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Introduction

- 1 'Morning tea with Tiwi Ladies' is one of the attractions for tourists visiting Bathurst and Melville Islands in northern Australia. Indigenous graveyards and the production of arts and crafts are part and parcel of the itinerary. The islands have a history of one hundred years as a 'destination culture' (Kirshenblatt- Gimblett 1998) for tourists and anthropologists alike. From the early years of the twentieth century onwards museum interests have been a steady factor in shaping the islanders' interrelationship with the wider world. Items of material culture were collected here in great quantities and ended up in museums all over the world. The current urge of metropolitan museums to set up a dialogue with source communities concerning collections assembled in the past, as well as indigenous people's reclaiming their dispersed cultural heritage, has gained considerable attention in the museum-studies literature (e.g., Simpson 1996; Peers and Brown 2003). Although local museum buildings may be of recent date, many indigenous 'source communities' have long since been affected by the process of museumification.
- 2 In this chapter I want to consider this process, and extend the idea of indigenous museums, by looking at twentieth-century Bathurst and Melville Islands through the lens of an open-air museum. This case study thus seeks to contribute to a better understanding of indigenous people in an evolving museumscape. In particular, I want to make clear that due to its museumification the so-called source community can be conceived of as being part and parcel of the circuit of museums. In this regard the source community is not a mere source of artefacts, but another museum in itself: a type of museum that comes close to an eco-museum or open-air museum. The

indigenous museum could be visited as such. De-accessioning of duplicates, of course, occurred to a greater extent than in metropolitan museums (although their involvement in exchanges with other such museums should not be underestimated). A shift in perspective, however, helps to see that the museal source community had its source in preexisting models of museumification. For example, the model of an open air-museum was around when Bathurst and Melville Islands opened in around 1905. It was a model with its antecedents in the world exhibitions (see Stoklund 2003). Museum interests had also become intertwined with the colonial enterprise (Fabian 2001). This was a ‘valuable advertisement of the country’s capabilities’, according to the then government resident, who established an ethnographic museum in his residence in the Northern Territory’s capital, immediately south of Bathurst and Melville islands (Herbert 1906). What is more, ‘Aboriginal cultural knowledge and material had been “up for sale” in the Northern Territory since the turn of the century’ (Povinelli 1993: 75). This commoditization also took place on Bathurst and Melville Islands (see Venbrux 2001, 2002), and it implied a production of difference. Baldwin Spencer, director of the National Museum of Victoria, conceived of them, in 1911–12, as ‘quite another world of aboriginal life’ (1928: 695). The islands were treated as an open-air museum. Museumification is closely linked to folklorization (De Jong 2001: 21–24), and likewise can be seen as special form of creation (Bogatyrev and Jakobson 1929). First and foremost, these are forms of cultural production sited in ‘an intercultural space’ (Merlan 1998; Myers 2002). In considering the museumification of the islands, both external influences and indigenous agency have to be taken into account. Below, I will discuss some of the conditions and local practices that constitute the process of museumification. I want to show how local, indigenous people have participated in an evolving global museumscape over the past hundred years. In the last few decades the islands have not only served as a kind of open-air museum, particularly in terms of small-scale tourism, but also boast indoor exhibition rooms. These galleries further enhance the process of museumification of local history and culture. Referring to the early twentieth-century example of Richard Thurnwald’s open-air museum in the island of Buin, Nick Stanley (this volume) States that the open-air museum provides a model that ‘thrives today in most of the cultural centres across the Pacific’. With regard to the case of Bathurst and Melville Islands I would like to go a step further, and demonstrate that this source community for a hundred years has been a de facto open-air museum. The process of museumification, in other words, may be more decisive than the formal product or institution when we are speaking of or conceptualizing an indigenous museum: the indigenous museum as a cultural form has a future firmly rooted in the past.

A Preserved Site

- 3 At the height of the ‘museum period’ (1880–1920; cf. Stocking 1983), Europeans gained access to Bathurst and Melville Islands. It was generally believed that in the two islands – at a distance of 60 km from the principal port in northern Australia – a pristine, primordial culture had been preserved. ‘For long ages past a narrow stretch of water seems to have isolated the Islanders with their remarkable culture’ (Spencer 1928: 709). The islanders formed ‘the one tribe which offered consistent, uncompromising resistance to European intrusion’ until the eve of the twentieth century (Reid 1990: 97). Consequently, the islands were seen as one of the few remaining locations where ‘the

