

Kuta, Bali: From Port City to Surf City

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Abstract

Kuta's port, once the center of Bali's maritime trade, was gradually replaced by Buleleng's port around the 1860s. The once-bustling Kuta dwindled into a small, impoverished village. However, by 1937, Kuta began attracting surf tourists, spurred by the opening of the Kuta Beach Hotel, which also offered surfing lessons to its guests. In 1942, the hotel was burned down by Japanese occupying forces, halting surfing activities until the late 1960s, when American hippie tourists revived the scene. They were followed by Australian hippies in 1973, leading to the spread of surfing across Bali's white-sand, high-wave beaches. Unintentionally, this became the foundation of Kuta's beach tourism. The evolution of Kuta from a harbor to a surfing port represents a compelling maritime historical phenomenon that merits further scholarly investigation. Data was gathered from surfers' memoirs on websites and the collective memory of Denpasar youth active in Kuta during the 1960s–1970s, supplemented by humanities research on Kuta. This study reveals Kuta's transformation into a Surf City, along with its accompanying socio-economic and cultural effects.

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Introduction

This research is framed within the paradigm of maritime history, broadly defined as the study of human interactions with the sea. However, it diverges from traditional maritime history themes, such as navigation and trade. Instead, the focus is on surfers at Kuta Beach in Badung, Bali, as the primary subject of study.

Before its transformation into today's surf city, Kuta was home to a thriving 19th-century port that served as the hub of Bali's maritime trade. Mads Lange, a Danish merchant, played a pivotal role in this era (Nordholt 1980, 17–47). Kuta's emergence as a port city was driven not only by its favorable coastal topography—providing safe anchorage for merchant vessels—but also by its fertile flatlands, abundant rice fields, orchards, and livestock (particularly water buffalo and cattle bred for trade). Merchants could also purchase enslaved people (Vickers 2012, 99–110), a practice that enriched local royalty and nobility. As a result, Denpasar, the capital of Badung, emerged as the leading trading hub in southern Bali. Commercial activities were concentrated around several ports, where merchants engaged in the export of local commodities and the import of European manufactured goods, opium, and Chinese currency (Veth 1869, 60).

Among the ports located in southern Bali, Kuta was the most developed. Its harbor facilitated Kuta's emergence as the most prosperous and largest village in 19th-century Badung. This prosperity was contingent upon seasonal shipping patterns: vessels anchored at Kuta during the dry season but relocated to the eastern coast during the monsoon period. Under normal weather conditions, Tuban—located southeast of Kuta—served as the sole landing port and was renowned for its abundant swine herds (De Locomotief, 1895).

Following the Dutch colonial government's conquest of the Kingdom of Buleleng in 1849 and the subsequent establishment of a port, the center of trade and shipping in Bali transitioned to Singaraja, the capital of Buleleng. Concurrently, the Kingdom of Badung was frequently engaged in conflicts with other Balinese kingdoms, such as Mengwi and Gianyar (Nordholt 1996; Agung 1989), mobilizing its populace, including those from Kuta. Consequently, Badung experienced a decline and was easily subjugated by Dutch colonial forces in 1906, an event referred to as the Puputan Badung. (Agung 1989; Raben 2015).

Kuta Beach gradually transformed into a quiet, impoverished village. Its economy relied solely on fishing, coconut farming, rice cultivation, and livestock (Wijaya, Sulistiyono 2020). However, in early 1937, the village was developed into a surfing destination by Bob Koke, an American who collaborated with Muriel Pearson. She was known in Bali as K'tut Tantri in 1965. Muriel Pearson, together with her husband, managed several bungalows in Bali. They established the Kuta Beach Hotel and introduced surfing lessons for their guests. The Kuta Beach Hotel was ultimately destroyed by Japanese occupation forces in 1942. Surfing activities only revived in the late 1960s through American hippies. These visitors did not stay in Kuta but rather at hotels in Denpasar, including Hotel Adiyasa west of Banjar Tampakgangsul, specifically on Nakula Street, owned by a local nobleman. Their appearance was eccentric - long-haired, wearing frayed jeans and flip-flops in typical hippie style, often with multiple wives and including Western women. This narrative is based on the collective recollections of Denpasar youth who frequented Kuta Beach for various purposes during the 1960s and 1970s.

