported. A letter written in June 1936 by Mr. Dolan, a railway employee, directed to Frank Sheehy, the Superintendent stated:

“Cameron said that they told him that car 1727 was for America Junction and the door was open on one side and the lock locked. He had no key to open it, so he put the car on one of the tracks near the coaches, where he thought they could not get at it, but when Lawrence found it the car was almost empty.”

(INCOFER: 745)

Although it only gives evidence of one case of robbery, the expression “where he thought they could not get at it”, hints at the continuousness of the problem of robbery during the loading process. Another correspondence proves even more significant, as the writer does not give account of one certain incident, but generally reports the problem of robbery and trickery to the same Frank Sheehy. The letter was written two years later, on July 8th 1938:

“(…) In many cases receivers have to receive bananas at more than one spot and were he to leave car doors open while away from the spot, he would probably have to receive fruit which he had already received and loaded”

(INCOFER: 745).

These letters indicate a culture of tricking the banana receivers by commercializing the fruit, stealing it from the car and then selling it again. The fact that the statements do not only give account of one single case of theft, but also assume that tricking would occur if car doors were left open, gives reason to

believe that this kind of trickery commonly and continuously happened. Especially subcontractors were affected by the UFCo's current rejection of fruit in cases of low demand, and as the cultivation of crops other than bananas was forbidden, the double selling of fruit presented one way of improving their income. The UFCo was the only purchaser and therefore the subcontractors were highly dependent on them buying the fruit.

It could well be argued that safety-measures like locking car doors were implemented by the UFCo officials because of a fundamental mistrust towards the planters rather than based on actual cases of theft. Still, based on the first letter cited above and the extremely tenuous situation of the UFCo's independent planters, it seems highly unlikely that such methods did not happen continuously during the selling and loading process. Still, the frequencies of the occurrence of such cases of theft are hard to reconstruct.

That these individual acts of trickery did have an effect on the loading process and could harm the company, however, becomes quite clear in the discussion following the letter of June 1936. The UFCo employees in charge of the buying and loading of the fruit criticized the instruction, that car doors had to stay open while receiving on various spots. The UFCo administrators argued, that the bananas should not stay in the carts with the doors closed, as this could damage the fruit. The employees, however, in fear of being robbed and tricked by the subcontractors, as mentioned in the letter, opted for the locking of the car doors. It was to decide, now, if the harming of the fruit was risked or if the occasional, or maybe even common theft and re-selling of bananas was put up with. It was a rather simple act of trickery intended to improve the subcontractor's income. The consequences, however, were severe enough to be repeatedly mentioned in the correspondences. James Scott gives an even broader meaning to these acts by stating that: "(p)etty thefts of grain or pilfering on the threshing floor may seem like trivial 'coping' mechanisms from one vantage point; but from a broader view of class relations, how the harvest is actually divided belongs at the center" (Scott 1989: 37).

Apart from trickery and robbery, a further strategy of improving the subcontractors' income can be mentioned. Aviva Chomsky suggests that, while in other banana regions the cultivation of basic crops was a thriving industry, crops other than bananas were only scarcely produced in Limón. A survey held in 1905 revealed that Limón was the only province without cultivation of subsistence crops. It is to be assumed, that the UFCo had a clear interest in preventing the cultivation and sale of such crops. The company controlled the commerce of basic comestible goods through the company owned stores, no competition in that area was desired whatsoever. The company needed overproduction of bananas in order to maintain the low price level, and subcontractors had to stay dependent on banana production by all means (Chomsky 1996: 183ff). Therefore, the company took legal steps in order to prevent the cultivation of subsistence crops. The rental contract for land in 1930 declared:

“(...) It is understood that this contract is granted with the sole objective that the contracting party devotes the land to the cultivation and planting of *bananas*: thus said party cannot in any case undertake any other kind of cultivation, unless there is an agreement between the contracting party and the Superintendent of the District, and this agreement is improved by the Administrator of the Company ... “
(in Chomsky 1996: 229).

Even though subsistence farming was clearly not common among the immigrant workers, Chomsky suggests that the survey of 1905 might have been an exaggeration, as Caribbean immigrant workers were reported to cultivate some subsistence crops unfamiliar to the Costa Ricans by English sources, like the *Limón Times*. Echeverri-Gent also mentions the existence of vegetable gardens, which presented a source of sustenance for the immigrant workers in cases of strikes or work stoppages. Squatters, who lived from selling food clandestinely grown on government land, provided the main source of food for strikers. (Echeverri-Gent 1992: 293). Especially in the late 1920s, during the decline of the banana boom, small farmers started to take up subsistence farming on abandoned banana lands. However, the attempts to grow subsistence crops in order to avoid

the extremely high prices of the company stores had to face the problem of company-controlled transportation (Chomsky 1996: 83ff, 229).

Evidence of the UFCo's disapproval of the cultivation of subsistence crops as well as the existence of such practices can be found in an article of *The Limón Searchlight* in June 1930. The article insinuates the widespread practice of the production and commercialization of various crops, such as grapefruits. The fruit was sold from house to house, creating a small market within the population of Caribbean immigrants in Limón. As the newspaper reports, groups of men destroyed fruit on subcontractors' lands that were not bananas (*The Limón Searchlight*, June 21st 1930). Although the article does not mention company officials being involved in the destroying of the crops, the fact that only fruit that were not bananas was destroyed, gives reason to believe that, for the UFCo's understanding, far too much autonomy was being created among workers. Additionally, Bourgois mentions a similar event during a strike in the Sixaola district, when the company systematically destroyed workers' subsistence crops in order to make them surrender due to lack of alimentation. Further, the company reacted with hard repression to squatting and clandestine production in times of labor shortage. During such times, the company started to establish rents for the abandoned lands and imposed pressure on the Costa Rican government demanding the deportation of the squatters. The landless immigrants consequently elevated the number of available laborers and enabled the company to maintain their low wages (Bourgois 1994: 116).

The repressive methods as reactions to squatting and clandestine production state evidence for the threat they meant to the UFCo. Squatting and clandestine production and commercialization of subsistence crops substantially weakened the UFCo's position. Firstly, the company owned stores could only keep their high price levels if no competition emerged. Secondly, the creation of a self-determined market and thus an alternative source of alimentation both made the workers as well as subcontractors far less dependent on the company coupons and enabled them to determine their own diet, not the one prescribed by the company. Thirdly, and probably most importantly, the clandestine production of crops other

than bananas secured alimentation during times of unemployment, massive rejections of fruit due to low demand, or strike activities.

