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Welcome to Paradise Island: The rise of Jamaica's cine-tourist image, 1891-1951

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Some boy nuh know this, them only come around like tourist
On the beach with a few club sodas
Bedtime stories, and pose like dem name Chuck Norris
And don't know the real hardcore

Damian Marley, "Welcome to Jamrock"

Welcome to Jamrock (2005)

The new makers
of our history profit without guilt
and are, in fact, prophets of a policy
that will make the island a mall, and the breakers
grin like waiters, like taxi drivers, these new plantations
by the sea; a slavery without chains, with no blood spilt –
just chain-link fences and signs, the new degradations.

Derek Walcott, "The Acacia Trees"

White Egrets (2010)

PREFACE

This thesis examines the history of film in Jamaica from the late nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century. It concentrates on how practices of (location) filming were connected to tourism and how they participated in the production of the island as a tropical paradise for Western tourism consumption. Emphasis is on the British and Hollywood film industries as empire cinemas and the Jamaican tourism industry as a nation-building project built on (neo)colonial dependency structures. While tourism, including film tourism, continues to be promoted as an important model for economic development for Jamaica, the reality beyond the “cine-tourist” image often tells a different story. The purpose of this study is to examine the foundations of this construct and to facilitate further research into the interwoven history of film, tourism and empire in postcolonial societies during the first half of the twentieth century.

This study is the result of archival research, literature review, participatory observation, ethnographic interviews, and watching dozens of films partially or completely shot and set in Jamaica and the wider (Anglophone) Caribbean. Since newspaper reports of the *Jamaica Gleaner* are my primary source materials to interpret Jamaica’s early film and tourism history, I use the abbreviation *JG* when quoting or paraphrasing from these reports (and include the surname of the reporter, if known). When referring to other historical newspapers, I usually provide the full title. Additionally, for mapping purposes, each time a Jamaican location film, i.e. a film that has been partially or completely shot on the island, is mentioned for the first time in the running narrative, the title is highlighted in bold. An overview of foreign feature films shot in Jamaica from 1913 to 2013 can be found in Appendix 1. An overview of Jamaican feature films from 1972 to 2013 can be found in Appendix 2.