Each morning, individuals commonly identified as hippies would utilize public transportation to travel to Kuta from the terminal situated north of Banjar Wangaya Kelod, specifically on Kartini Street in Denpasar, and would return in the evenings. However, as an increasing number of Kuta residents transformed their homes into guesthouses, the frequency of the daily Denpasar-Kuta commute by hippies diminished. These pensions gained particular popularity among Australian hippies, whose presence increased significantly after 1973. Physically, American and Australian hippies were hard to distinguish - the difference became apparent only in their shopping habits: Americans tended to be free-spending upper-middle class, while Australians were typically more budget-conscious lower-middle class. This perspective is derived from collective memories obtained through interviews conducted by Denpasar youth who frequented Kuta Beach during the 1960s and 1970s.

Visitors utilized bicycles or motorcycles for transportation to the beach. A significant number of Australian tourists also rented motorcycles to venture beyond Kuta, visiting other tourist attractions and surf locations, consistently accompanied by their respective local guides. An unusual practice developed: in the event of a motorcycle malfunction during travel, riders would abandon the vehicle and report its location to the owner, who would subsequently retrieve it with the assistance of a mechanic.

During the evenings, individuals engaged in activities such as observing sunsets, attending beach gatherings, or unwinding at local bars. Additionally, many frequented newly established local dining establishments, such as "Warung Made," where they could partake in meals, beverages, and social interactions with fellow international visitors. These interactions laid the groundwork for the development of Kuta's night tourism concept, which has since evolved to encompass a wide array of bars, restaurants, nightclubs, jungle dining experiences, nocturnal explorations, dance performances, and more, all of which are readily accessible on contemporary tourism websites.

Numerous international tourists, irrespective of gender, sought companionship with local individuals. For Balinese men, in particular, forming a romantic relationship with a Western partner was regarded as a source of pride. This was not only due to the opportunity

to enhance their English language proficiency but also because it alleviated the financial burden of dining and socializing, as these expenses were typically borne by their foreign partners. These local men often provided transportation for their partners, utilizing either their personal motorcycles or rented ones. Such relationships frequently evolved into intimate partnerships akin to marital unions, with many culminating in marriage. The collective memory of the community, as derived from interviews with Denpasar youth who frequented Kuta Beach during the period from 1960 to 1970, constitutes a primary source for the composition of this article.

Thus, when maritime history is interpreted broadly, it can encompass the study of human-sea interactions—including surfing activities, coastal livelihoods, and maritime culture. Within this framework, this article addresses a key question: how can surfing activities in Bali be reconstructed within maritime historical narratives? The methodology relies on tracing surfers' memoirs and scattered online accounts, combined with the collective memory of Denpasar youth who regularly interacted with tourists at Kuta Beach between 1960-1970. These fragments are then woven together (*suturei*) with factual threads drawn from humanities research on Kuta during the 1970s. Together, these sources serve as a gateway to understanding Kuta Bali's emergence as a Surf City.

Method

The heuristic process of this study is guided by Bourdieu's theoretical concepts, primarily *habitus*. *Habitus* is shaped through upbringing, recreational activities, and broader societal education (Mahar, Harker, and Wilkes 1990, 10). In the surfing environment, these three spheres of *habitus* can be observed among surfers who act as mentors—training local boys, engaging in surfing activities, and interacting with fellow surfers. *Habitus* is also a cognitive structure. The various schemas embedded within it include perceptions of space, time, good-bad, healthy-sick, profit-loss, useful-useless, right-wrong, up-down, front-back, left-right, beautiful-ugly, and honorable-shameful. These schemas interconnect to form a cognitive framework that guides individuals in their daily interactions (Takwin 1990, xviii-xix). Placed in the context of this research, the beach is a space that requires no conquest. Surfing is perceived as a good, healthy, profitable, useful, right, beautiful, and honorable activity. Similarly, such schemas were ingrained among the youth of Denpasar in the 1960s–1970s, who frequented Kuta Beach for diverse purposes.

This learning process occurs subtly, unconsciously, and appears so natural that it seems almost innate—as if bestowed by nature or inherent from birth. *Habitus* can also be described as cultural unconsciousness: the influence of history that is unconsciously perceived as natural. In other words, it is a product of history that emerges after birth, shaped by human interaction within specific societal spaces and timeframes. Simply put, *habitus* is neither destiny nor an innate trait—psychological or biological—embedded in humans (Mahar, Harker, and Wilkes 1990, 10).

One challenge in this research is that the memories of Denpasar's youth from that era often exist only as fragmented recollections. To serve as historical sources, these fragments must be pieced together into what is termed collective memory. To align with this study's focus, such collective memory must be contextualized within the memoirs of surfers who visited Bali in the 1970s—readily accessible on various websites—and then sutured with factual threads from the researcher's findings about Kuta in the 1970s.