While theft, trickery and the clandestine cultivation of subsistence crops seem to have been the most common petty acts of resistance among the workers and subcontractors, various other forms were mentioned in the railway correspondences. Deliberately delaying the banana trains proved an effective method to disturb the UFCo's business, as the time schedule was tight and delays could cause major losses. The INCOFER correspondence reports various complaints of overseers about whole gangs of workers, who did not assume their works on time and thus causing long delays (INCOFER: 4875, 1907).

Even though the UFCo was a powerful employer and was always trying to keep control over their workforce, those small but continuously practiced actions against the smooth functioning of the business stated a challenge, proven by their constant mentioning in letters and the company's repressive reactions. Neither theft nor trickery, neither squatting nor the clandestine production of subsistence crops intended to revolutionize the relationship of worker and employer. However, these acts can be seen as the expression of noncompliance on a daily basis. They undermined methods of repression as well as carved out realms of independence for the workers and subcontractors. Mass rejections of fruit were met with tricking the collectors and selling the fruit twice, the high price level of company stores could be evaded by creating small independent markets within the community. These fairly simple methods did not require a high degree of organization, but could substantially improve the immigrant's income and lessen their dependence on the company.

4.3. Refusal, abandonment and the problem of labor shortage

Refusal to work and the abandonment of the workplace are mostly spontaneous activities in consequence to worsened working conditions or other changes with a negative effect on workers. They are uncoordinated activities and their immediate goal is to improve working and living conditions, there is no revolutionary

intention. The most striking evidence for the power of such practices is the desertion from armies determining the outcome of wars: “These “mutinous” activities were not part of a rebellion; they were not organized or coordinated by anyone – and yet their aggregate impact was deadly, if not more so, than any large open movement of sedition might have been” (Scott 1989: 43).

The high dependence of the UFCo on a vast amount of available labor and their relative vulnerability towards labor shortage make desertion and the refusal to work a very important and effective form of resistance. Labor shortage marked the history of the UFCo in Limón throughout their years of operation in the province. Especially during the banana boom years the company was in constant search of labor and the UFCo had to put considerable effort into preventing their workers from constantly leaving the plantations. The reluctance of the Afro-Caribbean immigrants to remain on the plantations led to a high mobility among workers, as higher wages or better working conditions on other plantations or construction sites could lead to massive outflows of labor. Even though the company struggled in order to keep their laborers from leaving, for example by providing them with land, the problem continued to exist. A government report of 1892 announced:

“(…) los trabajadores que nos vienen de Jamaica y Colón y algunos otros lugares en las islas y costas del Mar Caribe, a más de ser pocos con dificultad se deciden a permanecer por tiempo largo en nuestras haciendas y rehusan establecerse definitivamente por no existir aquí los halagos que es natural los arrastren a sus países de procedencia.”

(Congreso: 1892: 3955)

If the number of available workers in the province was too low, the policy of low wages could no longer be sustained, as every laborer was urgently needed. A higher number of people in need of work gave more freedom and therefore power to the company. Thus, in order to keep wages low, or even to reduce them, the company frequently used the strategy of recruiting more workers than they actually needed.

According to Hernández (Hernández 1991: 207) the immigrant workers in Limón knew and understood this strategy perfectly well, which suggests, that the high mobility and reluctance to stay on one place was an immediate riposte to the company's policy of recruiting too many laborers. The collective desertion of the Limón plantations in cases of reduced wages was a highly effective weapon against this widely used strategy of the UFCo and caused a continuous struggle between the company and its workers.

In the records of letters written to and from high officials of the Northern Railway Company, desertions of plantations and reports of workers who refused to work appear frequently. On May 29, 1910 the following lines were written to Mr. C.D. Doswell by an employee of the Northern Railway Company:

“Referring to your letter of the 27th to Mr. Burdelle, Auditor, advising him of some 17 men who you had sent to Luisa West Farm. What became of the six men marked with a start who you said declined to go to the farms and have you advised Francisco?”

(INCOFER: 4825)

Whereas in this case of the Luisa West Farm workers the number was relatively low, in February 1905, 300 Jamaican workers were reported to have left a plantation in Zent because of a salary decrease to look for work in Colón, Panama, where at that moment more work was available and higher wages were paid (Hernández 1991: 207). Three years later, in 1908, another flow of outwards migration is reported.

In 1910 the problem of labor shortage reached a peak and the UFCo reacted by recruiting a group of 700 men from the island of St. Kitts and Nevis in order to push down wages. The approximately 700 men traveled on the *Aldernay*, a ship built for around 300, from St. Kitts to Limón in November of 1910. In the same year, several letters to Minor C. Keith and Andrew Preston by Northern Railway employees had stated that “the contract part is what we must avoid in any case” when recruiting workers (INCOFER: 4825). The St. Kitts men therefore arrived without contracts, but with the spoken promise of receiving 1.50\$ per day including food and accommodation. When the men were brought to their assigned

plantations in the zones of Río Banano, Zent and Guápiles, immediately after their journey on the overcrowded ship, they found that wages paid to them would be 0.70 \$ per day, not including alimentation (Hernández 2001: 200). Additional to the unsatisfactory wages, complaints about poor food and housing conditions arose. Due to these conditions, that differed significantly from what the workers had been promised, only a few days later the first men started to leave their assigned plantations and refused continuing to work if conditions did not change. The workers started to march along the railway lines towards Port Limón. Throughout the next days, the number of deserters increased steadily, as well as the number of men gathering in the streets of Limón and in front of the UFCo building.

