

**Am. Lat. Hist. Econ., Vol. 15, no. 2, July-December, 2008, pp. 99-126.**  
<http://alhe.mora.edu.mx/index.php/ALH>

---

## **Articles**

### **Between war and peace. Cuba in the times of the banana boom (1878-1895)**

**Alejandro García**

Date of receipt: July 2007

Acceptance date: September 2007

---

#### **Summary**

This article deals with the international production and marketing of bananas in Cuba, from the end of the Ten Years War (1878) to the beginning of the War of Independence (1895). It shows the history of the development of this crop in the northeastern zone of the island and its international organization, as well as the links that were established between the local producers and merchants and the US companies that operated the banana business in Caribbean waters.

**Keywords:** banana, banana, cluster, local capitalist, Cuban Red, Gros Michel.

---

#### **Abstract**

The present article is about the production and international commerce of banana in Cuba, from the end of the Ten Years War (1878), until the beginning of the Independence War (1895). The paper shows the development of this cultivation in the north-eastern zone of the Island; the international organization of the banana trade, and the relations between peasants, local merchants, and north-american companies that operating banana business in the Caribbean Sea.

**Key words:** banana, guineo, bunch, local capitalist, Cuban Red, Gros Michel.

---

Since the late eighteenth century, Cuba had become a major exporter of tropical products; first, cane sugar, followed remotely by a traditional product of its soil: tobacco. However, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, other products of agricultural origin, whose commercial values were always lower compared to the aforementioned, would also reach a discreet importance for the island economy. Among these cases were cocoa, coconuts, coffee, henequen and some fruit varieties of banana, among those commercially known as *bananas*. As in certain countries of Southeast Asia, of America or Africa, on this Caribbean island, bananas were an important component for human and animal food, but the international commercialization of the fruits of this giant herbaceous began only from the first decade of the XIX century, when some early *red* or *purple* banana exports were made from the northeastern coast of Cuba to some US ports on the Atlantic coast. <sup>one</sup>

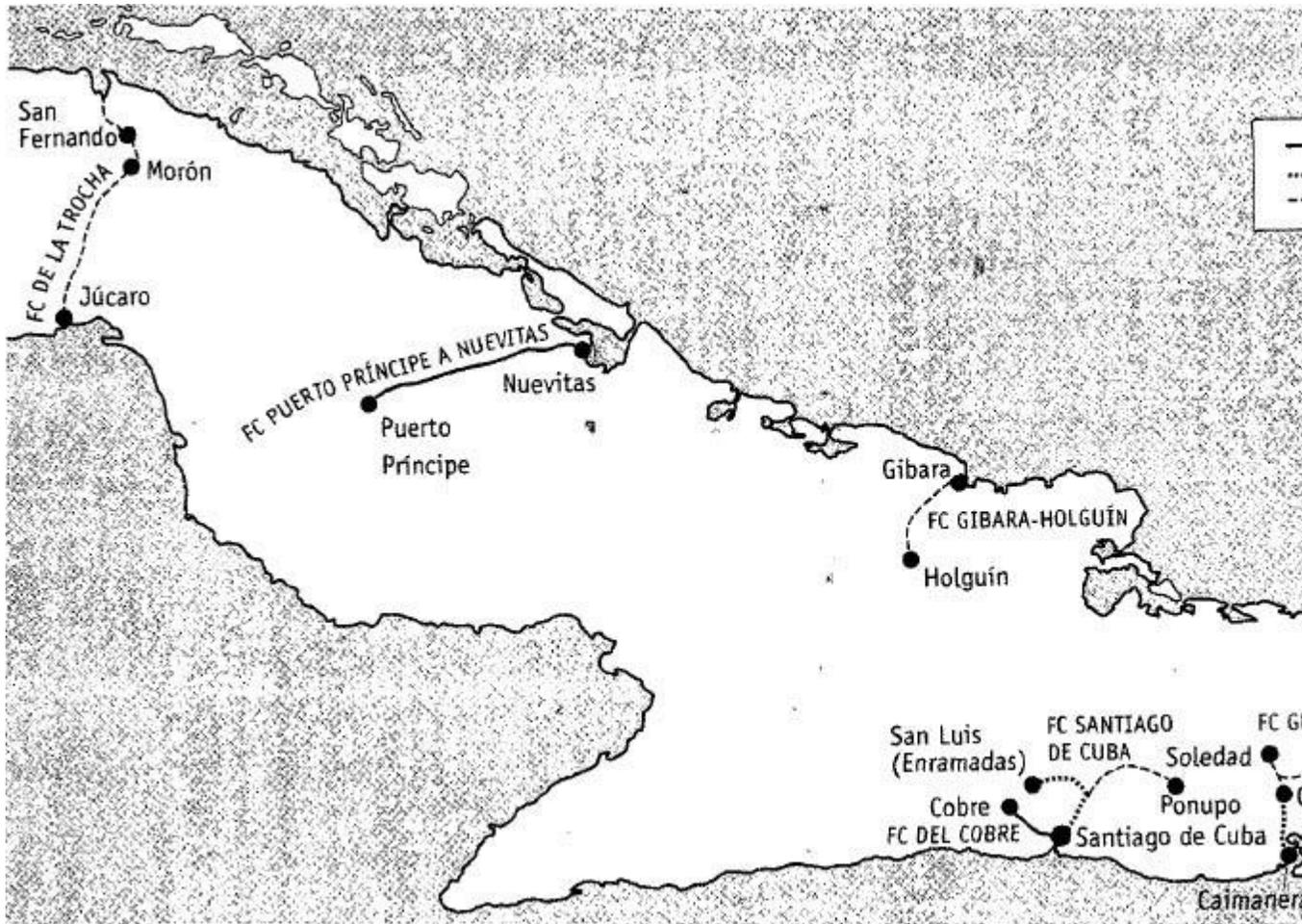
**During 150 years (1804-1954) banana was exported from the largest of the Antilles -Cuba- to the United States; however, the reflection of this process is almost non-existent in the banana historiography of the Americas. This is generally limited to a record of the first banana-fruit shipment made in 1804. <sup>2</sup>The international banana trade from Cuba was made from a specific area of the Cuban coast that is located in the northeast corner of its territory. The same one extends from the port of Gibara and continues course towards the east to finish in Maisí, in the oriental border of the island.**

The first approaches to knowledge about this topic are included in some local or regional studies carried out on the island itself. The oldest respond to the authorship of local journalists as Ricardo Varona Pupo in *Banes (Chronicles)* (Santiago de Cuba, Ros Press, 1930), who as part of local history refers to the introduction of the cultivation and export of bananas from of the enclave of Banes; and that of Ernesto de las Cuevas Morrillo, in his short work entitled *El guineo-banano* (Baracoa, 1935), where its author tries to leave a historical record of the antiquity and transcendence that this economic activity had for the local society of Baracoa.

Several decades later and due to the influx of business studies related to the action of the US transnationals in Cuba, two investigations were published on the actions of the well-known banana company United Fruit Co. in Cuban territory. One of these studies was conducted by the historian of that region Ariel James; it is about *Imperialism and nation in a banana plantation* (Havana, Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1976). In it, emphasis is placed on knowledge about the action deployed by said company, based on the production and marketing of bananas in the Banes Bay area.

In the research carried out by a team of professors and students of the old History School of the University of Havana, and published with the title *La United Fruit A case of imperialist domination in Cuba* (Havana, Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1976) , the banana issue was only addressed tangentially, since the study focused on the main activity carried out by United Fruit in the northeastern region of the country and that, in the Cuban case, was concentrated in the sugar exploitation.

