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# The Hidden Paradise; gap and culture shock in the transformation of a fishing villages into a tourism hotspots in Mandeh region, Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

The indigenous fishermen of the Mandeh region in Indonesia were living in seclusion, disconnected from the rest of the world before 2015. However, the captivating landscape of the region, featuring rolling hills, lush forests, thriving mangroves, and picturesque islets, remained hidden and unexplored. The region has experienced a substantial increase in tourism since 2015, prompting the government to establish it as the primary tourism hub. Therefore, this study aims to explore the transformation process of the Mandeh region from a fishing village into a tourism paradise. The historical method was used in this case, incorporating heuristic, criticism, analysis, and historiography stages. The documentation process involved the use of oral history techniques during the heuristic phase, with a total of 23 informants participating. Data collection was carried out through a productive Focus Group Discussion. The results showed a noticeable gap and culture shock experienced during the transition of a fishing village into a tourist destination. Future tourism policy should prioritise empowerment and hospitality programs, specifically in Mandeh integrated tourism area.

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## Introduction

The Mandeh region in the Pesisir Selatan District of West Sumatra, Indonesia, has seen remarkable and notable growth over recent decades. This area is celebrated for its historical artifacts, breathtaking natural scenery, and a rich cultural heritage that local communities hold dear. Dubbed 'Hidden Paradise,' this region aptly reflects its historical connections to the spice trade route along the western coast of Sumatra (Fatimah et al., 2021). Until 2015, Mandeh remained isolated from the outside world due to the lack of a highway connecting the Nagari,<sup>1</sup> relying only on traditional sea transportation and dependent on good weather conditions. This setback impeded interactions with the surrounding area, posing challenges for development.

The region has preserved its status as a 'Hidden Paradise,' celebrated for its breathtaking waterfalls, charming small islands, and historical underwater attractions, despite various challenges. A pivotal change transpired in October 2015 when Indonesia recognized the region's potential and classified it as a National Tourism Strategic Area (KSPN) after a presidential visit. Consequently, it was rebranded as the Mandeh Integrated Marine Tourism Area, propelling it to the forefront of popular tourist destinations (Fatimah, 2015). To achieve this goal, the government invested in a 42-km highway that would connect Mandeh to the outside world, significantly improving its accessibility. Completed in 2019, the road

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established Mandeh as a favored spot for tourists, both foreign and domestic, especially within Sumatra (P. U. P. R. Kementerian, 2019). This transformation had a big impact on locals who had lived with traditional customs for generations (Asnan, 2007; M. Nur, 2000). The community was adjusting to the changes, while the tourism industry began to embrace these cultural shifts (Zielinski et al., 2020). As a result, Mandeh attracted significant attention from experts.

Several publications carried out in the area explore this region, such as Hasanah (2016); Hermon et al. (2022); and Wisha et al. (2020) proposed efforts to conserve underwater heritage around Mandeh Bay. Alhadi (2018) and Putra (2020) explaining the socio-economic and local wisdom condition of the Mandeh Community as a coastal area that depends on the ocean. Furthermore, Alhadi et al. (2023) dan Raynaldo et al. (2020) have tried to map the efforts that have been and can be made for the empowerment of the Mandeh community. A notable gap still exists in the analysis concerning the historical perspective of the Mandeh region, terutama dari Masyarakat nelayan tradisional ke Masyarakat pariwisata dalam konteks Sejarah pariwisata. Previous publications primarily emphasized the prominent ports that once thrived on the west coast of Sumatra while overlooking the specific exploration of the region (Allerton, 2003; Sulistyaningsih et al., 2022; Syafrini et al., 2022). The area has proven to be a vital paradise for trading ships during challenging weather conditions on the West Coast but was not specifically explored in previous works. The inhabitants of this region possess a rich cultural heritage, belonging to a longstanding coastal community with a plethora of customs and indigenous knowledge (Fatimah & Ramadhan, 2019). Besides, Bambang Purwanto (2017) also highlighted the frequent oversight of this cultural uniqueness in the grand narrative of Indonesian history. Therefore, this study aims to explore this gap by reconstructing the transformation of the Mandeh region.

Employing a historical method, the study delves into how the Mandeh region transitioned from a traditional fishing community to become part of the thriving tourism industry. Throughout the process, historical facts emerged, highlighting the contrasting practices of traditional fishing communities and those involved in the tourism sector. As individuals and the community adapted to the transition from a fishing-based society to a tourism-based one, the results showed instances of culture clashes arising from the introduction of new social norms. In contrast to several publications focusing on culture transformation,<sup>2</sup> this study sheds light on an important and interesting phenomenon in the region, which is the occurrence of gap<sup>3</sup> and culture shock<sup>4</sup> during the adaptation process. These novel results emerge as the traditional fishing community in the Mandeh region transforms into a society based on the tourism industry.