aboriginal in his natural State' could still be observed (Spencer 1914: 41; cf. Klaatsch 1908: 674; Basedow 1913: 291). Both the landscape and the inhabitants of this secluded space happened to be designated as 'wild' and 'picturesque' by early twentieth-century visitors (Venbrux 2001). In their gaze it seemed faithful to the image of a primitive isolate, 'a hermetic aesthetic place' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991) not unlike a museum park. European visitors tended to regard the islanders as museum pieces, 'a relic of the early childhood of mankind' (Spencer 1922: 13). These Aborigines, 'hitherto practically uncontaminated by European influence' (Frazer 1912: 73), provided a unique opportunity to come face-to-face with humanity's contemporary ancestors. Thus framed visits to the islands helped to create a local 'experience economy' (Pine and Gilmore 1999) geared towards showing a primeval Aboriginal life-world in evidence.

- 4 Visitor expectations had their antecedents in social theorizing, and its popular dissemination in exhibitions, representing the Australian Aborigines as the primitive society *par excellence* (Kuper 1988, Morphy 1988, Hiatt 1996). How persistent the idea of a primitive isolate was follows from the account of a *National Geographic* expedition in the 1950s. The leader presents the islanders as 'one of the few archaic peoples left on earth'. The visiting party was 'travelling backward in time' and 'in the little-known land ... would see man living as much as he did 50,000 years ago' (Mountford 1956: 417). At that time, Bathurst and Melville Islands were Aboriginal reserves.
- 5 Throughout the twentieth century the islands, in addition to the physical boundaries, have been hedged around with legal barriers restricting access. They were initially leased to private interests, then declared Aboriginal reserves, and finally granted as Aboriginal land. Permission was required to gain entrance to the islands. (Since the 1980s tourists have been required to pay a visitors' fee.) The marked-off area in this sense also resembles an open-air museum. The distinctive 'world of aboriginal life' that Spencer and others found here was attributed to the islands' isolation until early in the twentieth century. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, sporadic exchanges took place with the crews of visiting ships. In 1824, Melville Island even became the site of the first colonial settlement in northern Australia. But the British Fort Dundas, a military and trading post, turned out to be a failure. Within five years the fort had to be abandoned (Campbell 1834). Although no friendly relations with the islanders were established, an indigenous graveyard with sculptured posts had been observed, the record of which was to inspire later European visitors. The remains of the short-lived fort would also become a popular destination for them. Among white people in Palmerston (the present city of Darwin, founded in 1869) on the mainland, the islanders had a reputation for hostility (Foelsche 1882: 17; Swoden 1882: 21) probably as a result of the earlier failure to establish friendly relations with them at Fort Dundas, and their subsequent attacks on people who visited or were stranded on the islands.¹ Requests by prospectors, speculators and Jesuit missionaries to be granted land on the islands were turned down by the administration (Reid 1990). The financial crises of the early 1890s (Trainor 1994) must have paved the way for the government to give Europeans access to the islands' resources, including timber and feral buffaloes (a legacy of the British fort). Hence, intermittent buffalo shooting took place on Melville Island from 1895 onwards. Some crews of Asian ships (operating from the mainland port) that frequented the islands' waters developed more peaceful relations with the islanders (Pilling 1958: 17). Cape Gambier, in the southwest of Melville Island, was to be

the primary 'contact zone'; the closest anchorage to the mainland, a function that it continued to fulfil when Europeans took over.