More recently, the author of this work published two articles in Spain that address some aspects of the banana issue in Cuba. In the first one, "The Cuban Coast of the Banana Trade 1804-1868" ( *Times of America* magazine , No. 7, year 2000, pp. 67-83), it is a part of the history of the banana trade development of the island in response to the possibilities offered by the markets of destination before 1868. It shows the available records on this activity from Cuba. The second article, "Santo, sign and historical route of the banana to Cuba" ( *Revista de Indias*, Vol. LXI, No. 221, January-April 2001, pp, 141-166), addresses some generalities and details about the introduction of banana in Cuba and the characterization of the areas where the cultivation and international commercialization of this fruit was carried out from some ports of the largest of the Antilles.



Tomado de Zanetti y García, *Sugar*, 1998, p. 54.

This article has an objective of limited scope; it is fundamentally about the description and analysis of the process followed by the commercialization of bananas in Cuba since the end of the Ten Years War (1878) until the beginning of the War of Independence (1895).<sup>3</sup> This is an important stage in the development of international banana trade, both in Europe from the Canary Islands and in America through the dissemination of *Musa* among the archipelagos and coasts bathed by the Caribbean Sea. Although Cuba participated in this boom stage, through an extraordinary expansion of the crops thanks to the contribution of new capital and the introduction of some technological advances related mainly to the application of steam in the land and maritime transportation of banana, its possibilities to reach Subsequently, further development was abruptly frustrated by the beginning of the War of Independence. The banana businesses of the island were, to some extent, restored until after 1898, but that is another story that would be outside the proposed time frame for the present work.

### **Transitory loss of Cuba's place in the international banana economy**

From the years after the Civil War and in a context characterized by the development of agriculture and industry in the United States of North America, the role played by this country with respect to the Caribbean area was very favored. This particular situation produced an important turn in the banana trade that, with some stability, had developed until then between Cuba and some US cities. In spite of the favorable situation for the banana demand that was presented from those years in the market of that nation, this advantage could not be taken advantage of by the producers and merchants settled in Cuba, since from October of 1868 and until after 1878 <sup>4</sup> took place on the island, almost in succession, two armed conflicts that negatively affected both the stability and the development of the international commercial activities that sustained until then the prosperity of the city of Baracoa and that of the small town of Samá.

During most of the years in which the war activities in favor of independence took place, the northeast area of the island was repeatedly used by Cuban insurgents as a receiving base for armed expeditions. Because of this inconvenience and some others that arose as a result of the bellicose attitude assumed by the local authorities of Cuba regarding the access of the foreign ships to the jetties - at the same time as the insecurity for the high altitude navigation caused by the destruction of the lighthouse of Punta de Maisí by the insurgents, almost since the beginning of the Ten Years' War, the attitude of the American merchants and the captains of the fruit boats can be perfectly understood with respect to the arrival of their ships to the ports and emergeideros of the most extreme zone of the north of the island.

As an alternative to this situation, merchants and mariners involved in the fruit traffic opted to reinforce other networks and mercantile routes that would ensure the uninterrupted supply of northern markets with fruit from any island or continental territory of the Caribbean area that was able to supply them.

To some extent, this was what happened during the ten years in which the armed conflict in Cuba continued. The practice assumed by banana traders and transporters during those years ultimately favored the definitive incorporation of new production areas located in the Antillean archipelago itself and in Central America. Over time, this *modus operandi* would become very common in the organization of banana trade on an international scale.

In order to achieve its full and uninterrupted operation and also to develop the possibilities of a future expansion, the entrepreneurs involved in the banana trade took the necessary steps to simultaneously have diverse options for the purchase of the product in any territory that was able to guarantee a stable and cheap offer of fruit merchandise. This way of operating constituted a kind of guarantee against the multiple eventualities of a political, meteorological or epidemiological nature that could be presented indistinctly in any of the supplying areas, which were constantly subject to both those risks of nature and political unrest.

In addition to the previous strategic premise for the achievement of a successful banana trade, the entrepreneurs of that sector took other measures, such as creating secure and stable organizational conditions for the acquisition and management of the delicate fruit merchandise through the erection of the necessary infrastructure to storage, transportation and the fastest shipment of merchandise. It was also a favorable factor for the development of the fruit business, the safety of practicing a free navigation of interferences outside the commercial activity. The lack of these conditions in the eastern half of the island of Cuba during those first ten years of war for independence, came to affect in a very direct way all the agricultural and mercantile activities that usually used to take place in those territories.

The wars affected the dispersed population that lived in the rural areas of the northeast coast of the island, from the port of Gibara to the easternmost point. Before each war action or the slightest suspicion of disembarkation of combatants and weapons, the population resident in those places was concentrated and moved to less exposed places, especially in the cases of those settlers who were settled in the points closest to the coasts. Because of the isolation from the very few terrestrial communications that existed in those regions of the country until the middle of the 20th century, these sites became vulnerable points for the infiltration of expeditions and the disembarkation of armaments destined for the independence fighters. In these circumstances, those piers and shelters of the coast that had always served to clandestine trade with local products, and not infrequently for the illegal entry of African slaves, were considered by the colonial authorities as dangerous places.

This situation produced great losses in the agriculture of those zones. However, the significance of the affectations produced by the guerrilla actions of the pro-independence workers in the banana trade during the Ten Years' War, were minimized in the statements that were made later by one of the oldest fruit merchants of that city. Twenty years after the events occurred, and since his retirement in Spanish territory, said businessman said that at least until 1872 there had been a great growth in exports of Baracoa, thanks to a situation of local peace that had been achieved despite that the whole of that region was included within the danger zone in which the insurgent forces usually operated. <sup>5</sup>

### **The peace situation and the banana takeoff of the region**

**When war activities completely ceased, almost at the dawn of the 1880s, the cultivation and export of bananas or *bananas* was mainly carried out in areas close to Baracoa and in the aforementioned sites located further west, such as Samá, Banes or Gibara Baracoa had in its favor the fact of having been the oldest and most experienced banana zone in the country and having under its jurisdiction a duly consolidated city and its small sheltered port.** When in the mid-nineteenth century fruits, and particularly bananas, seemed to become the commercial object of greatest importance for the region, the whole of urban and rural

society established there had gone through more than three centuries of slow formation. Within it, the different components of the local socio-economic structure had been consolidated; the bureaucratic functions representative of colonial power had been distributed for a long time, but hierarchies corresponding to the different strata and social classes of the locality also existed. On the other hand, land ownership had been distributed and redistributed more than once, depending on the economic or political circumstances through which the region had traveled over time. The administrative, military and cultural center of all that pioneer area was the first town founded in Cuba: Our Lady of the Assumption of Baracoa. Fruit trade introduced its own dynamics, both in its port and city, and in the piers located in some shelters of the coast, thus achieving an important economic activity that would be decisive for the lives of the inhabitants of the whole area.