## Literature review

### *Transformation of a fishing village*

The transformation of fishing villages into tourism villages involves the shift from a community dependent on fishing to one that embraces tourism as a primary economic activity. This transition is influenced by factors such as depleted fish stocks, increased tourism demand, and the need for economic diversification (Carr & Higham, 2001). It typically involves developing infrastructure, attracting tourists, and adapting local practices to cater to tourism needs. While some studies focus on the economic transition (Mowforth & Munt, 2015), others, like Mason (2020), emphasize the social and cultural impacts, such as changes to local traditions and lifestyles.

The economic shift is central to this transformation. Tourism can provide new income sources, particularly in areas where fishing resources are declining. It diversifies the economy, creates jobs in sectors like hospitality and retail, and increases demand for local products (Gössling, 2017). However, over-reliance on tourism can lead to economic vulnerabilities. Tourism's dependency on global market conditions, such as recessions or political instability, can expose fishing villages to risks. Additionally, tourism often raises property prices, making housing unaffordable for locals (Baker, 2022). The social and cultural impacts of this transformation are significant. The influx of tourists introduces new behaviours, values, and practices that can influence local traditions (Müller, 2012). Local communities may adapt by offering tours, traditional crafts, and cultural festivals, but this can lead to tensions with tourists and within the community.

According to Cohen and Cohen (2019), the balance between preserving local identity and meeting tourism demands can create social challenges, with some locals feeling alienated by the changes.

Effective governance is crucial to managing the economic, social, and environmental impacts of tourism. C. M. Hall et al. (2015) advocates for sustainable tourism development, which includes policies to prevent overexploitation, ensure fair revenue distribution, and involve the community in decision-making. Looking ahead, niche tourism markets like eco-tourism and cultural tourism offer opportunities for sustainable development in these villages, providing a balance between tourism growth and preservation of local heritage.

### **Gap and shock culture**

Culture shock refers to the feelings of confusion, disorientation, and anxiety that people experience when exposed to a new cultural environment. It is a common phenomenon among individuals who migrate, study abroad, or interact with cultural settings that differ significantly from their own. The concept was introduced by anthropologist Kalervo Oberg in the 1950s, who suggested that culture shock is a predictable response to the disorientation caused by unfamiliar cultural norms and practices (Oberg, 1960). This literature review seeks to explore various studies and theories on culture shock, its stages, its effects on individuals, and strategies for overcoming it.

Oberg's initial model of culture shock identified four main stages: honeymoon, frustration, adjustment, and adaptation. The honeymoon stage is characterized by excitement and fascination with the new culture, while the frustration stage often brings feelings of anxiety, homesickness, and confusion as the differences between the host and home cultures become apparent. In the adjustment stage, individuals begin to adapt to the new culture, learning how to navigate its social norms and practices. Finally, the adaptation stage is marked by a more stable and comfortable integration into the new culture (Oberg, 1960).

The concept of the 'culture gap' refers to the differences and misunderstandings that arise between individuals or groups from distinct cultural backgrounds. It can manifest in various contexts, such as international business, cross-cultural communication, or migration. The culture gap often leads to challenges in interaction, collaboration, and understanding, affecting relationships, performance, and social integration. While the term 'culture shock' describes the disorientation individuals face when adjusting to a new culture, the 'culture gap' typically refers to the broader, ongoing differences in values, norms, and behaviours between cultures (Goodroad, 2020). This literature review explores the nature of the culture gap, its implications, and how it influences communication and social integration.

The culture gap is often used interchangeably with the term 'cultural differences', but it carries a more specific connotation of a divide that leads to challenges in understanding and effective communication. According to Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2008), the culture gap refers to the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural distance between people from different cultural backgrounds. This gap arises from differences in societal values, communication styles, attitudes toward authority, work ethics, and family structures. The culture gap can be especially pronounced in international business contexts, where misunderstandings or incorrect assumptions based on cultural differences can lead to inefficiencies, miscommunication, and even conflict (E. T. Hall, 1976). A gap in understanding can also hinder the integration process for individuals moving to a new country, affecting their social adjustment, work performance, and mental health (Gudykunst, 2005).

### **Research method**

This study focused on the history of tourism and fell within the category of contemporary historical publications (Zuelow, 2015). A qualitative method was employed, combining ethnographic and oral history techniques to obtain information from participants who had direct experience of past and current events in the area (Slim & Thompson, 2002; Thompson, 2002). An ethnographic approach was used through fieldwork as the primary strategy for data collection (Atkinson, 2007), with experts residing in the Mandeh region participating as observers. This strategy encompassed socialization, conversation, observation, listening, and sharing ideas with local communities (Atkinson, 2007). The narratives and

**Table 1.** Interviewees' characteristics.

Interviewee's criteria	Total	Age range		Gender		
Fisherman	6	40–60	M	6	F	0
State apartment	4	60–80	M	4	F	0
Traders and private	4	20–25	M	1	F	3
Housewife	1	47–60	M	0	F	1
Local community members	6	35–70	M	4	F	2
Shipbuilder	2	69–90	M	2	F	0
	23			17		6
				23		

Source: Authors.