The Evolution of Kuta, Bali in the Literature

Thus far, maritime history has been narrowly defined, limited only to shipping and vessels, as seen in the works of Sulistiyono, S.T. (1994); Suwitha, I.G.P. (1993); Suwitha, I.G.P. (2017); Suwitha, I.G.P. (2024a); Suwitha, I.G.P. (2024b); and likely by the majority of maritime historians in Indonesia. On the other hand, as noted by Fusaro, M. (2010), in the Anglophone world, maritime history in its broadest sense—both historically and culturally—has been highly skeptical of theoretical approaches. This skepticism may stem from the enduring popularity of British historiography, which is largely rooted in the pragmatic Anglo-Saxon tradition. Another contributing factor is the long-standing and enthusiastic involvement of former sailors in the discipline. Naturally, they are more concerned with investigating the operational and technological developments of maritime history and their contributions to their respective national pasts, rather than engaging with more abstract theoretical arguments.

Beyond the aforementioned points, Fusaro, M. (2010) also observes that maritime history has consistently benefited from the rich and dedicated contributions of non-professional historians. These enthusiasts often craft captivating adventure narratives that appeal to a broad readership. However, this tendency has fostered a certain intellectual elitism within maritime history. As a result, maritime historians tend to highly value hands-on, "on-deck" experience, while somewhat dismissing approaches that fail to demonstrate proper appreciation for practical seafaring knowledge. The convergence of these two elements has long conspired to keep maritime history on the margins of the broader historical profession. (Fusaro, M., 2010).

However, over the past two decades, according to Fusaro, M. (2010), maritime history has undergone a significant revival and begun entering the mainstream of historical research. This shift is evidenced by the growing number of professional historians from various sub-disciplines (social, economic, political, and cultural) engaging with "maritime" issues and joining professional associations related to oceanic studies. Among the primary reasons behind this phenomenon are both a broader shift away from strictly "national" history production and increased professional historians' engagement with more expansive narratives. These developments have demonstrated how "maritime history" can provide an ideal platform for such narratives.

Today, the revival of maritime history is anticipated not only by academic historians but also by literary scholars. They seek to uncover new stories about human-sea relationships, including the experiences of sailors, transported convicts, enslaved peoples, and Native Americans. In recent years, scholars focusing on African, Asian, Pacific Islander, and European diasporas have begun examining how these communities engaged with oceans and freshwater systems - analyzing voyages, navies, and sailors of all kinds as compelling subjects for research. Although this development has occurred somewhat belatedly, given that maritime historical studies have traditionally concentrated on standard, conventional topics, the advent of new approaches—examining transethnic and cross-geographical histories while integrating interdisciplinary methodologies to enhance intellectual rigor, pose fresh questions, and present novel findings—has created abundant opportunities for historians to contribute to maritime history. (Verso 2023)

This new wave of maritime historical revival is partly the result of the hard work of historians who have been thinking about the maritime world "from below"—that is, examining not who was on the deck but who and what was beneath it: enslaved people, for example, or smuggled goods. Piracy, smuggling, slavery, and warfare are just some of the subjects that have captured significant academic attention, making this an ideal time to hold an event exploring and celebrating new approaches to maritime history. This was discussed at the "Maritime History from Below: Rethinking Society and the Sea" Conference, held on November 3–4, 2023, at Haaga Hall. (Verso 2023)

An article titled “The Value of Recreational Surfing to Society” briefly discusses the origins of surfing and its growth throughout the 20th century. It also examines the rise in surfing participation, using various social science techniques—including observed market expenditures and non-market valuation—to illustrate the socioeconomic value of surfing across different locations. The findings highlight the economic, social, and cultural importance of surfing facilities, the need to clearly articulate and measure changes in recreational infrastructure, and the necessity of considering any negative impacts on surf breaks and the natural environment that may result from development, coastal planning, and protection works. (Lazarow, Miller, and Blackwell, 2008)

An article written by Towner, N. and Sharyn, S. (2019) highlights that surf tourism brings positive implications for remote communities but also comes with less productive consequences. This conclusion addresses the study’s research question, which aimed to explore how communities in Mentawai, Indonesia, perceive surf tourism by specifically analyzing how they discuss its positive and negative impacts on daily life. The data was collected through field research conducted between July and September 2010, supplemented with additional data gathered later. The study focuses on the improvement in local livelihoods due to surf tourism, including increased job opportunities and the ability to learn English. However, it also raises concerns about surf tourism, particularly regarding the growing prevalence of alcohol and drug consumption and the impolite behavior of visiting surfers. Further research is needed to ensure that local community perspectives are incorporated into policy development and the sustainable growth of surf tourism in Mentawai.

