

Social Change and Threat to Agrarian Rights of the Tau Taa Wana Indigenous People in Central Sulawesi

Moh Nutfa,^{1*} Roslinawati Roslinawati,¹ Andi Mascunra,¹ Moh. Saleh,¹ Suriansah Suriansah¹

¹Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences and Political Sciences, Universitas Tadulako, Palu – Indonesia

Abstract

Social Change impacts indigenous people socially, which may result in agrarian conflicts and contested land tenure rights between local communities, private parties, and the state. This paper aims to identify social change and explain the negative consequences on the rights of the Tau Taa Wana indigenous people in Central Sulawesi. The article uses a descriptive qualitative research design to collect data through observations, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and a literature study. Eight informants became research subjects selected by purposive sampling. The data were analyzed using an interactive model to find patterns of social change and its impacts through data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and verification. Data validity was tested through triangulation. The results showed that 1) the Tau Taa Wana tribe experienced a gradual social transformation from a primitive, nomadic, agrarian society to a modern one, 2) the expansion of oil palm plantations is a modernization that threatened the tenure rights of the tribe, and 3) the Tau Taa Wana tribe will still struggle with agrarian conflicts that render them minority on their land. This research finding suggests the need to voice for agrarian rights in Indonesia as practiced by the Tau Taa Wana indigenous people in Central Sulawesi.

Perubahan sosial membawa dampak sosial berupa konflik agraria yang berujung pada perebutan hak antara masyarakat lokal, pihak swasta, dan negara. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk menemukan bentuk-bentuk perubahan sosial dan menjelaskan konsekuensi negatif dari perubahan sosial terhadap hak-hak masyarakat adat Tau Taa Wana di Sulawesi Tengah. Artikel ini menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif deskriptif untuk mengumpulkan data melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, diskusi kelompok terarah, dan studi literatur. Delapan informan menjadi subjek penelitian yang dipilih secara purposive sampling. Analisis data menggunakan model analisis interaktif untuk menemukan pola perubahan sosial dan dampaknya melalui tahapan pengumpulan data, reduksi data, penyajian data, dan verifikasi. Keabsahan data diuji melalui model triangulasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa: 1) Suku Tau Taa Wana mengalami transformasi sosial secara bertahap, dari masyarakat primitif, nomaden, agraris, dan akhirnya menjadi masyarakat modern, 2) ekspansi perkebunan kelapa sawit merupakan modernisasi yang membawa konsekuensi ancaman hilangnya hak-hak tenurial akibat kuatnya tekanan kapitalisme global, dan 3) Suku Tau Taa Wana masih akan terus bergelut dengan konflik agraria yang membuat mereka menjadi minoritas di tanah mereka. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan perlunya menyuarakan hak-hak agraria di Indonesia seperti yang dilakukan masyarakat adat Tau Taa Wana di Sulawesi Tengah.

Keywords: agrarian conflict; social change; Tau Taa Wana; tenure rights

*Corresponding Author: Moh Nutfa (mohnutfa2@gmail.com), Faculty of Social Sciences and Political Sciences, Universitas Tadulako, Jl. Soekarno Hatta No. Km. 9 Palu, Sulawesi Tengah 94148 Indonesia.

Introduction

The swift currents of social change show the two faces of society, with one moving forward and another backward. Sociologically, social change in the 21st century has taken root in the joints of people's lives, from modern and urban communities to traditional and rural ones. The changes occur both at the macro and micro levels, e.g., social systems and interaction patterns, respectively (Martono 2018). The Tau Taa Wana tribe in Central Sulawesi is no exception. They are changing from a traditional, indigenous, and closed community with a customary legal system to an open one (Grumbles 2013). A previous study found that structural pressures, such as the expansion of oil palm plantations, have changed the Tau Taa Wana tribe from a traditional nomadic society to a sedentary agricultural one, which is also open to the development of technology and information (Nutfa 2019). In other words, the social life of the Tau Taa Wana tribe is transformed from traditional to modern. Yet, the communal ties remain bound by customary law and local wisdom (Betaubun et al. 2022). Meanwhile, land tenure inequality arises in Central Sulawesi because it is increasingly concentrated among capital owners, exacerbating the poverty risk for local farmers (Rasyid, Lepasere, and Nutfa 2022). In Riau, changes in land tenure impact the tenure structure and the farming households' livelihoods, leading to a transition to a non-agriculture sector (Putri and Mardiana 2020), which means that social changes in the agriculture sector change the social structure from an agricultural society to a non-agricultural one.