During the consecutive ten years of war, the military activity had managed to polarize and face to an important degree the vital forces of Cuban society, dragging them into a struggle whose ultimate goal should have been the independence of the island. But at the same time that the territory and the population of the largest of the Antilles were partially killed by the war, in certain port cities of the United States, such as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore or New Orleans, it was consolidated, organized, it stabilized and grew spectacularly a large market for tropical products. The shipping companies and the sailors, who generally came from those cities of the American northeast, had achieved the intensification of their activities around the banana business, organizing it from a few islands of the Caribbean and some other parts of the subcontinent that bordered the basin maritime

#### Introduction of a new commercial variety

Long before substantially increasing the international demand for banana fruit, a new clone botanically identified as belonging to the *Emusa* section, group AAA, of the genus *Musa*,<sup>6</sup> had been introduced and acclimatized in the British colonies of the Caribbean. It is a banana-yellow bark fruit in its maturity, known in the Anglo-Saxon countries as Gros Michel. It is claimed that this variety had been created in distant Malaysia, and had been introduced to the Caribbean island of Jamaica by the French botanist Jean François Pouyat, between 1835 and 1836, extending from here to other islands of the Caribbean and Central America.<sup>7</sup> According to oral tradition, this variety had been taken by a French naval officer to the botanical garden of Saint-Pierre, in Martinique, at the beginning of the 19th century. From Martinique, a so-called Captain Johnson took him to Cuba.

This set of circumstances determined that this variety had been identified on the island of Cuba as *guineo*, or *guineo Johnson* (by the captain of this name), *puyá* (by the botanist Pouyat), *martelño* (by Martinique), *banana of martinico*, or simply long- *billed*. However, it has not been clear the etiology of the name of *Guinean* that is given in Cuba, and that undoubtedly suggests an

African origin. Among the advantages that this clone could exhibit with a view to its commercialization, are its attractive appearance characterized by a homogeneous bright yellow maturity, as well as the size and shape of the fruit; although the exuberance of the clusters and the resistance of the clusters to the carelessness of the manipulation can also be counted in their favor, since they can support in an acceptable way the transport without packaging that was practiced at that time. However, two weaknesses have characterized it: the first has to do with its maturation process, much faster than the Cuban Red, the variety of red bananas that had been exported by Cuba since the beginning of the 19th century. The second weakness of the Gros Michel refers to the lack of resistance of the clone to the disease *Fusarium oxisporum* f. *cube*, known more popularly as "Panama disease".

From the seventies of the nineteenth century, and almost by the hand of steam navigation, the Gros Michel was gradually gaining an important space in the international market displacing the traditional purple Cuban Red or Red Banana.<sup>8</sup> With the support of the new clone, Jamaica was intensely incorporated into the banana export industry since the 1870s, to become the main supplier of the growing US market.<sup>9</sup> As has been said repeatedly, the situation that arose at the end of the 1870s was very favorable for the international commercialization of fruit from anywhere in the Antilles or Central America. At that time, steam navigation began to introduce an important commercial advantage for the banana business by reducing the time spent in transporting the fruit and thereby reducing the risks of loss in shipments due to early maturation. However, the benefits that this situation must necessarily obtain from Cuba did not occur at the opportune moment because of the interruption in crops and exports motivated by the Ten Year War. But once concluded this, the resuscitation of banana plantations and the racking at the piers was immediate. If one considers that since 1877, that is, the year before the initial pacification of the area, and the production and export of banana-banana had recovered to reach figures above 900,000 bunches, it is perfectly understandable that as soon as in the year of 1883 this figure would have doubled, and five years later, in 1888, the export reached the high amount of 4 500 000 bunches.

#### Cuban plantations extend

With the development of banana crops through the use of the new clone recently adopted by Cuba, the national production responded quickly to the demand originated by the growing market of the United States. It was precisely after the Ten Years' War that other banana zones in the north-eastern region began to be massively promoted, especially in places around the bays of Tánamo and Banes, where growth was more spectacular.

In the newly created plantations, the amount of production grew between 20 and 50 times compared to the final years of the war. In order to better understand the nature of this *phenomenon*, the fundamental starting point that

constituted the enormous growth experienced in the demand of bananas by the US market can not be ignored. But factors such as changes in the scale and organization of the business had occurred in response to the demand for this fruit should also be taken into account. Among these can be recognized the diversity of powerful interests that were combined at that time for the exploitation of bananas in Cuba, and as a result the aggressive competition that began to develop between the commercial and shipping entities that operated in the sector on an international scale. The important factor that constituted the capital resources available to the entities that assumed the expansion of crops on the island during the conjuncture of the eighties can not be overlooked either.

#### Baracoa's new role in the export of fruit

For the beginning of the seventies of the nineteenth century, in the city of Baracoa there was already a defined export group that was firmly established in the territory, both economically, socially and politically. At the beginning of banana or banana fever in the following decade, it was already possible to recognize the presence of fruit merchants who came from some US port, but who also had important businesses in several places in the Caribbean and Central America, as they were for several decades the Sicilian Salvatore di Giorgio and his successors.<sup>10</sup> Advanced in the 1880s, the agro-commercial elite of Baracoa could be considered sufficiently trained in the fruit business to carry out a policy aimed simultaneously at the expansion of its plantations in the Baracoa subregion itself, as well as to obtain commercial control in the new areas that were encouraged in Samá or Banes, places located to the west, quite far from the primate city. In the situation of wide international demand for banana-fruit that was created from the eighties, some new mercantile and agricultural enterprises of a certain importance were organized in Baracoa, whose promoters had started from a previous experience and had at the same time capital coming from the fruit business that had been operating for several decades before.

As part of the higher, more modern and dynamic business stratum, some new companies were also introduced, whose financial bases and system of commercial relations were commercially very intertwined with foreign interests of diverse origin. Among these were the cases of the aforementioned Salvatore di Giorgio and also that of the Dumois family, whose business heads were closely linked to the same fruit interests of New York and Boston that, at the end of the 19th century, gave rise to the United Fruit Company . It was precisely the Dumois brothers<sup>eleven</sup> who in partnership with landowners from the Banes and Gibara area undertook the *promotion* of the huge Bañan plantation through the creation of three entities: the Samá Fruit Company, the Banes Fruit Company and the Dumois Fruit Company.

#### **Export during the banana boom years**

Like Banes and its bay, a coastal place known as Cayo Mambí was considered to be a lost site between the mangroves of Tánamo Bay, in an intermediate

direction between Baracoa and Nipe Bay, before the 1980s. The same one would reach a special protagonism in the banana export from that decade. There, an American company was established, the Cuban Fruit Company, whose commercial objectives were very similar to those of the aforementioned entities.

It is known that during the eighties and half of the nineties of the nineteenth century there was a situation of banana takeoff in different places of the American continent such as Jamaica, Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua, the Panamanian isthmus and also in the African Canary Islands. <sup>12</sup> Around the same time, on the Cuban coast of the banana tree, the cultivation and export of plantain-fruit increased considerably. This process had begun to take place more slowly in the largest of the Antilles at the end of the seventies of that century, although its agricultural and commercial practice was not a novelty for the population of those places, but rather it was an activity that began to take up again on a scale much greater than that which had been achieved during previous decades, when Cuba was practically the only exporter of bananas from the traditional Cuban Reds. However, in the case of Cuba the banana boom of the eighties and nineties would finally be interrupted again due to the new war for independence that took place between the years 1895 and 1898.

If the almost immediate restoration of crops after the Ten Years' War had been remarkable, so too had the accelerated growth of exports once it had ceased. In this way, it can be better understood that the pacification of the island favored in a very particular way those areas of the eastern territory dedicated to the cultivation of bananas; especially if one remembers that a good part of the military actions of the same one had had as scenario those spaces of the extensive central-western region of the country where precisely banana for the export was produced. In this sense, the northeastern part of the country showed a difference with respect to the western region of the island, since it had managed to maintain its economic activities during the course of the entire war, thanks to the protection provided by the Spanish army. The knowledge of the productive and commercial results achieved by the banana export from 1877, that is, a year before formally ending the so-called Big War, and the year of 1895 when the War of Independence began, clearly express the success of the banana company in Cuba during those 19 consecutive years (see [table 1](#) ).