Given this open perspective, this study seeks to explore maritime history “from below,” focusing on individuals who are often overlooked yet connected to seafaring and trade—while also examining human interactions with the ocean, such as surfing activities in Kuta. Although surfing itself is unrelated to maritime navigation or commerce, it has unwittingly become a driving force behind Bali’s tourism sector, which contributed a staggering Rp 107 trillion (44%) to national tourism revenue in 2024, as reported by Detikcom (2025). Beyond its economic impact, the social, economic, and cultural ripple effects of surfing have transformed Kuta into a modern city akin to other urban centers—distinguishable only when local communities perform their unique rituals, a phenomenon unmatched elsewhere in Indonesia.

The Evolution of Kuta, Bali in the Theoretical Framework

This study examines its core issues using Pierre Bourdieu's theory of power strategies, known as the genetic structuralism (or generative structuralism) approach. This framework posits that the analysis of objective structures cannot be separated from the study of the origins of mental structures. Bourdieu's thinking establishes a dialectical relationship (mutual influence) between objective and subjective structures. The theory emphasizes how external (objective) social structures—also termed social reality—shape individual (subjective) thoughts and actions. In turn, subjective tendencies contribute to the reproduction and transformation of objective structures. These dynamic forms a cyclical interplay where social reality and individual understanding co-construct one another (Mahar, Harker, and Wilkes, 1990).

The objective structure reflects Marxist influences, while the subjective structure bears traces of phenomenology. Both prove inadequate for analyzing social change within a society, necessitating the concept of habitus—a system of dispositions (internalized attitudes, tendencies of perception, feeling, action, and thought) focused here on surfing activities at Kuta Beach and their associated interests. Bourdieu formally defines habitus as

a durable, transposable system of dispositions. It is a structured structure that tends to function as a structuring structure: a generative principle organizing practices and representations. These practices and representations are objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing conscious aims or explicit mastery of the operations required to achieve them. They are objectively "regulated" and "regular" without in any way being the product of obedience to rules; they can be collectively orchestrated without being the result of a conductor's organizing action (Johnson, R., in Bourdieu, 1993: 5).

Bourdieu also employs the concept of capital, which is formed through the accumulation and transformation of resources. Capital in its various forms is not static but can be converted from one type to another. Through capital, individuals can position themselves within social fields—though this positioning must first be mediated by habitus (Mahar, Harker, and Wilkes, 1990) to fully grasp Kuta's transformation into a surfers' town.

Bourdieu's theory outlines four types of capital, as noted by Haryatmoko (2016, 45-45): social capital, economic capital, cultural capital, and symbolic capital. Economic capital refers to material resources that serve as means of production and financial assets. It is the most readily convertible form of capital into other types. Cultural capital encompasses educational qualifications, knowledge, cultural codes, speech patterns, writing skills, demeanor, and social etiquette—all of which influence social positioning. In the context of this study, this manifests in the ability to communicate and interact with hippie tourists, playing a pivotal role in determining social status. This is evident in the emergence of successful entrepreneurs in surf tourism, cultural tourism, and nightlife sectors.

Bourdieu (1994, 33, 196-197 cited in Haryatmoko 2016, 45) also introduced the concept of social capital, which comprises relational networks serving as resources for social positioning. The final form is symbolic capital, which generates symbolic power. This symbolic power typically requires status markers such as official titles, luxury vehicles, prestigious offices, academic degrees, high social standing, or distinguished family names. Essentially, symbolic capital encompasses all forms of recognition - both institutional and informal - granted by a social group (Bourdieu 1980, 32, 201-221 cited in Haryatmoko 2016: 45). This phenomenon becomes evident when examining Kuta's rapid tourism infrastructure development. As noted by Antonia, a researcher from California State University, Northridge, the area transformed from very basic facilities in 1974 to highly modern structures by 1997 (Wijaya 2012, 1118-1119).

Surf tourism and cultural tourism (Michel 1996), along with other forms such as spiritual tourism (yoga) (Adhi 2021) and nightlife tourism, collectively shape individual habitus and capital. While every individual possesses all four forms of capital (economic, cultural, social, and symbolic), their accumulation varies significantly. Some prioritize building social networks through surfing, resulting in stronger social capital relative to other forms. Others focus primarily on the economic aspects of surfing, making economic capital their dominant resource. This pattern continues across different capital formations. These diverse capital configurations interact dynamically, ultimately coalescing into a collective habitus and capital structure. This transformation has propelled Kuta, Bali's evolution from a forgotten port town to a world-renowned surf destination.

