

CIHAC. CM- Versión digital  
E-248-17

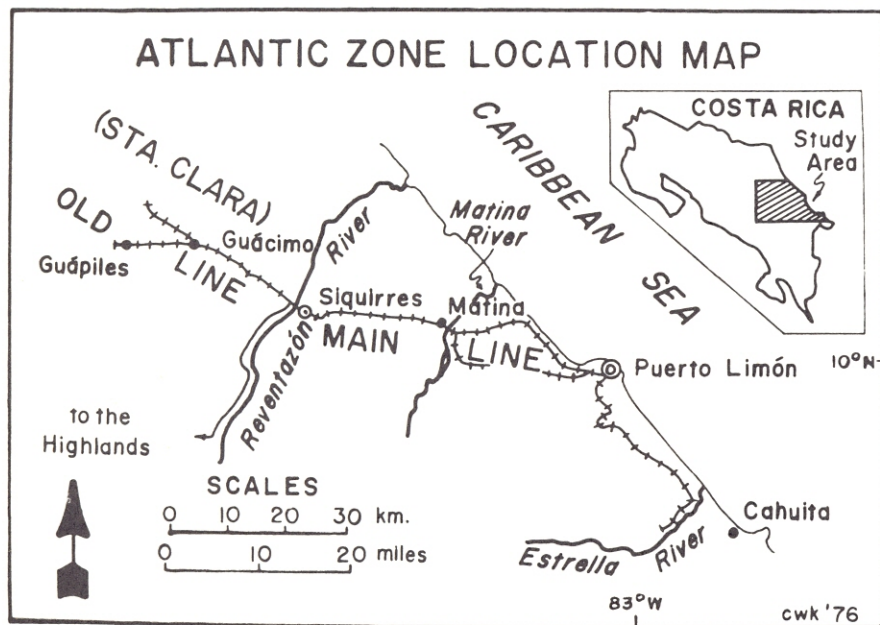
KOCH, CHARLES  
An ethnic Geography of Costa Rica's Atlantic  
pp. 7 - 18

## An Ethnic Geography of Costa Rica's Atlantic Zone

CHARLES W. KOCH

The Atlantic Zone of Costa Rica is one of the few places in the world where it is commonplace for poor, underprivileged whites to work for propertied blacks. This circumstance is even more unusual because the whites, or "natives" as the Negroes call them, are a majority both locally and nationally. Negroes constitute only 15 or 20 per cent of the population of the Atlantic Zone, and only one or two per cent of Costa Rica's population. Further, Negroes are "foreign" to Costa Rica: they or their immediate ancestors came from the British West Indies, and they are English-speaking Protestants in a country of Spanish-speaking Catholics.

About 60 per cent of the Negroes in Costa Rica's Atlantic Zone live in



Puerto Limón and Siquirres, the region's two cities. Most of the rest are concentrated in villages along the 38-mile railway between them. All of these villages have easy, several times daily communication with the cities, thanks partly to the fact that all traffic between the densely populated highlands and the country's busiest port must use this railroad. (See map.) The Negro villagers are mostly cacao farmers. Natives also live in these villages, but almost all are field hands employed on nearby banana plantations or by black cacao farmers.

Natives or whites are sandwiched around Negroes. Most of the plantation owners and managers are natives, and administrative posts in the cities are staffed mostly by natives. But 75 or 80 per cent of the natives live in the country either as small farmers or as field hands. In either case they are heavily concentrated in a purely agricultural region served by the Old Line, a 20-mile dead-end spur. During booms this region has good communication with the cities, but in busts it is lucky to have one train weekly. Native farmers live dispersed on their farms, unlike the village-dwelling Negro farmers. Corn is the basis of their farming, although natives pasture considerable numbers of cattle as well.

