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In Riau, connecting the provincial capital Pekanbaru with the small market town of Duri and the coastal town of Dumai is a two-lane high road.¹ The road runs through an area that once was dense forest accessible only by river. The road was built during the second half of the twentieth century, following the discovery of oil in the area. Part of the territory the road passes through is the traditional area of an indigenous people officially called 'Orang Sakai' (Sakai people). The Orang Sakai are a Malay-dialect-speaking forest-dwelling people. They traditionally practise shifting cultivation of cassava as well as trapping, hunting, and gathering food from the forest and nearby rivers. Many Sakai families today cultivate dry rice. They also collected, and still collect, forest products. Although today most Sakai are Muslim, they are recent converts to the faith. Their Sakai forebears were non-Muslim people living on the margins of the Siak kingdom (*kerajaan Siak*). Then as now, they lived in the upstream Mandau (Sungai Mandau Hulu), and its branching minor rivers (Sungai Samsam, Sungai Beringin). The Mandau River is a tributary of the Siak River, which flows by the town of Siak Sri Indrapura, the old kingdom's political centre, connecting the hinterland with the Melaka Straits.

This article will explore the transformations that an ugly strip of asphalt has wrought on the lives of an indigenous people. The environmental transformation that the road has brought to the area has occurred within the lifetime of most Sakai. For example, most Sakai families today live in zinc-roofed wooden houses surrounded by migrant-owned houses. If I had come to the area in the early 1980s, I would have seen more families inhabiting traditional bark houses, fewer migrants, and more land and forest surrounding them. What I would like to show is that although Sakai were victims of the road and development that came because of the road (Bodley 1990), they

¹ I would like to thank the Research School CNWS of Leiden University for funding the research on which this article is based. I would also like to thank Sylvia Davies for the conversation on the effect of roads on the Welsh countryside, which prompted some comparative ideas for this article. I would also like to thank her for proofreading the first draft of this article. I would further like to thank Martin Ramstedt and Sandra Pannell for their suggestions.

have also been accommodating to the road and the novelties it brings to the area. Sakai today move in this road environment to further their indigenous political and economic interests.

Ethnographies generally take roads for granted, especially if they were built for an area by outsiders rather than by local people for themselves. Once we place the road in the ethnographic description, a more accurate picture emerges of the present indigenous reality and landscape. Rather than confine roads to development studies, we can study the socio-cultural transformations that roads bring as part of a field of contestation, accommodation, and social change, which is the ever-changing ethnographic present (Leach 1989). The roads are entangled (to use an expression from Thomas 1991) with the local indigenous landscape, and are part of a greater entanglement of the indigenous people with the modern Indonesian economy and development ideologies that have created the area's present landscape of oilfields, plantations, migrant villages, and markets.

This is not the first time that the indigenous people of the area have been entangled with external state power. In the next section I give a general historical picture of the tribal people of the area from early twentieth-century accounts of them under the reign of Sultan Syarif Hassim (1889-1908). Backed by colonial Dutch funding, this sultan engaged in Malay kingdom development-projects (Malayization), which affected some of the tribal people of the upstream Mandau. I then bring the historical picture into the present, with the road as the central feature of my ethnographic descriptions. For roadside-dwelling people, the road is a major part of their landscape, spatial-temporal experiences, geographical positioning, and sense of direction. In short, it has become part of their way of life. Today, to write an ethnography of Sakai is to place them in an environmental landscape dominated by roads. This landscape of development has come about as a consequence of the road's construction (Porath 2000). I therefore present an ethnography of Sakai roadside ribbon development. I then compare the Siak sultanate's development (which arrived by canoe) with the late twentieth-century Indonesian development that arrived through the road.

The people of the upstream Mandau and the Siak kingdom

The kingdom of Siak was a downstream, coastal entrepot-state, and its economic base was the collection and export of forest products from its rich forests (Kathirithamby-Wells 1997). In the nineteenth century a traveller to Siak would have entered the kingdom through the Siak estuary and travelled upstream to the capital of Siak Sri Indrapura, where the sultan resided. While travelling through this kingdom by river, the traveller would have passed

through areas inhabited by different Malay-speaking peoples. These people lived in raised, thatched wooden and bark houses pitched along riverbanks and other people lived on rafts. Some of these people were Muslim and others not. Many of these non-Muslim people lived in the forest interior. These peoples of Siak populated the different areas along the rivers and in the forest. They practised a variety of Malay customs, and the political and legal status of different groups varied within the kingdom. An important social and geographic distinction in the kingdom was between the 'Orang Hulu' (upstream people) and the 'Orang Hilir' (downstream people). The downstream people were noble and merchant Muslim Malay, Minang, and Arab groups. Their areas formed what Scott (1998:52) calls 'state spaces'.

The upstream peoples of Siak and Mandau were diverse. Some were Muslim, others recently converted, and still others were neither. Many of these people were socially organized through the *pebatin* system. This was the administrative definition of a group of people living in a traditional area (*pebatin*) headed by a *batin* headman. The headman was usually a local elder who served as a judiciary of local customs. The *batin* headman was also the representative of the people to the Sultan of Siak and was officially appointed by him. The people who lived in *pebatin* were Muslim Malay or non-Muslim forest and marsh people. This loose system of administration seems to have been an indigenous Malay system pre-dating the Islamization of the area.

The tribal forebears of the Sakai were a non-Muslim upstream-dwelling people, which the state administration classified as *raja raja benang*. Officially, these were the lowest-status people in the kingdom. The Malay kingdom also called the people of the upstream Mandau 'Sakai'. This was a catch-all term that Malays used at times to refer to non-Muslim forest people living on the forest edges of their kingdoms and it was commonly used on the Malay peninsula and even in Borneo (Skeat and Blagden 1906:22; Dove 1997:360; Porath 2002). The upstream Mandau people eschewed the term and instead called themselves *orang batin* (people who lived in *pebatin* administration), just as a villager today would call him or her self *orang kampung* (village person) (Moszkowski 1909:91).² Today most of the indigenous people of the area have come to accept the term Sakai. I therefore use the name Sakai for the present-day indigenous people living in the area, while for the pre-1960 period I use 'upstream Mandau people'.³

In the late nineteenth century, the people of the upstream Mandau were organized into thirteen *pebatin* living in areas flanking the rivers and water-

² I have seen reports by some European writers translating the word *orang batin* as 'inner people'. This is an etymological confusion of the archaic Malay word *batin* meaning headman with the Arabic '*batin*' meaning 'inner'.

³ The people of the area still called themselves *orang batin* as late as the 1970s and 1980s.

ways. These *pebatin* did not form villages but mobile swidden settlements in forest clearings surrounded by cassava fields. Sometimes their tall, rectangular, thatched bark houses were built on the river banks. More usually, the upstream Mandau settlements were constructed further inland. A few scattered raised bark houses, reaching three metres or more in height, dotted the landscape surrounded by cassava fields. Beyond these scattered houses lay forests with paths leading to further swiddens with scattered houses. Each house was inhabited by a conjugal family and from the early descriptions it seems that in the past they were matrifocal with a tendency towards matrilineality (Hijmans Van Anrooij 1885; Moszkowski 1909).