Thus, in Bourdieu's theory, while acknowledging structural forces, he refuses to neglect the significance of agency (embodied here by real-life actors - the surfers). Bourdieu particularly emphasizes the dialectical (reciprocal) relationship between objective structures and subjective phenomena. Objective structures constrain thought, action, and interaction - how people represent the world. These representations, in turn, influence objective structures. The product of this dialectic is what we call practice. Therefore, practice is neither objectively determined nor simply a product of free will. This means

Kuta's social transformation - from a small, simple village to a modern destination - emerged from the intersection of habitus and capital within the tourism field.

Bob Koke as a Surfing Pioneer in Bali

Surfing in Bali was first introduced by Bob Koke, who arrived on the island with his lover, Louise. Previously, Louise had been married to Oliver H.P. Garrett, a renowned Hollywood screenwriter—though his alcoholism and penchant for affairs with other women led to their divorce, after which she reclaimed her maiden name, Louise Garrett. In the late 1920s, Louise was a talented painter, while Oliver, a former New York City newspaper reporter, had become a successful Hollywood writer and director. He received numerous commissions to write scripts for “talkies” (early sound films, as opposed to silent movies) (Jarratt 2025). One of his most famous works included *A Farewell to Arms*. The couple initially lived an idyllic life in a dream home overlooking Santa Monica Bay in the Pacific Palisades (Jarratt 2025).

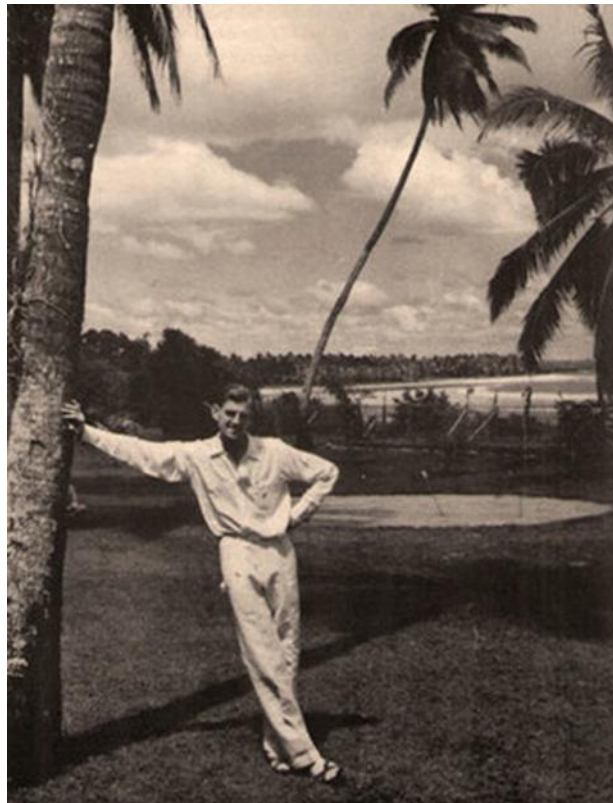


Figure 1. Bob Koke: Bali's First Surfer Photograph from 1937
Source: Jarratt, 2019

The idyllic existence was short-lived. Oliver, known for his promiscuous behavior, engaged in an extramarital relationship with a Hungarian model of notable beauty while on an overseas film project. Upon discovering Oliver's infidelity, Louise sought comfort in a relationship with her tennis coach, Bob Koke. Koke, born in 1910 in Los Angeles, was a University of California graduate and a part-time photographer. He was a regular visitor to the Garretts' Beverly Hills estate, where he trained prominent Hollywood figures such as David Selznick and Charlie Chaplin (Jarratt 2019). Koke commenced his career in Hollywood within the production department of MGM, following his role as assistant director to King Vidor on the 1932 film *"Bird of Paradise,"* which was filmed in Hawaii and featured Dolores del Río. (Jarratt 2025).