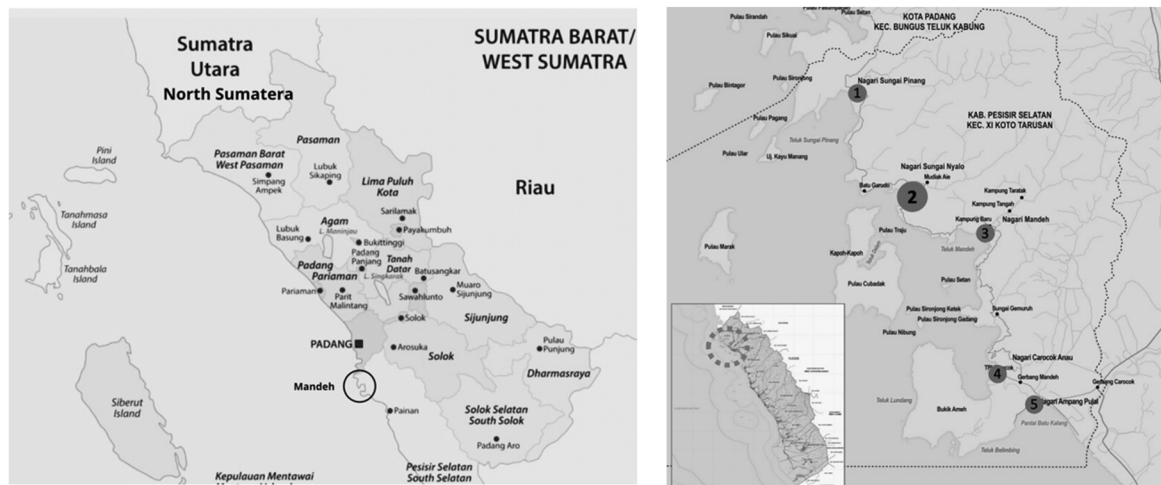
experiences shared by the Mandeh people provided a deeper understanding and greater context of life in Mandeh. This method provided comprehensive insights into the undocumented past practices of the groups (Shopes, 2011), affording the 'people without heritage' the opportunity to reclaim their tradition and no longer remain a social group with a 'hidden history' (Erman, 2011).

Data collection techniques employed involved snowball sampling, semi-structured, and casual interview techniques. In the first stage, related to the transformation and daily experiences of the fishing community in the Mandeh area, obtained through interviews and documentation. The data was obtained through Focus Group Discussions with researchers and stakeholders in the Mandeh Area. Based on these activities, The Focus Group Discussion was conducted, involving various community and government representatives from the Mandeh region. The interviews were conducted between 2015 and 2022,<sup>5</sup> focusing on the experience of the participants during their time in a traditional fishing community, the development of tourism in the area, as well as the responses to the changes. FGD participants provided suggestions for the names of individuals who were considered to know directly and deeply about the information we needed. We broadened our participant base by employing snowball sampling techniques (Table 1).

*A diverse population of* Twenty-three informants were selected based on various criteria, such as age, gender, occupation, and origin, to ensure comprehensive representation. The interviews took place in different locations, including homes, stalls, tourism hotspots, the office of the mayor, and the workplace of the participants, with duration ranging from 30 minutes to two hours. The interaction process primarily occurred in the Minangkabau language, the main dialect of Mandeh (Darban, 1997). Furthermore, the data went through the process of data selection, coding, simplification and transformation. The analysis involved sorting, comparing, and interpreting data that aligns with the study's objectives, especially in relation to the history of the Mandeh Region. In the next phase, data gathered from diverse sources was systematically organized into a cohesive collection of categorized and synthesized information, which was subsequently articulated in a narrative format. Following this, conclusions were drawn, and verification took place through the authors' interpretations to ascertain the significance of the presented data and relevant theory (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

## What is happening at Hidden Paradise?

Mandeh is a coastal area in Pesisir Selatan, West Sumatra, Indonesia. It's known for its clear waters, stunning beaches, lush hills, and rich cultural heritage. Often called the 'Raja Ampat of West Sumatra', Mandeh is famous for its marine life and breathtaking landscapes. The region is home to many communities, with most people relying on fishing, farming, and agriculture. The Minangkabau people, known for their matrilineal culture (where family inheritance is passed through women), influence the social structure. The community is tightly knit, with strong traditions. Tourism has started to provide a new source of income, with locals working in hospitality, guiding, and eco-tourism. However, this shift has led to challenges in balancing modern tourism with traditional lifestyles. Nowadays, its economy is mainly based on fishing, agriculture, and tourism. Fishing, particularly tuna, grouper, and snapper, is an important livelihood for coastal residents. Agriculture, with crops like rice, rubber, and coconuts, also plays a key role. However, tourism is growing fast, offering new job opportunities in eco-tourism, such as diving, snorkelling, and boating. The rise in tourism has led to better infrastructure, including roads and accommodations, boosting the local economy.



