

ABSTRACT

The dissertation, "Beyond the Plantations: The Tourism Industry in Barbados, 1780-1914," is an examination of aspects of the origins and development of tourism culture in the Caribbean. Its primary focus is Barbados, from the beginning of the collapse of slavery to the first World War. This subject has not attracted the attention of Caribbean historians at the level that equates it with the importance of the industry in the region. There is no in-depth analysis of the origins and evolution of tourism as an industry in Barbados. The absence of an historical perspective shapes much of what is written about the industry today, and has an impact on the fashioning of policy. The task of modernizing the industry has been the more difficult because of insufficient knowledge of its history.

The modern industry has its roots in the slave dispensation as a marginal activity within the mercantile complex that supported the sugar plantation sector. The characteristic features of the journey of the industry from the periphery to the centre of the Barbados economy are set out and examined. In this movement the industry has not successfully shed all the socio-cultural aspects of its origins, and continues to be haunted by its past. During the second half of the 20th century, tourism developed as the world's fastest growing industry - measured in terms of workers employed and capital formation in most Caribbean countries. The sector is now the engine of growth in most of these economies. This circumstance makes phenomenal the lack of an expansive historical literature.

The research perspective used here engages critically the so-called plantation society model of Caribbean development that provided a framework for explaining the character of the tourism industry. There is also focus on other explanatory approaches, which illustrate the ahistorical nature of national, political and social policies in respect of the industry. The main purpose of this study, then, is to facilitate the emergence of a more historical understanding of the industry in order to gauge more effectively its development capabilities.