**CUADRO 1. EXPORTACIÓN DE BANANOS (GUINEOS)  
REALIZADOS POR CUBA, ENTRE 1877 Y 1895**

<i>Años</i>	<i>Racimos</i>
1877	966 695
1878	1 067 994
1879	1 167 856
1880	1 310 801
1881	1 910 411
1882	1 622 235
1883	2 153 504
1884	2 313 679
1885	2 818 689
1886	2 351 634
1887	2 918 807
1888	4 428 366
1889	4 764 294
1890	5 734 152
1891	6 038 474
1892	7 663 531
1893	7 159 815
1894	6 757 618
1895	6 829 286

Fuentes: Porter, *Industrial*, 1899, p. 345; *Revista de Agricultura*, La Habana, año XIV, núm. 6, 11 de febrero de 1894, y año XV, núm. 294 de agosto de 1895; Quesada, *Handbook*, 1905, y *The Standard*, 1950, t. I, p. 45.

Notwithstanding the undoubted success obtained by the cultivation and export of plantain from those territories of the north east of the island, if the monetary value reached by these shipments is compared with the values generated by the set of exports that used to be sent from ports Cubans to the United States, it can be seen that the commercial value of exported bananas is remarkably low. If the years between 1891 and 1893 are used as a basis for comparison, three of the years in which this export reached the highest values in the nineteenth century, it can be seen that the numbers corresponding exclusively to the banana product are remarkably small.

The data offered in [Table 2](#) expresses the modesty of the values that the export of bananas had with respect to the total exports sent to the United States; approximately 1.73% in 1891; 1.47 in 1892, and 2.08% in 1893. The importance of this product is still comparatively less if the market value of bananas exported in 1894, 1 277 406 pesos, is related to the global value of

Cuban exports in that same year, ascending to 116 033 200 pesos; in this case its representativeness is only 1%. <sup>13</sup> Despite the small size of the previous relative numbers, it is impossible to ignore the importance of this economic activity seen on a regional scale, mainly because of the degree of territorial concentration that characterized it in Cuba. The crops and export ports were located in an irregular coastal strip of more than 250 kilometers in length and an average of fifteen kilometers in depth, with the exception of some areas in which the width of a more dispersed banana strip could reach between 30 and 40 kilometers. This territorial space managed to reach a total area of around 5,200 kilometers at the time of greatest prosperity, close to 4.68% of the national territory, where in 1887 about 3.05% of the Cuban population resided. <sup>14</sup> In a national economy, where more than 80% of the exported values were represented by sugar, while the second line of importance, tobacco, reached only between 10 and 11% of the total, bananas had a very important importance. little relevant for the whole national economy. However, this activity linked to the export of other fruits had come to constitute the center around which for a long time the economic life of a particular coastal region of the island characterized mainly by its isolation from the rest of the national territory.

**CUADRO 2. CUBA. VALORES COMPARATIVOS  
EN LAS EXPORTACIONES TOTALES A ESTADOS UNIDOS  
Y LOS CORRESPONDIENTES AL BANANO, 1891 Y 1893  
(EN MILLONES DE PESOS)**

<i>Años</i>	<i>Exportación total</i>	<i>Exportación bananera</i>
1891	61.7	1.07
1892	77.9	1.53
1893	78.7	1.64

Fuente: Zanetti, *Comercio*, 1998, p. 197.

**The main producing areas during the "banana fever"**

Access to any place on the northeast coast of Cuba at the end of the nineteenth century could only be achieved through the use of maritime navigation. As the only case of that region, the port of Gibara, on the westernmost limit of the banana coast, could afford to have a direct terrestrial communication with some other locality, in this case Holguín, a city to which access was granted. by a narrow gauge railway that until that time did not have connections with the rest of the island either. Because of this particular situation it can be considered that the epicenter of Cuba's banana economy was maintained until the years of the republic as an extensive set of enclaves whose communications could be made only by sea, both for the privileged link with the ports of destination of its fruit merchandise located in the United

States, to reach other important cities of the island itself, such as Santiago and Havana, or simply to move to any other place in the national territory.

During the eighties and nineties of the nineteenth century, the growth of Gros Michel exports from Cuba occurred unequivocally around three fundamental subregions or farming areas of the eastern region. Although different wharves and customs delegations were established along the coast, they were mainly Baracoa, Cayo Mambí in Sagua de Tánamo, Banes and, to a lesser extent, Gibara with the wharves of Sama and Bahía del Naranjo, the fundamental sites enabled for international trade that could be channeled officially from the different banana poles, which, in a solution of continuity, developed during the 19th century in the vicinity of those coasts. In Baracoa, the pioneer of this type of crops on the island, during those years the old agribusiness mechanisms that had been established early in their relationship with the ports of the eastern coast of the United States were consolidated. This circumstance favored the creation of a stable local society that, unlike most of the port cities of the island, did not rest on a sugar economy but on fruit. The business elites of the prized city of Cuba came to have a long experience in this type of business, they developed their own entrepreneurial spirit and also their particular dynamics, all of which allowed them to reach a relative opulence and the definition of their own local identity very early. The growth of Baracoa's banana exports between 1881 and 1895 went from an average of 1,700,000 clusters shipped by its port between 1881 and 1885, to the record of 3,100,000 million between 1891 and 1895, thus maintaining the most important place in the Fruit export of the island. However, despite such an important increase, the intense growth rate that the other fruit areas achieved during the same years reduced their relative participation in exports, reducing it from 83.60% in the first five years, to only 47.50% in the beginning of the nineties of the nineteenth century.

In the area of Sagua de Tánamo, with much weaker antecedents in the banana business, spectacular figures were also reached, but there the control of these activities remained shared among entrepreneurs from neighboring Baracoa and at least one US company that served as advanced to the entry of capital from that source during the post-war years. In the case of Sagua de Tánamo, the average values rose from the modest figure of 231,665 bunches in the five-year period begun in 1881, to 1,400,000 in the year ending in 1895, which meant a relative rise in their participation in the exports from 11.22% in 1891, until reaching 21.7% in 1895.

Banes was a very clear case of late incorporation, but at the same time on a large scale, the cultivation and export of bananas. Until the sixties of the nineteenth century, the places around the bay had a desolate image for its degree of abandonment and depopulation, although since 1827 franchises had been granted to encourage the establishment of settlers in said zone, without any result.<sup>15</sup> Notwithstanding the initial shortage of settlements of some significance in the area, the banana activity for the Banes area was conceived in terms of large-scale business, especially after 1888 when new plantations were promoted in places like Sama and others located in the old *and* almost

abandoned haciendas around the bay, such as Los Angeles and Mulás. The opening of the Embarcadero -through the installation of a dock and warehouses- and the commissioning of an 18-kilometer railroad served by steam locomotives, completed the indispensable equipment for a spectacular takeoff of the crops and facilitate the export of fruit bananas. All this would bring as immediate results the foundation and population growth of what would be in the twentieth century the town or city of Banes. From an average of just over 500,000 annual bunches produced and exported by Banes during the initial takeoff of the plantation between the years of 1881 and 1885, banana export activities averaged 2 million bunches between 1891 and 1895. From its initial participation with a discreet 5% with respect to the total of banana exports made from Cuban ports in that first five-year period, Banes would represent 30.8% of them in the last five-year period.