These differences between Negroes and natives parallel differences between black Creoles and East Indians in Trinidad and Guyana. East Indians are a rural folk who grow practically all of the rice produced in these two countries. Black Creoles tend more to be city dwellers. Many students of these societies assert that these distinctive economic specialties are culturally determined rather than socially or economically determined. Slavery is supposed to have atomized Creole society and to have produced an aversion to farm work. Thus Creoles do especially well in cities and in city-like *ambiances* where wage-work is the rule and advancement frequently means changing employers. Independence from obligations to the family is presumably an advantage. On the other hand East Indians are said to have a tradition of extended families from India as well as a preference for rice and knowledge of how to cultivate it. Thus they do especially well as peasant farmers where a cohesive family unit is a positive advantage. A conspicuous minority of East Indians are wealthy urban businessmen. The trustworthy contacts provided by extended families are presumed to be an advantage in this type of independent endeavor also.<sup>1</sup>

The few social scientists who have examined the Atlantic Zone have offered similar, if less elaborate, "cultural values" explanations for social and economic differences between Negroes and natives. These "cultural values" explanations emphasize that Negroes in the Atlantic Zone exhibit the same urban bias as their Creole relatives in the West Indies, and that natives in the Atlantic Zone exhibit the same lack of urbanization and the same frontier spirit which characterize Costa Rica and other Central American countries.<sup>2</sup>

My purpose is to show that Negroes' and natives' distinctive cultures have played no role in causing them to pursue different livelihoods. The method for accomplishing this is to demonstrate that social history suffices to explain contemporary social and economic differences between the two peoples.

### Sources

Until very recently the Atlantic Zone has been "foreign" to all parties with



a stake in it. Foreign banana and railroad companies have dominated its economic life. Workers came attracted by jobs and wages, planning always to leave when they struck it rich or when higher wages beckoned elsewhere. Costa Rica's government exploited the region as a colony for the benefit of the highlands: for decades the Atlantic Zone paid more taxes into the government than any other region of the country, but it received none of the schools, roads, and similar improvements which set Costa Rica "above" its Central American neighbors. Works on this "foreign" region have focused upon the polemics of how it has served this interest or that. In the process the region itself has been subjected more to caricature than to serious study.<sup>3</sup>

Hence I have relied upon primary sources to reconstruct an historical geography of the region and its peoples. *La Voz del Atlántico-The Atlantic Voice*, a weekly newspaper published in Spanish and English in Puerto Limón from 1934 to 1946, proved the most useful all-round source. It was dedicated mostly to the minutiae of purely local interest; it was a copious publisher of letters to the editor; and it represented no coherent interest. The two halves had different editors, and they were so independent that articles published in one half frequently contained ethnic slurs on readers of the other half. Social differences between Negroes and natives developed during the decade when this weekly was published, making it scarcely possible to overestimate the newspaper's usefulness.

The fact that ethnic groups can be distinguished on the basis of surnames (English=Negro; Spanish= native) makes lists of individuals useful. Two lists in particular are used in this article: an employment file maintained by the Northern Railway Company from 1917 to 1941, and the railway's *Planilla de Empleo* or wage and salary roll for January, 1970. These records provide invaluable information about the evolution of employment in the Atlantic Zone. (A number of other lists were used in the dissertation to detail such items as patterns of landholding.)

Other sources include the usual government reports, official compendia of laws and executive orders, consular reports, theses and published scholarly works, accounts of travelers, *etc.* I have also made extensive use of the memories of Atlantic Zone residents whom I interviewed almost continuously during six months' residence and travel in the region in 1970-71.

### Settling and Farming in the Atlantic Zone

By the middle of the nineteenth century the Atlantic Zone had come to have a mainly negative significance for Costa Rica: the region isolated the highlands from the Atlantic Ocean. As a result coffee from Costa Rica destined for Europe was embarked from a port on the Pacific coast and was sent either across Panama or around Cape Horn, at considerable expense in either case. The prospect of cutting freight rates in half prompted the government to build a railroad across the Atlantic Zone.<sup>4</sup>

An early plan to pay for the railroad by selling public land along the right-of-way dictated that it pass through Santa Clara despite the circuitous route. The advantage of Santa Clara was that it was well drained and hence "healthy."



The rest of the railway either passed through the already settled highlands, or through Matina, a swampy region famous equally for the cacao it produced in colonial days and for the tropical fevers the cacao growers invariably suffered. The conventional wisdom of the time was that Matina was almost useless since only blacks could survive there. Hence in the early years of railway construction Jamaican workers were given small farms in Matina as a way of settling them and developing the region. Santa Clara was surveyed into square-mile blocks of land which were sold mostly to rich Costa Ricans.