- 6 The Source Community as a Living Museum The new era, one of sustained contact with Europeans, commenced in 1905. The governor landed in the southwest of Melville Island with a party of Europeans 'in the hope of meeting some wild natives, which was the principal object of H.E.'s visit to the island' (*The Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, 9 June 1905). But they failed to meet them. In the second half of June, however, a white man named Joe Cooper established himself on Melville Island as the lessee's manager. In the previous decade Cooper and associates had ventured into the island several times to shoot buffalo for their hides and horns. Encounters of these parties with the islanders had been of a violent nature. Cooper now gained access with the help of a few islanders he had kidnapped in 1896. He was accompanied by his brother and an armed workforce of thirty mainland Aborigines. Their gun power was instrumental in the 'pacification' of the islands. The Cooper brothers took up buffalo shooting; to a lesser extent they engaged in logging and trepanging (collecting sea cucumbers or *bêche-de-mer*). The Coopers and their mainland employees camped on various places on the island. Young islander men became attached to the camps, working in exchange for introduced foods and goods.
- 7 Once the enterprise was established it attracted a stream of European visitors. These visitors relied on Cooper's protection and the guidance, transport and other facilities offered by him. A major objective was to view 'wild' Aborigines and their cultural expressions in the islands that had been out of bounds before. Already some European men and women had 'availed themselves of this opportunity for a flying visit to the island' when the Coopers shipped in horses and gear: 'Mr. Corr, who had taken his camera with him, is said to have obtained a good snapshot of a group of wild natives, who are described as a far finer and healthier looking lot than their opium and alcohol contaminated compatriots in and around the settled districts of the mainland' (*The Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, 30 June 1905). The shift in the colonial frontier brought first-hand experience of 'genuine' Aborigines within reach. 'The opening door', to use Morris's expression (2001: 79), was one to a living museum. Cooper was quick to pick up on this interest: evidence of the islanders' authenticity and distinctiveness could be presented. His guests witnessed the performance of dances and ceremonies by the islanders, were shown burial sites, and often paid a visit to the remains of Fort Dundas. Furthermore, the visitors were given demonstrations of primitive technology, took photographs, and obtained ethnographic artefacts from the islanders in exchange for trade goods. An example of this pattern of visitor activities, is the account of a visit provided by a German scientist, Hermann Klaatsch, in September 1906. Europeans on the mainland were to read it, under the heading 'A trip to Melville Island', in the newspaper. Klaatsch considered his brief stay at Cooper's camp 'an experience never to be forgotten by him'. He not only had 'the most invigorating and glorious natural bath conceivable' in a waterhole (something still on offer for tourists) in a 'picturesque valley', but he also relates that he 'on each night was an interested spectator of corroborees inaugurated in honour of his visit by the natives' (*The Northern Times and Gazette*, 5 October 1905). Although the scientist was primarily interested in data to confirm his evolutionary theory that Aborigines represented 'the missing link', he sought to fund his endeavour by bartering for ethnographic objects at source and selling them to metropolitan museums.⁴ Given those museums' demand for Aboriginal artefacts, he was able to get a handsome profit by playing them off against each other

(Völger 1986). His trade, facilitated by Cooper, also smoothed his relations with the islanders with whom he was unable to speak (Klaatsch 1908: 586). What is more, islanders frequently took the initiative and approached European visitors. The islanders' 'mercantile ambitions' (Fabian 2001: 129), resulting in a commodified display of culture, coincided with the quest of visitors to witness and document a pristine, authentic Aboriginal culture before it was 'too late'. The formation of such a 'destination culture', an intercultural space, however, implied a shift in the context of indigenous cultural practices. In particular, the change in function and meaning of objects, dances and so forth, entailed their museumification (cf. De Jong 2001). This extended to the islanders themselves, being subjected to the visitors' gaze (cf. Rooijackers and Van de Weijer 2002). In accordance with the image of the islands as an open-air museum, there was a certain selectiveness as to what merited attention. The focus was on matters that demonstrated the authenticity and distinctiveness of the islands' Aborigines.

- 8 For Europeans Aboriginal dances and ceremonies provided a sort of litmus test of authenticity (Povinelli 1993: 74), evidence that they were dealing with 'genuine' Aborigines. A clear example of the islanders' adjustment to this expectation are the so-called 'welcome dances' with which they greeted European visitors upon arrival in exchange for tobacco (Klaatsch 1908; Basedow 1908; Spencer 1914, 1928; Gsell 1956: 47). The dances for entertainment, furthermore, could be staged at any moment and place convenient for a European audience (Murphy 1920; Hill 1943; Simpson 1954). Basedow remarks that 'whenever we came into contact with the blacks and presented them with divers small articles, a corroboree was immediately inaugurated; even though the encounter happened to occur in the middle of the day' (1913: 305). Such dances are performed for tourists up to the present day. The staging of welcome dances for visitors was one thing, a flexibility in the schedule of planned rituals another. It is no coincidence (although they believed that it was) that one visitor after another had the 'good luck' or 'good fortune' to attend ceremonies being held (Venbrux 2001). They did not have to wait for long to see one; especially postfuneral rituals – dance and song ceremonies – that could take place between two months and two years after a death.⁵ Spencer (1914, 1928) regarded the mortuary rituals as 'the wildest' he had ever witnessed in the whole of Australia. They offered sought-after photo opportunities. The timing of the visitor-attended rituals can also be seen as an indigenous strategy to generate an instant collection of artefacts. Next, the second-hand, desirable 'authentic' objects could be transacted to the visiting Europeans, who collected such items – 'used in ritual' – almost without exception. The influence of external museum interests also showed in the preference for distinctive Aboriginal artefacts, unique to the islands. In demonstrating a particular interest in precisely those things that distinguished the islanders from mainland Aborigines, European visitors cum collectors contributed to a museumification of local culture that was not only selective but also determined by what stood out from a European perspective. In due time, however, these items also became accepted as cultural icons by the islanders themselves. The favoured objects included barbed spears, bark containers and grave posts, all decorated with geometrical designs. The period before the First World War, when Westerners – museums, in particular – had the greatest interest in acquiring artefacts of Australian Aborigines, was formative in this respect. Indigenous handicrafts were also included in submissions to exhibitions aiming to show the Northern Territory's potential for development. At the first Australian Women's Exhibition in Melbourne in 1907, for