As there were no roads to the area, and as the upstream Mandau was difficult to navigate, the upstream Mandau people had a measure of autonomy from downstream Malay society. According to the early accounts, the people of the area were only obliged to send the sultan bezoar stones (*guliga*) and aloe wood (*kayu gaharu*) as a sign of their allegiance to him. It was feared that overt political and economic pressure would frighten the people, causing them to flee to the forests. This taxation was not entirely successful, as the *batin* headman only sent a small quantity to satisfy the sultan. The non-Muslim Malay tribesmen traded the rest with Chinese merchants in the area. It seems that for the Siak sultanate it was important to foster these people's allegiance to the kingdom. By recognizing the Sultan of Siak as their overlord, the people in this area brought their territory into the Siak kingdom. Part of this territory was politically controversial and the sultans of Rokan and of Siak even waged war for it. At an earlier date, eight *batin* headmen who were allied to Rokan shifted their allegiance to Siak, bringing their kinsmen and territory under Siak jurisdiction. Later, in 1907, this border conflict was resumed when the Dutch signed a treaty recognizing the area as belonging to Siak (Moszkowski 1909:92). From the perspective of downstream Siak, the upstream Mandau and its non-Muslim inhabitants (Orang Batin) formed the northwestern border of the kingdom.

In the late nineteenth century and foreshadowing the construction of the road more than half a century later, Sultan Syarif Hassim made access to the area easier by clearing the undergrowth of large parts of the Mandau River. The river, now cleared, facilitated the transportation of rubber downstream from his large rubber plantation, lying along the left bank of the Mandau River (Moszkowski 1909:42). This allowed easier access to traders, and the sultanate was able to promulgate its religious and cultural policies of Malayization to the area, thus facilitating the political and economic integration of the upstream Mandau people into the kingdom's political culture.

Already during the previous sultan's reign (Sultan Syarif Kassim I, 1864–1889), a trade system (*serahan*) was instituted in the upstream Mandau. The *serahan* trade was a trade network providing people in the upstream and

interior areas with basic commodities such as salt, cutlasses, iron, cloth, and other consumables in exchange for their forest products (*hasil hutan*). This sultan seems to have instituted this trade system in the upstream Mandau in order to develop the forest people's consumer needs, thus attracting them out of the forest and compelling them to become more dependent on the kingdom's trade consumables (Hijmans Van Anrooij 1885:339). The respective parties carried out the trade at a fixed time and place. The forest people canoed their forest products downriver to barter for the desired consumables. The *serahan* trade not only established a trading network with the forest people but also helped disseminate and exchange news in its interactive space. Another consequence of the *serahan* trade was that many indigenous families fell into debt to traders, and their only recourse was to flee to the woods until a higher authority intervened on their behalf.⁴ Later, Sultan Syarif Hassim permitted many Chinese merchants to enter the upstream areas of the Siak interior to trade their goods (Moszkowski 1909:101). These merchants competed for forest products with the *serahan* traders and helped increase the exchange value of forest products. Many of these merchants cohabited with indigenous women and were able to mobilize their indigenous affines to search for desired forest products. After a few years many of the Chinese merchants moved on, leaving behind their indigenous wives and children (Moszkowski 1909:99).

The cleared river gave kingdom personnel easier access to the area too. Accessibility allowed the sultan to carry out measures to reform his kingdom according to peninsula-Malay cultural standards. Across the straits, British colonial ideologies helped to re-define what standards of Malayness were (Andaya and Andaya 1982:153). These new definitions must have influenced the east coast Malay kingdoms of Sumatra in what Malayness is. Having more access to the upstream Mandau, Siak policies of Malayization began to have their effect on some of the people living there. First, the sultan ordered the people to grow rice. Non-Muslims who failed to comply with his agricultural policies were temporarily imprisoned (Moszkowski 1909:27). Islamization was another pressing issue. Although the people of the area were not Muslim, *batin* headmen had to accept the faith. In the late nineteenth century some individuals do seem to have adopted the faith. Other sultanate policies tried to transform customary marriage and inheritance and descent reckoning. The matrimonial arrangements of the people in the area probably seemed immoral to the Muslim Malays. The sultan tried to encourage bride-price payment and to transform the inheritance system from a matrilineal to a patrilineal arrangement following Malay-peninsula ideals rather than

⁴ Hijmans van Anrooij (1985:348) notes the people of the Mandau region incurred the highest debt in the kingdom for the year 1878.

central Sumatran practices (Moszkowski 1909:105).

The brief accounts we have of the upstream Mandau suggest that social differentiation was taking place. When Moszkowski travelled to the area in 1907 he was accompanied by a sultanate official who most probably took him to the more accessible settlements, which had been affected by the sultanate's Malayization projects. One of the *pebatin* settlements he visited was at Pinggir, whose headman (*batin*) represented the eight other *batin* headmen to the kingdom (Moszkowski 1909:91). The women he met there were dressed in rural Malay fashion of the time and wore Malay-style jewellery (Moszkowski 1909:90). The men wore sarongs and even Chinese-style shirts. The houses that some of the people were living in were thatched saddle-backed bark houses, resembling downstream Kampar-Malay houses, suggesting architectural emulation of downstream house types. Another group he visited were the people of *pebatin* Paoh. Apparently, the people here were more sedentary than other *pebatin* people and had recently been taught to grow rice (Moszkowski 1909:95). Again the photographs show them dressed in Malay rural fashion. Interestingly, Moszkowski did unexpectedly come across one riverside settlement along the Penaso River and here he was struck by its poverty.⁵

Moszkowski's descriptions suggest social and economic differentiation arising not only between families but also between different *pebatin* groups in the upstream Mandau probably caused by the clearing of the Mandau River and the ensuing ease of access of people, goods, and ideas to the region. Moszkowski went to the upstream Mandau in search of a 'primitive tribe'. His access to the Sakai was made feasible by the sultanate's development projects in the area following the clearance of the river. He predicted that this 'Malayized' primitive tribe would disappear in the greater Malay population. What he did not consider was that these (so-called proto-Malay) people were showing their Malayness to him and to sultanate personnel. A hundred years later and under different state ideologies, their wealthier descendants show their *maju*-ness (progressiveness) through purchased commodities.

It seems that if the forest people of the area were undergoing a process of Malayization around the turn of the twentieth century, it came to an abrupt halt with the Japanese period. This period is remembered as difficult, and many Sakai fled deeper into the woods to avoid the harsh conditions imposed on them. Cloth and goods were unavailable. It was only later, after the declaration of the state of Indonesia (1945) and the building of the road, that Sakai families who fled to the woods during the Japanese occupation shyly came out from the forests in the 1950s and early 1960s, dressed in barkcloth.

⁵ From the description of their houses, this settlement may have been set up for a temporary fishing expedition.