The long route through Santa Clara proved technically difficult, so in 1886 a more direct route up the canyon of the Reventazón River to the highlands was adopted. The railway west of the Reventazón River was turned into a spur which has since been aptly called the "Old Line," a term which has even replaced Santa Clara as the regional name. (I have also adopted the term "Main Line" for the region between the Reventazón River and the coast because the original name, Matina, now applies only to half of this region.)

Despite its early promise the Old Line proved to be the poorest agricultural region of the Atlantic Zone. Bananas, the first major crop of the region, exhausted its sandy, acidic soils in 10 years or less; and cacao, the most profitable successor to bananas, suffered uncontrollable attacks of fungus in its especially wet climate. This left only pasture as the major successor to bananas.

Peasants had begun growing bananas on the Main Line even before the Old Line was built. Silt deposited by the same floods which contributed to the region's morbid reputation served to replenish soil fertility, giving banana plantings there an indefinite lifespan. The lesson was not lost on would-be planters. As the exhausted first-generation plantations went out of production on the Old Line in the 1890s a whole second generation of larger plantations was created on the Main Line. By 1908 this region produced 80 per cent of the 10,000,000+ stems of bananas exported from Costa Rica.<sup>5</sup>

Around the turn of the century Panama disease appeared. It is a soil fungus which attacks especially the Gros Michel variety of banana, eventually turning infected plants into a putrified mass of vegetation. Soil characteristics affect both spread of the fungus and susceptibility of plants to it. On both scores the Old Line fared worse than the Main Line. Main Line workers found small patches still productive for other crops for years after planters had given up on bananas. On the Old Line the disease rapidly left whole districts unproductive.

The Atlantic Zone has experienced four banana booms and three intervening busts. The first boom peaked in 1907 following 15 years of steady expansion. It was prolonged until 1913 by opening up new banana districts as Panama disease crippled the old ones, but the disease together with the disruption of trade during World War I finally produced a bust. The second boom peaked in 1927 and the third in 1937-1938. The latter boom was cut short after only two years by appearance of a new banana plague—sigatoka. When the new disease appeared the United Fruit Company, which had dominated Costa Rica's banana industry since 1899, abandoned the Atlantic Zone to concentrate on a new banana area on the Pacific coast.<sup>6</sup> The last banana boom began in 1956 when Standard Fruit Company started a plantation of Giant Cavendish bananas—resis-

tant to Panama disease—in the Estrella Valley. In the 1970s this latest boom was still on the upswing, promising to surpass even the big boom of 1907-1913.

With each successive boom the Old Line's share of production has increased, despite the poor performance of bananas there. In 1908 it produced only about one-fifth of banana exports; but by 1970 about two-thirds of the Atlantic Zone's banana acreage was located there, mostly north and west of the old railway on the peripheries of the settled area. The paradox of increasing concentration of bananas in the poorest place to grow them is explained because the booms have been invariably associated with plantation agriculture. Estates have survived best in the Old Line region where isolation and poor possibilities for own-account farming have provided workers attracted during the booms little reason to stay during the busts.

Main Line estates have been under constant pressure to subdivide into peasant farms. Population has been more stable on the Main Line because of the more service-oriented economy, the greater longevity of banana plantations, and because cacao—the major successor to bananas here—requires more labor than ranching. Also bananas and cacao have offered workers profitable crops to grow on their own.

Peasant farming became especially widespread in the Main Line cacao districts in the early 1930s. Planters in those years could not even recover the cost of harvesting the crop. Workers took over the plantations to work on their own, at first as tenants, but as the United Fruit Company lost interest in its extensive cacao lands, increasingly as squatters. In 1934 the United Fruit Company gave thousands of hectares of these squatter-infested lands to the government in exchange for a concession to develop a new banana zone on the Pacific coast.<sup>7</sup>

Peasant farming in old Santa Clara is concentrated in the Upper Old Line, *i.e.*, the region from Guácimo west. Estates in this region were abandoned in the late 1920s and early 1930s, but the more accessible estates of the Lower Old Line (Guácimo east to the Reventazón River) survived this period of low cattle prices.