instance, 'the work of Aboriginal women from Melville Island was particularly featured' (James 1989: 71). For Cooper the transactions of his visitors went hand in hand with his commercial interests. It created the goodwill of visiting dignitaries and earned him some money. He not only facilitated the collection of artefacts by representatives of museums but also acted as an agent, trading in ethnographic objects, and if necessary commissioning them to size (Venbrux 2001). Cooper attained legendary status as 'the only white man among hundreds of savages' (Masson 1915: 57). He was appointed sub-protector of the Aborigines on Melville Island. In addition to the authoritative knowledge of islander culture with which European visitors (including Baldwin Spencer) credited him, this seemed some kind of curatorial role.

- 9 In 1911 the federal government took over the administration of the Northern Territory from South Australia. At that point, Father Gsell, a French missionary of the Sacred Heart order, established a small mission station at the southeastern point of Bathurst Island, opposite Cooper's camp on Melville. The southeastern part of Bathurst Island was leased to the Roman Catholic Mission, and the rest declared an Aboriginal reserve. When Cooper left the islands in 1916, his honorary role of sub-protector was transferred to a priest at the mission station. Although the European presence in the islands was of crucial importance for visitors, indigenous agency should not be underrated.
- 10 Some islanders acted as stranger-handlers. They specialized in guiding European visitors (Hart 1954). The latter were given demonstrations of the making and painting of, among other things, bark baskets, spears and grave posts. And they could hardly miss seeing dances and ceremonies. Even near the mission station performances of 'pagan' ceremonies were staged for parties of European tourists. Sometimes such an almost inpromptu ceremony 'was not well done' in the opinion of the Islanders.⁶ The visitors often happened to be too short of time for a properly prepared 'corroboree'. 'The advent of the due date was accelerated by a liberal distribution of tobacco', notes a member of a party of nine Europeans visiting the mission station in 1920 (Murphy 1920: 79). It had become standard practice for Europeans to hand out tobacco and trade goods to Aborigines as an incentive (Basedow 1926: 100). These visitors often relied upon information from earlier visitors. They behaved in a predictable way, revisiting the same places (e.g., burial sites with the prized grave posts, waterholes, the remains of the British fort). Those in the business of showing Europeans around would also direct them to the camps of close relatives. Moreover, along established routes Aborigines approached or pointed the way. Important in this respect was the area around Papiiau beach, in the northeast of Bathurst Island, at the Apsley Strait. Boats that went up the Apsley Strait had to wait for the tide to turn between Papiiau, on Bathurst, and Fort Dundas, on Melville Island. During the stop-over Bathurst Islanders approached by canoe, taking the opportunity to trade their artefacts with European passengers.⁷ Willing visitors were also led to an indigenous camp a little inland. Here they were shown, among other things, the production of bark baskets and aspects of ceremonial life.
- 11 Conigrave writes that at the Papiiau camp a number of 'freshly painted' spears stood ready: 'These, and many baskets and other objects of native arts and crafts, we took in barter, and we soon had a full cargo for the dinghy' (1936: 169). Furthermore, it appeared that the Islanders were used to posing for photographs, even in the anthropometric style so popular with museums (cf. Venbrux and Jones 2002). Hence