Open refusal like that of the St. Kitts workers is a definite threat to the dominant group and can easily take over, as James Scott underlines (Scott 1990: 205). The weapon of massively deserting a workplace is a powerful one, especially in the banana business, where time schedules are tight and a delay can ruin the fruit and therefore lead to the cancellation of whole shipments of bananas. The men of St Kitts might not have had immediate success in improving their working conditions, but the reaction to their collective desertion and refusal to continue working show the power this simple and unorganized act of resistance can have. Not so much the outcome, but the reaction of the UFCo and the Costa Rican government shows how big a threat to the company's power this massive desertion had been. The Costa Rican government sent 250 soldiers to Limón and several guards were posted along the railway to prevent workers from leaving the farms and marching towards the city. No one was allowed to leave the town of Siquirres without a judicial passport. The UFCo called an American Cruiser of the US Navy in case the unrest had gotten worse and officially proclaimed to the workers that none of their demands would be fulfilled (Hernández 1991: 200). On the 27th of November 1910 the British Consul F. Nutter Cox arrived in Limón. Cox expresses his allegiance to the UFCo by advising the workers to continue working:

“You and all British Subjects are under the authority of the president of Costa Rica and the Officials named by him, and I hereby order you to obey such authorities absolutely (...) You are hereby directed to return, as free men, to work at the farms of the United Fruit Company (...) You should not pay any attention to any person who advises you not to work.”
(in Chomsky 1996: 162)

The mentioning of the “person who advises you not to work” by Consul Nutter Cox as well as the fact that very soon, the Jamaican community supported the cause of the St. Kitts men clearly underlines the importance of the actors a hidden transcript needs to become a public one and therewith an act of open resistance. By mentioning this, the British Consul admits how great a danger such persons can be to a company like the UFCo. It also underlines Scott’s argument, that resistant subcultures need mutuality and offstage social spaces, where the socialization of resistant practices takes place (Scott 1990: 118).

In spite of the lack of support from neither part of the powerful groups, the workers continued deserting their workplaces and refusing to work for almost 3 weeks and were able to generate support among the Jamaican inhabitants of Limón. The spontaneous and completely unorganized acts of resistance against the UFCo turned into open acts of unrest and an openly articulated discontent with the working conditions the St. Kitts workers faced when they arrived in Limón in November 1910. In total, the unrest lasted almost three weeks, with several men being killed due to violent reactions of the UFCo as well as the Costa Rican government.

Scott mentions desertion as an example for everyday resistance that can lead to the breakdown of a whole system. In the case of the Afro–Caribbean workers in Limón, their constant movements and reluctance of staying on the UFCo plantations for longer than they felt inclined to, did not cause the breakdown of a system, but it did lead to a constant shortage of labor, one of the biggest challenges the UFCo had to face in the history of its operations in Limón.

4.4. Creating realms of resistance

Besides this petty resistance, however, an important part in the creation of non-compliant ideas and a more self-determined life was to carve out certain “social sites of the hidden transcript”, such spaces, where an antihegemonic discourse could take place (Scott 1990: 120). The central argument by James Scott, that the mere existence of “offstage social spaces” (Scott 1990: 119), where resistant ideas can spread and grow is already an act of resistance, is the initial point of this subchapter. Actual sites as well as social realms could serve as such spaces, where the hidden transcript was nourished.

4.4.1. *Gatherings*

The reconstruction of the actual locations, where the immigrant workers met and the hidden transcript became public, is a hard task, as the subordinate were anxious to keep them clandestine. Their existence is mostly expressed through the company’s ambitions to prevent their establishment. In a scene of Rossi’s novel *Limón Blues*, however, a meeting at such a location is described and shows the importance of offstage social spaces as places for the exchange of dissident ideas. Orlandus, the protagonist of Rossi’s novel meets the powerman Charles Ferguson, an obeah-man who was involved in the St- Kitts Strike of 1911 and nicknamed “Consul” by the immigrant community.

„[Orlandus] [c]onoció a un powerman llamado Charles Ferguson, hombre alto, fornido, inteligente, de risa fácil. Tenía un negocio en Bocas del Toro y era traductor. Recorrían juntos las fondas, donde Ferguson, con voz de terciopelo, les hablaba a los negros de socialismo. En un rhum tavern y en medio de una de esas arengas vio a Gutzmore recostado contra la pared mugrosa. Se acordó. „Dem call demselves Fabian“, le dijo Arthur Gutzmore en Bearesem 4 mientras abundaban el desagüe. Orlandus se detuvo, apoyó la barbilla en el mango de la pala. “¿Pero qué buscan?” preguntó. ‘Si vienes a fumar conmigo en la noche te lo explicaré’. Y él había ido con Arthur y

después de fumar leyeron sobre unión de trabajadores para conseguir cambios. Por esos días, Gutzmore organizó la protesta y como fue un triunfo le apodaron Guts, y ahora lo tenía al frente con esa sonrisa a la vez retadora y delicada. Se abrazaron y se quedaron la noche hablando y bebiendo“ (Rossi 2002: 33).

Many aspects about offstage social spaces, discussed in the previous chapter, appear in this short excerpt, where Orlandus makes his first contact with ideas of resistance against the company's power in the province. It is a powerman, a member of a religious sect, who first introduces him to the ideas of socialism. The “rhum tavern” mentioned repeatedly by Scott being one of the most common offstage spaces for subordinates, is where they exchange thoughts and memories. And finally the hint about the nighttime meeting in order to further discuss the matter underlines the necessity of spaces that were out of the earshot of overseers and company officials.

Aviva Chomsky, too, underlines the importance of such nightly meetings among workers, as well as the company's eagerness to prevent and restrict those. In order to lower the risk of malaria, company doctors demanded the workers to stay in the camps and not to travel to surrounding villages, as the camps were screened and the village houses were not. In many cases, obeying this rule was a precondition for the construction of screens on workers' camps. Considered the awareness of the company doctors, that more malaria was carried out of the camps than into them from the villages, this rule seems more like a measure of precaution in order to prevent gatherings and bonding among workers and villagers than a health measure (Chomsky 1996: 108f.).