Continuous peasant settlement in the Upper Old Line dates only from the early 1940s. Wartime settlers were natives and their crop was corn. They grew so much that this region soon came to produce most of Costa Rica's supply. Many farmers used land ceded by the United Fruit Company in 1934 along with Main Line cacao lands. But settlers soon spilled over onto private lands, partly because the extent of the new government holdings was not known. Government aid to settlers included a new law vigorously reasserting squatters' rights, a price support scheme for corn, and a new grain dryer installed in Guácimo.<sup>8</sup>

Corn was an especially attractive crop in these years. Cacao and bananas, the traditional crops of the Atlantic Zone, were classified as luxuries and exported in limited quantities. Abacá and rubber, the wartime crops of the Atlantic Zone, were strictly plantation crops. Corn, on the other hand, could be grown by peasants and marketed domestically. And corn could be grown with little supervision, a fact which permitted absentee farming. Farmers came into the Upper Old Line during planting season only to leave again until harvest time. Many worked on abacá plantations located on the Main Line 30 miles away.



The end of the war brought the first real cacao boom since the 1920s. Corn lost out as a result. In 1956 and 1957 slightly *less* corn was exported to the highlands than in the war years, despite a tripling of population in the corn growing region. But in 1958, following three consecutive years of only average post-war cacao prices, corn exports doubled. Cacao, which had become the major peasant crop of the Old Line region, was being driven out by the "crisis." Corn was squeezed out again beginning in 1965 when the latest banana boom spread to the Old Line. Potential corn growers found it more profitable to work on banana plantations. Corn is clearly the most unattractive of the Atlantic Zone's three major crops. It is a major crop only in the poorest and most isolated farming region, the Upper Old Line, and even there it is grown in large amounts only in hard times.<sup>9</sup>

### Social Change

To understand how present social and economic differences between Negroes and natives developed we must first know much about the ethnic composition of the Atlantic Zone's population and how migrations have altered it. Table 1 summarizes relevant population statistics for Limón Province, a region only slightly larger (in population) than the study area. Only for 1927 and 1950 are the numbers worthy of great confidence. The 1910 figures represent estimates based upon estimates, and the 1963 figures are estimates based upon the 1963 census of population (which did not classify ethnic or racial groups) and two mid-1960s studies of the two principal cities of the Atlantic Zone.<sup>10</sup>

The percentage of Negroes has steadily declined since the first banana boom which peaked around 1910. Between 1927 and 1950 change was especially dramatic: the Negro population decreased by a quarter while the number of natives doubled. The selection of census years is fortuitous. The year 1927 was the peak of the second banana boom; and 1950 was a boom year of sorts too—bananas were then unimportant but cacao prices were especially high. Between these two years much happened: one entire boom-bust cycle for bananas, major dislocations associated with World War II, and the cacao boom at the end of the war.

Trends in employment can readily be traced for the Atlantic railway. Three types of data are available: total employees classified by nationality or surname for selected dates (Table 2); employees classified by nationality and depart-

TABLE 1.—Negroes and Natives, 1910-1963

Year	Numbers		Per cent Negroes*	Per cent change	
	Negroes	Natives		Negroes	Natives
1910	11,280	5,915	66%		
1927	18,422	12,133	60%	63%	105%
1950	13,749	25,925	35%	-25%	113%
1963	18,000	47,885	27%	31%	85%

\* Of Negroes + natives.



ment for 1895 (Table 3); and, for a series of years, monthly employees classified by surname and salary (Table 4). Unfortunately, all of these statistics include employment in the highlands as well as the lowlands. Negroes have rarely held railway jobs outside of the lowlands. In 1895 less than a quarter of employees worked in the highlands, and the proportion has been less ever since because this railway has grown mostly in the lowland banana regions.

Table 4 requires some clarification. It refers only to salaried employees, *i.e.*, those paid by the month rather than by the hour. It thus excludes the mass of day-laborers who were paid by the hour and who worked at tasks such as loading and unloading railroad cars, or maintaining the right-of-way. The salaried roll included a few lowly employees such as office boys and laundresses, but for the most part salaried employees were brakemen, conductors and engineers, dispatchers, mechanics, and foremen—an elite one-quarter of the total workforce.