Though Koke was born and raised near the coast, his first real introduction to surf culture came in Hawaii—and he was instantly hooked. He soon found himself riding massive redwood surfboards alongside Waikiki's beach boys. However, his film industry career stalled, forcing him to return to Los Angeles to teach tennis. Around the same time, Oliver Garrett came back to LA with his Hungarian model lover in tow. Louise, furious, spat at Oliver and immediately filed for divorce. She then fled to the Far East with her tennis coach-turned-lover. The couple departed Los Angeles in October 1934, sailing first to Yokohama before traveling through Japan, Shanghai, and Hong Kong. In Singapore, a friend suggested Koke experience Bali's beauty—a truly unique getaway at the time, when few tourists visited the island. Some sources speculate it was Charlie Chaplin, one of Koke's tennis students, who first told him about Bali's wonders (Jarratt 2019). Chaplin himself had visited Bali in 1932 (Soerabajasch Handelsblad 1932, 2).

The couple arrived in Bali in August 1936. Upon checking into the Bali Hotel in Denpasar, they registered as "The Kokes"—a strategic move to avoid scandal (Jarratt 2025). Introducing themselves to fellow guests as Robert and Louise Koke (Jarratt 2019), they soon encountered a woman who would transform their Far Eastern dream into a nightmare: Muriel Pearson, a Scottish woman known in Bali as K'tut Tantri. Petite and unhappy in her marriage while living in Los Angeles, Pearson had been inspired to visit Bali after watching *Goono-Goono* (Jarratt 2019). Also known as *The Kriss*, this melodrama set in Bali explores a love triangle involving a Balinese prince, a commoner, and a slave girl. The film's narrative centers on the concept of *goona-goona*, a mystical love potion, as its primary plot device, while simultaneously highlighting Balinese culture and daily life (Atkinson 2019). Its box office success in Hollywood theaters prompted Pearson to immediately book a ticket to Bali (Jarratt 2019).

Remarkably, her real-life experience in Bali seemed to mirror the film's plot: her car mysteriously ran out of gasoline right in front of a Balinese royal palace, where she encountered an English-speaking prince who adopted her as his sister and gave her the name K'tut Tantri. Pearson as known as Tantri led Koke and Louise to Kuta Beach, gesturing toward the stretch of shoreline where the Hard Rock Hotel now stands. She envisioned building Bali's first beachfront hotel and proposed a partnership with the couple. Thus, the Kuta Beach Hotel was established in early 1937 (Jarratt 2019). The hotel's courtyard featured bamboo furniture styled after Hawaiian *lānai*—a deliberate departure from traditional Balinese aesthetics (Jarratt 2025).

Hawaiian-style Lanai is an open-roofed veranda attached to a house, often with open or screened walls, functioning as an outdoor family space connected to the main home. It is frequently used for relaxing, dining, or enjoying the scenery (Lyon 2024). Although adopting Hawaiian architectural influences, the Koke family pioneered the Bali resort concept, offering a blend of the exotic and familiar while providing surfing experience packages for their hotel guests. This idea emerged after Koke recognized the potential of riding the waves at Kuta Beach. Even before the surfboards he ordered from Hawaii arrived, Koke worked with his hotel staff to carve shorter wooden boards in the Hawaiian *alaia* style. With these handmade surfboards, Koke believed they would be suitable for guests with no prior surfing experience, whether riding standing up or lying down. (Jarratt 2025).

Enthusiasm quickly spread among the locals and guests about the surfing lesson packages offered at Kuta Beach. One eager participant was an elderly aristocratic widow named Lady Hartelby from England. She was 70 years old and couldn't swim, yet she was determined to learn how to surf. Louise tried to dissuade her. Repeatedly, she urged Lady Hartelby to abandon the idea, but the stubborn Englishwoman insisted—determined to succeed, as was typical of her strong-willed nature. Eventually, she was taken to the beach, and for a first-timer, one session should have been enough. But not for Lady Hartelby. Even

exhausted, she fought for more chances to surf. Then one day, she nearly drowned but was rescued by Koke. (Jarratt 2019).

However, by the end of 1937, a dispute arose between the Koke family and Tantri over several issues. Tantri moved to a bungalow on the other side of the sandy beachfront and opened her own hotel, which she also named Kuta Beach Hotel—though most people knew it as Manx's Rooms and Bungalows. The Koke family took legal action to try to stop her. But then, the occupying Japanese forces invaded the Dutch East Indies. Koke managed to get Louise onto a yacht out of Surabaya, then attempted to return home via a U.S. Air Force flight—where he was advised he'd be better off enlisting. Thus began his distinguished career with the Office of Strategic Services (the CIA's precursor) in Batavia and Shanghai, and later with the Southeast Asia Command. (Jarratt 2019).