The UFCo generally regarded gatherings in public spaces as a problem and threat, which lead to the implementation of the “vagrancy law” as well as the “law of expulsion”, one of the few interventions by the Costa Rican state, which was undoubtedly interested in the continuation of UFCo's operations in Limón. Vagrancy laws had existed in Limón even before the turn of the century, but were usually only implemented in times of labor shortage, in order to recruit laborers (Harpelle 2001: 28). In cases of work stoppages and the consequent gathering of

immigrant workers in the streets of Port Limón, the vagrancy law was a highly effective method against such public assemblies. Hernández gives evidence of a group of workers, who left their plantation after a wage reduce in 1905 and filled the streets of Limón:

“Desde el jueves ultimo, cada tren que llegaba de Zent, nos traía infinidad de jamaicanos, y el viernes la ciudad amaneció replete de ellos, de modo que ni en hoteles, ni en casas se podía encontrar lugar. La policía comenzó a vigilarlos celosamente, y no pocos fueron juzgados por vagos y multados.”
(in Hernández 1991b: 220)

The vagrancy law, thus, was implemented in order to end the gatherings and prevent further collective actions. The same strategy was used five years later, as the St. Kitts workers left their farms and marched towards Limón to gather in front of company buildings. Many of the workers left Limón in fear of being arrested, the number of immigrants gathered in the streets lowered significantly as workers resumed work at the farms (Harpelle 2001: 29). The vagrancy law enabled the company to punish the immigrant workers for merely standing in a public place, or even charge them fees for violation of the law (Hernández 1991: 220). The law of expulsion or “ley de expulsión de extranjeros indeseables”, was used to solve any kind of labor problem. The term “indeseable” could be used very freely, whichever individual that was potentially dangerous to the state or the company could be expelled (Hernández 1991b: 220ff). The “visual impact of collective power” (Scott 1990a: 65) threatened the dominant, and by the implementation of the law of expulsion and the vagrancy law this weakness was clearly admitted. In occasions of gatherings, the hidden transcript was given mutuality, it was shared and thus nourished and spread easily. Gatherings were thus aimed for by the subordinate and feared by the dominant.

4.4.2. Religious cults as catalysts for resistance

Aviva Chomsky points out the importance of religions in the creation of an “alternative society in the shadow of the plantation (Chomsky 1995: 843). In

Limón during the first half of the 20th century religious groups spread with the growing number of Caribbean immigrants. Mostly Anglican, Methodist and Baptist churches were established throughout the province, contrasting the mainly catholic Hispanic highland. Further, the Obeah as well as the Pocomía and Cumina cult was of great importance in Limón, and although not the only African-based religious cults existing in Limón, the influence of those two sects is considered the most crucial in resistance practices. Monica Schuler underlines the role of Obeah stating that it was “a powerful catalyst for African and Afro-Jamaican resistance to European values and control” (in Chomsky 1995: 845). As it is the most frequently mentioned religious sect, this subchapter will focus on Obeah as a social realm and a space belonging to the subordinate group.

Obeah “is not a religion as such, but a system of beliefs grounded in spirituality and an acknowledgement of the supernatural and involving aspects of witchcraft, sorcery, magic, spells, and healing” (Frye 1997: 198). The Ashanti word obayifo, translated “witch” or “wizard” (Fernández Olmos and Paravisini Gebert 1997: 8), as well as simply “power” (Duncan and Meléndez 2005: 135), changed into Obeah, Obiah or Obia. The practice of Obeah involves dealing with ghosts or spirits in order to cause good or evil on people. For achieving a specific end, an individual can ask the Obeah practitioner for help and advice. The various forms of Obeah have existed as a common practice since the early days of plantation society in the English-speaking Caribbean. The Obeah-men and Obeah-women have played a crucial role in slave societies. Despite the colonial authorities’ efforts to repress the practices connected with Obeah, Obeah-men and women functioned as community leaders. Obeah, as well as Voodoo and other African-based religions have been an important factor in inspiring revolts against colonial powers. The most famous example is the revolt of Ashanti slaves in Jamaica in 1760, where the co-leader had claimed to be an Obeah-man who was believed to be invulnerable. The belief in the leaders’ invulnerability substantially strengthened the movement (Fernández Olmos and Paravisini Gebert 1997: 8). Alan Richardson further points out that Obeah fostered resistance as it offered leaders, meeting places and preserved African traditions creating a feeling of community and mutuality. Clearly, Obeah was considered a threat by Jamaican authorities, when the implementation of Obeah practices was declared a capital

offence and the law for “suppression and punishment of Obeah practices” was enacted. Richardson argues, that the perception of Obeah being subversive and dangerous had existed since the revolt of 1760 (Richardson 1997: 174f).

In 1911, *The Limón Times* published an article mentioning the practices of a not specified religious cult. It stated: “vile practices (revival meetings) which have stirred the town during the past month the like of which have never been known in the previous history of Port Limón” (in Chomsky 1995: 847). Most probably, the ceremony was part of the two most common revival cults, Pocomía or Cumina, which involved gatherings with drumming and dancing. Pocomía as well as Cumina can be understood as African-derived rituals with Christian practices and beliefs, as well as the belief in spirit possessions, similar to Obeah (Mosby 2003: 153). Quince Duncan describes a Cumina ceremony in his novel *La paz del pueblo*:

“Danzaban en torno al fuego por las noches movidos por un ritmo diáfano que aceleraba el pulso de los hombres. Cuminá en el fuego. Cuminá en el ritmo, en la esperanza y en la rebeldía, en el amor y en el sueño. Danzaban en torno al fuego por las noches, y combatían bajo el brazo poderoso del Cuminá guerrero hasta que sus lanzas se agotaron y cayeron sagrando en la arena. Morían, Cuminá en el pecho para volver por las noches a las danzas del pueblo, para inspirar rebelión y la defensa de los sagrados principios del samamfo”

(Duncan 1978: 28).

This description of a revival ritual gives insight of how closely linked religious beliefs were to resistance and rebellion. Rebellion was constantly mentioned, and although, as Eugene Genovese points out, religion neither “sparked the slave to rebellion nor rendered them docile” (in Billings 1990: 2), the constant mentioning and the creation of an awareness of the possibility of rebellion can be considered an act of resistance.

Further, the meetings happened during nighttime, a time were overseers, company officials as well as the Costa Rican authorities were not present. The labeling as a

“vile practice” in the above mentioned article published in the *Limón Times* shows, that the religious nightly gatherings were considered a disturbance, or even a danger to public order. It expresses the total disapproval of the practices, even by certain members of the immigrant community, suggested by the fact that the *Limón Times* was an English speaking newspaper, inherent to the immigrant community of Limón.

Thus, one achievement of Obeah, Cumina, Pocomía and other religious cults was the creation of spaces out of the earshot of the powerful, the practicing of “ideological negation” (Scott 1990: 116) outside of surveillance. The role of the religious cults, however, can be further emphasized by showing the great influence of sect leaders in petty forms of resistance that swelled to collective acts, as massive work stoppages or strikes. When, in 1911, the workers from the island of St. Kitts, who were brought to Limón in order to compensate labor shortage, protested against the working conditions on their assigned plantations, the Obeah-man Charles Ferguson was one of the ringleaders. Aviva Chomsky suggests, that his ties to an Obeah-man from St. Kitts have been the connecting point between the two groups, although the company always intended to instigate hostility between the Jamaican majority and the group of workers from St. Kitts (Chomsky 1995: 844). Charles Ferguson thus acted as an agent using the social realm of Obeah as a site of operation. The religious beliefs remained secondary in this specific case, but it can be argued that Obeah functioned as the basis for resistance.

