RRIPANGU YIRDAKI: NEGOTIATING MUSICAL IDENTITIES IN A NORTHEAST ARNHEM LAND TOURISM BUSINESS

BY

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ABSTRACT

Rripaŋu Yidaki is a grassroots tourism business, dedicated to the craft and study of the didjeridu, initiated, owned, and maintained by one Aboriginal family in the far north of Australia. Because of their work as Aboriginal musicians in the tourism industry, members of the Gurruwiwi family are identified, and sometimes self-identify, with common perceptions of Aboriginal enterprises as being “authentic,” “indigenous,” and “ecological.” These perceptions and self-identifications are important parts of the Gurruwiwis’ musical identity, which like all identities is composite and situationally-contingent, meaning that particular aspects of this musical identity are highlighted or become salient in particular situations. The tourist encounter is one such situation, particularly noteworthy in that it is rife with tensions between tourists’ preconceptions and the self-representations of host societies.

In the case of Rripaŋu Yidaki the tensions between preconceptions and self-representations of the “authentic,” the “indigenous,” and the “ecological” produce consequences that directly impact the sustainability of both the Gurruwiwi family’s business and the long-standing musical practices upon which it is based. The more negative of these consequences could be mitigated somewhat by increased scholarly participation in developing resources for and actively facilitating a more informed, transparent, and comprehensible kind of musical tourism.
CAUTION TO ABORIGINAL READERS

This document contains the names and photographic images of Aboriginal people who are deceased. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers, particularly Yolŋu who may know the deceased, are urged to approach this work with caution.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Djalu' Gurruwiwi, a Yolŋu Aboriginal musician, and his family run a home business in the far north of Australia, through which they make a substantial portion of their livelihoods teaching the basics of didjeridu playing and craftsmanship to tourists visiting the region. As in any business, public perception of the family’s activities and the family’s ability to influence this perception through actively shaping their public identity are key to the success of the family business. This thesis examines the ways that musical practices heavily inform the self-representation and outside perception of this Aboriginal family to the extent that they can be said to have a fully-fledged and multifaceted musical identity. This identity impacts their relationships with other local Aboriginal people and outsiders in a variety of ways, and significantly affects both the success of their family enterprise, and they ways they are able to do business. Three identity characteristics common to many tourist perceptions of non-Western musicians, and in some cases also a significant part of the musicians’ self-representations, are particularly salient to the Gurruwiwi family’s business. These characteristics are commonly glossed by the adjectives “authentic,” “indigenous,” and “natural” or “ecological.”

The first chapter of this thesis provides relevant background information to this

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1 This thesis follows orthography conventions for Yolŋu Matha words and names developed by missionary linguist Beulah Lowe in the 1930s, and used today to teach literacy of Yolŋu languages in Yolŋu community schools in Australia’s northeast Arnhem Land region, and at Charles Darwin University (Lowe, 1996; Christie and Gaykamaŋu, 2001; see also http://learnline.cdu.edu.au/yolngustudies/index.htm). For the benefit of the reader, Appendices B and C present a guide to pronouncing Yolŋu Matha phonemes and a glossary containing all the Yolŋu Matha terms used in this work.

Observant readers will note that the name Rrippaŋu Yiḏaki is spelled differently in the title of this work. This is due to formatting constraints imposed by the University of Illinois Thesis Office. The title follows an orthography developed by anthropologist Howard Morphy, which unfortunately does not capture the full range of semantically-significant Yolŋu Matha phonemes as well as the Lowe orthography.

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study, tracing a history of the study of the didjeridu in scholarship and a brief sketch of its role in Yolŋu musical and ceremonial practice. It also details the history of the Gurruwiwi family business, as well as Djalu’s personal history with the didjeridu, through which he came to align himself with the decidedly non-Yolŋu identity marker of “professional musician.” This information helps to contextualize what is at stake when an instrument and emblem of Aboriginality like the didjeridu is presented by Aboriginal people in the context of tourism.

In the second chapter I analyze what motivates tourists to choose Djalu’s business, Rripaŋu Yiḏaki, over other more easily accessible didjeridu tourism destinations. The focus rests on tourists’ desire for an “authentic” didjeridu experience. Through a survey of the academic literature on authenticity in music and tourism paired with a close reading of statements made by visitors concerning their motivations for visiting the Gurruwiwis, I point out problems with the concept of authenticity as a framework for discussion of musical and tourist experience. I also note ways in which conforming to this ascribed aspect of their musical identity may prove damaging in the long term to the sustainability of the Gurruwiwis’ family enterprise.