there was the perception of a 'photographic salon': 'our subjects very quickly seized our anxiety to take them full face and profile. If when the former had been taken, a native was slow in turning for his other portrait, he was given some "hurry-up" by those looking on, and when the focal plane shutter went off with a snap, there was satisfied clicking of tongues against their cheeks that seemed to assure us that we had done our job well' (Conigrave 1936: 170). The site had the double function of production centre and tourist trap. The Aboriginal reserve or living museum, if it may be called so, thus was less 'uncontaminated by European influence' than often supposed. The source community underwent dramatic changes in many respects (see Pye 1985; Venbrux 2000b), but despite the impact of external forces attention focused on those areas that were thought to represent 'traditional' (read: precontact) Aboriginal society, frozen in time. These were set apart, lifted out of context, as is characteristic of museumification. European visitors and museums wanted the tokens of 'real' or 'authentic' Aborigines. European representations of the Islanders (in museum collections, earlier accounts and popular culture) fed back into local cultural production. Time and again, while adjustments had to be made to economic and sociocultural change, emphasis was put – as regards hunting and gathering, ceremonies, and artefacts – on the past. The understandings of that past shifted in a process of negotiation between indigenous people's current ideas about the past (*palingari*) and consumer expectations over time. 'Being ourselves for you', as Stanley (1995) notes in his book of the same title, can be read in two directions. The encounters contributed to a mutual process of identity formation.

- 12 In need of a tribal name for the Bathurst and Melville Islanders anthropologist C.W.M. Hart coined the word Tiwi (meaning 'human beings'; Hart 1930). The Islanders themselves gradually accepted the designation Tiwi as an expression of their communal identity. Besides dance and ceremony, distinctive artefacts and a characteristic painting style came to be seen as icons of Tiwi-ness. The massive production of 'authentic' objects from the beginning of the twentieth century, kept in European museums, slowed down somewhat in the period between the two world wars. Yet, European visitors to the islands (and Darwin, where the islanders sometimes performed for Europeans and traded in artefacts) still wanted look-a-likes of these emblematic museum artefacts as mementoes. In time these would also end up in museums. To satisfy demand Islanders continued to produce the bark containers long after they had fallen into disuse. The large barbed spears that had proven to be ineffective against highpowered rifles at the time of 'pacification' (Powell 1988: 124) remained collectors' items. The same was true for grave posts, often repainted by the islanders for European customers (Venbrux 2001). The cultural heritage presented was mainly so-called decorative art. Even previously undecorated bark containers were painted (see Venbrux 2002). Instead of the spear being three to four metres in length, and therefore difficult to transport elsewhere, the Islanders started to produce barbed spearheads. Members of the allied armed forces who resided in the islands during the Second World War acquired many of these transformed objects (some have now been repatriated to the Milewurri Museum in Milikapiti on Melville Island). In the next few decades islander carvers further transformed them into fantasy pieces (with exaggerated proportions and ornaments) for European visitors looking for 'primitive' art. These objects too ended up in private collections and museums, and came to be seen as timeless and authentic. 'It is a marvel that their culture has survived with so little change', remarks Mountford with regard to the year 1954 (1956: 417). At that

time, however, the majority of the islanders lived at the Bathurst Island mission and on the two government settlements, Garden Point and Snake Bay, on Melville Island (formally an Aboriginal reserve since 1933). Government policy towards Aborigines had changed from 'protection' to assimilation. In 1953 a bill had been passed that made Aborigines on reserves 'wards of the State', in effect, inmates of a total institution (Rowley 1972). Placed under close supervision of European superintendents, they were supposed to adopt a European lifestyle and work ethic. Despite 'a complete ecclesiastical ban' on indigenous ceremonies at the Bathurst Island mission (Mountford 1958: 60), the missionaries encouraged the production of artefacts (along with other handicrafts) for sale (Venbrux 2000a). Mountford on Melville Island gave a new turn to the idea of local, 'traditional' Aboriginal society.

- 13 He did so not only by promoting a novel form of bark paintings (derived from the bark containers), but also by instigating mythological themes as the subject matter for the works. Although he had been unable to detect such themes in either islander designs or ceremony (see Mountford 1958: 110, 160), the new emphasis on myths of creation times demonstrated in European perception that the islanders were 'genuine' Aborigines. The Islanders responded creatively to the European desire for Dreamtime stories which were known from exhibitions and publications of Arnhem Land bark paintings. Adding to the mystique were figurative carvings of 'mythical ancestors', another innovation (emerging from the tradition of carving grave posts, and probably inspired by the statues of Catholic saints). This striking art attracted many visitors from the 1950s to the 1970s, wanting to see the islanders and getting work and stories from them. Because visitors needed permission of the responsible government department in order to enter the islands, white superintendents on both islands acted as intermediaries. Dances and ceremonies continued to be performed for European tourists.
- 14 The shift towards mythological interpretations in museum representations of Aborigines had a clear impact on the source community. The entanglement was to be even greater because the formidable collection of innovative work made and inspired by Mountford was disseminated to State museums, supposedly representing the source community's tradition in its most authentic form. It was indeed becoming a tradition in its own right: repeatedly – in the 1960s, the 1980s, and around 2000 – Europeans engaged in the local arts and crafts industry referred islanders to (illustrations of) the bark paintings with mythological themes from 1954 as *the* example of proper traditional art. In recent years, a number of islanders were sent to view them in museum stores in order to reclaim 'traditional Tiwi imagery' (Burbidge 2000: 17). There have been frequent exhibitions of carvings and paintings with a mythological story assembled by notable collectors (such as Dorothy Bennett, Karel Kupka, Louis A. Allen, Helen Groger-Wurms and Sandra Holmes) in the period from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s. Today these works dominate the representation of Bathurst and Melville Islanders in the Northern Territory Art Gallery and Museum in Darwin: 'the museum effect' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991: 410–413) has left an imprint on tourists to the islands.
- 15 A reflection of the museumification of islander culture in the postwar era can also be seen in the appearance of ceremonial scenes and artefacts as subjects of paintings on bark and in the carving of sets of miniature grave posts. The implementation of the policy of assimilation made inroads on the islander lifeworld (cf. Department of the Territories 1963). In the face of modernization it was believed that certain ceremonies