**Figure 1.** Mandeh region in West Sumatra.

Culturally, the region deeply influenced by Minangkabau traditions, seen in its unique architecture, dance, music, and food. Local festivals and events, often religious or cultural, are important to the community. Mandeh is also known for its arts and crafts, attracting visitors interested in local culture. The natural beauty is a major attraction, with coral reefs, mangroves, and tropical forests supporting rich marine life like fish, turtles, and coral species. However, the rise in tourism poses environmental challenges, including threats to coral reefs from overfishing and unregulated diving. Local authorities are working to establish Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and promote eco-friendly tourism to protect the environment while benefiting the community. Waste management and balancing tourism growth with conservation are ongoing challenges (Figure 1).

Situated on the west coast of Sumatra, the Mandeh region boasts a rich and extensive history dating back to ancient times. It served as an international shipping lane and a crucial part of the spice route, facilitating trade among various countries, such as Arabia, China, India, and others (Ajisman, 2018). Several significant trading ports, including Barus, Air Bangis, Tiku, Pariaman, Painan, Inderapura, as well as Muko-Muko, have thrived in this area (Asnan, 2007). Moreover, the Mandeh region, strategically located between Padang and Painan, has been a passage for ships travelling the two ports.<sup>6</sup>

In the nineteenth century, the Mandeh region became a significant site for wood harvesting, with merchants from Muko-muko, Nias, and Bengkulu actively involved in the trade (Ajisman, 2020). The area was not only renowned for its boat-building activities but also became a favoured anchorage for ships navigating the western coast of Sumatra. During the Indrapura Kingdom era,<sup>7</sup> many ships sought refuge in the Mandeh region to avoid the formidable waves of the Indian Ocean. Consequently, the area earned the name 'Mandeh' as it became a popular stopover point,<sup>8</sup> with the title believed to originate from 'Ma-andeh', meaning shelter.<sup>9</sup> There were limited records about the past of this area, leading experts to rely on the stories and collective memory of the local community in exploring the historical conditions (Figure 2) (Halbwachs, 1992).

Mandeh, a hilly area on the west coast of Sumatra, spans approximately 18,000 hectares, stretching from the Bukit Barisan mountains to the sea. A remarkable feature shared by the west coast of Sumatra, including Mandeh, was the sequence of mountains running parallel to the shoreline. The Bukit Barisan Mountain range dropped into the sea, with it lying close to the coastline, forming steep slopes that gradually transformed into a narrow strip of land along the shore (Dobbin, 2008, p. 2). Within the vicinity where the majority of the population resides, flat grounds were conducive to human habitation. This locality was home to three prominent Nagari, namely, Nagari Mandeh, Nyalo Mudiak Aie River, and Sungai Pinang, which directly faced the sea. As the elevation increased towards the Bukit Barisan, greater opportunities for rice cultivation extended beyond the village and the coastal plain.<sup>10</sup> The area was often compared to the renowned tourist destination of Raja Ampat in Papua due to its unique natural landscape, serene ocean, and a cluster of small islands and hills along the coastline (Fatimah & Ramadhan, 2019).





**Figure 2.** One of the panoramas of the sea, the small islands in Mandeh, and the road that was completed in 2018. *Source:* Author, taken in 2019.

Although a road linking Sungai Pinang to Bungus Teluk Kabung was constructed in the late 1990s, accessing the primary Nagari in the area still required a boat due to the dangerous conditions of the highway.<sup>11</sup> The poorly maintained road suffered significant damage, making navigation increasingly challenging. Therefore, the natural beauty of the Mandeh region remained concealed for centuries, impeded by its difficult accessibility. The superiority of the area, which lay in the rich historical and cultural heritage, local wisdom, and breathtaking natural beauty, never had the chance to be fully showcased. The region was often overlooked by tourists and rarely included in travel itineraries, despite being a hidden paradise on the west coast of Sumatra which was a phenomenon worth exploring.