Another agent can be seen in Altimann Krimbell Dabney, “Shepherd Alti”, who as well enjoyed popularity in Limón. He acted as the leader of a Pocomía group and was considered lunatic and heroic at the same time. Dabney claimed to have been sent to Costa Rica as the “God of the black race”, he had a sanctuary “where he offered salvation from the impending apocalypse that God would use to punish all those who oppressed the “black race” (Harpelle 1994: 102). His reputation of being defiant of authority as well as being an acknowledged healer made him seem suspicious and dangerous to the authorities. In 1932, the police entered Dabney’s tabernacle during a service, destroyed the interior and took worshippers to the police station. Additionally, several other worshippers were arrested about a

month later. Most of Dabney's protest was directed against president Leon Cortés, who negotiated the banana contract with the UFCo, which prohibited blacks from working on the Pacific coast plantations. The Costa Rican police fought against Dabney for several years, until he was finally subdued, and several of his followers were deported from the country as undesirables or detained because of their connection to Altman Dabney and Pocomía. Throughout the following years, the Costa Rican government continued to repress the religious cults. When, a few years after Dabney's arrest, a new Pocomía leader, George Davis, appeared, he was arrested within weeks, accused of having taken part in the murder of a child. Although he was freed due to lack of evidence, the UFCo cancelled Davis's traveling pass shortly after this incident, claiming that he had insulted an UFCo official (Harpelle 1994: 102ff). However, not only the authorities, the government and the UFCo, disapproved of the cults. Lead by the English speaking newspaper the *Limón Times* and its editor Samuel Nation, the elites of the immigrant community as well considered it a threat to the wellbeing of the community, as it would always be connected with the cults and mysterious happenings around them. With the disapproval and oppression from all sides, the cults were subsequently driven underground and public gatherings became less frequent and the cults less visible in the province. Despite the oppression, however, the cults remained popular (Chomsky 1995: 849).

As has been shown in previous chapters, the harsh reactions of the company, and, in the case of the cults, the Costa Rican government, suggests the meaning given to the cults by the authorities. It has been argued that especially the Obeah cult has been a catalyst for rebellious actions in Caribbean slave societies. In an enclave economy like Limón in the first half of the 20th century, Obeah, Pocomía, Cumina and several other cults served a similar function. Basing on the above, it can be suggested that the cults contributed to resistance practices on different levels.

Firstly, the revivalist sects, such as Pocomía and Obeah presented a way of creating social realms of resistance, by organizing gatherings and nightly meetings. A space was created, and resistance was preached and spread among the Caribbean immigrants that had settled in the province. By creating a "counterideology", as named by James Scott, the immigrants contributed to the

creation of a cultural life only belonging to them, a sphere where neither the company nor the government could interfere. Additionally, as shown in Duncan's novel, the idea of resistance and rebellion was a part of the revivalist gatherings. Secondly, the sects served as a link between the various immigrant groups, which the UFCo had always tried to prevent, as solidarity meant a threat to the company. This linking function becomes evident in the St. Kitts incident of 1910, when the Jamaican residents of Limón and the newly arrived St Kitts workers connected through their shared beliefs.

Thirdly, the feeling of belonging and the creation of a communal security network stated opposition against the wave of racism, and the disapproval of the black inhabitants of Costa Rica. When the UFCo retreated from the Caribbean, the government was confronted with a mass of unemployed workers and subcontractors who had settled permanently in the province. The government refused to accept them as citizens and free passage was not possible until after the civil war of 1948.

4.4.3. Medicine as a sphere of self-determination

The UFCo was omnipresent in the daily lives of the residents of Limón. It provided housing, clothing, totally controlled transportation and communication, owned stores and was also in control of the medical services. Especially health care presented a very effective form of social control to the company:

“In line with the company's desire to create a docile, stable and contented proletariat out of independent-minded West Indian and Central American peasants, it sought to convert – or coerce – them into accepting the wonders of modern medicine and sanitation, which could, of course, be provided only by the company. Thus health care became a form of attempted social control.”

(Chomsky 1996: 89f).

The UFCo urgently needed a docile and more stable work force, the migration movements among the workers already highly complicated the control they could

wield over them. Diseases presented yet another threat of losing workers. Hence the company both needed to prevent the spreading of diseases and make workers dependent on their facilities. The UFCo was the only provider of medication and medical care in Limón. Two company hospitals existed in the province, one in Bocas del Toro and the other one in Port Limón. Still, until 1904 no “colored” patients were seen in those hospitals. According to the UFCo, infant mortality was a major problem among the Negro population, which they mostly blamed on “the mothers’ ignorance of the most elemental notions of hygiene and their complete ignorance of the way to feed their children” (Chomsky 1996: 125). Their subsequent introduction of formula was meant to reduce child mortality, meaning to force upon them the wonders of modern medicine and sanitation, while at the same time making them dependent on products produced and sold exclusively by the company. Interestingly, Paula Palmer describes a very different scenario, stating that infant mortality among the Afro – Caribbean population of Limón was very low in the early days of banana business: “Very seldom, did you hear a woman dead from having baby in those times. Very seldom you hear a baby dead” (Adine Bryant in Palmer 2005: 87). The introduction of formula can thus be considered a mere tool of making the women dependent on the provision of the product by the company and thus being able to control them in a more efficient way. The constant striving for independence and the reluctance of the immigrants to remain in the province presented a problem, and making them dependent on medical services could be a way of tying them to the location.

However, the Caribbean immigrants showed reluctance to accept the measures and procedure wielded over them. The example of malaria controlling measures implemented by the UFCo in Limón before 1950 give insight of the widespread opposition against this company medicine among the plantation workers as well as independent planters in Limón. Several measures against the spreading of malaria were implemented, but before 1926, no serious efforts were taken so as to combat malaria among workers. According to the UFCo, workers “could not be trusted to obey sanitary regulations and use them correctly” (Chomsky 1996: 101), a statement that indicates the plantation workers’ reluctance to use company hospitals as well as to obey to company measurements and treatments against the

spreading of diseases. The company's methods were simply not what the workers desired (Chomsky 1996: 92ff). Three main reasons for the reluctance of accepting company medicine can be outlined.