In March 1946, just as the Dutch began landing in Bali, Koke stood on the beach at Kuta. He shook his head at the panorama of wreckage stretching from his feet southward along Beach Road. Koke removed his army cap, wiped his brow, and kicked at the debris, uncovering remnants of a concrete laundry block wall—all that remained of what had once been part of the Kuta Beach Hotel. After returning to America, Koke and Louise settled in rural Virginia, near CIA headquarters in Langley. (Jarratt 2019).

As a final note, Koke positioned Bali as Asia's spiritual home for surfing, igniting the continent's surf culture. Widely regarded as Indonesia's first surfer, Koke remains an unsung pioneer—often called the father of Balinese surfing. His legacy transformed Bali into one of the world's most iconic surf destinations today. Without Koke's influence, Bali might never have blossomed into the global surf hub it is now. It was his passion that first drew travelers to ride Bali's waves, casting the island in a new, adventurous light. Local surfers still honor how Koke reshaped Bali's identity, embedding surfing into Southeast Asia's cultural fabric. (Jarratt 2019).

From Shipping to Surfing: The Maritime History of Kuta Beach and Its Impact on Balinese Society (1937-1970s)

The collective memory of Bali's youth in the 1960s and 1970s serves as a gateway to understanding the cultural impact of surfing at Kuta Beach. As modernization swept across Indonesia, Kuta became a magnet for young trendsetters—not just from Denpasar but even from Jakarta—seeking a new way of life. A key driver of this cultural shift was the rise of private radio stations, such as Taruna Sanggar Siswa and Cassanona, which broadcast Western rock music. The sounds of Creedence Clearwater Revival (CCR), Deep Purple, Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, and Pink Floyd filled the air, shaping the tastes of a generation. Bands like The Rolling Stones, Queen, AC/DC, and Kiss became the soundtrack of Denpasar's youth, who frequently flocked to Kuta Beach during this era.

Popular music magazines like *Actuil*—the most iconic of its time—circulated widely, featuring pull-out posters of international rock stars that adorned teenagers' bedroom walls. Meanwhile, style-conscious youth from Jakarta, seeking to break from conservative norms, flocked to Kuta Beach to embrace the hippie look. They sported long hair, flip-flops, and cutbray pants—the distinctive bell-bottom jeans that flared dramatically from the knee down, a defining fashion trend of the 1970s. These fashion rebels also hunted for rare, side-seamless T-shirts, sometimes even bargaining for the very shirts off locals' backs.

The arrival of Hollywood films in Indonesia, including Bali, further transformed youth lifestyles. The 1970s could be considered the peak era of Hollywood cinema in Indonesia, screening everything from popular genres to horror and action/adventure films. In Denpasar, there were three movie theaters, each offering different genres. Wisnu Theater screened Indian films. Indra Theater featured various Hollywood films, including Westerns,

detective stories, Mandarin films, and Indonesian romance movies. Then there was Jaya Theater, which typically showed films that had already finished runs at other theaters.

Modernization in all aspects of life – including the revitalization of Ngurah Rai Airport, Benoa Harbor, Bali Beach Hotel, highways, and bridges (Wijaya 2020) – coincided with the arrival of Australian hippies and their lifestyle. The number of Australian hippies coming to Kuta was considerable. Research by Bagus, I.G.B (Nyoman 2012) shows that these hippies, referred to as young traveler tourists, began arriving at Kuta Beach in the 1970s. Data obtained from police authorities indicates that the number of hippies visiting Kuta increased steadily year after year. In 1971, the number reached 1,700 people. By 1972 it had risen to 6,280 people, and in 1973 it reached 14,447 people.

Kuta Beach held a special appeal for the hippies that went beyond just surfing, sunbathing, and smoking marijuana. Female hippies sometimes even sunbathed without wearing underwear, though they did not do this just anywhere - they chose secluded spots far from Kuta's crowded central beach area. Their preferred location was the stretch of white sand at the Kuta-Legian border, where the atmosphere remained peacefully untouched. Most of these travelers stayed in local houses that had been converted into guest accommodations. This practice led to a rapid growth in Kuta's home rental business. (Based on the collective memory of Denpasar youth who frequented Kuta Beach during the 1960s-1970s).