From a sociological perspective, social change occurs structurally on both macro and micro levels (Lauer 2012). It occurs in social patterns (such as behavior), social relations, social institutions, and social structures at a

certain time (Sztompka 2007). Social Change is arguably driven by the development of European capitalism, which results in economic dependence on the system (Schumpeter 2015). From the perspective of Karl Marx and positivistic structuralists, social change emerges from contradictions and conflicts between dominant and subordinate classes (Goldstein 2006; Polanyi 2001).

The theoretical analysis in this study is based on a review of agrarian rights. The basis of land tenure is regulated in Section 33 of the 1945 Constitution, stating that the state has the authority to control land, water, and the wealth contained therein. However, since the colonial era, the government (including the Old and New Orger regimes) has placed the state as the ruler of the land, water, and natural resources (Sasmitha, Budhiawan, and Sukayadi 2014). As a result, inequality in agrarian rights, especially in rural areas, persists (Manguntara et al. 2006). Another issue of inequality is the transfer of rights through land grabbing—a legacy of the colonial culture (Pujiriyani et al. 2014). An agrarian expert, Noer Fauzi, argues that the agrarian and social-ecological crisis is caused by development practices grounded in global land policies (Sitorus et al., 2016; Wiradi, 2009). Such conditions have an impact on the fate of indigenous peoples and agrarian rights, which may also lead to agrarian conflicts (Hauser-Schäublin 2013).

Despite the importance, localized research on indigenous people's agrarian rights is scarce and limited (Wiradi, 2009), especially in Central Sulawesi, which opens a gap for an investigation. Research has shown that, since the 1990s, social change in Tau Taa Wana has almost reached its peak. For example, empirical findings have shown the existence of social interactions with

external groups (Camang 2003). Such a change or transition brings adverse social consequences, such as the loss of basic rights, e.g., tenure rights, by the indigenous people. This is especially true because the expansion of mining companies is increasingly aggressive. For example, the Tau Taa Wana tribe in Ampana Kota District in Tojo Una Una Regency is experiencing an agricultural land crisis as the land has been controlled primarily by outsiders. As a result, they only rely on subsistence farming. The practice of selling land is the main factor that leads to this crisis. In addition, the mining activities of PT Arthaindo Jaya Abadi have damaged more than 5,000 hectares of land in the coastal area since 2012 (Nutfa and Amelia 2019).

The expansion of oil palm plantations brings structural pressure that leads to destructive social change. A previous study shows that the Tau Taa Wana tribe is worried about the future of their customary land (Andika 2015). The palm oil company, PT. Kurnia Luwuk Sejati (KLS) has been expanding since 1997, causing tenure problems and agrarian conflicts, while PT. Rajawali seeks to expand its area of 1,500 hectares into the customary territory (Andika 2015). The findings of the Agrarian Reform Consortium (KPA) show that there were at least 472 agrarian conflicts throughout Indonesia in 2014, involving an area of 2,860,977.07 hectares and at least 105,887 families (Zakaria et al. 2015). The KPA data 2021 also shows 207 cases of agrarian conflict in 32 provinces spread over 507 villages, with victims reaching 198,895 families and a disputed land area of 500,062 hectares (Herman 2022). This indicates that agrarian conflicts are often related to the existence of the palm oil industry.

Another study proves that agrarian conflicts show multi-interests that existing policies cannot regulate (Zuber 2013). In fact, land

grabbing by investors has become a trend that the current policies and the state cannot stop (Pujiriyani et al. 2014). This will have a domino effect because agrarian problems are also related to forest destruction. Extractive industries such as mining and palm oil have been destructive to the forests since the 1990s, resulting in widespread deforestation. In 1997, 2.7 million hectares of forest were converted to oil palm plantations by PT Perkebunan Nusantara (PTPN) (Bachriadi 2020). Greenpeace Indonesia data shows that between 2014 and 2019, around 4.4 million hectares of forest were burned due to the expansion of the oil palm and paper industry (Wisdom, 2020).