The index of salary dissimilarity in Table 4 is a measure of how much wages of English surname employees diverged from those of employees with Spanish surnames. The index of 21.9 for 1920, for example, means that 21.9 per cent of employees with English surnames would have had to be shifted to another salary category to reproduce the percentage distribution of Spanish surname employees (or *vice-versa*). The index does not indicate which group was skewed to the higher salaries. But examination of the statistics clearly shows that, for each year, the English surname group averaged the higher salaries. This is only partly because of the high salaries paid the foreign white engineers

TABLE 2.—Nationality or Surname of Railway Employees

Nationality or surname	1895		1928		1970	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Spanish surname	(168)	(22.5%)	(868)	(44.0%)	1,694	80.9%
Costa Ricans	162	21.7%	812	42.0%	....	....
Other Central Americans	6	.8%	56	2.0%	....	....
English surnames	(555)	(74.5%)	(1,060)	(54.8%)	3,399	19.1%
Jamaicans & similar	471*	63.2%	978	50.6%	....	....
British & North Americans	84	11.3%	82	4.2%	....	....
Others	22	2.3%	5	.3%	....	....
Totals	745		1,933		2,093	

\* Includes three "American Negroes."

TABLE 3.—Nature of Occupations of Costa Rican and Jamaican Railway Employees, 1895

Nature of occupation	Costa Ricans		Jamaicans	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Clerical	14	8.6%	10	2.2%
Skilled manual	101	62.4%	171	36.6%
Unskilled manual	47	29.0%	286	61.2%

NOTE: Nature of occupation is inferred from department titles.

TABLE 4.—Relative Status of English- and Spanish-surname Employees for Selected Dates (Salaried Employees Only)

Year	% English of English + Spanish	% increase or decrease from previous year		Index of salary dissimilarity
		Spanish	English	
1920	60.4%			21.9
1925	60.0%	25.5%	23.4%	22.8
1930	58.0%	29.4%	26.4%	11.7
1935	59.4%	-45.8%	-35.3%	16.0
1940*	50.7%	37.4%	2.2%	23.1
1970	26.3%	26.3%	-56.4%	24.9

\* Data for 1940 really refer to 1938-1940. The railway was reorganized in 1938. Numerous employees were demoted to the hourly roll. If their records do not indicate that they subsequently quit I assumed that they were still employed in 1940.

and conductors. Even in the pay categories of under \$100 monthly, where few foreign whites worked, the English surname group consistently enjoyed the higher salaries; and the foreign white contingent was replaced by local blacks in the early 1930s bust in order to reduce the wage bill. Comparison of Tables 2 and 4 shows that in the late 1920s and in 1970 the English surname group was also overrepresented on the elite salaried payroll, something remarkable for a people who live in the banana zone where the day-laborer type of jobs are presumably concentrated.

There was obviously a radical change in the relative positions of Negroes and natives between 1895 when Costa Ricans had the better jobs (Table 3) and 1920 when the English surname group enjoyed the higher salaries. The change had already occurred by 1912 when a traveler observed that, on the docks of Puerto Limón, "Spaniards" (natives) staffed the most back-breaking and poorly paid jobs.<sup>11</sup> The docks were run by the railway company.

This change reflected a reversal of wage levels between Costa Rica and the Caribbean. In the late nineteenth century coffee prices and hence wages in Costa Rica were high, and sugar prices and hence wages in the Caribbean were low. Wages in the Atlantic Zone were then lower than in the highlands, and only skilled Costa Ricans found railway offerings attractive. But in 1902 coffee prices registered a record low, bringing Costa Rican wages down. At the same time employment of 45,000 Jamaicans and Barbadians building the Panama Canal, and of thousands more in the Caribbean banana industry, elevated wages in the Caribbean. During World War I wages decreased all over the Caribbean, but they recovered immediately following thanks to the "dance of millions" sugar boom.<sup>12</sup>

But in the Atlantic Zone wages appear not to have recovered despite a movement of Negroes from Costa Rica to Cuba attracted by the sugar boom. In Costa Rica this was a period of considerable use of labor—large amounts of cacao were planted even in second rate regions. Other evidence suggests that natives continued to pour into the Atlantic Zone as Negroes left. Their coming may have fueled the Negro out-migration by keeping wages down.

Table 4 shows that from 1920 to 1935 changes in native and Negro employment paralleled each other but that native employment was the more volatile.