Chapter 3 closely examines the motivations and methodologies of the Gurruwiwi family members involved in Rripaŋu Yiḏaki, and questions what it means to be an “indigenous” tourism business. In it I describe the Gurruwiwi family’s business model and mode of operation which, while they have been criticized as unconventional and

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2 In using first names to refer to the Yolŋu people who contributed to this thesis, it is in no way my intention to show disrespect. Many of the Yolŋu people referred to in this work are members of the same family, and thus I refer to them by first name largely in the interests of clarity and concision, and in some cases out of personal familiarity and affection.
lacking “product development,” are premised on long-standing, local Aboriginal social frameworks. I argue that these “indigenous” business practices far from being a hindrance, are in fact uniquely suited to meet the needs and desires of the family, its business, and its self-selecting clientele.

The fourth chapter questions the representation of the Gurruwiwi family enterprise, and indigenous tourism business more generally, as an “ecological” endeavor. Like many recent indigenous tourism ventures, Rripaŋu Yidaki has been labeled by some as an “ecotourism” business. Chapter four illustrates the problems involved with carelessly identifying Aboriginal and other indigenous business endeavors as “ecological” or “eco-friendly” on the basis of a hazy conception of cultural links between indigenous peoples and the natural world. I also point out however, that the Gurruwiwis themselves emphasize the importance of their connection to their local lands, and note the ways in which the Gurruwiwi family’s activities may be correctly seen as furthering a kind of cross-cultural ecological understanding and awareness.

To conclude I reflect on which aspects of the Gurruwiwi family’s musical identity are most beneficial to, as well as which aspects stand to hinder the long term success of their business. In light of this information, I suggest ways that scholars interested in applied ethnomusicological work might help grassroots musical tourism businesses like Rripaŋu Yidaki emphasize those aspects of their musical identity that their operators hold to be most important, and thereby facilitate a more transparent and mutually beneficial interaction between such enterprises and their visitors.
Why Music?

As a whole, this thesis stands as an ethnography of the professional lives of an Aboriginal family working as music teachers and instrument craftspeople, and the recreational lives of the tourists who visit them. As such, some scholars may wonder why this thesis is presented as a work of ethnomusicology. It does not, after all, deal extensively with the sonic qualities of Yolŋu music, or the “music itself” (Kolinski 1967: 6). Nor is my thesis concerned with ethnography of Yolŋu musical performance, the topic of an already extensive literature (see e.g. Elkin and Jones 1957; Berndt 1966; Stubington 1982; Clunies Ross and Wild 1984; Knopoff 1992; Toner 2001, 2005; Magowan 2005a, 2007).

I see this thesis as fundamentally ethnomusicological however, in that it is a musical anthropology of the lives of an Aboriginal family trying to make a living in a changing and complex economy by teaching music in the context of the tourist encounter. I use musical anthropology here, following Seeger (1987) to indicate that I view music as “part of the very construction and interpretation of social and conceptual relationships and processes” (1987: xiv). In this case the conceptual relationships that bear upon the Gurruwiwis’ ability to negotiate a living in the tourist trade are the connections between the didjeridu and Aboriginality, between discourses of ‘authenticity’ and the didjeridu, between musical knowledge and trade value in Yolŋu society, and between Yolŋu music and Yolŋu land ownership. The social processes at play are the touristic interpretation of these relationships as markers of Yolŋu identity, and the employment of that identity by the Gurruwiwis to make a living by teaching tourists, sometimes reinforcing, sometimes
confounding, and occasionally subtly transforming their preconceptions. Given that negotiating a livelihood that can support oneself and one's family is perhaps the most fundamental of social processes, I see this type of study of musical identities used to negotiate a successful living in local and international markets, as an important direction for future ethnomusicological writing.

I also hold this work to be ethnomusicological in that it strives toward a greater interdisciplinarity in music research. Scholars have often noted the fundamentally interdisciplinary quality of the field of ethnomusicology (see e.g. Nettl 2005: 3-15; Kolinski 1967; Christensen 1991: 204; Stockman 1991: 326). Most frequently noted is the interaction of three disciplines: musicology, anthropology, and sociology, though ethnomusicologists have also incorporated methods and literatures from such varied disciplines as sociolinguistics (e.g. Sutton 1978; Powers 1980), semiotics (e.g. Turino 1999), and ecology (e.g. Archer 1964; Kurath 1966) in order to better grasp the musical and extra-musical activities of their interlocutors. I too believe that to fully grasp the ways that musical identities shape the extra-musical lives of musicians and impact their livelihoods, it is necessary to grapple with existing literatures on these livelihoods and extra-musical practices. As such, my thesis brings the methods and literature of the anthropology of music to bear on problems and theories also pertinent to—and in Chapter 4 arguably more pertinent to—the field of tourism studies. While there has been some fruitful work done by ethnomusicologists on music and tourism (see Tatar 1987; Sarkissian 2000), none of it to my knowledge makes a significant attempt to deal with the rapidly expanding and maturing literature on socio-cultural aspects of tourism. In this
thesis I aim to achieve some degree of synthesis between these two literatures, in the hopes of elucidating the ways that musical identities can significantly affect musicians’ ability to do business in the tourism trade, and perhaps help to bring these two fields, which draw upon similar bodies of critical and social theory, closer together.