Considering the importance of resolving agrarian problems, this paper seeks to understand the impacts of extractive industries by reviewing social change and the threat of loss of the rights of the indigenous people of Tau Taa Wana. The expansion of the oil palm plantation and mining industries has proven to change social patterns and eliminate the tenure rights in Central Sulawesi.

The object of this research is the indigenous people of Tau Taa Wana in Tojo Una Una Regency and North Morowali Regency, Central Sulawesi Province. The field observation was conducted in 2021. A qualitative approach was used to describe the empirical findings and produce the narratives (Moleong 2014). The research results and empirical findings were corroborated with library data and documentation (Creswell 2014). The researcher is the main instrument of the research, supported by an interview guide or matrix instrument. The research subject was an informant with descriptive information about the topics in question (Bungin 2012). Eight informants were selected by purposive sampling. The data collection involves qualitative observations, in-

depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), documentation, and document studies (Bungin 2015; Moleong 2014). The validation stage sorted the data thematically through an in-depth analysis and triangulation (Creswell 2014; Denzin and Lincoln 2009). The data were analyzed through an interactive model consisting of data collection, reduction, display, and verification (Idrus 2009; Sugiyono 2016).

This study aims to find and explain: (1) the changes in the Tau Taa Wana tribe from a traditional to an industrial society, (2) the expansion of the oil palm plantation industry, and the threat to the Tau Taa Wana tribe's tenure rights, and (3) the future of the Tau Taa Wana indigenous people. It has been proven empirically that the more extensive the social change, the more difficult it is to reclaim tenure rights. The Tau Taa Wana tribe will lose not only the tenure rights but also the direction of social change and, eventually, the control over the changes. The assumptions of this research are: 1) the further the stages of social change, the more difficult it is for the indigenous peoples to reclaim their tenure rights; 2) the expansion of the palm oil industry is a global capitalist hegemony that infringes the rights of the indigenous peoples; and 3) tenure conflicts will cause indigenous people to lose their tenure

rights and the direction social change, which will be increasingly uncontrollable in the future.

The Change of the Tau Taa Wana Tribe from a Primitive to Industrial Society

Social Change occurs in every society's dimension, space, and time. Robert H. Lauer stated that social change occurs at every level of life (Lauer 2012). Meanwhile, JL Gillin and JP Gillin define social change as a way of life due to changes in geography, material culture, population composition, ideology, and diffusion (Saebani 2016). A French philosopher, Auguste Comte, explained that social change happens in all dimensions of human life and all stages of intellectual development, i.e., the theological, metaphysical, and positivistic stages. Each stage of Change in society can be distinguished based on the principles or beliefs, behavior, and technology used (Soekanto and Sulistyowati, 2017).

The more stages of social change are passed, the more complex the problems in the social system will be. Figure 1 is social transformation graph illustrates the continuous process of social transformation that occurs in the life of the Tau Taa Wana tribe.

Figure 1
Stages of the Tau Taa Wana tribe's Social Transformation



During the primitive-hunting period (pre 1700s), the Tau Taa Wana community was in the primitive dimension, unaware of farming traditions. This period was marked by beliefs in ancestral spirits (animism) and the power of nature and absolute spirits (teocentrism), the use of simple or limited agricultural technology, and a focus on hunting and gathering activities.

During the nomadic period (1700-1800s), the focus shifted to nomadic activities, i.e., moving from one place to another. This dimension can be said to be the outset of the agrarian era. However, being nomadic is a way of survival considered the most ideal at that time. The move is not only to obtain various food sources but is also based on the traditional reading of nature's motions or conditions. The intuitive ability to read nature motivates a nomadic life to date (Nutfu 2019). For example, one may live near a river bank during the dry season but then move to a higher altitude during the rainy season to avoid overflows.

The agrarian period (1800-1950s) saw many changes in the social structure. Leadership emerged to legitimize territory, and local principles (customary law) started to be established to regulate land use. The Tau Taa Wana tribe began to recognize agrarian life and communalism. An increase followed the increase in population in basic needs, especially food. Land disputes did not exist because the ownership of space (customary territory) was owned communally. The influence of outside religions introduced by missionaries began to influence the religious system through the 'Khalaik' belief (Atkinson 1983; Hisyam 2015).

During this period, people also started to adopt a sedentary existence while occasionally moving by following the 'movement of nature.'