### **Mandeh region: an insight into the traditional fisherman community's way of life**

Mandeh people had their interpretation of the origin of society and the surroundings, believing that the inhabitants of the village originated from Solok, situated in the heartland of West Sumatra.<sup>12</sup> The locals believed their ancestors embarked on a search for a new home, following footpaths that led to the Baruang-Baruang Barantai and Siguntur areas in present-day Tarusan until eventually reaching the beach, a process thought to have taken place centuries ago.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, Mandeh people deeply believed in folklore from the Dutch Colonial rule era. During this time, the Government appointed a person named Tuanku Tarusan to collect taxes from the loggers. To accomplish the task, Tuanku Tarusan enlisted the help of a mysterious warrior named Pandeka Bagak,<sup>14</sup> who possessed extraordinary supernatural abilities that the loggers were unable to overcome. Upon completion of his mission, the warrior recognized the region as an ideal place to establish a settlement. Tuanku Tarusan warmly invited his beloved spouse and devoted companions to partake in founding a prospering community, now famously known as Taruko.<sup>15</sup>

For generations, most people in the community worked as fishermen, employing various methods such as fishing, trawling, and using nets or ponds to catch fish. Some individuals with capital or investments ventured into the wide-open sea using varieties of boats, ranging from small to medium and large vessels, to capture fish. The skilled anglers employed conventional equipment and techniques including angling and trawling during fishing expeditions, which last for several days or even up to a month for larger vessels. However, challenging weather conditions often presented obstacles to fishing activities at sea, and the fishermen faced significant risks and uncertainty about their income, which was referred to as *rasaki harimau*.<sup>16</sup> During times of bad weather, fishermen engaged in other activities, such



**Figure 3.** Picture of a wooden house building based on local wisdom in Kampuang Tengah, Nagari Mandeh. *Source:* Author (retrieved in 2014).

as tending to the garden at home, foraging for resources in the forest, or enjoying their hobbies (Figure 3).

The locals frequently used boats to travel to Padang or Tarusan due to the difficulty of the land route. However, the ships could not anchor at the shore when the water receded, and commuters had to either cross by canoe or walk through the water to reach their destination. They have also faced difficulties in accessing knowledge as there were few schools in the area, offering only a primary level of education. For children desiring further education, one possible solution was to relocate to another region, but acquiring knowledge was not considered a priority for the population. M. who worked in Nagari Sungai Nyalo Mudiak Aie noted that only a few individuals pursued education as they firmly believed in becoming fishermen after high school graduation.<sup>17</sup> The lack of job opportunities in this isolated village further exacerbated poverty, which was directly related to the low level of public education.

### **From a fishing communities into tourism paradise**

In the 1990s, Bappenas known as the Ministry of National Development of the Republic of Indonesia, prioritized the development of Mandeh, Biak, and Bunaken (Fatimah, 2022). From 1995 to 2005, Darizal Basir, who served as the District Head of Pesisir Selatan, conducted a comprehensive investigation into the potential of Mandeh using aerial, land, and sea imagery (Yunus, 2021). The government of Pesisir Selatan Regency actively engaged various groups to collaborate and shape the development concept for the Mandeh region, incorporating it into the strategic plan. Efforts were made to build roads in the area, but they were small and incomplete, leading to minimal growth in Mandeh between 2009 and 2015 due to budget constraints.<sup>18</sup>

In the 2010s, the Indonesian government started focusing on supporting tourism development in Mandeh Region, promoting multiple destinations as additional National Tourism Strategy Areas. The main focus of the government was the development of priority 10+2 KSPNs, with particular attention on Toraja and Mandeh. As part of the strategy to increase state revenues, the government heavily invested in marine tourism, opening up the hidden paradise to the public. Mandeh Integrated Marine Area now boasts infrastructure dedicated to enhancing the tourism experience. According to Tourism Law Number 10 of 2009, it was recognized as a crucial element in the National Tourism Development Master Plan, often referred to as 'Raja Ampat in West Sumatra'. The plan emphasized the stunning natural beauty, underwater locations, traditional culture, and marine tourism activities of the region.



**Table 2.** Number of tourist visits to south coastal district and Mandeh region.

Year	Domestics tourists		Overseas tourists	
	Pesisir Selatan regency	Mandeh region	Pesisir Selatan regency	Mandeh area
2010	108,386	–	357	–
2011	143,635	–	431	–
2012	306,979	–	476	–
2013	587,633	–	525	–
2014	1,556,235	255,362	1554	876
2015	2,400,000	385,598	1,600	911
2016	1,980,000	384,961	1,707	927
2017	2,350,000	375,460	1,700	1,190
2018	2,479,841	418,454	1715	1,200
2019	2,065,863	329,214	3,650	2,555
2020	177,033	–	250	–

Source: The elaboration from BPS South Coastal District, South Coastal District Tourism Office.