The road and the redefined area of development

In 1915, Sultan Syarif Hassim's son, Tunku Syarif Kassim II, became Sultan of Siak. He is best remembered for having been the first sultan in Malay history to abdicate, which he did in the name of the Republic of Indonesia. In 1945 the kingdom of Siak, which had its political origin in the late eighteenth century, was abolished. This sultan is also remembered for his German sedan car. Prior to the twentieth century rajas and sultans expressed the power of their movements in royal barges, yachts, ships, and boats. The 1930s was the age of the motor car, which concomitantly ushered in the age of roads suitable for these horseless carriages.

During the 1930s and 1940s when the sultan drove to political meetings in his motor car, Caltex oil company was conducting its first oil explorations in Sumatra and the upstream Mandau was about to become a major oilfield. In 1952 the first oil rig started production in the Sakai *pebatin* Minas area. Later, other fields started operating in other traditional Sakai *pebatin* areas.

To ease access to the oilfields, Caltex built the Pekanbaru-Duri-Dumai road, which was fully completed in 1959. Today the paved roads support very heavy traffic. Oil containers, logging trucks, inter-city and local buses, vans, cars, and motorbikes pass by at very high speed. The safest means of walking the road is on the oil pipe that flanks one side. Sakai from roadside settlements sometimes dry their laundry on the pipe. It also serves as a seat when waiting for the southbound bus. At one time during the 1970s some Sakai even used the metal pipe to beat fish poison out of bark but were severely told off by passing Caltex employees. Although today Sakai purchase poisons from the market, some people still reminisce over the times when they made full use of what for them is a useless metal object in their roadside environment.

The road runs through a variety of landscapes, from hills of remaining patches of forest to forests of palm-oil monoculture plantations and oilfields. At certain points along the road, village settlements and market centres line its edge. Migrants from other parts of Sumatra and from Java inhabit these roadside settlements in the main – usually from North and West Sumatra, Java, and the island of Nias. They came to this frontier area in search of cheap land and to make a living. Here, North Sumatrans (Batak), Javanese, and West Sumatrans (Minangkabau) usually own shops and market stalls. Some settlements are ethnically mixed. Sakai village settlements and hamlets are found between these migrant settlements. A few Sakai families live in mixed village settlements too. Their houses form a central line and migrant houses surround them.

Dirt roads branch off the main road. These roads are usually slippery because of the oil poured on them to keep the dust level low. The roads extend

An environment of logging and oil trucks (photo: Nathan Porath)

inwards and pass oilfields, rubber and palm-oil plantations and lead up to interior migrant and Sakai hamlets. Many of these inner Sakai settlements are government and Caltex-sponsored settlements. There are also break-off families who form smaller hamlets. These are formed by families who used to live in larger communities, but who branched off to form a smaller settlement of their own, usually on another's land, but also on land they want to reclaim or on land beside the river. The difference between these settlements and past swidden (*ladang*) arrangements is that today the houses are more densely arranged. The houses line the side of an officially recognized road in accordance with government development regulations. Usually cassava swiddens surround the houses. Today, Sakai live in cluster-settlements of boxhouses (bark house or wooden) scattered through the area between Minas and Duri. Together with other migrant village settlements and plantations, these settlements form part of official Indonesian villages (*desa*).

The old Malay kingdom's *batin* system of administration does not exist anymore. It has been completely destroyed. Now, the area is divided into administrative villages (*desa*) composed of scattered village settlements. A state official headman (*kepala desa*) serves as the head of the *desa*. Subordinate to him is the *kepala dusun* and below him is the *kepala tetangga* (neighbourhood head), who represents the settlement to the official headmen. The official headmen are usually local Malays. If there are Sakai in a *dusun* area

then usually the *kepala dusun* is Sakai. The same applies to the neighbourhood head (*kepala tetangga*). If there is a predominant migrant community for example, and no Sakai, then the *kepala dusun* or *kepala tetangga* might be a migrant. All these officially recognized settlements are well connected to each other by dirt roads and by the trunk road, which people call the *jalan raya* (the big road) or *jalan aspal* (the asphalt road). The concentration of Sakai families in village settlements following Indonesian administrative principles was only possible after the roads were built.

The road, development, and the land problem

The road was constructed in a territory that the Indonesian state perceived through the European derived idea of Terra Nullius. The colonial authorities considered land that did not show signs of appropriation to be vacant and therefore the property of the state (Colchester 1986:105; Haverfeild 1999:53). Since the upstream Mandau was sparsely populated by politically unorganized non-Muslim forest people, the Indonesian State treated much of its territory as vacant. So the road was cut through it without any consultation (Bodley 1990:25). It was not built for the indigenous people, it was built for economic purposes. The road allowed the implementation of national policies in the area and the creation of an infrastructure for rural Indonesian society, and from the late twentieth century the area has been developing as a frontier zone (Colombijn, this volume).

The indigenous people who once were the crucial link to the land became superfluous to it. As an exposed 'primitive' national embarrassment (Bodley 1990:58) they were a target of Indonesian national development policies. During the Suharto period (1966-1998) the Indonesian state discourse on tribal people called its myriad forest and hill peoples *suku terasing* – outsider societies – and tasked itself with bringing these people into mainstream Indonesian society (Persoon 1998). Indigenous people like the Sakai were therefore placed within a structural category that defined them as alien, primitive, unprogressive, in need of developmental correction, and dangerous if they did not conform to state policies (Colchester 1986:105; Dove 1990:21; Haverfeild 1999:51; Lindsey 1999:15). Sakai understood that they had to show that they were trying to become modern rural Indonesians. Development discourse has become their main discourse with other Indonesians, developing into an embodied cultural discourse and identity in its own right.

One way Sakai can show their 'modernity' is through appropriating commodities such as wooden houses, televisions, sofas, chainsaws, jeans, and other rural fashions, motorbikes, gold jewellery, and even by marrying a

Javanese. Sakai obtain the money needed to buy such goods from the sale of fallow land to rural Indonesian migrants, who have discovered this lucrative land-purchasing opportunity during their frequent travels through the area via the road. This opportunity has encouraged many other rural Indonesians to settle in the area opened up by the road (Porath 2000). Schematically speaking, as one family living in area A sells fallow land in area B, a family living in area B sells fallow land in area A. By selling to migrants, both families reduce the Sakai land-ownership ratio in the area. The road has not merely changed the Sakai landscape but has indirectly created the contextual situation for a total dispossession of land.

The Sakai consumption of modernity through the ideology of development overlaps with 'modernity's' consumption of Sakai land through the same ideology. With scarcer land and forests to reclaim, in the long run Sakai families will be unable to sustain themselves in the traditional manner.

A description of a portion of the trunk road

In the past, Sakai built their houses at a certain distance from each other, like beads scattered across a forest and swidden landscape. Today, like beads threaded on a string, Sakai houses line officially recognized roads. Surrounding these clusters is a development landscape of oil rigs, plantations, and migrants. Environmentally, this landscape of development frames the Sakai ethnographic present.

The description below is of small Sakai settlements on the portion of the road that runs across the Samsam and Mandau rivers. The settlement I am most familiar with on the trunk road is headed by a man called Bah S. and I shall refer to it as Bah S's settlement; it will serve as my point of reference.