People began to feel the convenience and think of the future generation. As such, the farming system was invented. During this period, the Tau Taa Wana tribe began to depend on natural resources fully (land, forest, and forest products). This was also the period of royalty and tribalism, connected with the Dutch colonial period. Contact with outside groups started to take place, including with the invaders. This was when the agrarian conflict began. Tribal wars broke out in the name of defending territory, but at the same time, to seize the territory's independence from Dutch geopolitics.

The industrial age (1950s-present) is the era of post-independence during which Tau Taa Wana began to know the outside world (outside groups). The openness of communication and social interaction impacted the social and agrarian systems. Cacao plants arrived in the 1990s, so a settled plantation style started to replace the changing farming model. This was when commodity plants, like cocoa and coconut, rose in popularity. In 1997, the monoculture industry for oil palm goods was introduced to the lowlands inhabited by the Tau Taa Wana tribe.

The tribe believed this area was customary land that could not be traded. However, the introduction of oil palm plantations brought about socio-economic changes. The sale and purchase of land became more common. Therefore, sources of livelihood also shifted to oil palm plantations. According to a Tau Taa Wana community member, Apa Imel, the majority of the Tau Taa Wana people were willing to become palm oil workers:

"I used to work in a palm oil company as a manual laborer for four years. My story is sad. I worked there to fulfill the urgent household's economic needs. The same was

true for my wife, who worked at the same place, but then we quit because we felt we had suffered enough. I was like living on the tip of the index finger.”

The above statement is confirmed by Apa Imel’s wife, Indo Imel, who stated that becoming a palm oil worker was not by choice or because it was considered economically promising to obtain prosperity. The reality was bitter and far from expectation. While working for the palm oil company, they felt unhappy because they worked on their land.

Indo Imel added that the transmigration program and the arrival of palm oil commodities motivated land grabbing and the trading of the indigenous Tau Taa Wana people’s lands, as he admitted below:

“Our land was sold by the village head. This customary land had existed before we were here, owned by our parents. In the past, there were many sago palms, our food source. The introduction of the transmigration program in the 1990s crowded the area. The migrants started to take up the land for their plantations, invading and claiming our territory. They went to the village head to claim the promised land because they had not been given any. The head of the village might need money at the time, so he sold the Taronggo community’s land. There were no land certificates at the time. Before we received the land certificate, we were deceived. The land was used for Pae Lipu (field rice) before the oil palm plantations were established. That land and the coconut trees belonged to our parents. Because of the influx of transmigration, the village head sold our land without our consent. We are heartbroken.”

In line with Indo Imel, Apa Yulin said,

“Because our customary lands have been usurped, we were easily influenced by the circumstances (driven by needs) such as buying a motorbike. In this case, we believed

the land (gardens) could be sold. Because of this easily-influenced current situation, the customary (ancestral) land has been filled with palm oil.”

Since the entry of the palm oil industry, the Tau Taa Wana tribe started to adopt materialist views and attitudes because they hoped to gain prosperity from oil palm plantations. Many Tau Taa Wana people chose to work as laborers in oil palm plantations or as owners. The traditional cultivation culture is fading with the massive use of pesticides. At the same time, they are marginalized by top-down policies (such as transmigration) and land acquisition from oil palm plantation expansion.

The Oil Palm Plantation Industry and the Threat to Tenure Rights

Geertz (1969), in his book *Agricultural Involution*, shows that social change among farmers in the agrarian realm on Java is related to the culture of rice farming. Rice field management will affect the social organization, village structure, social strata, kinship relations, and social systems in rural areas. In other words, modern agricultural systems have created involute conditions due to the increasing population. Outside Java, involution occurs when the agricultural system becomes individual industries based on cultural rationality, such as the emergence of the term ‘plantation’ (RAPS 2017; White 1983).

The introduction of the oil palm plantation industry did not bring a positive effect. The expected welfare turned into a social disaster. The expansion of PT Sawindo Cemerlang, covering an area of 1,500 hectares in the Baturube District, has a negative impact on the socio-economic life of the Tau Taa Wana tribe. Meanwhile, the expansion of oil palm plantation,

PT Kurnia Luwuk Sejati (PT KLS), has become the most highlighted in Central Sulawesi as it covers Banggai Regency, Morowali Regency, and North Morowali Regency (Andika 2015).