This stands to reason. In the 1920s boom thousands of natives went to the Atlantic Zone. They were, on the average, less settled and had less seniority than Negroes and their homeland was but a day or less away, making it especially easy for them to go back in hard times. The oddity is that between 1925 and 1930 the index of salary dissimilarity decreased, reflecting an improvement in the relative position of natives despite their lesser average seniority. A quota system may have been adopted informally at this time to insure natives an "equable" share of the good jobs. In 1925 Costa Rica's president issued an order that white work gangs have white foremen,<sup>13</sup> and beginning that year references to racially segregated work gangs appear in the railway's employment file. Still, Negroes remained overrepresented on the elite salaried payroll.

Between 1936 and 1940 the government pursued a reservation policy with respect to Negroes. Negroes were not permitted to come to Costa Rica and they were not permitted to work in the new Pacific coast banana zone. There is even some evidence that they were occasionally rounded up in the highlands and shipped back to the lowlands. *Within* the Atlantic Zone Negroes' prior rights to the old United Fruit Company cacao lands were recognized, and the National Bank even launched a cooperative to support cacao prices.

Limitations upon Negro immigration and upon their movement within Costa Rica functioned as a one-way valve: Negroes could leave the Atlantic Zone—provided they also left the country—but they could not enter it. In 1941 or 1942 restrictions upon internal movements of Negroes were quietly dropped, but restrictions upon immigration of unskilled workers in general have kept a new movement of West Indians to Costa Rica from developing.

The reservation policy was put into effect just before the 1937-1938 boom started. Table 4 shows the results: between 1935 and 1938-1940 native employment increased by a third but Negro employment remained virtually unchanged. The increase in the index of salary dissimilarity suggests that the Negro migration restrictions had the effect of turning Negro workers into an elite of skilled or senior workers.

This does not mean that Negroes no longer manned banana plantations—hundreds did so in the banana boom of 1937-1938. But they were worker-peasants who sought plantation wages partly to get cash to invest on their own banana farms. They were not interested in full time jobs. These black worker-peasants were clustered in regions where peasant farming was commonplace—the cacao districts of the Main Line and of the coast south of Puerto Limón. On the Old Line the few Negroes who worked on plantations were skilled workers charged with such "easy" tasks as operating the trams that estates used to haul bananas out to the railroad. The ax and shovel tasks were done by natives.<sup>14</sup>

In 1939 the new banana plague precipitated an abrupt and unusually severe banana bust which coincided with a fall in cacao prices. Negroes found themselves bottled up in the Atlantic Zone. Many were literally reduced to starvation. The Panama Canal Company sparked a mass out-migration when it began hiring workers in 1940. Puerto Limón began to experience shortages of locally-produced foods, evidence that many who left were peasant farmers.<sup>15</sup>

The Negro population was reduced to a rump of better-to-do farmers, skilled workers, women and old people, city-dwellers, and a few field hands who worked



on plantations which had not closed down. For natives the sequence of events was radically different. In the late 1930s they were shipped to the Pacific banana zone only to be brought back beginning in 1942 to work on war time enterprises. These workers provided the settlers for the corn region which shortly emerged in the Upper Old Line.<sup>16</sup>

Since World War II Negro migrations have been, if anything, counter-cyclical: Negroes have left in the good years and they have stayed in the bad. The surplus of young Negro women in 1950 suggests that Negroes were then leaving the Atlantic Zone despite the cacao boom. Similarly during the period of high cacao prices around 1970 it was common knowledge that Negroes were leaving the Atlantic Zone for the highlands and for the United States. But there is no evidence of significant Negro out-migration in the early 1960s when cacao prices were especially low. A student who investigated a stagnant rural Negro community at that time was astonished to discover a massive out-migration when he returned a decade later.<sup>17</sup>

To understand this peculiar pattern of out-migration we must appreciate the economic and social position of the Negro community. Negroes own much of the best cacao land in the Atlantic Zone; they are better educated than natives; and they have emerged as the local elite of Costa Rica's largest political party.<sup>18</sup> Negroes are clearly the Atlantic Zone's home-grown middle class. The problem is that there is little for a middle class to do in the Atlantic Zone, much less a home-grown one. According to the provincial governor, Puerto Limón offers too few jobs for local secondary school graduates. Clerical employment actually shrunk with removal of local banana company offices to the highlands, and local administrative posts are usually staffed by individuals transferred in from the highlands.<sup>19</sup> The country offers no opportunity either. Expansion of Negro farming would imply moving beyond the prime cacao districts to second-rate farming regions. It is no wonder that Negroes leave the Atlantic Zone. And since their purpose is to avoid falling into the day-laboring class which must accept almost any job, they leave in the good years and stay in the bad.