Bah S's settlement is nine raised and thatched bark houses (*rumah kulit kayu*) pitched on a mound with a stretch of flat sandy land leading up to the road's kerb. The sandy land is Caltex land and officially it is forbidden to build on it. An important feature in the positioning of this roadside settlement is its proximity to one of the rivers. Bah S's settlement is pitched close to the banks of the Mandau River. The headman originally built his bark house on this well-chosen site and he was later followed by his siblings' families. The location of the mound gives these families easy access to the river, and their main source of sustenance, fish.

On the other side of the road are two or three wooden houses inhabited by North Sumatran migrants. One of these dwellings houses a small shop selling basic commodities, and the Sakai here are among the main customers. Just on the bridge where the road crosses over the river are two or three wooden brothels. Keeping with the direction of the road and passing a

number of Batak houses, about a further twenty minutes' walk is another small settlement of Sakai houses lining the road. Surrounding these Sakai families are many North Sumatran migrant families. In 1997, Caltex sponsored the development of a small market opposite this settlement.⁶

About ten minutes down the road in the other direction, towards Pekanbaru, is another roadside Sakai settlement of raised bark and wooden houses. Opposite this settlement lives the neighbourhood headman (*kepala dusun*) in a larger wooden house, and some other migrant families. A further five-minute walk from here is '*komplek*'. This is a complex of brothels housing mainly Javanese women who sexually cater for the rural male population. Many Sakai males walk, ride a bike, or take a bus to visit the brothels. During the 1990s a number of men married or cohabited with women they met in the brothels.

For many Sakai settlements, living on the roadside means direct exposure to indigenous migrants and whatever social ailments they bring. Sometimes on Saturday nights the wind carries loud Indonesian pop music from the *komplek* to all the neighbouring settlements and hamlets. Sakai fear the sudden appearance of shifty-looking migrants who loiter around the *komplek* at late hours. Families living in the roadside settlements shut their heavy wooden doors at dusk. Unlike some other settlements that are directly along the road, the Sakai families living on the mound look down over the road, which gives them a strategic overview of any visitor or intruder approaching their hamlet. This is important for a people who traditionally (and still to a certain degree) feel uncomfortable with the unexpected appearance of outsiders. Although Sakai houses do not have windows, people can see what is happening down on the road through gaps in the bark wall and can prepare to receive approaching visitors.

Further down the road in the direction of Pekanbaru is yet another Sakai settlement of white Depsos (Department of Welfare) houses that the local government and Caltex built for a Sakai group. The settlement is called the Project of Ten House Settlement (Proyek Sepuluh). Originally, the families here came from the inner Samsam area and built small bark houses on the edge of the road where it intersects the Samsam River. Easy access to the Samsam River was an important factor in locating the settlement. The Sakai here spent their time begging for money from passing drivers. They dis-

⁶ Originally these Sakai families lived in raised wooden houses although during my stay these houses were changed. The Sakai neighbourhood headman agreed with some Batak that they build for the Sakai families new wooden zinc-roof houses in exchange for Batak being allowed to build their houses on the same site. The houses they built for the Sakai families were zinc-roof wooden shops. The Sakai families agreed to this set-up to conform with the dwelling appearance of the area, but this led to some friction with some families in Bah S's settlement who also owned some of this land.

played their poverty on the road so completely that they forced the provincial government to build them a settlement of zinc-roofed wooden houses. The project also supplied the Sakai families with a small mosque, although other Sakai had their doubts about this settlement's relationship to Islam. The people from this settlement still stop cars and ask for money, although now in conformity with the faith, women cover their hair and claim that the money is for the mosque. Sakai elsewhere believe that the Sakai here spend the money on gambling and prostitution.

The road in the Sakai economy

Living on the edge of the trunk road today gives people quick access to alternative financial possibilities. Sakai use the road to sell their products directly to passing drivers. Every morning and evening men, and occasionally women, of these settlements paddle their kayak to gather the fish caught in their rattan fish traps for their own consumption. Families living on the edge of the road smoke any surplus fish and sell it to passing drivers. Sakai also at times display an animal such as a monkey or a baby bear to sell to drivers.⁷

In comparison, Sakai living in interior settlements have to ride out to sell their catches, and the journey could take about half an hour on the slippery dirt roads. For example, one group of Sakai who returned to the woods increased their self-sufficiency but lost their monetary income (Porath 2000). They complained that they could not sell their fish directly on the edge of the road. They had less contact with townspeople and the shaman suffered a reduction in income from clientele who tipped him for his medicinal services.⁸ Nevertheless, the families did adapt. One of the women married a Javanese migrant who opened up a market for them selling forest timber. They also became custodians of land that they reappropriated. This attracted other families back into the woods. In another settlement, Sakai families of further upstream Samsam built huts by the river and commute from the ethnically mixed settlement they live in officially. In their hut settlement they collect fish and sell it to migrants. If the trunk road gives roadside Sakai direct economic access to other Indonesians, interior Sakai can still find quick routes to the market through their use of motorbikes and through relations with local migrants.

⁷ It is not only roadside Sakai who sell animals this way but also other migrants if they have caught a forest animal.

⁸ As Sakai still have a certain magical status in the area the road has made the medicine men and women easily accessible to townspeople and local prostitutes searching for medicine, love magic, and potions to attract others. These magic-seekers usually tip the medicine (wo)man for their services.

Sakai children selling a baby monkey to passing drivers (photo: Nathan Porath)

Although interior groups have less access to the financial opportunities that roadside people have, nevertheless the latter's advantage is uncertain and depends on spontaneous activities such as begging, and selling fish or forest animals to drivers. It also depends on whether drivers are willing to stop to purchase their goods. Passing drivers provide roadside Sakai with petty cash to buy basic consumables for the coming days; they do not provide a sustainable monetary income.

The main source of income for most Sakai is the collection of forest products. The road makes it easier for townspeople and merchants of forest products to reach the Sakai. Sakai men and women make use of the river as a passage to more inaccessible upstream forest areas for collecting rattan, wood, and other forest products. By contrast, the road is used to take collected forest products to village and town markets. Usually the gatherers of wood and rattan transport the products by canoe to riverbanks easily accessible by truck. This might be on the edge of the trunk road, or the banks close to an inner dirt road. The owner of the truck transports it to a town market.

Sometimes an abundant catch of fresh fish may be taken to the market in person rather than smoked and sold on the road. The individual or individuals will either take an *oplet* (minibus) or bus and pay a thousand rupiahs each way, or preferably arrange a ride with a local vehicle owner. People from

Bah S's settlement frequently arranged a ride on the *kepala dusun*'s van free of charge.⁹ People from other settlements would make similar arrangements with other wealthy Sakai vehicle owners. A local network of Sakai vehicle owners and poorer Sakai has emerged with the differentiation of wealth that development has brought to this indigenous people.¹⁰ Another indigenous group which has monopolized the motorized-vehicle network of the area are the descendants of indigenous Sakai and Chinese marriages who call themselves Sino-Sakai (*Sakai Cino*). As wealthier owners of pick-up trucks, they pick up and drop off labourers at certain forested areas for work. These truck owners also transport forest products from Sakai settlements to market.