were 'no longer valued' by the islanders themselves (Goodale 1971: 225). They would inevitably cease to exist (Mountford 1958). It could no longer be taken for granted that the mortuary rituals, forbidden by the missionaries, were still being carried out (Brandl 1971). A European visitor could not help observing the sociocultural change 'without feeling the breath of a dying culture on the back of your neck' (Simpson 1954: 162). Another visitor, cartoonist Eric Joliffe, was of opinion that 'Melville Island bark paintings would shortly affect Western-style industrial design': 'The patterns are all original, which is what designers are looking for. They show no trace of influence by any other culture' (*The Northern Territory Times*, 12 August 1954).

- 16 Other artistically inclined visitors, in 1958, commissioned new grave posts, rather than a repainting of discarded ceremonial ones. Islanders carved and painted the posts in front of cameras, as it was an event in itself, to be carefully documented for a museum (see Neale 2000: 82–87). This set of posts was the first Aboriginal work put on display, in 1959, in 'a major art institution' (The Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, Jones 1988: 175). Although the posts had long been prominent in ethnographic collections from Melbourne to the Vatican, this new production of course increased the desirability of this icon for museums and for visitors to the islands of viewing the 'real' thing at burial sites or in ceremonies.
- 17 In the 1960s Aborigines gradually acquired civil rights. In 1977 a bill was passed to grant land rights to Aborigines on reserves in the Northern Territory. Government policy towards Aborigines gradually changed from assimilation to self-determination or self-management. To secure decision-making power over their lands, the people from Bathurst and Melville Islands created their own land council in 1978. The Tiwi Land Council, formed by delegates of the islands' 'traditional owners,' administers the Tiwi Land Trust. With the decline in supervision of their daily lives, the right to social security benefits, and the regaining of their lands, Aboriginal societies in northern Australia underwent a cultural renaissance. The cultural revival in Bathurst and Melville Islands was, I think, initiated by the performance of two old-style ceremonies or postfuneral rituals in the 1970s. These were recorded on film at the explicit request of the close relatives of the deceased. In this respect the record differed from Baldwin Spencer's filming of these ceremonies in 1912: the people concerned wanted to have it as a document of their culture. But they also took pride in the registrations being released as ethnographic films. That the rituals no longer needed to be hidden from the missionaries also meant that a wider participation was possible. This celebration of culture was further emphasized in the fact that the Tiwi Land Council welcomed anthropologists to document the reflowering ceremonial life (cf. Grau 1983; Goodale 1988; Venbrux 1995). Sometimes such an anthropologist would hear islanders claim in their lyrics that they were 'important', because white people came to see (or listen) to them. The elderly, who had obtained the skills and knowledge, led the ceremonies; in areas of uncertainty they often referred to 'the old people' from the past to convince others that things had to be done in a certain way.⁸ Apart from burials, the other main ceremonies were held at weekends to fit in with a Westernized lifestyle.
- 18 An objectification of culture took place in the so-called 'culture classes' in primary schools. At times, older people were invited to tell the children 'traditional' stories, to teach them Tiwi songs, and to instruct them in bush crafts and the performance of 'traditional' dances, and to demonstrate the making of artefacts. 'Tiwi culture' was embraced in manifold ways at the Bathurst Island mission: in bilingual education, the