Methodology

This thesis stems from research gathered during a three-year period of fieldwork, including visits to northeast Arnhem Land in May and June of 2006; June, July and August of 2007; November of 2007; and June and July of 2008. During these visits I participated in the Gurruwiwi family business, assisting in the production and sale of didjeridus and the hosting of international tourists. I also studied didjeridu playing and craftsmanship with Djalu’ and his sons. I base my arguments upon my own participant experience, as well as a review of the literatures on the musical practices and customary economies of northeast Arnhem Land. In addition I draw upon both informal conversation and recorded interviews conducted with Gurruwiwi family members and their visitors in person, on the telephone, and over email and instant messaging. Informal conversation with tourists visiting the Gurruwiwi family during their stay in Arnhem Land yielded qualitative data about these visitors’ initial response to their experience, while subsequent interviews over the phone and over email correspondence allowed visitors to reflect at length on the meanings and long-term effects of their experiences. Formal interviews conducted both in Arnhem Land and subsequently via telecommunications with Djalu' Gurruwiwi and his sister Dhäŋgal help to frame my own experience of participating in this family business, providing a basis for discussion and
Though I was not physically present in Arnhem Land during the entire three years prior to writing this thesis, I am deliberately characterizing this part of my life as a period of “fieldwork.” In doing so I aim to emphasize the role communications technology played in my research and to follow Gupta and Ferguson (1997) in rejecting the notion of the geographical anchoring of the anthropological “field.” The use of telephones, email, and internet discussion forums helped me to break down what Gupta and Ferguson (1997: 13) characterize as the classical “field and home” distinction and to meet the challenge of conducting long term fieldwork with limited funding and time for travel. I was thus able to conduct a formal, recorded interview with the Gurruwiwis over the internet telephone program Skype on the same day that I attended a graduate ethnography seminar devoted to the subject of the ethnographic interview. On other occasions I was able to hear the closing songs and dances at funerals for Yolŋu friends in Arnhem Land over the phone, and on one occasion to give a eulogy at the funeral for a good friend and excellent didjeridu player by speaking on a cellular telephone amplified through a public address system.

Another part of my aim in the inclusion of distance communication in what I characterize as “fieldwork” is to acknowledge the role that communications technology plays in the lives of both Yolŋu living in Arnhem Land, and the tourists that travel to visit them. Both groups are participants in and consumers of the new media of internet-based discussion forums and social networking sites; satellite television and radio; and cellular telephone-based voice, text, and picture communication. There is no reason therefore, to
limit communication with these groups of people to a bounded moment in time, during which one is physically elsewhere. And while I do see travel as a necessary component of my own research and of anthropological fieldwork more generally, I see no reason to center or privilege the experiences of travelling and being elsewhere through textual devices like arrival and exit narratives. Such rhetorical conventions only serve to reinforce fallacious perceptions of Aboriginal people and other groups who happen to live locations distant from the ethnographer’s home as exotic and inaccessible “others” who are somehow less “modern” than the producers and consumers of ethnography. It is past time for ethnographers to recognize indigenous peoples as equal participants in increasingly interconnected dialogues and economies facilitated by new media and communications technologies.

A Word on Identity

Identity is a word frequently employed, but very rarely explicitly defined in contemporary ethnographic writing. As this study centers upon aspects of Yolŋu identity that become salient in encounters between Yolŋu musicians and tourists, it would perhaps facilitate the discussion to delimit my usage of the term. Following Turino (2004: 8), I see identity as “the representation of selected habits foregrounded in given contexts to define self to oneself and to others by oneself and by others.” Put more simply, one’s identity is the situationally-contingent representation of aspects of oneself to oneself and to others, as well as the perception of aspects of oneself by others. Thus in discussing individual and group identity I am by no means addressing all of the things that make up an individual personality and tie groups of people together. Nor am I necessarily even
addressing the qualities an individual or a group perceives as most important to itself. I am instead analyzing which qualities of individuals and groups become most relevant in specific situations, and the consequences inherent in highlighting these qualities.