The export of bananas called *bananas* was maintained during the nineties of the nineteenth century in a highly competitive situation in the US market, with respect to other suppliers that used to go to the same ports. Among the largest and most stable banana exporters of that time, Cuba had a potential similar to that of Jamaica. This British possession of the Caribbean maintained a range in export banana values ranging from 1,300,000 to 2,000,000 dollars per year, between the years 1889 and 1893. During that same period, Cuba exported bananas for values that generally exceeded 1,000,000 of dollars and that in some years could reach up to 1 600 000. <sup>16</sup> In 1893, when the largest of the Antilles already exported between 6,000,000 and 7,000,000 annual bunches, the exports of the countries of Central America, which were beginning to develop a banana economy, such as Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama, they barely managed to exceed individually the figure of 2 million annual bunches (see [table 3](#) ). <sup>17</sup>

**CUADRO 3. EXPORTACIONES DE BANANOS DE COSTA RICA, CUBA, GUATEMALA, HONDURAS Y PANAMÁ, EN 1893 Y 1898 (EN RACIMOS)**

<i>Años</i>	<i>Costa Rica</i>	<i>Cuba</i>	<i>Guatemala</i>	<i>Honduras</i>	<i>Panamá</i>
1893	1 278 647	7 159 815	193 522	1 400 863	2 058 583
1898	2 231 036		186 492	1 701 693	2 068 500

Fuente: Ellis, *Transnacionales*, 1983, p. 41.

### **About the banana infrastructure**

The banana boom that took place between the eighties and the mid-nineties of the nineteenth century made it necessary to introduce certain gadgets and technical means to facilitate the transportation and massive shipments of fruit. Given the increase in exports, the first issue to be resolved was focused

on the inadequacies of the piers that had been used until then by merchants and growers of the fruit in the Baracoa area. From the beginning, the shipments had been made with the protection of the accidents and natural shelters that the coast could offer, and also by means of a few facilities represented by rustic and inadequate docks, as it was the old dock of the Baracoa port.

However, since the eighties began to materialize projects for the construction and improvement of docks and warehouses located on the pier of the port itself and also in other places, such as the mouth of the Yumurí River,<sup>18</sup> place this last one where they used to concentrate important loads destined to the export. By simply observing the maps and the area itself, it is easy to visually recognize that the fringes occupied by the coastal plains in Baracoa are usually narrow. These spaces of different levels blocked by mountains were occupied from the first moments by the plantations of bananas. But precisely because of this topographical particularity, the subsequent extension of the crops had to be carried out by occupying land of a higher elevation and the construction of terraces on its slopes.

To solve the inconveniences that the topography of the place could cause for the massive shipments of banana, several mechanical solutions were introduced in order that the fruit could be driven from the higher planes to boarding points that were located in more places. low of the coast. These circumstances made it necessary to install different devices that were aimed at solving this problem. It was precisely the mouth of the Yumurí River and particularly the site known as El Jigüey, two of the places where the great unevenness between the cultivation lands, the place where the fruit was collected and the boarding points located could be seen more clearly. at sea level.

One of the first and perhaps the most important contraption built to solve this problem was a cable car of German invoice, which was installed in 1883 and ten years later was extended to the site known as Gran Tierra. This mill had the function of driving the individual loads of bunches from above, in a place called La Dolorita, in the La Sabana neighborhood, until reaching the sea level, at a point located about six leagues from Baracoa, very close to the mouth of the aforementioned river. In the management work and financing that led to the installation of this mechanical ingenuity were involved the main producers of the haciendas of La Sabana and Yumurí, together with some of the main members of the local oligarchy that functioned as exporters, shipowners and consignees. ships, registered in Baracoa.<sup>19</sup>

For the operation of said cable car, steam engines were installed to facilitate the transfer and descent of the gondolas loaded with bananas from the plantations to the piers, as well as the ascent of people and merchandise to those same places, along a trajectory of about ten kilometers. The Great Airway of the Yumurí, as it was called pompously, would be popularly called *e/eveto*, perhaps a corruption extracted from the title of the corporate

name that finally operated such installation: the Soler Elevator and Tramway Company. In 1890 the well-known firm Monés y Compañía would also finance the installation of a second cable car that delivered the same architect from the previous one: Agustín Soler Espalter.

With the aim of serving the transfer and massive shipment of bananas made by the largest export companies that operated in eastern Cuba, a railway was also introduced in those abandoned areas of the national territory, since the penultimate decade of the 19th century. This important means of transport-the result of the first industrial revolution-had been used in almost all of the west of the island since 1837, while in the eastern end had only managed to keep running some lanes in areas near Santiago de Cuba and Guantánamo, almost always destined to sugar or mining objectives. However, in the eighties of that century, the consortium formed from the aforementioned Dumois family, through its connections with the fruit merchants of Boston and using the mediation of a group of companies that had previously created, proceeded to the installation of the first kilometers of narrow railroad for the transportation of the banana from the Hacienda de Mulas to the brand new jetty that they built in Esterón, a *town* in the Bay of Banes.

Also at the end of the eighties, and joined to the sanitation and filling of mangrove-covered coastal lands that had previously been used for the realization of complicated and eventual shipments of products from the land, the US-based firm Cuban Fruit Company achieved the establishment of a dock and the construction of a railroad of 3.5 miles (5.6 kilometers) in length, intended to facilitate their own banana shipments through the strategic place known as Cayo Mambí, in the bay of Tánamo. Although probably a few kilometers more were added to those previously built by both banana companies, the adoption of the then modern technology of land transport would not spread more broadly in these places of the Cuban coast until the early twentieth century, when a part of the lands that integrated it began to be massively destined to the cultivation of sugarcane.

Notwithstanding the extension of the Cuban banana littoral, the existence of an infinity of bays, inlets and natural shelters was at all times a very favorable advantage so that the fruit merchandise could be shipped by many different points of the coast, which necessarily shorten the transportation terrestrial, fatiguing and complicated, from the plantations to the points of embarkation. As is already known, in some of the areas closest to Baracoa the coastal plains are extremely narrow; for this reason and until the twentieth century, the bunches of bananas had to be transferred in arrias from places that might not be very distant, but they were rugged. In other less abrupt places the transportation could be done in a more comfortable way because the land used for the plantations, although more extensive and far from the coast, had flat spaces through which to travel by using carts pulled by oxen .

The lack of greater facilities for land transportation over medium distances, and the very extension of the Cuban banana coast made it necessary to simultaneously put various ports and sub-ports in service in order to carry out

banana exports more directly. However, other jetties were only able to serve as collection points and point of maritime scale with respect to the nearest port enabled for direct exports. As in most of the strategic points of the coast that were used for the shipments of bananas used to lack the necessary draft so that the fruit boats could anchor properly, the loading operations had to be done by the aid of patanas or barges (called in those *laucones* zones ).

From the services provided by these last vessels assisted by steam tugs, finally the access of the fruit loads to the boats that were anchored in deeper areas of the coast was achieved. From the westernmost site of the Cuban banana coast (the port of Gibara) and following the course of the coast to the east, several boarding points for guineos were promoted during the 19th century, such as Boca de Sama, Banes, Cayo Mambí, Baracoa and Mata, although the mouths of some rivers such as the Toa and the Yumurí were also advantageously used, not to mention some other less important places that were gaining or losing importance in the measure in which the installation of some technical means in very Punctuals managed to offer additional facilities so that producers and traders could make their shipments more easily.