decoration of the church interior and mission premises with Tiwi designs, hymns in Tiwi and sometimes the adding of 'traditional' dances to the liturgy, integrating Mass with islander funeral dance and song ceremonies, and even allowing grave posts (previously rejected as 'a pagan symbol', see Fallon 1991: 13) to be erected at the Catholic cemetery. Clerical vestments and chalices were produced in 'Tiwi style' by the local arts and crafts industry, started up by the missionaries in the late 1960s. Under the guidance of European 'arts advisers' this industry would further develop; also on Melville Island, drawing on the Tiwi pictorial tradition and ceremonial life and objects of the past. Locally printed fabrics with a Tiwi Design trademark came into use as loin cloths and skirts and as payments for ritual services in mortuary rites, as well as being sold to tourists.

- 19 From 1980 onwards, the people from Bathurst and Melville Islands have been involved in the development of a local tourist industry. It was one of the first ventures considered to provide economic support for 'Tiwi national development' (Tiwi Land Council 1990: 5). Over the years Tiwi Tours has contributed greatly to the museumification of the Islander life-world. It has been run mostly by European managers or operators in joint venture. It focuses on cultural and ecotourism (see Venbrux 2000a). The idea of an open-air museum is strongly suggested by the promotional pamphlet. Here the itinerary and highlights on the map show what is on offer. Inevitably, visits are suggested to burial sites with grave posts and to the remains of Fort Dundas, with a swim in a scenic waterhole, demonstrations of the production of artefacts, dance and ceremony, and the purchase arts and crafts. Some islanders specialize in guiding the European visitors. The camps that were production centres have been replaced by workshops and art centres. Tourists arrive by plane, and are moved around in the islands in motor vehicles and motorized boats. The former church of the Bathurst Island mission, a wooden construction, has become part of the cultural heritage on display.
- 20 Nearby the story of the mission is told in a museum. The 'picturesque' towards the end of the twentieth century gained a new meaning with the ubiquitous paintings in Tiwi style in contact zones. This aestheticizing with the help of murals sends the same message as the freshly painted spears that stood ready for European visitors at Papiiau camp in 1914. Tiwi fine art is now purchased in large quantities by all the major museums in Australia and several others overseas. It is through this continuous history of collection that indigenous people have been involved in an evolving museumscape over a period of a hundred years. The source community, in effect, has continued to exist as a living museum.

Museum Constructions

- 21 In the late twentieth century the people of Melville and Bathurst Islands have themselves adopted strategies of salvage ethnography such as recording oral histories and knowledge relating to practices, ceremonies, plant and flora (Puruntatameri et al. 2001). They have also collected traditional artefacts in museums, with a view to retaining their culture. Broadcasts on the islands' closed-circuit television system serve the same purpose. In the 1990s the Tiwi Land Council, fearing a loss of culture, decided to start paying people for the performance of 'traditional' ceremonies, including mortuary rites. A long-term dream of a Tiwi Cultural Centre at Three-Ways (on Melville

Island), where the roads to the three major townships meet, has not yet materialized. The maquette has become a museum piece in the offices. It may eventually happen under the new Tiwi Islands Regional Government. But here, as in other source communities such as the Torres Strait Islands (see Herle, this volume), there are more urgent matters and problems first to be taken care of (e.g., keeping the Australian government to its promises to fund badly needed health programmes). Yet, two local museums, one on Bathurst Island, the other on Melville, already exist.