Note: Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, there was no record of foreign tourists visiting the Mandeh region in 2020.

President Joko Widodo, since taking office in 2014, focused on completing the road construction project in two years to promote the Mandeh tourist area alongside a comprehensive package including the Heritage City tour in Bukittinggi. The Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing (PUPR) highlighted the need for a budget of IDR 500 billion to realize the plan. However, due to various limitations, the construction of this road eventually lasted for a period of four years. Between 2015 and 2017, the Government achieved the impressive feat of building a 16-km road, 6 m wide, with a development budget of IDR 88.26 billion. The main difficulty encountered during this achievement was acquiring the necessary land. In 2016, the construction of the road linking Carocok Anau to Puncak Mandeh in Nagari Mandeh was finally concluded, quickly becoming a bustling site. The primary impediment to this endeavour remained the acquisition of land, which sparked controversy in the region. In 2016, only 1,000 of the 6,000 km development targets were achieved, but progress continued, and by 2019, 25.08 km were completed.

This development resulted in the residents diversifying the job opportunities of the community beyond just fishing. Fishermen with basic boats were transformed into tourist ships instead of using the vessels solely for fishing. Consequently, tourists had a one-of-a-kind chance to indulge in fishing in the sea or visit the alluring small islands of the Mandeh region by renting boats.<sup>19</sup> This activity started in 2015 in the village of Carocok Anau, which became a popular tourist destination due to its accessibility by land.<sup>20</sup> This transformation provided them with the opportunity to attain substantial earnings by venturing into the lucrative realm of tour guiding. These fishermen previously earned around IDR 600,000 per month, which was insufficient to support a family of five to six members.<sup>21</sup>

The Mandeh region has changed quickly, turning from a quiet paradise into a popular tourist spot attracting millions of visitors. The increase in tourism has created new job opportunities like tour guides, traders, and hotel managers. The local community has adapted well to these changes, benefiting from government support, which helped transform Mandeh (Pusat Kajian Pariwisata Heritage Olahraga dan Rekreasi UNP, 2022). By the late 2010s, improved infrastructure made the region become a promising tourist destination in Indonesia. However, this growth raised concerns about cultural changes and the risk of locals being left behind in the economy. As the region became more prosperous, the community's living conditions also improved. A local resident, An., noted that in the past, most houses were temporary wooden structures, but now, many permanent homes have been built (Table 2).<sup>22</sup>

### Adaptation of gap and culture shock in the life of Mandeh indigenes

The objective of this section delved into the notion of gap and culture shock resulting from the discrepancies between the contemporary tourism society adopted by Mandeh inhabitants and their former existence as a conventional fishing community. The tourism industry included a diverse community known for its creativity, excellent communication and service skills, and ability to adapt to changes. However, cultural differences between urban tourists and traditional fishing communities created challenges during the interactions, causing gaps between cultures and beliefs. This impacts how they engage with one another due to the differing perspectives. The Mandeh people often perceive the outside world as modern and attempted to imitate it, adapting to the changes brought about by tourism (Williams, 2012).

The rapid growth of tourism posed challenges for locals accustomed to a relaxed lifestyle. While the influx of tourists brought steady employment throughout the year, unlike the off-season for fishermen, locals often did not show hospitality. Merchants, competing for customers, sometimes provided services in a way that made tourists uncomfortable, with impolite and loud behaviour, leaving consumers feeling uncomfortable.<sup>23</sup> Speaking loudly was a normal part of the daily life of the Mandeh people living on the coast, but contrasts with the relatively softer speaking tone of those from the highlands. This cultural characteristic had been deeply ingrained in the lives of coastal communities. Visitors from the highlands found the loud behaviour unacceptable, which led to misunderstandings and discomfort during interactions.

There were also multiple reports indicating that residents aggressively demand money from guests who had parked their vehicles, even though there was no official rule or regulation mandating a parking fee at the location. When crossing a bridge, guests are often approached by a group of people requesting donations for bridge maintenance and repair. These interactions turned confrontational, with forceful methods, unsuitable language, and disrespectful conduct being employed. It appeared that the money collected from the levy was misused for personal needs,<sup>24</sup> causing further dissatisfaction among tourists. Due to improper treatment or constant rumours about such incidents, many visitors refrained from shopping at shops owned by residents and actively avoiding any contact with them.

Sanitation problems in Mandeh are linked to poverty, lack of education, and high population density. Many locals do not fully understand the importance of cleanliness, leading to the practice of using rivers, mangrove forests, and gardens as toilets. Water sources, especially rivers, are essential in daily life for bathing, washing clothes, getting water for cooking and drinking, and even disposing of garbage. Unfortunately, people often see pollution from upstream flowing down the river while they bathe or wash, which worsens the situation.<sup>25</sup> This type of behaviour was unhealthy and potentially resulted in the development of diseases. When first-time tourists seek to escape their daily routine and experience the satisfaction of a new location, they were often disrupted by poverty, unclean surroundings, and disease. Unfortunately, many were unable to cope with the harsh reality encountered (Hottola, 2004).