On a top-down basis, the oil palm plantation industry is based on the principle of sustainable development based on economic, social, and environmental aspects to lead to planned social change (Jamaludin 2016). It is also a global goal for sustainable economic prosperity (Tenrisau 2021). However, oil palm expansion exploits nature, marginalizes the natives, and changes the local community from agrarian to industrial as they work as plantation workers (Andika 2015; Grumbly 2013; Nutfa 2019). According to a figure of the Tau Taa Wana tribe, Apa Fik, the indigenous peoples are persuaded to become workers in the palm oil industry through several processes:

“In 2010, PT KLS, through the village head, again planned to carry out an oil palm development program covering an area of ± 900 hectares in three customary areas (Lipu Sumbol, Lipu Salisarao, and Lipu Viautiro) without socialization to the indigenous people. It is despite the fact that the village’s plains area is home to many oil palm plantations, and the majority of the workers are from the Tau Taa Wana tribe. Finally, we massively rejected this plan. This effort was successful because we urged the Morowali BKSDA to cancel the company’s plan. I know the company’s policy is to exhaust all the land so the indigenous people become (cheap) laborers, and the company does not need to outsource workers.”

Knowing that palm oil does not bring prosperity, only a few of the Tau Taa Wana people remain palm oil workers. The exact number is unknown, but several respected figures of Tau Taa Wana said only about ± 30 people from the Tau Taa Wana tribe still work as palm oil workers at PT KLS in the Taronggo

area. Most choose to be field farmers, while others are roofing craftsmen, resin collectors, rattan collectors, etc.

Indo Laku, a traditional female figurehead of Tau Taa Wana, also said, “Customary land is a legacy from our ancestors that we must preserve. Palm oil has threatened our lives, so we have moved to the mountains. All villages’ plains have been used for oil palm cultivation. Only here (in the mountains) can we live. It is the last place for us, the Tau Taa Wana people, to live and die.” Living near oil palm plantations makes the indigenous Tau Taa Wana people uncomfortable because oil palm is not part of their agrarian tradition. Although the lowlands (former customary lands) have been converted into oil palm plantations, communal lands are still owned and recognized by the state through the establishment of the Wana Posangke Customary Forest in Bungku Utara District, which was stipulated by the Minister of Environment and Forestry, Siti Nurbaya, through the decree 6747/Menlhk-pskl.1/12/2016.

Apa Ketong, a Tau Taa Wana community member who lives on the outskirts of an oil palm plantation, said that living near an oil palm is uncomfortable. The state’s recognition of customary land does not guarantee that oil palm and mining corporations will not be invested in customary forests in the future. Similarly, Apa Laku, the customary head of Tau Taa Wana, said,

“Palm companies are still eyeing our customary lands. The state has recognized customary forests, but the company does not respect this recognition. Our children and grandchildren are entrusted with this land. I hope you will not be tempted to sell the land.”

This statement means that the Tau Taa Wana tribe has great concern for the future of customary land because, looking at the times, it is undeniable that the Tau Taa Wana people live in a changing time, including the openness to information and outsiders and the intense use of communication technology. Currently, the Tau Taa Wana tribe is in the category of modern society, which Alex Inkelles characterizes as open to new experiences and knowledge, future-oriented, careful planning, trusting in technology, and having a desire to master nature (see Sunarto, 2004; Budiman, 2017).

The current situation of the Tau Taa Wana tribe is much different from the past life. Before becoming the object of modern industry, they used to rely on sustainable subsistence sourced from hunting, such as pigs. The socio-economic system at that time was only intended for eating and hunting (Alvard 2000). In the tribal era, life spread along the coast, riverbanks, and mountains of Tokala (Alvard 2006). In contrast, the present-day conditions result in an industrialized, agrarian community, which leads to a materialist and individualist culture.

Tenure Conflict and Future of the Tau Taa Wana Tribe

Tenure conflicts over the forest areas will still be a common problem in the future. Conflicts resulting from the expansion of oil palm plantations are not only between the Tau Taa Wana people and the private sector. A similar conflict happens between the residents of Tanggunharjo and Perhutani over differences in forest management's objectives and the struggle for forest resources (Ambarwati et al. 2018). The Tau Taa Wana tribe has traditional knowledge of managing

and utilizing living natural resources (Pitopang and Safaruddin 2012).