Roadside consumption

If the road allows for the easier transport of forest products, it also exposes Sakai to the greater rural consumer society. Within the development discourse that has enveloped them over the years, to live by the roadside is more *maju* (progressed) than living in the forests. It allows Sakai to be connected to the greater rural Indonesian society and allows them to be seen by outsiders as conforming to state policies and to development expectations of them. Moreover, living by the road suggests to Sakai easier access to markets and consumer commodities. Money that people obtain from the sale of raw forest products and the sale of land is spent not just on food but on consumer items sold in the markets the road runs through. Living along the road means that one can easily hop on a bus and visit the market, purchase a few commodities, and be seen doing so. Although Sakai do visit markets, usually on a Sunday, they do so only when they have some money to spend. Wealthier Sakai, those who are referred to as 'already progressed' (*olah maju*), freely express their economic differentiation through consumer goods and the establishment of relationships that those goods allow. Whereas wealthier Sakai become models of embodied development and progress for poorer Sakai, the latter keenly express that they are waiting for development to come to them.

⁹ The *kepala dusun* is a relatively wealthy Sakai man who was a beneficiary of an early development educational project and was married to Bah S's wife's youngest sister. Hence, notwithstanding his influential position he was obliged to serve poorer Sakai in the area.

¹⁰ There are some instances when the vehicle owner charges the poorer Sakai a fee for the use of the vehicle.

Development comes through the road

Previously I described how the Project of Ten Houses was established by a few Sakai families embarrassing the provincial government by making a nuisance of themselves on the edge of a road where middle-class white-collar workers and foreigners drive by. This brought development to them in the form of zinc-roofed wooden boxhouses that have become the architectural model for Sakai. Although people of Bah S's settlement do not beg on the trunk road like the people at the Project of Ten Houses Settlement, these families, who are well versed in the discourse of development, also wanted their thatched houses to be visible. They know that their bark houses are viewed negatively by the state and therefore their presence on the roadside was a challenge which invited development. As they put it, they were 'waiting for development' (*menunggu pembangunan*). The difficulty this settlement experienced in attracting development was that the stretch of land it was situated on belonged to a Chinese man from Duri. The other Sakai settlement facing the brothel suffered the same problem: it was on land belonging to the wealthy village headman of partly Chinese descent.

During my stay, these roadside settlements had a number of visits from local authorities and Caltex personnel. Any of these visitors who stop at the edge of the road are greeted expectantly, as they are seen as possible harbingers of development. During my stay, an influential Malay man from Pekanbaru purchased the land for Bah S's settlement and a school was built beside the *kepala dusun*'s house with the express purpose of providing local Sakai children with a basic school education. So development was not only somehow seen as coming down the road but also does actually come down the road.

But what is this development Sakai are waiting for? It is not always clear what development and progress mean for Sakai, and why should it be? After all, the general discourse of development which over the years has been the only way the Indonesian state has communicated with the Sakai (and other similar peoples) is drawn from an institutional and academic corpus of knowledge (Crush 1995). Through their exposure to the wider society, Sakai have appropriated and embodied the discourse of development, which has taken on a cultural life of its own and is a frame of communication and interaction with other Indonesians.

Poorer Sakai do see the wealth, power, and influence that people benefiting from development have in the area. It is this wealth that poorer Sakai seem to desire blindly; to be transformed through *pembangunan* is to progress (*maju*) and become rich (*menjadi o'ak kaya*). People know that money does not grow on trees, but it does appear to travel down the road. Hence, they are awaiting it. The road is both metaphorically and literally seen as the path of development (*pembangunan*) and the path to progress (*kemajuan*).

Socializing through the use of the road

The road transports people quickly from one area to another. In the past (and still today), Sakai would navigate the rivers by canoe. Although to my mind (defined by the direction of the trunk road) it is possible to walk from one end of the area traditionally associated with the Sakai to the other in less than two days, in the past most of this territory would have been dense forest inhabited by tigers and wild elephants. People travelled such distances by river. To reach a settlement by the banks of the Penaso River from the Samsam one would have to navigate a canoe downstream Samsam to the Mandau, then again downstream Mandau to the Penaso estuary, and then upstream this river to the desired location. This would take about a day in a canoe. The trunk roads and the dirt roads that branch off it provide quicker access to different areas in the territory. Hence, when Sakai individuals hear of work opportunities in another area or want to visit families in other areas, they use the road and motorized vehicles to get there. In development discourse this is considered a more progressed (*lebih maju*) way of travelling.

Although vehicles allow for commuting between place of residence and place of work, poorer Sakai families do not commute. They normally stay in the other areas for a long period before returning to their settlement, usually being accommodated by a relative living in that settlement.

A very important part of Sakai social life is visiting other families of the settlement and visiting relatives in other settlements (*patanak*). People of these roadside settlements usually visit each other's hamlets on foot. On many evenings, Sakai and non-Sakai walk to the *kepala dusun*'s house to crowd around his colour television (with satellite dish) to watch an Indonesian or Indian film. They walk home in pitch darkness in single file on the oil pipe to avoid being hit by speeding trucks whose headlights light up the outline of the road.

Although people walk up or down the road to nearby settlements, for a social visit to more distant settlements Sakai arrange a minibus or a pick-up truck to transport them. The driver of the vehicle, who is usually Sakai or Sakai related, is told at what time to return to pick people up. As people alight, it is noticeable that they are well dressed in the local rural fashion, and that women wear gold jewellery. On the occasions that I have seen guests from other settlements to poorer Sakai bark house settlements, the sudden unexpected appearance of the visitors and their demeanour always suggested to me that they were notifying the poorer families of their wealth. In the local Sakai discourse drawn from state development policies, they were expressing that they were already progressed (*sudah maju*) and wealthier (*lebih kaya*) and, needless to say, they could afford to hire a vehicle for the event. Considering that all these people were born in and lived in thatched bark houses for most of their life, this expression of wealth is remarkable.