This point is central to my study in that, though Djalu' and his family have not always perceived themselves primarily as musicians, a professional identity historically foreign to Yolŋu classification, they have come to be seen as such by their international visitors, and have to some extent recently embraced the label themselves. Likewise, though they may not self-identify primarily as tourism business operators, this has become the primary lens through which many Yolŋu in their community view the Gurruwiwi family’s day-to-day activities. Both perceptions have had significant consequences for both the Gurruwiwis’ livelihood and their relationships with other Yolŋu families.

Djalu' Gurruwiwi’s career path, and that of his sisters, wife, sons, and daughters who take part in the family enterprise, are unique among Yolŋu, and deeply connected to significant social changes that have occurred during the last sixty years of Yolŋu history. The first chapter of this study illustrates the path that took a man born in a nomadic hunting and gathering family to a modicum of international musical celebrity with an internet-based cult following, and enabled him to provide for a large extended family in a rapidly changing economy.
CHAPTER 1
RRIPADU YIDAKI IN CONTEXT

Djalu' Gurruwiwi’s family business, situated just northwest of the mining town of Nhulunbuy in the northeast of Australia's Arnhem Land region, is predicated on the craft, sale, and tuition of the didjeridu. The didjeridu as a unique musical instrument has long held the interests of ethnomusicologists and other scholars who have generated a robust literature about it, the focus of which has shifted over time paralleling trends in the lives of Aboriginal people like Djalu' during the same time frame. Over the past forty years, some Aboriginal didjeridu players, along with other performers and artists, have come to identify with decidedly non-Aboriginal professional identities like “painter” and “musician.” But, for these Aboriginal people even the mere identification with such categories holds consequences, both within and outside their home communities. This chapter examines the literature on the didjeridu as a marker of identity, details the personal history of how one man came to closely identify with the instrument, and examines the consequences he has experienced in broadcasting that identity beyond the bounds of his home community.

The ‘Iconic’ Didjeridu in Ethnomusicology

The didjeridu is a musical instrument, commonly fashioned out of a hollow length of eucalyptus wood, which originates in Arnhem Land and has become emblematic in recent years of both the Australian nation and its Aboriginal peoples. At present the instrument is enjoyed by people from diverse locations around the world, some of whom convene regularly on online forums (see e.g. http://forum.serioussticks.com), or

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1 Some material in this chapter reproduces material previously published in the Journal of Ecotourism (see Clark 2009). It is used here with permission.
intermittently at festivals and concerts to share in their enthusiasm for the instrument. The use of the didjeridu by non-Aboriginal people outside Australia, and indeed even by many Aboriginal groups in Australia today, is however, a fairly recent phenomenon. Ethnomusicologist Alice Moyle (1981) traces the instrument's origins to groups living in the far northernmost region of Australia's Northern Territory, as well as small adjoining regions in Western Australia and Queensland. Moyle (1981) infers from rock art evidence that groups within this region have used the didjeridu for at least 1000 years. Didjeridu playing spread to other parts of Australia largely in the 1960s and 70s, perhaps as a result of the activism and educational efforts of Aboriginal leaders like Wandjuk Marika, during a period of intense upheaval and struggle over civil liberties for northern Aboriginal groups (see Marika 1977, 1995). Its current international popularity is even more recent, and likely traceable to increased availability of recordings via new media, as well as a general increase in the popularity of so-called “world music” over the past two decades (see Mitchell 1993).

Scholars on the other hand, have evinced an interest in the didjeridu somewhat longer than the general public, though the earliest anthropological visitors to Arnhem Land, likely the birthplace of the didjeridu, made only cursory reference to this unique instrument. Warner (1937: 503), in the earliest anthropological account of the cultural practices of Aboriginal people living in Arnhem Land, speaks of the “iraki,” his orthography for *yidaki*, the generic Yolŋu Matha word for didjeridu, as an “artifact” and an example of musical instrument “technology” notable only for its role in mortuary ceremony and *rites-de-passage*. Thomson, though he also took note of such ceremonies in his accounts of his early travels through Arnhem Land during the 1930s (1949a: 5; see
also Thomson 1948, 1949b), and even took photographs of didjeridu playing in such ceremonies (2003: 176-177), gave the instrument not a single mention in his ethnographic writing.