Previous empirical evidence has shown that modernity does not positively impact the indigenous Tau Taa Wana people. A study finds that the absence of policies makes tenure conflicts persist (Zuber 2013) and perpetuated. However, policies are not always a solution to tenure problems. It could be the case that the more agrarian regulations, the more agrarian problems arise (Zakie 2017). In the case of the Tau Taa Wana people, the underlying problem is the risk of losing customary lands due to the expansion of the oil palm plantation industry, which is difficult to contain. Moreover, customary land is not only an economic source but also the body and soul of the Tau Taa Wana indigenous people. The state will not be able to make the agrarian rights of indigenous peoples permanent if corporations are still allowed to expand through mining permits and expansion permits. Therefore, future agrarian conflicts between indigenous peoples and investors will continue.

The traditional leader of the Tau Taa Wana tribe, Indo Ija, said,

“Currently, PT KLS is still eyeing our customary land here. They want our customary lands to become oil palm plantations. The customary forest decree has been issued, but outsiders (corporations) are trying to persuade us to sell the land. However, we will continue to fight for the customary land of the Tau Taa Wana tribe.”

Apart from Indo Ija, Apa Dien also said that when outsiders seized customary lands and became oil palm plantations, the Tau Taa Wana people were sad and worried about the future of customary lands. “When we are gone (died), the children may join the company in the future. But as long as we are alive, we cannot allow that.

We will fight the customary land to death.” This statement indicates that the indigenous people of Tau Taa Wana are worried about the future, especially when dealing with tenure conflicts.

Additionally, the indigenous people of Laman Kinipan in Central Kalimantan are concerned about the state’s inadequate protection of them and their customary forests. The same is true for people in other regions of Indonesia (Arumingtyas 2019). A prior study found that violence in the agriculture sector, especially conflicts between farmers, the private sector, and the government, results from the development of global capitalism and a legacy of the New Order (Atkinson 1983). The latest study found that the future of the Tau Taa Wana tribe continues to grapple with structural pressures with two threats, namely: 1) conflict with the private sector regarding the issue of the oil palm and mining industries and 2) conflict with the government (state) regarding the need for policy recognition (Nutfu 2019). Constitutional Court Decision No. 35/PUU-X2012 confirms customary forests are in customary territory, not the state’s forests. Even though the state has recognized it, the need for policy recognition should extend to the local government level.

In 2016, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) issued a decree No. 6747/MENLHK-PSKL/KUM.1/12/2016 concerning the Designation of Wana Posangke Traditional Forest covering an area of ± 4,660 hectares in North Bungku District, North Morowali Regency. This decision is a form of acknowledgment of the efforts of the indigenous people of Tau Taa Wana in defending their customary territory. Previously, the Morowali Regency Government issued Regional Regulation No. 13 of 2012 concerning the Recognition and Protection of the Tau Taa Wana Tribe. However,

the state has not fulfilled the rights of the indigenous people of Tau Taa Wana in Tojo Una Una since 2012. So far, the Tojo Una Una Regency Government has only stipulated Regional Regulation Number 11 of 2017 concerning the Inauguration of the Tau Taa Wana Indigenous Peoples.

The National Commission of Human Rights states that no less than 70 million or 20% of the total population of Indonesia are indigenous people. Sadly, various agrarian disputes, criminalization, violence, exclusion, confiscation, and human rights violations will likely occur in forest areas. There were at least 40 cases between 2014 and 2015. The Supreme Court Decision No. 35/PUU-X2012 is expected to reduce this problem, but the agrarian problems faced by indigenous peoples persist (Cahyono et al. 2016). It proves that indigenous peoples remain prone to agrarian cases in the future.

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that the expansion of the oil palm plantation industry in Central Sulawesi has led to social transformation in the Tau Taa Wana indigenous people. They experienced stages of social transformation from primitive, nomadic, agrarian to modern, industrial societies. Then, due to the expansion of the oil palm plantation industry, the Tau Taa Wana indigenous people lost their land tenure rights.

This study fills in the gaps in previous research and shows social inequality between indigenous peoples and capitalists or oil palm plantation owners in Central Sulawesi. Although this study has attempted to describe patterns of social change in the Tau Taa Wana indigenous community, not all aspects have been summarized due to differences in socio-political

situations, time, locus, research subjects, and perspectives. Therefore, further research on the social transformation of indigenous peoples needs to be developed using this research's primary data as a reference.[]

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