- 22 The Patakijjali Museum at Nguui (Bathurst Island) was started by Sister Ann Gardner of the Bathurst Island Mission in corrugated iron sheds on the mission grounds dating from the Second World War. The buildings had previously been used as a bakery and dining rooms for children staying at the mission. The museum initially consisted of a collection of artefacts, donated by local people, especially the late Raphael and Declan Apuatimi, who had a close association with the mission. The museum was ventilated by fans, but there was no airconditioning. From the 1980s onwards, the museum has become a small-scale attraction to tourists visiting the islands. In the early 1990s, the exhibition rooms were professionally upgraded under the guidance of curator Glenn Cole from the Department of Regional Museums of Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences in Darwin. The museum is named after the founder of the Roman Catholic mission, Father Gsell (Patakijjali).
- 23 Currently, the museum contains three galleries, which have a similarity in style to the ones at the museum in Darwin. The first room celebrates the history of the mission. Next is the gallery known as Arraliki or the Tiwi Culture Room. Here 'traditional' artefacts, historical photographs and explications about the habitat of the mangrove swamps and hunting and gathering are on display. Finally, one enters Apupwamkiyimi or the Tiwi Dreaming Room, which connects creation myths with the yam ritual, mortuary rituals and the production of bark baskets (cf. Tungatalum and Cole 1996). Photographs, texts and objects illuminate the making of the bark containers. An arrangement of standing grave posts relates to the mortuary rituals. In the middle of the room a miniature diorama shows the scene of the performance of a seasonal ritual in progress. Photographs and accompanying texts provide some explanation. The last two galleries about the traditional way of life and the 'Dreaming' (ritual and cosmology) stand in stark contrast to the first gallery, which is dedicated to technological achievement and development accomplished by the mission. In order not to upset local Aboriginal visitors, pieces of paper are temporarily pasted over the tabooed photographs of the recently deceased.
- 24 The Muluwurri Museum at Milikapiti on Melville Island was founded at the end of the 1980s. Anne Marchant, then an adult educator, took the initiative. The air-conditioned, one-room museum or gallery is part of a larger complex of buildings containing the Jilamara arts and crafts centre. According to Marchant, the museum in the newly built complex had several functions: preserving a selection of locally produced artefacts or art, stimulating Tiwi artists, attracting tourists and serving as a community museum of culture and history (personal communication). Again, assistance was provided by the Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences in Darwin through the government-funded Regional Museums Programme for the establishment of Cultural Keeping Places. The upgrading of the museums has also served to improve 'the tourist infrastructure' (Cole 1996: 19–20). On display are artefacts such as a set of grave posts, spears, clubs and throwing sticks, carvings of birds and human figures, and bark

containers. Photographs depict islanders performing mortuary rituals. A small case shows some of the medals Tiwi men received for their services in the Second World War. From that period there are also repatriated spearheads hung on the wall.

- 25 Artists Pedro Woneaemirri and John Wilson proudly led me to their museum, in 1998, to show me some of their sculptural work in progress. Wilson, Woneaemirri and others, at times, used to paint inside the museum as a comfortable place to be. Unlike the other art centres in the islands, the people at Milikapiti only use 'natural pigments' for paint. Their work is in demand as, for instance, a significant order from a dealer in Amsterdam attested. Wilson produced a photocopy from a catalogue with works made at Milikapiti in the 1960s and 1970s. A female collector from Queensland had commissioned him to create a grave post containing carved human figures, similar to the one on the photocopy he received. Woneaemirri expressed a strong interest in my records of a seasonal ritual he attended as a child with his late grandmother at Pirlangimpi almost a decade ago (cf. Venbrux 1995: 119–49). He felt empty, he said, because so many of the older generation had died there. His interest in recent history took on a personal meaning. The photographs in the museum speak about relatives and events; like artefacts, they embody a history of social relations and distinctive, personal identities. The primary purpose of the museum attached to the art centre, as on Bathurst Island, is a display of Tiwi culture for visitors. These museums are part of the cultural-tourism infrastructure. So also are the art centres which serve as outlets for arts and crafts. The art centres are integrated into special art tours by plane. Tourists come to see indigenous artists at work in situ. Framing the visitors' gaze not only contributes to 'the museum effect', as a 'genuine' museum with objects not for sale, but it also seems to increase the desirability for things that are apparently special and rare. In 2002, an art centre at Pirlangimpi (Melville Island) was also planning to start a museum. This was to be something different to the art and artefacts for sale on display in a special room. The Keeping Place at Nguui (Bathurst Island), however, seems to have the magic and secrecy of museum.⁹ It is a striking building, the interior decorated with Tiwi paintings, hidden somewhat between the airstrip and the community.
- 26 Here tourists could freely look around among the artefacts on display for sale. A selection of these products went to museums, either directly or indirectly. Museum interests have helped to shape the islands' destination culture. Bathurst and Melville Islands have been a locus of musealization ever since the era of sustained contact with Europeans commenced in 1905. It was in this initial phase that a pattern of interaction emerged which may be considered a cultural form in its own right. The source community from which artefacts were (and are) withdrawn gained the outlook of a living museum. It is as such a site of dialogue that can be seen as part of a global museumscape.
- 27 Had Baldwin Spencer, who 'had always wanted to see Melville Island' (1928: 641), visited the islands at the end of the twentieth century, he would have seen 'quite another world of aboriginal life' (1928: 695). Currently, a life-sized statue of Spencer is sitting in a glass box in the Melbourne Museum. He is surrounded by artefacts from Bathurst and Melville Islands, dating from 1911–1912. Islanders have come to visit.
- 28 The exhibit invites viewers to reflect on the terms of understanding, in the past and the present.

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