The first reason is closely linked to the already discussed religious beliefs of the Afro-Caribbean immigrants. The immigrants relied on forms of medical practices inherent to their cultures and religious beliefs; an Obeah healer was more easily trusted than an UFCo doctor. By this means, the immigrants found ways to elude the function of control and domination of the company hospital. Midwives, healers, as well as so-called snake doctors were members of high prestige in the community. Even serious injuries like machete wounds, high fevers of snake bites were treated within the community, and "nobody never go to doctor" as Mr. Selven Bryant, a resident of Old Harbour states (in Palmer 2005: 89). Another resident of the Limón Province, Mr. Johnson, who was a child in the town of Cahuita in the early days of banana business, remembers:

"My grandmother could cure fever without any doctor, she knew to do it with bare bush, but I don't know them things. (...) That's the bush we call stinging nettle, some people call it scratch bush. They beat themselves with it and it blister them and they get rid of the fever."

(In Palmer 2005: 87)

A very high degree of self-determination in medical practices, and a general mistrust of white medicine, is observable in these statements. An important factor in strengthening this mistrust in the company's medical services might be found in the common practice of distributing quinine as malaria treatment as well as prophylaxis. Thus, as a second reason of high reluctance to accept company medicine the use of quinine can be suggested. In the novel *Mamita Yunai*, Carlos Luis Fallas describes realities of the UFCo workers as follows:

"Ilusiones de todos los que entran a la Zona Bananera en busca de fortuna y que se van dejando a jirones en las fincas de la United. Los linieros viejos ya no sueñan en nada, no piensan en nada. Sudan y tragan quinina. Y se

emborrachan con el ron grosero que quema la garganta y destruye el organismo.”

(Fallas 2007: 124).

According to Fallas description, the UFCo workers did not oppose to the application of quinine as a remedy as well as prophylaxis and passively endured the misery on the plantations. He hints at the side-effects the continuous application of quinine causes, such as weakness, dizziness and fatigue. Precisely because of these side effects, Chomsky contrarily argues, quinine was disliked and, in many cases, refused by the company workers. The reason why treating and preventing malaria was of such high importance to the UFCo was not because malaria caused most deaths among the workers. Usually, the workers, who were to their great majority born in the Caribbean, were highly resistant to tropical diseases. The company, however, encouraged prophylaxis, as the treatment of malaria required a long period of hospitalization, which simply proved too expensive for the company (Chomsky 1996: 96). The workers showed resistance to these measures of routinely prescribing quinine, they refused to continue taking the pill after the symptoms had ceased and in many cases did not permit the company doctors to administer the pill to their children. Hence, the company required methods of forcing the treatment on the workers in order to prevent repeated infection. Besides refusing to treat re-infected workers, who had declined the follow-up treatment, a further technique of punishing noncompliance was to simply withhold payment until the anti-malarial treatment had been taken (Chomsky 1996: 106).

The third reason of workers' resistance to company measures against malaria is linked to the already mentioned phenomenon of high fluctuation and constant migratory movements among workers in Limón, which further complicated the company's efforts to force certain treatments upon their working force. To prevent infection of those workers who did not stay long enough to be given quinine treatment, the simple method of screening houses was introduced. Still, even this seemingly benign method met the opposition of workers, as the UFCo demanded a certain behavior to go along with the screening. Workers should not travel between the plantation as well as “refrain from gathering in public

assemblies during the hours between sunrise and sunset (sic – it must mean sunset and sunrise) when the danger of infection by mosquitoes is greatest” (UFCOMD 14/1925 in Chomsky 1996: 109). As gatherings, especially during nighttime, were one of the few chances to meet without the presence of overseers, the measure was not met with high acceptance.

Workers thus resisted social control through noncompliance with medical treatment provided by the company. As Chomsky underlines, workers had their own ideas about medicine, and were reluctant to rely on company doctors. Simple unwillingness and sticking to their own beliefs partly deprived the UFCo of a very efficient tool of social control. But not only did they set a statement by that, and substantially complicated the UFCo doctors’ practice, in some cases this behavior did actually cause changes and improved their situations. Because of the massive refusal of taking quinine, the UFCo medical department developed a little “Pink Tonic Tablet” containing iron and various other supplements in order to replace the quinine. Many workers’ health substantially improved after taking the tablets, as, according to Chomsky, the iron was the significant factor in the improvement of the workers’ health as many suffered from anemia and undernourishment (Chomsky 1996: 128). Especially concerning health and medicine, the constant struggle between workers and the company is clearly perceivable. The workers insisted on maintaining their own belief system and were highly critical towards company medicine, and the company, on the other hand, struggled to maintain a certain degree of control over their workforce, as fluctuation, desertion and migration caused periods of extreme labor shortage.

4.5. Discussing “organized” resistance

“Paul Rodman is angered by the fact, that most Costa Ricans believe black laborers were acquiescent with the company structure” states Paula Palmer (Palmer 2005: 137). Even though the famous strike of 1934, organized by Carlos Luis Fallas and the Communist Party of Costa Rica is often cited as the first strike against the UFCo, workers of the company were organizing strikes as early as 1913, and they suffered cruel consequences. Even earlier, in 1909, in a letter to

Andrew Preston, president of the UFCo until 1924, a railway official wrote the following lines: “Dear Sir, we have had a little strike to-day among the laborers at Limón, and the men did not turn out. This will delay somewhat in loading the S.S. *Parismina*, but not very much, as we have called in from the farms about 400 men, and they will all be at work at about 6 o’clock this evening. This is the usual happening, which occurs about once a year, but it will not amount to anything.” (INCOFER: 4833). In a strike in 1913, one Jamaican worker was killed storming the dock where Nicaraguan strikebreakers, imported by the UFCo, continued the work of the strikers. When the strike ended in April, all the strike organizers were fired (Palmer 2005: 137). Again, in 1918, the UFCo workers struggled for three months in order to achieve a pay rise, a strike that is remembered to be one of the most violent. The company did not negotiate and again brought strikebreakers from the highlands, threw strikers out of their company-housing, burned their possessions, destroyed their gardens and pursued them into the mountains, where they had fled to take refuge. There, they burned their shelters and brought the strikers in under arrest. According to Mr. Rodman, the main demands of the workers was better payment and more liberal politics among the employees, as well as better treatment towards laborers (in Palmer 2005: 139).