This out-migration has had the effect of increasingly concentrating Negroes in the most prosperous farming regions. El Bosque, an old estate adjacent to Guácimo, provides an example. El Bosque has poor, sandy soils. In 1937 the small farmers who worked the estate were Negroes. By 1963, however, at least 85 per cent of the small farmers were natives.<sup>20</sup> Native informants say that Negro farmers were old and they died off. Negro informants say that the children of these old farmers had left Costa Rica. Renewed out-migration in the late 1960s resulted in a similar Negro abandonment of the poorer hill districts of the Main Line.<sup>21</sup> Even prime cacao districts experienced heavy out-migration, but enough children have remained in these places to perpetuate Negro ownership of the land.

Negro abandonment of the poorer farming districts also explains why rural Negroes live in villages while rural natives live dispersed. Village settlement of farmers goes with fragmentation of farm holdings. The continual land hunger in the prime cacao districts has served to create and perpetuate fragmentation. But continuous peasant settlement in the Upper Old Line dates only from the 1940s, and whole farms there are routinely sold, typically to novices from the

highlands. Successful Upper Old Line farmers are thus not in the position of trying to expand holdings in the face of a general disinclination to sell out. On the contrary, "success" in these regions means, to a perverse degree, getting out of the region or at least doing something other than own-account farming.

Selective out-migration from the poorer farming districts also accounts for the greater concentration of Negroes in cities. In 1927 Negroes were no more highly urbanized than natives. Since then Negroes have not gone to local cities in greater numbers than natives. What Negroes *have* done is move out of the country districts while natives have continued to pour into them.

## Conclusion

The notion that Negroes and natives in the Atlantic Zone live in different ways because they have different cultures is spurious. Social history provides sufficient explanation for all of the striking social and economic differences between them.

Basically, Negroes are the "old immigrants" of the Atlantic Zone. Before the turn of the century they came in greater numbers than natives and they were actually encouraged to settle in what subsequently proved the best farming regions. Then, for two decades following the turn of the century, improved opportunities in the Caribbean slowed West Indian migration into the Atlantic Zone while stagnation of Costa Rica's coffee economy thrust increasing numbers of natives into the region. The natives found themselves "new immigrants" in their own country.

In the 1920s and especially in the 1930s native workers exploited their position as the national majority to redress their position as the underprivileged minority in the banana regions. The result was the reservation policy which forced the unskilled working class blacks out of the country in 1939 and 1940 during a purely local but especially severe depression in the Atlantic Zone. With the return of "normal" conditions after World War II, Negroes emerged as the Atlantic Zone's middle class of prosperous small farmers and skilled, well paid (by local standards) urban workers.

Natives in the Atlantic Zone occupy the two extremes of the social continuum. They are both the local upper class of planters, businessmen, and professionals; and its lower class of unskilled workers and poor farmers. This reflects their split origin. The upper class are really highlanders sojourning in the Atlantic Zone. The lower class occupy positions typical of new immigrants the world over, positions which they inherited from Negroes who have gone elsewhere.

## Notes

1. John P. Augelli and H. W. Taylor, "Race and Population Patterns in Trinidad," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 50 (1960, pp. 123-38; Leo A. Despres, *Cultural Pluralism and Nationalist Politics in British Guiana* (Chicago, 1967); David Lowenthal, *West Indian Societies* (New York, 1972). But for the point of view that the ethnic characteristics are purely social (rather than cultural) in origin see: Raymond T. Smith, *British Guiana* (London, 1962), and Vera Rubin and Marisa Zavalloni, *We Wish to be Looked Upon* (New York, 1969).