It is around the time that the term “ethnomusicology” was gaining currency in the early 1950s, as well as the birth of the Society for Ethnomusicology and its attendant journal *Ethnomusicology*, that anthropologists and newly-minted ethnomusicologists began to take a more serious interest in the didjeridu. This early interest can perhaps best be described as sound-centric, or pertaining largely to the didjeridu’s sonic contributions to Aboriginal song genres and the techniques used to produce such sounds. In the 1950s, scholars such as A.P. Elkin and Trevor Jones devoted a significant portion of their research to recording samples Aboriginal music, transcribing these recordings, and writing down brief sketches of their overall sonic impressions of these recordings and providing cursory notes about the context in which these recordings were made (see Elkin 1953, Elkin and Jones 1957). Jones later went on to produce a record of solo recordings of various Aboriginal didjeridu styles from the Northern Territory and his attempts to reproduce some of the basic techniques used in these solos (Jones 1963), as well as an article detailing various rhythmic procedures employed by *yidaki* players in northeast Arnhem Land (Jones 1973).

Ethnomusicologist Alice Moyle largely continued the work started by Elkin and Jones in her *Songs of the Northern Territory* (Moyle 1964) series of recordings of Aboriginal music and companion booklets. In later works (Moyle 1977, 1981) she also followed Warner (1937) in analyzing the didjeridu as an artifact, in terms of both its geographic distribution and its history according to the archaeological record. It can
perhaps be inferred then that these early ethnomusicologists were interested in the didjeridu primarily because of its sonic and physical uniqueness.

Since the 1990s however, the didjeridu literature has undergone a significant shift in focus, such that the vast majority of writings about the instrument from 1990 onward deal with its significance as a marker of Aboriginal or New Age identity, or as a commodity in an increasingly global musical marketplace. Karl Neuenfeldt made some of the first efforts in this direction starting in the early 1990s. Neuenfeldt has written of the ways the didjeridu takes on new meanings when used in what he terms ‘popular’ and ‘world’ music (Neuenfeldt 1994); of its advent as a souvenir sold to tourists in the unlikely location of Alice Springs (Neuenfeldt 1997a); of its use as a marker of Aboriginal identity in Aboriginal rock music, Australian mainstream education, and Australian cinema (Neuenfeldt 1998a, 1998b; Kibby and Neuenfeldt 1998); of the instruments appropriation and utilization in the shaping of New Age identities (Neuenfeldt 1998c); and of the ongoing public debate over the appropriateness of non-Aboriginal women playing the didjeridu given its place with respect to the gender roles of various Aboriginal societies (Neuenfeldt 2006). Neuenfeldt has also compiled a seminal text on the various identity issues at play as an increasing number of people worldwide become aware of the instrument through the medium of the internet (Neuenfeldt ed., 1997).

Numerous other scholars have taken up the topics of commodification and identity as they pertain to the didjeridu as well. Corn (1999) has noted the consternation of Yolŋu Aboriginal people at the 1999 Garma Festival of Traditional Culture in northeast

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2 Two notable exceptions to this trend are the works of Knopoff (1992, 1997) and Toner (2001, 2005b) whose writings deal extensively with sonic, performative, and formal processes within Yolŋu music. These works are, however a small minority within the literature on Yolŋu music.
Arnhem Land over their feeling of having been left behind and unremunerated by the growing didjeridu industry in Australia. Magowan (2005b) discusses tensions that arise between various groups of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people as the instrument makes the transition from “an object mediating social relations in traditional contexts, to an item of economic value in spheres of global exchange” (Magowan 2005b: 97). Toner (2005a) discusses the presentation of Aboriginal music including the didjeridu in mainstream contexts by Yolŋu musicians in Arnhem Land, and the ways it is altered from its typical practice to express the concerns of Aboriginal people to a non-Aboriginal audience. And Graves (2006) discusses his experience coordinating two projects designed to respond to the concerns Corn wrote of at the 1999 Garma festival, by bringing Aboriginal didjeridu players in northeast Arnhem Land, and non-Aboriginal didjeridu aficionados in Australia and overseas into closer contact.

Clearly then, the literature concerning the didjeridu, identity, and commodification is already robust, having come into vogue in the 1990s after a shift in scholarly focus away from examining the purely sonic and physical aspects of the instrument. Later I will suggest reasons for this shift relating to both broader shifts in scholarship and changes in the way that Aboriginal people self-identify following increasing contact with non-Aboriginal Australians and international visitors. First though, I want to address what I perceive as a lack in the scholarship on didjeridu and identity: personal histories of Aboriginal musicians who play the didjeridu, detailing why it became an important identity-marker for these people in the first place. Djalu' Gurrwiwiwi’s story is one of increasing closeness and identification with the instrument to the extent that it became a viable livelihood for himself and his family, a rarity among even the most gifted
Aboriginal musicians.