Accommodation to a polluted environment

The roadside location of Sakai settlements makes them vulnerable to various environmental pollutants. Motorized vehicles pollute the air as they pass by the Sakai settlements, exposing these once forest-dwelling people to new gasses and smells. As some Sakai today own motor vehicles, they also contribute to the fumes. For example, a motorbike owner might test his vehicle by accelerating the engine in an open Sakai settlement, emitting fumes into the surrounding air.¹¹

Roads are a physical hazard. Some of the minor dirt roads are sprayed with oil to keep down the dust. Such roads not only emit volatile compounds and bad odours but also are extremely slippery for motorcyclists. The roads are also dangerous for people, especially children, who gain some of their livelihood by attracting passing drivers. During my stay in 1997, a motorbike hit one Sakai child from the Project of Ten Houses Settlement as he was begging for money on the road. The child was injured and local officials used this incident as an excuse to admonish local people about begging on the road. Also during my stay, a passing truck killed a Batak girl who was returning home from school. The many accidents occurring on this road have become a common experience that also provides sensational topics to liven evening conversations. The danger of the road is an acknowledged fact that Sakai and non-Sakai live with.¹²

If the road has brought to the Sakai the experience of new dangers, it has also introduced new kinds of waste to the area. Vehicle occupants dispose of their rubbish as they pass by. Some poorer Sakai collect discarded items such as plastic water bottles, tin cans, and other scrap metal they find on the road. The plastic water bottles serve as water containers replacing the traditional water gourds. People use tin cans for paraffin lighting instead of *damar* (resin), while scrap metal comes in handy for a number of purposes. For example, many men have made the heads of their fishing spears from scrap metal discarded by electrical engineers. Even shamans make use of scrap metal by attaching it to their rattler for a more effective noise.¹³ The road therefore provides Sakai with a new source of metal and other synthetic materials.

¹¹ Asthma (*sosak n'ao*) is a common ailment. Most Sakai are also chain smokers, which probably aggravates the incidence of the disease.

¹² I know that some Sakai drivers and their companions have been in car accidents.

¹³ Living in a social environment where picking up scrap metal from the road was normal, I even recall once coming back home with a discarded piece of a car number plate that I found on the road. I gave it to Bah S, who laughed embarrassingly at the thought that I should have brought it home for him. Nevertheless he kept the piece, and it came in handy to fix the broken scale that the people of his settlement use to weigh their fish before selling the surplus to market vendors.

The road has also radically transformed the area's soundscape. In the morning people wake up to the hooting of the gibbons, the chirping and twittering of birds, and the noise of passing trucks. This noise pollution carries on for twenty-four hours a day, so much so that one tends to forget that it is there. The sound of an engine has become part of the environmental soundscape and in local oral-art genres is referred to onomatopoeically as *bu'de'um de'um* (vroom vroom). A common mesmerizing sound pattern is the loud traffic sounds of hooting trucks and their engines followed by a sudden moment of hypnotic silence. A passing motorbike pierces the silence, but as the sound of its motor diminishes in the distance, the peace is utterly shattered by the resumption of accelerating trucks. An important motor sound is when the engine stops abruptly in front of a settlement. This attracts attention and people peer through gaps in the bark wall to evaluate the vehicle and to try to figure out whether the car belongs to tourists, Caltex workers, or government officials. They ponder as to why the car has stopped, and try to guess the driver's intentions. For example, a yellow Caltex car or a dark official car suggests the possible harbingers of development. A van or pick-up truck driving up to the settlement might suggest forest work. A car silently parked at a distance might mean a useless tourist who may nevertheless tip them if caught in time. A truck suggests a rough-and-tumble truck driver, and unless there is no indication that his vehicle has broken down, people become suspicious of the driver's intentions and relax when the vehicle moves on.

The road has not only polluted the air and the soundscape but has contributed to Sakai visual pollution as well. Although the road is part of everyday Sakai experience, we can only imagine how it first polluted their vision of the forest environment. From the Sakai perspective, the area is not a frontier zone and neither is it a wilderness. For Sakai the area harbours a live spirit landscape with cultural and personal meanings. Certain areas in the dense forest are associated with spirits. There are also sacred sites that have to be maintained. Many of these spirit locales have been destroyed by companies in the area who have legally expropriated the land for their own interests (Porath 2000). As the road was built, it formed a meandering line cutting the area in half. It is difficult to know the extent of the sacred territory and mythological landscapes the road has polluted.

The nuisance of roadside primitivists and ethnicization

Most of the houses in the area are zinc-roofed wooden houses. When I first travelled along this road, Bah S's roadside settlement of raised thatched houses pitched on the mound initially appeared to me as though they were transposed from the forest onto this mound from another historical period. I

stopped to take photographs and a wiry man came running down the mound towards me waving his hand shouting '*jangan foto*' (do not take photographs). At the same time I saw some movements on the mound, and two men appeared from the back of the houses riding bicycles. They cycled in circles around the row of bark houses. The cyclists were clearly disrupting the 'primitive' image of traditional *rumah Sakai* (Sakai houses) by cycling around them in circles. By living on the edge of the road and being exposed to other people, Sakai have become aware that they are something of a sensation. Already in the 1970s Caltex drivers stopped their cars by the road to take photographs of these 'tribals'. Even Bill Dalton's travel guide, *Indonesia Handbook*, devotes a page to them, telling tourists that they could be seen by the roadside and photos taken of them for a small fee (Dalton 1989:563). By the late 1990s Sakai families were frustrated with this primitivist perception of them. Families still living in the raised bark houses here and elsewhere always said to me on initial contact that they were bored with people driving by their houses and taking photographs of them. People stressed that at least some form of remuneration should be given. The stress on 'driving by' meant that people have no intention to meet and seriously talk to Sakai, but as they are passing by, they stop to take photos of the houses without permission and then disappear. In my first meeting with Bah S, then, he was intent on catching me before I could make my get-away with the photographs of the houses. As Bah S became one of my foster fathers, we later laughed about our first meeting.

The road has brought people to the area with modernist ideas about culture, ethnicity, and art framed by the Indonesian political-cultural ideas of ethnicity and culture (Acciaioli 1985; Schefold 1998; King 1999). The confrontation with a stranger's camera and other forms of primitivist interactions defines Sakai as culturally different and this leads to new ideas about culture (*budaya*) and identity and ways of thinking about self. A process of ethnicization is occurring whereby embodied knowledge becomes an objectified demonstrative culture. In one large settlement sponsored by Caltex, a museum was built and Caltex tourists visit the Sakai here by coach. In this concrete stream of roadside interactions, the indigenous people of the area are undergoing a radical shift from being a tribal forest people with their particular worldview, knowledge, and identity to being an Indonesian ethnic group called Sakai possessing a photographable culture (Porath 2002).

Embodying the motorized experience

Since we know that the Sakai were a timid people, it is interesting to imagine what people experienced when they saw the first oil trucks in the area, which was probably around the 1940s. Sakai say that people called the trucks *muta-*

ka. A person who first sighted a truck warned the others by yelling '*mutaka mutaka copet la'i ke imbo!*' (Motor car, motor car, quick, flee to the forest!). People would then drop everything and run panic-stricken to the woods. Interestingly, one of the shamanic spirits is of the last raja's sedan car and another of a red 1940s oil truck. Still today, a person can have a hallucinatory vision of a car parking in front of the settlement and the driver (spirit lover) beckoning the visionary to enter the vehicle. What was once visual pollution, today has been psychologically accommodated in a number of ways, as visionary spirits and as environmental road signs of eventual possibilities. People have learnt to read the roadscape as they live and move through it.

Most Sakai are used to travelling in motorized vehicles. Poorer Sakai do not own cars, although some individuals do own motorbikes which they have bought from the proceedings of land sales. Motorized vehicles have provided Sakai individuals with the experience of allowing their bodies to move at certain speeds that, traditionally, only spirits were conceived to be able to move at. Motorbike owners are proficient in balancing their vehicle with more than one person sitting behind them. Moreover, vehicle owners have basic mechanical knowledge about vehicle maintenance.