Since 2011, the Pesisir Selatan Government has worked to address this issue by educating residents and raising awareness about proper waste management to reduce open defecation (Pemerintah Daerah Kabupaten Pesisir Selatan, 2011). In addition, the central Government also joined the effort by constructing dozens of public bathrooms. Despite the availability of these facilities, some residents were hesitant to embrace the change, feeling the weight of pressure and reverting to the former ways, specifically among the elderly population.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, some of the newly built facilities were left deserted, with residents resulting in alternative uses, such as turning their toilets into storage spaces.<sup>27</sup> This highlights the importance of public education to ensure the benefits of physical development were fully realized. Recent developments in the region caused culture shock for the locals, as the changes brought by tourism were unexpected. This led to the gradual loss of their local culture. The arrival of tourists also had a strong psychological and social impact on the local people, who were from disadvantaged and remote areas. The interactions between tourists and locals became important, raising concerns about preserving traditional heritage and the effects of tourism on the community (Figure 4).

In recent years, more foreigners have been visiting the village of Mandeh, which used to be rare. These visitors now have the chance to explore the villages and see local activities like '*mealö pukek*', the art of drying fish.<sup>28</sup> At first, the locals felt shy and unsure when meeting tourists and only a few interacted with them. However, some people took the initiative, opening kiosks and becoming tour guides. This led to a mutual interest in sharing and learning from each other. As the locals gradually ventured into the tourism industry, their feelings of inferiority began to fade. The community started to embrace the idea of having foreigners in their midst, and the people became more accommodating. Becoming tourism professional practitioners meant adopting a more disciplined approach, as they had to deal with various aspects of the industry. Providing services to tourists required the locals to depart from the laid-back lifestyle, leading some to express a desire to maximize their time and increase productivity.



**Figure 4.** Lifestyles of men when not going to sea, or doing cockfights in Kampuang Tengah, Nagari Mandeh. *Source:* Author (retrieved in 2015).

## Conclusions

Mandeh Region in Pesisir Selatan, Indonesia showcases a natural beauty conducive to tourism development. However, until the 2010s, this gem was largely cut off due to inadequate road infrastructure, causing it to lag behind neighbouring areas. The government's initiative to build infrastructure not only integrated Mandeh with the outside world but also spurred the growth of the tourism sector, offering local fishermen the chance to explore new opportunities in tourism.

The study illustrates the dynamic effort of the community as they gradually adapt to the transformations brought on by tourism. The influx of new customs and traditions has significantly influenced their traditional lifestyles. Known as the 'Hidden Paradise,' Mandeh boasts an abundance of natural assets, rich histories, and vibrant cultures. With its historical relics, remarkable landmarks, and stunning natural features, the region reflects a deep cultural heritage. Nevertheless, the introduction of these new lifestyles has resulted in profound changes and potential conflicts, particularly concerning local knowledge and traditions, which have lost some value, leading to cultural dissonance when faced with newcomers.

The research focuses on uncovering the various dimensions of cultural gaps and shocks within the Mandeh community. While the tourism industry has had a beneficial impact on their way of life, it has simultaneously induced a loss of treasured local customs and knowledge. Therefore, it is essential to disseminate this analysis and mitigate the adverse effects on local communities. The local government must implement measures to protect local wisdom and historical sites as significant remnants of their heritage. Providing varied support and mitigation strategies against culture shock is crucial to ensuring that the transition is smooth, thereby preventing stark disparities between traditional and contemporary ways of life.

The transformation that the local Mandeh community has experienced due to swift environmental changes unearths several gaps and occurrences of culture shock. While there are notable positives, such as a commendable work ethic and receptiveness to outside influences, the study has uncovered a troubling lack of awareness regarding local history and culture—elements vital for bolstering tourism potential. Discussions surrounding local culture in Mandeh have been scarce, and identifying, mapping, and revitalizing this culture could suggest future research directions. This initiative could empower the local community as key stakeholders in managing tourism, creating pathways for further inquiry.