**Rripaŋu Yidaki Past and Present**

Djalu' Gurruwiwi's own Gälpu people, one of the Yolŋu clans of central and northeast Arnhem Land (see Appendix A, Figure 1.1), are one of the many Northern Territory Aboriginal peoples with a long-standing tradition of didjeridu playing. In Yolŋu languages the generic word for didjeridu is *yidaki*, though individual clans employ different terms to refer to specific, sacred, and esoteric didjeridu types. Yolŋu *yidaki* are commonly crafted from living, termite-hollowed stringybark eucalyptus trees, which grow abundantly in the area around their homeland communities in Arnhem Land. In performance, Yolŋu musicians most often play the *yidaki* to provide the rhythmic drone accompaniment to *manikay*, songs that form an integral part of a Yolŋu clan's spiritual-ancestral identity and heritage. *Manikay* are often paired with *bungul*, the dancing that features prominently in *bäpurru* (funerals), *dhäpi* (circumcisions), and other ceremonies that significantly impact Yolŋu lives (see Appendix A, Figure 1.2 for a visual impression of *bungul* dancing at a *bäpurru* ceremony). According to Yolŋu interlocutors who worked closely with researchers at Charles Darwin University to develop curricula for courses in Yolŋu languages and culture, *manikay*, along with *wäŋa* (land), *dhäwu* (stories), *miny'ji* (art or designs), and *gurruṯu* (kinship) is one of the five foundational elements of Yolŋu *rom*, meaning “law” or “culture” (Christie and Gaykamaŋu 2001: 4). Thus the *yidaki* holds a special place in Yolŋu law and expressive forms due to its use in the performance of *manikay*.

Djalu' Gurruwiwi has a special relationship with the *yidaki*, one that is unique among Yolŋu, and has developed over the course of his already long life. Djalu' was born
sometime in the 1930s on the mission settlement of Milingimbi in central Arnhem Land. The precise date is unknown, though one of his vivid early memories is of the bombing of Milingimbi and Wessel Island by the Japanese during World War II, indicating a likely birth date in the mid-to-late 30s.

Djalu' is the oldest living son of the late Monyu Gurruwiwi, formerly a powerful Gälpu clan leader. Readers familiar with Yolŋu history and ethnography may recognize the name Monyu, as he was one of the Yolŋu elders who testified in the seminal land rights case Milirrpum and others v. Nabalco and the Commonwealth of Australia (see Blackburn 1971). This makes Djalu's father a figure of some importance in the history of Aboriginal land rights in Australia, as the outcome of this case ultimately led to the passage of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act of 1976, the first recognition by the Commonwealth government of Aboriginal peoples’ legal rights to their homelands. Monyu was also an important figure in local Yolŋu politics at the time, as evidenced by his role as one of the leaders of the smoking ceremony featured in Dunlop’s (1971) ethnographic film Dundiwuy’s House Opening.

As a young man, Djalu' followed his father in moving to Elcho Island, where the Gurruwiwi family helped to build the mission station that is now the community of Galiwin'ku. No doubt Monyu’s participation in the Adjustment Movement that took place at the new mission community, in which Yolŋu elders erected a monument that publicly revealed previously secret, sacred items and information (see Berndt 1962), made a strong impression on young Djalu's religious views and ethics pertaining to cross-cultural sharing.

Djalu' frequently tells stories that indicate that, while living on Elcho, his father
also played a pivotal role in fostering his life-long involvement with the yidaki. Djalu' and his sisters have often told me of Monyu’s use of the yidaki’s higher-pitched first overtone as an alert to important, or exciting news during their childhood, like when returning from a successful turtle hunt, bringing the highly prized meat, tripe, and fat of sea turtles for his family to share. It was during his teenage years though, that Djalu's father galvanized his son’s connection to the yidaki. Seeing that two of his sons had exceptional musical ability, Monyu entrusted the responsibility for remembering and performing the Gälpu-clan manikay during ceremony to Djalu' and his now-deceased brother Gurritjiri, giving Gurritjiri the manikay (songs) and bilma (clapsticks) and Djalu' the role of yidakimirri, or didjeridu player. Monyu’s sons received their father’s charge as a sacred trust, which Gurritjiri maintained until his passing in 2008, and Djalu' maintains to this day.

Though his primary occupation at the time was carpentry, building houses on the mission station, Djalu' also began to earn a reputation as a yidaki craftsman that extended beyond the small island community of Galiwin'ku. Much like famed Yolŋu artist Narritjin Maymuru (see Morphy 1991), Djalu's career as an artist and craftsman of wide renown was facilitated by the Methodist mission in northeast Arnhem Land when he began to make yidaki for sale as part of the arts and crafts initiatives devised by local missionaries (Lim 2001a: 3). Through these sales and his teaching of yidaki and buŋgal dancing at the mission school, Djalu' must have secured a reputation as one of the most knowledgeable yidaki makers and players in the area, as his sister Dhängal recalls that people visiting from major urban centers in Australia to make deliveries or work on the mission station were referred to Djalu' by the missionaries and staff, and would visit him to purchase a
yidaki for a souvenir or to hear one played (Dhängal Gurruwiwi, personal communication, January 29, 2008).