People who want to ride a motorbike learn from others. They first practise in the settlement and later try more distant travels. Sometime during my stay at Bah S's settlement I bought a motorbike. When I was not using it, Bah S practised riding it on the mound. After a couple of months he practised riding it on the dirt patch along the road. Toward the end of my stay a friend from an inner settlement told me that some time earlier he saw a motorbike coming slowly towards him with two unlikely people sitting on it. As the couple drew closer to him he was surprised to see that it was Bah S and his wife, who had just returned from the market of Balai Pungut. Until this moment, Bah S and his wife frequently travelled to this market by canoe. As a passenger on motorized vehicles, Bah S was already used to the experience of his body moving at higher speeds, although he was unable to ride a motorbike. In these few months he took the opportunity to learn what is fundamentally a new technique of the body and a new means of travel. Bah S is one of many indigenous people who were born in a forest society and for whom motorized vehicles were something Other, but recently have acquired knowledge of moving in the area using motorized technology.

The road as a tool for indigenous political mobilization

By 2000 the Sakai land issue and the future of Sakai prosperity has become an issue for the concerned Riau-Malay intelligentsia. More vocal Sakai are also aware of this problem. The dirt roads to the interior have allowed Sakai fam-

Figure 3. Embodying the motorized experience (photo: Nathan Porath)

ilies to re-enter the woods and reclaim land in traditional areas that they had been evicted from when land was legally assigned to shareholder companies. Families align their houses along the dirt road in accordance with government regulations, and even pre-empt developers with their own 'roads and development' ideology by demanding from authorities that the roads to their forest hamlets be improved. Sakai understand the importance of being connected to the greater Indonesian rural society and making it clear that they are not fleeing back into the woods. By rearticulating the development discourse that originally dispossessed them, Sakai have a greater opportunity to reclaim the remainder of their land.

In recent years the more courageous individuals have also been using the road and its transport to visit administrative state institutions and influential people concerned with their plight. These usually involve day visits to town, starting at dusk and returning just before dawn. After the change of government (1997) and in the spirit of reform (Reformasi), many Sakai have travelled the road in large groups to local towns to state their claims for land and the future of their prosperity before government personnel. In 1999 some 162 people crammed into two Caltex buses and travelled the high road to the provincial capital Pekanbaru to meet the then newly appointed governor of the province. For most of these travellers, this visit was their first to the provincial capital, and a major event for those who had to overstep a conceptual spatial boundary to visit a town which by car is only about two hours away from their bark houses. On this visit, the indigenous people were the governor's official visitors. Large groups of Sakai have also visited the administrative offices (*kecamatan*) in the nearby town of Duri.

Since 1998 the Sakai have been encouraged to demonstrate (*demo*) in front of the municipality building. In the post-Suharto spirit of Reformasi, Sakai call these visits '*po'i demo*', that is, 'to go on a demonstration'. The idea is that Sakai people are picked up by a truck and taken to the town hall, where they demonstrate (sometimes brandishing spears) and proclaim their dissatisfaction with the state of affairs (Colombijn 2000). *Po'i demo* is only possible by using road transport to arrive at the demonstration venue. Although Sakai can accrue social and economic benefits from these political demonstrations and official visits, such encouragement to demonstrate is itself part of development ideology and exposes Sakai to the new national political ideology of Reformasi. Thus, although land dispossession had come via the road, it is the same road that Sakai today are travelling on to demand their rights as indigenous Indonesians. The instrument of dispossession is now becoming a means to political mobilization and an instrument to help remedy the broken Sakai land relationship (Abramson 2000:10).

A comparison of the effects of river and road accessibility in periods one hundred years apart

In the above descriptions I presented two periods of state development processes in the area, the first occurring in the late nineteenth century under the tutelage of the Malay sultanate and the second occurring in the late twentieth century as part of modern Indonesian nation-state development schemes. Both periods of development seem to have been made possible by improving accessibility to the area. In the first, a river was cleared, whereas in the second a major road was built. The respective states carried out these construction

works not for the benefit of indigenous people but for their own economic purposes. The river was cleared to facilitate the transportation of rubber from the sultan's rubber plantation, and the road to facilitate the transportation of oil and later forest wood from the area. The sultan's plantation of about one thousand trees swallowed up a vast tract of land, although I do not believe that it affected indigenous people's actual relationship to land.¹⁴

Although the two state-owned oil companies have swallowed much of the territory, Sakai do not bear a grudge towards the company. First, not all of the territory has been transferred to the oil companies but only specific reserves. Secondly, Sakai perceive Caltex as a willing counterpart in aiding them to 'develop' (*bangun*) and 'progress' (*maju*), although this does lead them to a certain dependency on the company (Kunanyagam and Young 1998:142). Sakai were more concerned with the palm oil and rubber shareholding companies. As vacant land is the legal property of the state, shareholding companies have been encouraged to make use of the land. I have seen an aerial mapping in the local forestry department on which black lines demarcated the territory the company defined for its use. I tried to gain a sense of positioning of the map by following the lines representing the rivers. As the aerial map's location began to come into focus, it struck me that within the angle of the line representing the river's estuary lived Bah X, Bah Y, Bah Z, and further along the line was Bah A's hamlet and at another point was situated Bah R's settlement. All these people were living within the area demarcated by the lines on the map. From the company's perspective, represented through the demarcations on the map, these indigenous people's presence was not recorded: they do not exist (see also Kunanyagam and Young 1998). At that point the meaning of the words of one Riau-Malay intellectual dawned upon me: that the Suharto government wanted the land without its people (*Riau tanpa orangnya*). And here lies a major difference with the past. Although in theory the Sakai area and its resources were the property of the sultan, in practice the area only became part of the sultanate through the people's allegiance to the raja. The sultanate needed the people of the land to have access to it. They were the forest resource collectors of the area, and one is tempted to use the term 'professional primitives' coined by Fox (1969) to characterize their economic relationship to the Malay sultanate. The indigenous people of the area were the people who extracted the forest resources and they were the link to the land. Under modern nation-state conditions, the state could and does mobilize people who can do the forest and land resource extraction more efficiently for present-day economic needs and demands.

¹⁴ There is some evidence that Dutch and sultanate mining activities confined the indigenous people to the small area associated with their present location (Moszkowski 1909).