As it has been possible to appreciate, the infrastructure that facilitated the shipments and the transportation of bananas in the northeastern region of Cuba was in some way reinforced and modernized since the eighties of the nineteenth century as a response to the increase in the demand for fruit . But it must not be forgotten that since the previous decade certain innovations of importance related to the cultivation and mass transportation of bananas have already begun to be introduced. Between 1872 and 1875 the almost total substitution of the clones of the traditional Cuban Red for the ideal commercial variety Gros Michel had already taken place, but also a few years earlier a real revolution in maritime transportation had begun, which consisted in the introduction of the Steam navigation and its application to banana driving from the production centers to their commercial destinations.

The steam propulsion would gradually displace the sailboats that used to complete the race between the Cuban banana coast and the US ports, while some schooners destined for high seas navigation still remain in service for many years. Shortly after, but already begun century XX, the refrigeration would be in charge to complete the system of fruit transportation by means of a fundamental contribution that would endow it with a superior degree of efficiency and at the same time open the possibility of driving the fruit from much more places away from their fundamental destination markets.

### **External links of local companies**

As it is already known, in the eighties of the nineteenth century began the most extensive stage of banana growth that took place in Cuba during that century. During this period, new mercantile firms were incorporated into the fruit business, while the old houses reorganized their societies with the purpose of adapting them to the circumstances of each moment. After the death of the brothers Agustín and Pedro Monés and Maury, the two sons of the second,

Pedro José de Jesús and José Pedro Fortunato, would inherit the businesses of Monés y Hermano, reorganizing the company in 1880 under the title of Monés y Compañía. The business management of the new entity was in the hands of Pedro José, who would develop a successful career in the different levels of social life: as an entrepreneur at the head of the firm's commercial and industrial interests, and as a politician by becoming an alderman in 1878, only 30 years old. Later he would also be mayor of Baracoa (1880-1883), and vocal in the deputation of Santiago for several years.

Like some successful landowners and merchants in sugar and slaves located in the port cities of western Cuba who had been ennobled by the crown of Spain, Pedro José Monés was also converted into a Marquis at the time, but by designation of his sanctity the Pope Leo XIII.<sup>20</sup> In 1894, this important local oligarch effected the transfer of some of his properties from Baracoa to the Barcelona merchant José Simón González, and later set up his residence in Paris. Later J. Simón, in partnership with the US interests of the Di Giorgio family (J. Simón and Compañía S. en C.), would start new businesses starting with bananas, just before the war of Independence began.

During the eighties, the payroll of the banana trade of Baracoa was increased considerably by the incorporation of new mercantile companies. As is to be expected, the greatest success in the banana business depended above all on the control that each entrepreneur had over the different factors involved in it. Among these could be production itself, through its financing and modes of control over land and labor power; the financing of sales transactions at the local level; the storage and storage of the merchandise; maritime transport represented by the ownership of ships or the function of consignees and, finally, the commercialization of the fruit in the foreign market.

It can be assumed that the exercise of such activities by local banana entrepreneurs or, instead, their integration into international networks that were able to assume them, should have been at the *time* the maximum aspiration of each of them. these businessmen. An example of this type of entrepreneur who covers the whole business was Hipólito Dumois, the head of a family clan made up of five brothers. This was an entrepreneur from Santiago de Cuba equipped with sufficient preparation for business, and also had experience and connections with US capitalists and entrepreneurs previously linked to the banana business and interested in achieving the penetration of the fruit export market in Cuba. The investors linked to him were Lorenzo Down Baker and Andrew Preston, who were part of a trading company that had been registered in 1885 as Boston Fruit Company.

As a first step to enter the banana business, Dumois managed to establish himself as a merchant in Baracoa in partnership with an accredited businessman from that position, José Tur; however, at that time the traditional banana oligarchy of the city had already distributed almost all of the existing spaces in the fruit business of the place and also had important positions in

local and regional governments. Consequently, the competition against the web of interests already created made it difficult for any attempt to promote a new business on a large scale in those particular territories. In the same way, the other appropriate places for cultivation that were in the neighboring Sagua de Tánamo, had already been taken over by US capitalists since 1878, when they had made the purchase of 1,500 caballerias of land to the family of the counts. of Jaruco and Mopox, with the purpose of establishing a banana enclave there that would go on to exploit the aforementioned Cuba Fruit Company, once the coastal lands were cleaned up and the necessary infrastructure for the operation of a port was installed.

Because of the situation pointed out, the introduction of the interests of the Dumois brothers and the idea of developing them on a larger scale in those areas was discarded, in order to finally direct their interests towards lands far away from those areas, such as those that were available in the area of Samá and the surroundings of Banes Bay. The point of departure for the large-scale business was set by acquiring some 3,000 caballerias of land (40,000 hectares), in partnership with landowners and merchants from Baracoa and Gibara, and with the participation of a local caudillo.

The entity formed for these purposes was finally registered as Banes Fruit Company.<sup>21</sup> In order to dispute the space with other planters previously established in Samá, such as Bonell, Monés and Ruiz, the Samá Fruit Company was also created by the Dumois. Finally, the commercialization of the product had to be carried out by the firm Dumois Fruit Company, which, from New York, would be administered by one of the Dumois brothers.

In order to fully assume the management of the huge fruit business, the interests of Hipólito Dumois were finally withdrawn from Tur and Dumois de Baracoa, through the transfer of their assets to a successor entity called Tur y Bonell. From the activities developed by fruity entities such as those that have been taken as examples of the business dynamics followed at that time, the business of cultivation and export of plantain-fruit or banana was organized in the areas of Samá-Banes, Sagua de Tánamo and Baracoa, until the end of the 19th century.

### **Again the war paralyzes the local banana trade**

On February 24, 1895, the war of the Cubans against the Spanish colonial rule resumed, once again placing crops and banana exports in a difficult situation. The disembarkation of armed expeditions near Baracoa did not wait until the hostilities began, so that the entire area corresponding to the Cuban banana coast became again the scene of military operations. To the extent that the conflagration extended to the west, towards the area of Gibara, almost all of that coast was again involved by the war. As a result, the brand-new facilities of the Dumois family clan were finally burned to the ground.

The policy of the incendiary torch put into practice by the Cuban military command, with the aim of cutting off the nutritional sources of the colonial *economy* on the island, was not long in coming. His actions profoundly affected not only banana plantations and infrastructure, but also the recently founded town of Banes, which was set on fire in August 1896.<sup>22</sup> The plan of "reconcentration" of the rural population dictated by the Spanish side and the naval blockade established by the US squadron in 1898 was later added to the insecurity that gave rise to such acts of violence. These unfortunate circumstances determined that the banana growers and the large export houses established in Baracoa, Gibara, Samá, Banes and Sagua de Tánamo practically paralyzed all of their usual operations.

The railroads and the ingenious facilities that had been destined to the transfer of the loads fruterías from zones of the interior until the coast, as well as those others that facilitated the movement of the loads between the different planes corresponding to the reception and the shipment of the fruit, were seriously affected by the actions of the war. The confrontations and diverse acts that took place in the course of the new independence struggle provoked a sensible and almost immediate decrease in the exported product.

Of a total of 6.8 million bunches that had been sent to the US market in 1895, the following year the shipments were reduced to just over 2 000 000, while in 1897 only 148 000 bunches were exported, which meant the loss total of the Cuban banana economy at the end of the century. This situation was part of a fact of much greater scope that affected the whole of the country's economy.