Thus, UFCo letters as well as personal statements by Limón residents prove the occurrence of strikes long before the famous banana strike of 1934, the already mentioned strike of St. Kitts being one of the most commonly known. Consequently, a certain degree of organization did exist among the Afro-Caribbean population of Limón and even before Marcus Garvey and the UNIA, various lodges were already active before 1910. Other assemblies, like literary groups had been established. Besides those apolitical associations, the *Artisan’s and Labourer’s Union* (ALU) was formed in December of 1910, with Charles Ferguson, also an active Obeah-man, in the executive board. As has been discussed previously, Ferguson, his connections to Obeah as well as his new position in the ALU presented a serious threat to the company, which lead to his expulsion from the country. After 1911, when the ALU fell apart, no successful unionizing reappeared until the 1930s, and then it was among Costa Ricans, organized by the Communist Party. After 1911 strikes happened only sporadic,

and organizations turned to be of a more religious and social character (Chomsky 1996: 187ff).

Especially in the period before 1934, everyday resistance in the form of labor migration, religious sects, the establishment and persistence of a system of medical care apart from company medicine as well as small and routinely performed acts of resistance such as theft or trickery on the plantations, was more successful than the attempts of organizing workers' resistance. The Afro-Caribbean workers' position demanded self-determined action, as, in the first half of the 20th century, state intervention for their cause lacked almost completely. The constant labor movements, that greatly challenged the UFCo, who never managed to satisfactorily solve the problem of labor shortage, also constrained the workers from a successful unionization. Still, the various examples of resistance practices among the Afro-Caribbeans of Limón contradict the image of the "docile negro", and present a substantially different picture of the UFCo workers in Limón in the first half of the 20th century.

5. Conclusion and Outlook

From the very beginning of banana business in Limón, the United Fruit Company struggled to maintain order and control on their plantations in the Costa Rican Caribbean. The Afro-Caribbean immigrant workers, mainly from Jamaica, who started arriving at the coast of Limón in the late 19th century, presented the majority of their working force until the company's retreat from the Costa Rican Caribbean towards the end of the first half of the 20th century. During the decades in between, the coexistence of the immigrant workers and their communities, the UFCo and the Costa Rican authorities molded and defined many of the characteristics of the province, which remain visible until today. The immigrants' intention had not been to stay on the Isthmus, but to return to their native lands with enough money to independently secure a living. By the beginning of the 20th century, however, permanent settlements developed around the railway lines, as Minor Keith and the UFCo conceded land to their workers in order to prevent

them from leaving during work delays, which often lasted for months. These first settlers, highly experienced in the cultivation of bananas, introduced Minor Keith to banana planting and thus presented a basis for the subsequent expansion of the plantations in Costa Rica and Central America. This point has been stressed in order to underline the active and decisive role the Afro-Caribbeans played in the expansion of the banana plantings in the Costa Rican Caribbean. From the very beginning, the immigrants and their communities had been part of the development, and, as suggested in the present study, they maintained their active part in the process over the years until the boom, the subsequent years of decline and the UFCo's eventual abandonment of the Caribbean plantations towards the end of the first half of the 20th century. While the company struggled to maintain control, the workers struggled to resist control, exploitation, ideological domination and deprivation of their independence and liberty.

As one of the UFCo's biggest challenges was constant labor shortage, the company applied various methods of tying the workers to their workplaces. The immigrants, however, achieved to maintain high fluctuation movements. The descendants of former slaves were aware of how to use their freedom, and as a consequence, the UFCo could never entirely solve the problem of labor shortage. In order to prevent bonding and solidarity, which could increase the risk of collective actions against the company, segmentation of immigrants according to their ethnic and origin was implemented. The immigrant workers partly resisted these methods as shared beliefs expressed in religious cults such as Obeah, Cumina, Myalism and Pocomía, enabled connections and collective actions, most clearly visible in the St. Kitts uprising of 1910, where an Obeah-man of St. Kitts and the Obeah-man Charles Ferguson of Limón, functioned as a linking element. By maintaining their religious beliefs and practices, the immigrant workers also created spaces for exchange and strengthened their own counter-morality, opposing the dominant opinion. A sphere where the dominant opinion was most openly challenged and opposed to, was closely linked to the Afro-Caribbeans religious beliefs: the refusal of accepting certain company provided medical treatments and rather trusting healers inherent to their community. Medical care was used by the company as a tool of social control as well as for the purpose of

creating a situation of dependence on the company's facilities in order to tie their workers to the plantations. The immigrants, however, remained highly self-determined in this area. In the daily routine of the banana business, the immigrants found various ways of tricking the overseers, or of stealing from the banana carts in order to compensate the high degree of rejection of the subcontractors' fruit, and thus to secure a living.

Underlying all these small acts and strategies of self-determination, certain folktales and legends can be considered crucial. In a society, where every child knows about Anansi, the spider and how it always manages to trick the powerful, dissidence, disobedience and resistance are bound to be present in the daily lives, as a critical climate of opinion is predominant.

The conclusion can be drawn, that the image of the "docile negro", predominant in among the Hispanic population of Costa Rica, must be seriously doubted. The Afro-Caribbean workers of Limón were far from "bien portados" (*Gaceta Oficial* 1874), or "por lo general sumisos" (*Diario el Comercio* 1887). The strategies of expressing noncompliance and of challenging the UFCo's domination and, in later years, the growing racist prejudices against the black population, demonstrated in this study present merely a few, traceable methods.