For reasons that are not entirely clear to me however, sometime prior to the 1990s Djalu' was forced to relocate his family away from Elcho to the mainland community of Gunyaŋara on his wife's Gumatj-clan land. Rumors abound in Gunyaŋara and nearby Yirrkala about Djalu' having a violent past, and I have also been told on several occasions by his sisters and Djalu' himself that in the past he was a dangerous man with a bad temper. It is possible that he was involved in an act of violence on Elcho that prompted his move to the mainland. It is also possible that he was suspected of practicing galka or evil sorcery. Cawte's (1996) book about Yolŋu medicinal knowledge, *Healers of Arnhem Land*, features staged photographs taken by the author in the 1970s, in which Djalu' plays the role of a galka (evil sorcerer), who is hunted and killed by the men of the imaginary group he has been plaguing. Malignant sorcery is a serious concern for many Yolŋu, and Djalu's participation in these photo sessions may have been taken as evidence by many on Galiwin'ku that he did in fact possess the skills necessary to practice galka, and was therefore a threat to the community.

Whatever the reason for Djalu's move to Gunyaŋara, it was in this Gumatj homeland community that Djalu's life changed fundamentally, and the groundwork for his current work as a teacher and musical-cultural ambassador was laid. While living in Gunyaŋara Djalu' had a conversion experience while watching televangelist Benny Hinn deliver a sermon, deciding thereafter to foreswear violence and dedicate himself to the service of God. Djalu' began acting as a community lay preacher in Gunyaŋara, and despite vocal difficulty following a recent stroke Djalu' still holds regular Sunday
fellowship at his present home nearer to Nhulunbuy. Djalu's evangelism is interesting though in that it also extends to his Yolŋu spirituality and work with the yidaki. Djalu' describes his work with the yidaki as part of the pact he made with God upon his revelatory experience, saying: “Baapay Godthu rraku gurrupar djaama yirdaki [sic]. Djaama rrakun, yaka wiripuny djaama...yaka djaama wiripunha… [God gave me the job to make yirdaki. That is my job now, not anything else…]” (Lim 2001a: 4). Djalu' often speaks of the importance of sharing his spiritual and artistic heritage with non-Yolŋu as it offers them a window onto both Yolŋu artistic life, as well as the spiritual forces that move him to act with humility and raypirri, or discipline and adherence to Yolŋu law.

Perhaps these evangelical sentiments toward the yidaki are what led Djalu' to become involved with the band Yothu Yindi. In 1989 Yothu Yindi became the most internationally recognized and financially successful Australian Aboriginal musical group of all time, following the release of their first album, Homeland Movement. The song “Treaty,” in particular, met with significant commercial success and critical acclaim, attaining a top ten position on the international Billboard dance charts in 1992, and remaining on the charts for nineteen weeks (Billboard.com 2009). Treaty’s highly political lyrics, calling for formal recognition of Aboriginal land rights and recognition of Australia’s indigenous heritage in the form of a treaty with the commonwealth government, have also attracted significant scholarly interest (see Mitchell 1993; Stubington and Dunbarr-Hall 1994; Neuenfeldt 1998a; Langton 2004: 105-114). Stubington and Dunbarr-Hall note the uniqueness of the song, in relation to the bulk of Yothu Yindi’s work, in that it combines formal elements of standard rock music, with elements of a Yolŋu song genre called djatpayarri, creating a “a musical example of the
kind of [political] rapprochement sought by the text of the song” (1994: 243). Indeed the song alternates between verses sung in English accompanied primarily by rock instrumentation and verses sung in Yolŋu Matha accompanied by yidaki and biłma. These section changes are marked visually in the song’s music video by images of the band playing rock instruments in a night club setting during the rock sections, and images of the band’s late yidakimirri, Milkayŋu Munungurr, playing yidaki on the beach in Yirrkala during the djatpaŋarri sections (see Yothu Yindi 1992). It is highly likely that the yidaki depicted in these scenes was made by Djalu' Gurruwiwi, as he was at the time acting as the band’s yidaki supplier, and was in fact one of the Yolŋu elders who initially voiced his support for the band’s recording manikay and djatpaŋarri, and fusions of manikay and djatpaŋarri with rock music on their albums. Djalu's relationship with Yothu Yindi was quickly discovered and seized upon by the online didjeridu aficionado community in the mid-to-late-nineties, and marked the beginning of Djalu's small measure of international fame.

