

Customary land and the indigenous people of Sabah: a case study of Sinumagang-Tinuman Toki

ABSTRACT

Customary land is a land that has been inherited from the ancestors and has been cultivated since time immemorial. Customary land is also the foundation of the life of the indigenous communities, and it is governed in accordance with their customs, known as adat. Unfortunately, the customary practices of the indigenous communities are often neglected and are not recognised by the state. This is due to opposing opinions and interpretations of customary land ownership and statutory land tenure as practised by the state. This study was mainly conducted to understand the differing perceptions, with the hope that the findings may provide a enlightenment on how these two opposing systems can be uniformized. A qualitative research method was used involving interviews with key informants from among the indigenous peoples living in Sinumagang and Tinuman Toki, Sabah, Malaysia. The preliminary findings revealed that the current state system does provide a window of opportunity to accommodate input from the customary practices of the indigenous communities to make it a part of the reformed land administration system of the state.