According to a study conducted by the Bali Police (Report of the Hippie Survey Team, Regional Police XV Bali, 1973), in August 1973, out of 204 hotels and guesthouses across Bali, 73 were located in Kuta. By early May 1974, this number had risen to 114. Most of these guesthouses were concentrated in the banjars (neighborhoods) of Tegal, Pande, and Buni—the heart of Kuta's tourism district. These three banjars occupied a highly strategic location, close to the main road, Ngurah Rai International Airport, and the beach. As a result, numerous eateries, souvenir shops, and motorcycle rental businesses flourished in the area (Wijaya, 2012). Among these, Warung Made was the most popular dining spot for tourists, where they could eat, drink, and meet new companions (based on the collective memory of Denpasar youth who frequented Kuta Beach during the 1960s–1970s).

Although not yet based on in-depth research, Ngurah Bagus noted that interactions between villagers and tourists had begun to exhibit certain concerning trends, particularly regarding the social behavior of local youth. However, within the youth community itself, these behaviors were not yet seen as alarming. One young woman did stand out for her conspicuous behavior, but she had previously lived in Jakarta for an extended period before returning to her village for personal reasons. Similarly, the youth adopting hippie-style social habits were primarily limited to those working in the tourism sector. While exact numbers remain unverified, Ngurah Bagus observed that several young men had engaged in intimate relationships with tourists, with the most notable case being a young man from Banjar Tegal. (Wijaya 2010)

These intimate social interactions typically stemmed from business relationships, where local youth worked as freelance guides—offering services such as transporting tourists (usually by motorcycle) to sightseeing spots, accompanying them for meals and drinks, and joining them for beach outings. Many were hotel employees who doubled as informal tour guides. As these daily interactions continued, tourists grew increasingly close to their guides, leading to "friendships" that mirrored the casual relationships common in their home countries. The intensity of these bonds often prompted tourists to extend their stays in Kuta for weeks or even months. The local youth involved in such relationships began adopting tourists' lifestyles, visible in their relaxed clothing styles, long hair, necklaces, rings, and other accessories. (Based on the collective memory of Denpasar youth who frequented Kuta Beach during the 1960s–1970s).

According to observations and data collected by anthropologist Ngurah Bagus, marijuana use—while prevalent among tourists and non-locals—was not initially adopted by native Kuta residents. Citing police records, Ngurah Bagus noted that even when Kuta villagers were involved in cannabis distribution, their motive was purely commercial. Multiple cases indicated Kuta served primarily as a transit zone and accommodation hub for the drug trade. The most immediate societal changes since Kuta's development as a tourist area included a rise in theft and the influx of sex workers from Denpasar operating along the beachfront. Although local authorities, in collaboration with police and community leaders, attempted to regulate these issues, they remained unresolved (Wijaya, 2012).

Conclusion

The research by Jarratt provides a valuable entry point for examining Kuta Beach's maritime history transformation - from a bustling port and shipping hub to a surf city. When contextualized within contemporary perspectives, these brief memoirs reveal a profound lament for the lost Bali of the 1970s, as poignantly captured in the account of American tourist Brian N. Tisot, who visited Bali in 1978. This sentiment is further reinforced by Antonia's research (Wijaya 2012), which essentially concludes that the Bali Antonia knew in 1974 had already vanished. By 1997, the island had become thoroughly "Indonesianized," resembling other urbanized tropical regions across Asia.

According to Antonia, tourism has emerged as the dominant industry, with its reach extending to every corner of the island and influencing nearly all aspects of Balinese life. Sacred traditions have become entangled with pollution, and within just two decades, the Balinese transitioned from a religious-agrarian society to modern Indonesians - transformed into cultural merchants and service providers for the global tourism market. The most significant changes, however, have been orchestrated by non-Balinese controlling the island's land resources. This rapid transformation has brought environmentally and socially disruptive consequences. Antonia witnessed her former neighborhood in Kuta (1974) - once characterized by lush gardens, coconut groves, alleyways, warungs, and warm, engaging locals - morph into a strip of tourist-oriented storefronts catering to foreigners and Indonesia's new wealthy class. Both foreign investors and Javanese Indonesians have played pivotal roles in converting temple grounds and green spaces into bars, restaurants, and discos. Today, Kuta epitomizes urban nightmares: traffic congestion, pollution, and crime dominate, while local residents become increasingly invisible and detached from their socio-cultural foundations - a crisis now affecting many Kuta families. Upon deeper analysis, we conclude that these social transformations cannot be attributed solely to maritime tourism, colonial heritage cultural tourism, or subsequent tourism variants. Rather, they stem primarily from the modernization policies implemented during Suharto's regime - what might be termed the "Indonesianization" of Bali. Beach tourism, cultural tourism, and other forms served merely as dollar contributors or entry tickets to experience the carefully designed panorama of modernization. Contemporary Bali stands as a product of this engineered transformation.

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