

Confusion over land rights and development opportunities through communal titles in Sabah, Malaysia

Abstract

Confusion over land rights issues and opportunities created through communal titles may just be rhetoric to some, but for the poor rural communities, it is a matter of survival. As this paper reveals, this may be due to contradictory interpretations between native communities and state agencies of what constitutes native customary rights. The methods and materials used are based on case studies in the state of Sabah, Malaysia with regard to the policies, programmes and projects that have been implemented in rural areas. This was made possible through interviews with key informants, textual analyses and state documents, and through observations of projects implemented in the rural areas of Sabah. Based on the information gathered, this paper reveals a worrying pattern of state and peoples' interactions over the provision of communal titles and state projects.