## Notes

1. Nagari is an administrative division after sub-districts in the province of West Sumatra, Indonesia.
2. For publications about transformation in other tourist areas, see Allerton (2003); Sulistyaningsih et al. (2022); Syafrini et al. (2022).
3. See some examples of publications of culture gap, see . Ap & Crompton (1993); Luthy (1994); Reisinger (1994)
4. See some examples of publications of culture shock, see Furnham (1984); Hottola (2004); Montuori and Fahim (2004).
5. In recent years, we have visited this area on many occasions. During that visit, we interacted a lot with residents and got a lot of valuable information about their lives. In this article, we use a number of interviews we conducted in the 2015–2022 timeframe because it was during these occasions that we had the recordings and transcripts of the interviews. (Pusat Kajian Pariwisata Heritage Olahraga dan Rekreasi UNP, 2022).
6. In the mid-nineteenth century, Padang was a large and busy port which was classified as a class A port serving both national and international shipping. Meanwhile, Painan, which is located in the south, is included in a class B port serving inter-island shipping and coastal shipping that carries a number of export and import commodities. See Asnan (2002).
7. The Sultanate of Inderapura is a kingdom located in the present-day Pesisir Selatan district, West Sumatra. The development of Inderapura began when Malacca fell to the Portuguese in 1511 . At the end of the seventeenth century, the central area of Inderapura included the valleys of the Airhaji and Batang Inderapura rivers. See, (Kathirithamby-Wells, 1976).
8. Interview with An. (70) a community member, Sungai Nyalo Mudiak Aie, April 23, 2015. See also
9. Interview with An. (70) a community member, April 23 2015, Sungai Nyalo Mudiak Aie.
10. Ibid., 70-73.
11. Interview with A.J. (52) government officials, September 21 2021, Carocok Anau.
12. There are four main areas where highlanders are scattered in Minangkabau, namely Luhak Nan Tigo where Minangkabau cultural history originates and the other is the Solok area which is historically better known as Kubung XIII and IX Koto. These four main areas are called *darek*, which means the mainland, or more specifically the highlands, in contrast to *rantau*, the term used to describe all the areas that are in the border area. Communities beyond the region possess their own ancient tales, recounting the genesis of fresh settlements forever intertwined with the ancestral roots of those who migrated from these very lands. See (Graves, 2007, pp. 4–5).
13. Interview with An. (70) a community member, April 23 2015, Sungai Nyalo Mudiak Aie.
14. N. Dt. Bdr sati Nan Mudo (70) a community member, April 24 2015, Sungai Nyalo Mudia Aie.
15. Ibid.
16. This term is commonly used in the Minangkabau language to refer to erratic income. Like a tiger (*harimau*) that hunts in the forest, there is no certainty that it will get day-to-day labour.
17. Interview with M. (54) a government official, August 6 2022, Sungai Nyalo Mudiak Aie.
18. Ibid.
19. Interview with V.O. (40) a fisherman, August 19 2021, Sungai Nyalo Mudiak Aie.
20. Ibid.
21. Interview with M. (54) a government official, August 6 2022, Sungai Nyalo Mudiak Aie.
22. Interview with Anw. (80) a fisherman, August 6 2022, Sungai Nyalo Mudiak Aie.
23. Interview with M. (54) a government official, August 6 2022, Sungai Nyalo Mudiak Aie.
24. Interview with M. (54) a government official, August 6 2022, Sungai Nyalo Mudiak Aie.
25. Interview with Nrl. (54) a community member, August 08 2020, Sungai Nyalo Mudiak Aie.
26. Interview with A.S. (36) a community member, January 5 2020, Sungai Nyalo Mudiak Aie.
27. Ibid.
28. *Maelo pukek* is a Tradition Fishermen catch fish on the shore by spreading nets or *pukek* nets in the middle of the sea with the help of small boats plus an engine behind the boat to take the nets or *pukek* nets out to sea. The ropes that were left on the shoreline together pulled *pukek* so that *pukek* that had been stretched earlier pulled over to the shoreline with the fish that had been trapped and also the trash that the *pukek* had brought (Fitrisia, 2014; Yuliyus & Susilawati, 2021).

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## About the author



**Siti Fatimah**, with expertise in history, culture, and genre exploration, played a leading role in guiding the efforts of the team. Her focus was to comprehend the significant role that the social sciences and humanities play in contributing to tourism sectors.

In 2022, a team comprising **Siti Fatimah**, **Delmira Syafrini**, **Yuliana**, **Yudi Antomi**, and **Haldi Patra** collaborated on a project centred around Mandeh, Indonesia. They were all affiliated with the Centre for Tourism, Heritage, Sports, and Recreation Studies at the Universitas Negeri Padang in Padang, Indonesia. The collective aim of the team was to explore the untapped tourism potential of Mandeh, a venture that **Siti Fatimah** had been studying since 2014.

This collaborative effort between the team of **Siti Fatimah** and **Sabri Mohamad Sharif** represents a convergence of knowledge and expertise from multiple disciplines, focused on shedding light on the unexplored tourism potential of Mandeh. Through the involvement of passionate and dedicated experts working together, the future looks promising for the development and promotion of tourism prospects in Mandeh.

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