The military operations that took place between 1895 and 1898, during the War of Independence, came to understand the entire territory of the island and destroyed many of the fundamental centers of the sugar industry and also all kinds of crops, both export and those that were destined for internal consumption. During the course of the war, between 85 and 88% of the farms that existed in the national territory were destroyed, while the population of the island finally came to suffer a net loss of almost 60,000 inhabitants and, according to the most conservative calculations, a demographic loss of more than 300,000 inhabitants.<sup>2. 3</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth century a new stage in the national history of Cuba would begin, as part of the economic recovery that would be achieved in the country from its traditional production items. Once the following century began, also in the production and export of bananas or bananas a certain recovery would be achieved to reach very soon discreet levels up to one and a half million annual bunches, a fact that would take place after 1900;<sup>24</sup> but by then US interests had already begun to deploy a commercial and financial offensive that would allow them, in a short time, to achieve a much greater control, both in the production and commercialization of the then privileged fruit trade object.

## **conclusion**

The process followed by the agricultural and commercial growth of bananas in Cuba was carried out in jumps, framed between stages of war. In the present article the main stage of boom in the international commercialization of this fruit from the island during the 19th century was addressed. This process not only meant the production of large areas located in inaccessible places of the national territory that, with the exception of Baracoa, had previously been in a situation of almost total depopulation, but the opening of a new source of occupation, alternative with respect to other productions destined to self-consumption or to export.

The impetuous development of banana consumption in the United States during the eighties and nineties of that century was a stimulating factor for some national capitalist entrepreneurs -in alliance with foreign interests- to settle and spread to those places almost totally isolated from the rest of the territory. national. The particular situation of these places lacking terrestrial communication and with an abundance of badlands, favored the establishment of real banana plantations in the northeastern part of the country, such as those created around the bays of Banes and Tánamo, as well as the extension of crops in Baracoa. As a technical advance of singular importance and modernity for the time, in those desolate spaces of the island was introduced the railroad, a medium that until then had only been used in Cuba for the export of sugars and minerals and, to a much lesser extent, for the transportation of passengers.

In spite of the discreet importance that the cultivation and export of bananas-fruit had on a national scale that was carried out in the northeast area of Cuba during the period between the two great wars for independence, the successful maintenance of this activity during all that time constituted a fact of particular relevance. Through the exploitation of the banana business, the necessary conditions were created for the incorporation of a large coastal territory from the east of the island to international trade, opening a minimum space for the subsistence of the population that was settled in those isolated areas of the country and, as a result, the creation of a stimulus for unemployed peasants and workers to begin to flow from other places in eastern Cuba to these modest poles of attraction. But the facts presented in this brief work are only part of the story: that related to the production and trade of bananas in those areas. The discovery of new knowledge about this process may be done in the future, through research that is oriented to the application of other approaches to the study of Cuba's banana history.

## **Sources and bibliography**

### *Records*

AHN National Historical Archive, Madrid. ANC National Archive of Cuba.

### *Hemerography*

*The Cuba Review*, New York, 1907.

*Magazine of Agriculture*, Havana, 1894 and 1895.

### *Bibliography*

*Balance sheet of the commerce of the island of Cuba in 1894*, Havana, Printing of the Government and General Captaincy by SM, 1895.

Barcia, María del Carmen, Gloria García and Eduardo Torres-Cuevas, *The struggles for national independence and structural transformations, 1868-1898*, Havana, Editora Política, 1996.

Champion, Jean, *The banana*, Barcelona, Editorial Blume, 1968.

Cuevas Ernesto de las, *Guineo-banano*, Baracoa, La Crónica Press, 1935 (Cuadernos de Historia, 3).

Department of War, *Report on the Census of Cuba- 1899*, Washington, Government Printing Office, 1900.

Ellis, Frank, *The banana transnationals in Central America*, San José, Costa Rica Educa, 1983.

García Alvarez, Alejandro, "The Cuban Coast of Banana Trade", *Times of America Magazine*, no. 7, 2000, pp. 67-83.

-----, "Holy, sign and historical route of the banana to Cuba", *Revista de Indias*, vol. LXI, no. 221. January-April 2001, pp. 141-166.

Giorgio, Robert Di and Joseph A. Di Giorgio, *The Giorgio's: from Fruit Merchants to Corporate Innovators*, California, The University of Berkeley / The Bancroft Library, 1983.

Hernández Vidaurreta, Manuel, *Ei plantain*, Havana, Cuban Book Institute, 1973.

Iglesias García, Fe, "Cuba, economy, war of independence and military occupation", written in the Institute of History of Havana, 1999.

General Intendancy of Property, *General statistics of the foreign trade of the island of Cuba in 1894, signed by the General Direction of Property of the Ministry of Overseas*, Madrid, Typographical Establishment Successors of Rivadeneyra, 1897.

James, Ariel, *Banes, imperialism and nation in a sugar plantation*, Havana, Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1976.

Kepner, Charles D. Jr. and John H. Soothill, *The Banana Empire; a Case Study of Economic Imperialism*, New York, The Vanguard Press, 1935.

Lavallé, Bernard, Consuelo Naranjo and Antonio Santamaría, *Spanish America (1763-1898)*, Madrid, Síntesis, 2002.

Lluhy, Jaime, *Convenience and opportunity of a mercantile contracting center and permanent Ibero-American commercial exhibition in Barcelona*, Barcelona, La Academia, 1889.

López Gómez, A., "The banana crop in the Canary Islands *Geographical Studies*, No. 126, 1972, pp. 5-67.

Nieto Cortadellas, Rafael, *Dignidades nobiliarias cubanas*, Madrid, Hispanic Culture, 1954.

Pérez de la Riva, Juan, "Human resources in Cuba at the beginning of the century: immigration, economy and nationality (1899-1906) in *The Neocolonial Republic*, Havana, Yearbook of Cuban Studies, 1975, t.1.

Pezuela y Lobo, J. de la, *Geographic, statistical and historical Dictionary of the island of Cuba*, Madrid, Printing of the establishment of Mellado, 1863-1866, 4 tt.

Porter, Robert P., *Industrial Cuba*, New York, Putnam & Sons, 1899.

Quesada, Gonzalo de, *Handbook of Cuba*, Washington D. C, International Bureau of the American Republics, 1905.

Reynolds, Phiiiph Keep, *The Banana; Its History, Cultivation and Place among Staple Foods*, Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company / The Riverside Press Cambridge, 1927.

Santamaría, Antonio and Alejandro García Álvarez, *Economy and colony. The Cuban economy and the relationship with Spain, 1765-1902*, Madrid, Tierra Nueva and Cielo Nuevo / Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), 2004.

Simmonds, Norman W., *The bananas*, Barcelona, Editorial Blume, 1973.

"Spain and Cuba", *The Geneva Pamphlet*, Geneva, DA Appleton and Co., 1876.

*The Standard Cyclopedia of Horticulture*, New York, LH Bailey, The MacMillan Company, 1950, t.1.

Several Authors, *The United Fruit. A case of imperialist domination in Cuba*, Havana, Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1976.

Varona Pupo, Ricardo, *Banes (chronicles)*, Santiago de Cuba, Ross Printing, 1930.

Wilson, Charles M., *Empire in Green and Gold The Story of the American Banana Trade*, sl, Henry Holt and Company, 1947.

Yero Martínez, Ernesto, *Baracoa: cradle of history and tradition*, Baracoa, Oriente, La Nueva Democracia Press, 1944.