The image of the obedient black Limonese banana worker might have emerged, as many studies of resistance against the UFCo in Limón focus on the strike of 1934, which was lead by the Costa Rican communist party. In the 1934 strike, Afro-Caribbean presence was minimal, a fact which could lead to the assumption that the immigrants did not take part in resistance practices. The question arises, thus, why the Afro-Caribbeans' participation was low in the 1934 strike in site of their continuous resistance activities in the decades before. Aviva Chomsky suggests that with the failure of the Artisans and Labor Union after the 1910 St Kitts uprisings, the workers of Limón might have become less radical. With he failure of the strikes of 1910, the black population became aware of their extreme vulnerability and lack of legal protection from the Costa Rican government or even the British authorities in the country (Chomsky 1996: 218). A different interpretation of the reasons of the lack of black participation is presented by Echeverri-Gent who argues, that the tradition of resistance among the immigrant community was eroded when the communist party took the leadership of the

strike. She further mentions the growing racist prejudices against the black population as a possible reason for their withdrawal from the strike (Echeverri-Gent 1992: 297). Based on the present study, a third possible interpretation can be added. With the growing marginalization of the Afro-Caribbean population, the driving underground of African-based religious cults and the increasingly tight economic situation, the strategies of resistance went from more open forms, as strikes and protests, repeatedly mentioned in the early banana years, to more subtle and clandestine forms of resistance, as presented in this study. The clandestine character of resistance became more important as the forms of control became more elaborate, and the Costa Rican state was increasingly involved. The vagrancy law as well as the law of expulsion implies the growing involvement of the government. A change of strategies could avoid such obstacles and reduce the risk of having to face repressive consequences, while still achieving improvement. However, the 1934 strike was the first time, the banana workers achieved to raise public awareness of their situation. Ironically, the Afro-Caribbeans, although they had stated the great majority of workers for decades and could look back at a tradition of resistance and struggle against the UFCo's domination, were excluded from the strike and did not experience improvements.

The marginalization of the black population of Costa Rica, the still perceivable racist tendencies and the relative poverty of the province at the present time can thus be considered a legacy of the UFCo enclave. A wide field of possible further investigation opens concerning the marginalization of the Afro-Caribbean immigrants and a growing institutionalization of racist prejudices in Costa Rica. More detailed studies on the reasons for this racist tendency, and the development of the continuous deprivation of rights, would offer valuable insight. In the country's historiography, not much space is awarded to the black population of Costa Rica. The myth of homogeneity excluded indigenous groups as well as blacks, in order to create the appearance of a homogenous, white, Hispanic population. Further research about the Afro-Caribbeans and their heritage, their activities in the province and their struggle against all kinds of authorities can contribute to a more detailed and accurate picture of the Afro-Caribbean population of Costa Rica.

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Zusammenfassung

In der Historiographie Costa Ricas wird der afrokaribischen Bevölkerung, größtenteils handelt es sich hierbei um Nachfahren von Westafrikanischen Sklaven, die aus Jamaika und einigen anderen karibischen Inseln an die Karibikküste Costa Ricas auswanderten, kaum Platz eingeräumt. Die United Fruit Company, die in engem Zusammenhang mit dieser Bevölkerungsgruppe steht, wird jedoch als eine der einflussreichsten Akteurinnen in der neueren Geschichte Zentralamerikas angesehen. Diese Arbeit setzt mich mit der Beziehung der scheinbar machtlosen Masse and Einwanderern und jenem Unternehmen, dem unbegrenzte Macht zugeschrieben wird, auseinander. Dabei liegt der Schwerpunkt auf den *everyday forms of resistance*, den alltäglichen Formen des Widerstands seitens der afrokaribischen Bevölkerung, die in verschiedener Weise unter der Herrschaft der UFCo lebten und von ihr abhängig waren. *Everyday resistance* beschreibt jene Art des Widerstandes, welcher täglich, individuell, ohne aufwändige Planung und anonym ausgeführt werden kann. Die verschiedenen Arten und Weisen, auf die Widerstand ausgedrückt wurde, werden in drei Kategorien geteilt: Die Überlieferung von Sagen, Märchen und Liedern, geringfügiger Widerstand wie Diebstahl oder Betrugerei sowie die Schaffung von sozialen Bereichen des Widerstandes und der Selbstbestimmung. Diese relativ breite Definition des Begriffes „Widerstand“ sowie die Analyse von Quellen sowie Zeitungen, Romanen, Biographien und Briefen, ermöglichen einen differenzierten Blick auf den Alltag der afrokaribischen Einwanderer. Das Bild des unterwürfigen und passiven Plantagenarbeiters gerät ins Wanken, und viele sehr verschiedenartige Ausdrücke des Widerstandes gegen Ausbeutung und Unterdrückung können sichtbar gemacht werden. Legenden und Märchen bildeten die Grundlage für kritische Gedanken, Diebstahl Betrugerei und der geheime Gemüseanbau untergruben die Autorität der UFCo. Außerdem gelang es den Einwanderern, in gewissen Bereichen einen hohen Grad an Selbstbestimmung und Unabhängigkeit zu erlangen, so zum Beispiel in der Medizin. Trotz ihrer untergeordneten Position spielten die afrokaribischen Einwanderer eine entscheidende Rolle in der Ausbreitung der Bananenwirtschaft und konnten immer wieder die Grenzen der Macht und Unterdrückung deutlich machen.

Summary

The Afro-Caribbean workers of Limón, mostly descendants of Anglophone blacks, have not been awarded much space in Costa Rican historiography. Their employer, the US multinational United Fruit Company, however, is considered one of the most powerful actors on the Costa Rican as well as Central American Caribbean areas. This study is an examination of the relationship between the seemingly powerless group of immigrant workers and the multinational company. The main objective is to analyze the various forms of everyday resistance performed by the Afro-Caribbean population that lived under domination of the company. Everyday forms of resistance are routinely performed, and mainly individualistic expressions of noncompliance that do not require a high degree of organization and can be performed anonymously. Three main categories of resistance practices have been established: the telling and re-telling of folktales, petty forms of resistance such as theft and robbery and the creation of social realms of resistance. This somewhat wide definition of resistance, allows drawing a fairly differentiated picture of the Afro-Caribbeans' role in the banana business. Working with sources such as Limonese newspapers, novels, biographies and letters written by company as well as railway officials, allows gaining insight in the daily lives and routines of the Afro-Caribbeans of Limón. The image of the docile and obedient workers, loyal to their company, falters, and the conclusion can be drawn, that immigrant workers can look back at a history of dissidence and disobedience. This noncompliance with the dominant system was expressed in songs and stories, in various forms of petty resistance such as theft, trickery and the clandestine cultivation of subsistence crops. Further, the Afro-Caribbeans managed to secure certain social realms of high self-determination, most clearly evident in their refusal to accept company prescribed medicine and their trust in healers inherent to their community and beliefs. In spite of their subordinate position, the immigrant workers played a crucial role in the starting and later expansion of the banana business and proved, that there were certain limits to power and exploitation.

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Deutsch (Muttersprache), Englisch, Spanisch (fließend)
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