Accessibility to the area in both periods invited people to settle there. During the late nineteenth century many Chinese merchants were allowed to enter the area. It seems though that people who came to the area for economic reasons moved on after achieving their purpose. The area lacked a social infrastructure to attract people to stay. The road brought with it schools, health facilities, and markets, and other government institutions provided an infrastructure for a rural society. As Indonesians, Sakai have access to these institutions. Nevertheless, for many families these modern benefits do not always fit the mobile indigenous lifestyle, and it is migrants who tend to benefit most from them. For example, although Sakai demand schools and education for their children, the educational process demands residential permanency which Sakai families cannot guarantee. Children may enter a school only to be pulled out a year or two later because the parents decide to move elsewhere. Interestingly, Sakai children who live in interior settlements receive schooling, while many of those living along the road do not. Again, concerning health care, Sakai still turn to their shamans – and for good reason, as these men and women therapeutically serve people's psychological well-being. Many individuals (although not all) fear what they call the 'injection needle', and give this as a good reason they are scared to go to the clinic. Similarly, Sakai who are accustomed to the health care system proudly express their courage by stating that they are not scared of the needle anymore. Moreover, Sakai mothers are adamant about giving birth to their children in their own homes, aided by a Sakai midwife. Hence, like spirits, the clinic is a dispensary of medicine, but is also a dangerous unknown other.

The most telling similarity between the nineteenth century and the Suharto era is the social differentiation that emerged as a consequence of development schemes. In both periods, Sakai families were developing new consumer needs and a dependency on the outsider society. The economic differentiation of the two periods also seems to have been dependent on people's relationships with outsiders who travelled to the area. In the late nineteenth century some of the *batin* headmen were the sultan's clients and were granted certain privileges from him. Individuals related to Chinese and Malay merchants benefited economically from their affiliation with non-*batin* people. In the Suharto period many wealthier indigenous people of the area were those descended from families already benefiting from earlier development projects, such as children of ex-*batin* headmen or Sino or Malay Sakai. These individuals own much land, may live in concrete houses, and drive motor vehicles. They are also opportunistic, and can easily mobilize poorer Sakai for labour projects to satiate the economic demands of the greater society. These *orang bossi* (bosses) form the middlemen between poorer Sakai families and the larger Indonesian society, and benefit from this position (Suparlan 1995).

The major difference in the impact of development on the indigenous people is the scale of the projects, the technology to implement the projects, and the ideologies governing the projects (Lee 1992). The fact that such a road can be built and maintained requires knowledge, technology, financial resources, and the ability to employ people for construction tasks. The building of any road (and river clearance) is a historical moment congruent with ideas that underlie views about geography, forest, economy, tribal people, state, and nation. In the pre-modern kingdom, roads and rivers were paths to geographical and social peripheries. For example, in the late nineteenth century a dirt road stretched northwards from Pekanbaru leading to the surrounding dense forests but no further. The Pekanbaru-Duri-Dumai high road was built through the forest, which resembled an unmanaged garden securely situated within the boundaries of the nation-state. In the late twentieth century the road transformed the area from being on the margins of a downstream Malay power centre into an Indonesian development area (*daerah pembangunan*). Consequently the road redefined the Sakai sense of geographical positioning. Instead of an upstream/downstream orientation, the road reoriented people to a Pekanbaru-Duri direction. Within their locality the indigenous people were still marginalized (Tsing 1993).

In the late nineteenth century the guiding development ideology of the state seems to have been a project of Malayization. Some of the inhabitants of the upstream Mandau were undergoing a Malayization process, which may have been halted during the Japanese occupation. In the late twentieth century it is Indonesianization through the ideology of development and progress that reconfigures their identity. The indigenous people have become a monotheistic (most are Muslim but a few are Christian) Indonesian ethnic group called Sakai, possessing a displayable primitive Riau culture.

Conclusion

The modern road is part of a landscape of development, but is also an instrument, a technique of the development process. Roads are built for rational economic purposes and for this reason state and non-state funding bodies invest in their construction (Durman 2000). The road is an instrument of greater projects allowing the projects to move easily through an area. It is because roads are basic tools to facilitate movement that they provide cognitive metaphors for movement and intentions.

Roads are agents of change. Effects of a road, however, depend on what its builders intend to have cross it, what actually moves on it, what comes, and what stays. This also depends on the moral responsibilities and ideology of the sponsors of the road construction.

Present-day roads form part of a development landscape, a landscape associated with what Tilley (1994:20) calls a modern 'capitalist space'. Such a space is stripped of sedimentary layers of human meaning, the landscape is desanctified. The land is opened for exploitation, is set apart from people, myth, and history, and is rationally controlled and used (Tilley 1994:21). By contrast, the 'pre-capitalist space' the road runs through is also invested with forms of power, but with a qualitatively different landscape, associated with 'mythical understandings and ritual knowledge intimately linked with bodily routine and practices' (Tilley 1994:22). Although Tilley regards these two categorical descriptions of 'space' as being a 'high level of generality' (Tilley 1994:22), in practice the two spaces intermesh and become entangled with each other. For example, Caltex might see the area as an oilfield to be exploited, but the company is nevertheless placed in a moral relationship to the indigenous people who have been dispossessed of their lands and reduced to poverty.

On the other hand, the indigenous 'pre-modern space' has become entangled with the road landscape, and new forms of 'bodily routine and practices' have emerged. The road has become part of the everyday space Sakai move through. Sakai have been learning how to use the road, for their own purposes, exploiting it, cognitively mapping and registering its changes and the novelties it brings. Although the road's landscape does not usually feature in legend-landscapes and songs, it does enter into conversations about everyday happenings, anchoring the event to an identifiable area along the road and evoking a sense of place to the narrative (Basso 1984). The road landscape forms a continuity with the area's past and people's personal histories through their residential movements and recollection of events occurring along the road throughout their lifetime. Older Sakai can recount the history of the transformation of the road, and people's life histories have been made in relation to the road's geography. For example, Bah S's (and others') residential shifts along different parts of the road form part of his personal biography.

As they do in the forest, Sakai read the roadside environment and make their judgements for actions. Forest foraging activities have also been extended to the road by some poorer Sakai, such as gathering discarded metal or even asking people for money.

The road and transport vehicles have provided new dimensions to the process of kinship. People express their kin relationships with motor-vehicle owners by hitching rides, borrowing motorbikes, and learning how to ride. Vehicles also make visiting geographically distant kin, crucial for maintaining relationships, much easier, but also more temporary.

Through their roadside exposure, Sakai have been confronted with modernist ways of thinking about self through interactions with other Indonesians who visit them and who tend to see their modernity reflected back at them

when in the presence of poorer Sakai. These novel ways of thinking about self do not reflect a cultural continuity of practice under novel conditions and culture as embodied dispositions to act and interpret the world, but in bipolar terms and associations of 'traditional culture' and 'modern practice'. These interactions have provided novel ideas about 'tradition' (*tradisi*) 'culture' (*budaya*), and 'ethnicity' (*suku Sakai*). It is assumed that Sakai culture is not what they are doing along the road and with vehicles, but is what they did and do in the forest beyond the modernist experience. For Sakai, 'culture' becomes conceptually fenced off from the changes in their way of life and is objectified, but can also serve as an exploitable economic niche in roadside interactions.

Although the road and what came in its wake originally victimized Sakai, it has also provided them access to new political and economic possibilities within the already changed environment. Sakai have not simply adapted to the road's presence, but today move within its own transformative spheres. They have become part of the ethnic composition of the roadside society, a factor in the area's transformations, and through the use of the road they are forcing other Indonesians to recognize their indigenous place in the area's future.

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