



Bali and the Tourist Industry: A History, 1906-1942

David Shavit

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The island of Bali's sensational image was created by the tourists, artists, and scholars who visited the tiny nation between the two world wars. A Dutch colony from 1908, Bali was a source of revenue for the Dutch government, which began to develop its image as the ultimate vacation spot. The tourism industry spread the idea of Bali as a paradise in which noble, happy, spiritual Balinese—all prodigiously creative artists—lived in innocence. Sensual images of beautiful people on an enchanted isle unspoiled by modernity predominated. Bali also acquired a reputation as a homosexual paradise. A host of books and articles fed these images of Bali until it evolved into one of the most romantic stops on the tourist itinerary. The Balinese people, however, made little profit from the tourist traffic. This history of the development of tourism in Bali stretches from the Dutch occupation in 1906 to the Japanese occupation in 1942. After exhaustive research in published records and in unpublished letters, diaries, and oral histories left by many of the American and European visitors to the island as well as the Balinese residents, the author explores the reasons for Bali's popularity among Westerners and their effects on the native culture.

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