2. Pierre A. D. Stouse, Jr., "Agricultural Settlement in Former Costa Rican Banana



Regions" (unpublished dissertation, Wisconsin University, 1965); Roy Simon Bryce-Laporte, "Social Relations and Cultural Persistence (or Change) among Jamaicans in a Rural Area of Costa Rica" (unpublished thesis, University of Puerto Rico, 1962); Michael D. Olien, "The Negro in Costa Rica" (unpublished dissertation, University of Oregon, 1967); Melvin E. Shouse, "The Lowland Hinterland of Limón, Costa Rica" (unpublished thesis, University of Chicago, 1938); H. Nuhn and M. Céspedes, "Población," in: H. Nuhn, et al., *Estudio geográfico regional, Zona Atlántico Norte de Costa Rica* (San José, 1967). Negroes and natives are said simply to prefer to live in different places or grow different crops.

3. The titles indicate the polemical nature of many of these works: Frederick U. Adams, *Conquest of the Tropics: The Story of the Creative Enterprises Conducted by the United Fruit Company* (Garden City, New York, 1914); Charles M. Wilson, *Empire in Green and Gold* (New York, 1947); Charles D. Kepner, Jr., and Jay Henry Soothill, *The Banana Empire, a Case Study of Economic Imperialism* (New York, 1935); Cooperativa Bananera Costarricense, *Certamen del patriotismo* (San José, 1928).

4. Charles W. Macune, Jr., "The Building of the Atlantic Railroad of Costa Rica, 1821-1891" (unpublished thesis, George Washington University, 1963).

5. George Earl Church, *Report upon the Costa Rica Railway* (London, 1895), 6; Maurice de Perigny, *La République de Costa Rica, son Avenir Economique et le Canal de Panama* (Paris, 1918), 97.

6. Clarence F. Jones and Paul C. Morrison, "Evolution of the Banana Industry of Costa Rica," *Economic Geography*, XXVIII (January, 1952), 1-19.

7. Kepner and Soothill, 92; *La Voz del Atlántico*, October 12, 1934.

8. R. G. Howard, *Report of Activities, Old Line Area, 1944* (Institute of Inter-American Affairs, Food Production Division, San José, October 11, 1944).

9. Gerhard Sandner, *La colonización agrícola de Costa Rica*, Vol. I (San José, 1962), 90.

10. I am indebted to the Northern Railway Company and to its amiable archivist, Sr. Jorge Font, for giving me access to its employment files.

11. George Palmer Putnam, *The Southland of North America: Rambles and Observations in Central America during the Year 1912* (New York, 1914), 170.

12. Carlos Joaquin Sáenz, "Population Growth, Economic Progress and Opportunities on the Land: the Case of Costa Rica," *Land Tenure Center, Research Paper No. 47* (University of Wisconsin, 1972), 32; George W. Westerman, "Historical Notes on West Indians on the Isthmus of Panama," *Phylon*, XXII (1961), 340-50, reference on p. 345; Gisele Eisner, *Jamaica, 1830-1930, a Study in Economic Growth* (Manchester, 1961), 150.

13. *La Voz del Atlántico*, September 18, 1934.

14. Shouse, "Lowland Hinterland of Limón," 32-39.

15. *La Voz del Atlántico*, February 3, 1940; see also the novel by Carlos Luis Fallas, *Mamita Yunai* (San José, 1970), 17-22.

16. *La Voz del Atlántico*, September 11, 1943. The newspaper alleged that they were "natives of other Central American countries," presumably Nicaraguans.

17. Costa Rica, Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, *Censo de Población de Costa Rica, 1950*; Bryce-Laporte, "Social Relations;" Quince Duncan, "New Sigloville: 10 años después," in Carlos Meléndez and Quince Duncan, *El negro en Costa Rica* (San José, 1972). Duncan interviewed Bryce-Laporte.

18. Meléndez and Duncan, *El negro en Costa Rica*, 243-78.

19. *La Nación* (San José), October 3, 1970.

20. Shouse, "Lowland Hinterland of Limón," 38; Costa Rica, Instituto de Tierras y Colonización, Departamento de Planificación Agraria, *Información socio-económica . . . Fincas: Anita Grande, El Hogar, El Bosque, Parcelación Astúa Pirie* (San José, 1963), mimeo.

21. Duncan, "New Sigloville."

Koch

10 mayo 84