Zanetti, Óscar, *In search of reciprocity*, Havana, EMPES, 1989.

-----, *Commerce and power. Cuban-Spanish-American relations around 1898*, Havana, Casa de las Américas, 1998.

----- and Alejandro García, *Sugar and Railroads. A Cuban History, 1837-1959*, trans. Franklin W. Knight and Mary Todd, Chapel Hill, N. C, University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> García, "Costa", 2001, pp. 67-83.

<sup>2</sup> Simmonds, *Plátanos*, 1973, pp. 68-69; Reynolds, *Banana*, 1927, p. 39; Ellis, *Transnational*, 1983, p. 31, and Wilson, *Empire*, 1947, p. 13

<sup>3</sup> The first war for the independence of Cuba took place between 1868 and 1878. During the war, military actions failed to penetrate the western part of the island, where most of the country's sugar and tobacco wealth was concentrated. In this case, the destructive effects of the same were concentrated in the central-eastern territories. Finally the peace was signed without the independence of the island being recognized. The War of Independence began in 1895 and ended in 1898 through the participation of the United States Army and Navy and the foreign occupation of the country. In this fight the affectations resulting from the war activity spread throughout the national territory, leaving a sequel of ruin and destruction in crops and infrastructure and a great impact on the amount of the population and their living conditions.

<sup>4</sup> It is about the armed actions included as part of the Ten Years War or the Great War (1868-1878), and also those of the so-called Guerra Chiquita (1879-1880).

<sup>5</sup> This is one of the Catalan merchants of Baracoa, Jaime Lluhy Taulina, who, however, in 1877 had declared bankrupt his mercantile society, Lluhy, *Conveniencia*, 1889, p. 5, and Julián de Zulueta gives powers to Jaime Carbó, from Baracoa, to represent him in the bankruptcy of Jaime Lluhy Taulma ", in the National Archive of Cuba (hereinafter ANC), notarial protocols, notary Gabriel Ramírez, 1877, fs. 725 et seq.

<sup>6</sup> According to the classification taken from Simmonds, *Plátanos*, 1973, pp. 92-93.

<sup>7</sup> Champion, *Banana*, 1968, p. 24

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, and also Hernández, *Plátano*, 1973, p. 105, and Simmonds, *Plátanos*, 1973, p. 133.

<sup>9</sup> Simmonds, *Plátanos*, 1973, p. 93 and Ellis, *Transnacionales*, 1983.

<sup>10</sup> Salvatore di Giorgio, a native of Cefalù, in Sicily, was the founder of a fruit dynasty in the United States. In Baracoa, as well as in Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico and other places in the region, he acquired large batches of bananas for the Mexican-American Fruit and Steamship Company, of which he owned 50% of the shares. Giorgio, *Giorgio's* 1983, p. eleven.

<sup>11</sup> It is about Hipólito, Simón, Alfredo, Enrique and Jorge Dumois.

<sup>12</sup> The boom in mass cultivation and the international commercialization of bananas took place in the Canary Islands, almost at the same time that this process took place in Central America and the Caribbean. See López, "Cultivo", 1972.

<sup>13</sup> *Balance*, 1895 .

<sup>14</sup> In 1899, this proportion had increased to 4.31% of the total population at that time. For the calculation, only the municipalities of Baracoa, Sagua de Tánamo, Mayarí and Gibara have been considered. Department, *Infirme*, 1900, pp. 189-191 and 198-201.

<sup>15</sup> Pezuela, *Dictionary*, 1863-1866, t 1, p. 114

<sup>16</sup> *Magazine of Agriculture*, Havana, August 4, 1895, year XV, no. 29

<sup>17</sup> Ellis, *Transnational*, 1983, p. 41

<sup>18</sup> Development, leg. 208, no. two; Promotion. Commerce, leg. 209, no. 2. 3; leg. 214, no. 14 and others in Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid (hereinafter AHN).

<sup>19</sup> Carísimo Espalter (harvester), Juan Arrúe (harvester and member of the Board of Agriculture of Baracoa), Pedro José Monés and Maury (exporter, shipowner and mayor of Baracoa), Víctor Puig (exporter), Miguel Perellade participated in this management work. (exporter), Miguel Villaplana (exporter),

Diego Belmonte and Francisco Llibre (harvesters), Quirico Bonell and José Tur (exporters), Roque Alayo (exporter) and other growers; besides the lawyer Gil Hartman and the mechanics Agustín Soler Espalter (main promoter of the idea and at the same time landowner of the Savannah, regidor in several occasions and president of the Board of Agriculture, Commerce and Industry of Baracoa in 1872), and José Batista. See, among other sources, Yero, *Baracoa*, 1944, and Cuevas, *Guineo-banana*, 1935, p. 20-23.

<sup>20</sup> By brief of its sanctity Leon XIII was granted the dignity of Marquess of Maury with personal character to Pedro Jose de Jesus Monés and Maury, Vals de la Paisa and Pares, being authorized its use in Spain by royal order of 1897. See Nieto, *Dignidades*, 1954, pp. 143-144.

<sup>21</sup> This entity was formed by Hipólito Dumois, together with Juan Cárdenas, landowner of Baracoa and Alto Songo, the landowner of Gibara Delfín Pupo and the Colonel of the War of Independence Octavio Silva. James, *Banes*, 1976, pp. 57-60, and Miscellaneous, *United*, p. 47

<sup>22</sup> James, *Banes*, 1976, p. 87, and Varona, *Banes*, 1930, pp. 72-74.

<sup>23</sup> These calculations have generally been made taking into account the reduction in the birth rate and the increase that occurred in the mortality rate. Barcia, García and Torres-Cuevas, *Luchas*, 1996, pp. 524, 538; Department, *Report*, 1900, pp. 189-191; Pérez de la Riva, "Resources", 1975, pp. 20-25, and Lavallé, Naranjo and Santamaría, *América*, 2002, pp. 340-343.

<sup>24</sup> *The Cuba Review*, 1907.

---

## About the Author

### Alejandro Garcia

(Matanzas, Cuba, 1932). Doctor in Historical Sciences (1987). Professor of Merit (University of Havana, 2002). Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy and History of the University of Havana and the San Jerónimo University College of Havana. He has published the books *La gran bourgeoisie comercial en Cuba* (1990) and *Déla consolidacion a la crisis* (1999). Others, in shared authorship, are: *United Fruit. A case of imperialist domination in Cuba* (1976), *Roads for sugar* (1987) and *Economy and colony. The Cuban economy and the relationship with Spain. 1765-1902* (2004). His articles have

been published in Argentina, Australia, Cuba, Ecuador, Spain, the United States, Mexico, Sweden and Venezuela.

## Refback links

- No Refback link.

Copyright (c) 2015 Latin America in Economic History

*Latin America in Economic History* is a publication edited by the [Dr. José María Luis Mora Research Institute](#)

Editorial Director and / or responsible: Dr. Luis A. Jáuregui Frías. Reservations of exclusive use rights no. [04-2014-071813365300-203](#) Electronic ISSN 2007-3496. Responsible for the latest update: Lic. Adriana Barajas Gómez. Valentín Gómez Farías Square, no. 12, col. San Juan Mixcoac, Deleg. Benito Juárez, 03730, Mexico City. Tel. 5598-3777 ext. 3103, [alhe@mora.edu.mx](mailto:alhe@mora.edu.mx)



*Latin America in Economic History* is under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC BY 4.0)