Today the yidaki forms the cornerstone of Rripaŋu Yiidak, the Gurruwiwi family business whose name translates literally as “lightning didjeridu,” acknowledging one of the sacred didjeridu types made by Gälpu clanspeople. Djalu', his wife, and his sons and daughters, the main operators of the business, craft many yidaki every year that they sell through the local arts center, Buku-Larrŋay Mulka, in the nearby community of Yirrkala. Many of these yidaki are ultimately resold by didjeridu retailers in southern Australia and overseas for prices ranging upwards of $1000 USD. To supplement this income stream, the Gurruwiwi family also runs a grassroots tourism enterprise.

Officially launched in 2001, Rripaŋu Yiidak regularly hosts traveling groups and
individual visitors who are interested in learning to craft and play the *yidaki* at the Gurruwiwi family home in Gäluru (see Appendix A, Figure 1.3), as part of what the enterprise's website has called an “eco-cultural program” (*Rripaŋu Yidaki* 2003). In addition to hosting visitors and selling *yidaki*, the *Rripaŋu Yidaki* family enterprise engages in promotion and education by performing and teaching at music festivals both in Australia and overseas. The family has also released several videos and compact discs of *manikay* and *bungul* performance, and *yidaki* instruction for commercial distribution (see e.g. Gurruwiwi 2001; Gurruwiwi 2003; Gurruwiwi 2005). As Corn (2005: 31) observes, because of these activities “Djalu Gurruwiwi's international reputation as a master *yidaki* player, maker and teacher is now unparalleled.”

During my longest stay with the Gurruwiwis, from June through August of 2007, it struck me that the groups and individuals I saw visiting *Rripaŋu Yidaki* came largely not from within Australia, but from overseas destinations, especially the US, Japan, and Western Europe. There was no set length for their visits. Organized groups typically stayed for around one week, while individuals stayed anywhere from a single day, to several weeks. The family does not keep written records of how many visitors they receive. When asked about how many visitors they receive in a given year, Djalu's sister Dhäŋgal simply said “lots” (personal communication, January 29, 2008). My observations support this statement, in that during the time I spent with the Gurruwiwis, it was a rare week that they had no overseas visitors.

While most visitors camp during their stay with the Gurruwiwis, and are cautioned by the *Rripaŋu Yidaki* website that they are expected to bring their own tent, some groups in the past have made special arrangements with local hotels in the nearby
town of Nhulunbuy for the duration of their stay (Randin Graves, personal communication, April 11, 2008). Whether camping, or overnighting in hotels though, the local climate, flora, and fauna are integral parts of the daily experience when visiting Rripaŋu Yidaki, as during the dry season when many travelers visit, the Gurruwiwi family spends the bulk of their time outdoors, often retiring inside only to sleep at night. Urbanite visitors from overseas frequently expressed to me in informal conversation that this constant contact with the Arnhem Land environment was both one of their main draws to visit Rripaŋu Yidaki, as well as one of the aspects of the experience most at odds with their own home routines.

Most visitors to Rripaŋu Yidaki are men, as customarily Yolŋu women do not play yidaki in ceremony or in daily life. While Djalu' has publicly indicated that he is happy for non-Aboriginal women who wish to play the didjeridu in their own lives (see Buku-Larrŋay Mulka 2006), the few women who do visit Rripaŋu Yidaki choose to follow local custom. Dhāŋgal Gurruwiwi, Djalu's sister and partner in the business, cannot recall one woman visitor who has ever come for yidaki tuition from Djalu', stating that most women who visit travel accompanying male partners who come for yidaki tuition (personal communication, January 29, 2008).

For almost all of these men who visit, tuition in playing and crafting yidaki plays a central role in their experience. Cutting and crafting yidaki in particular is the focal point for many visitors, the most easily graspable part of their experience, and indeed the reason many choose to visit in the first place. My own experience of yidaki cutting, while highly rewarding, has involved quite a lot of strenuous work, comprising long treks through brushy woodland to find suitable trees, repeated use of axe and saw, followed by
the effort of removing several heavy logs back to a vehicle to take home and craft. Cutting trips often take as much as half a day, and completing work on the harvested yidaki involves several consecutive days of concerted effort.

Tuition in Gälpu clan style yidaki playing also forms an important part of most visitors' experiences, though in many cases a much less accessible part than craftsmanship. I have frequently observed visiting didjeridu players who do not speak Aboriginal languages having difficulty learning the basic rhythmic tonguing techniques of Yolŋu style playing, as these techniques are based on tongue positions frequently employed in Aboriginal languages, but not employed at all in English, Japanese, or most Western European languages. Yolŋu children pick up these basic tonguing techniques easily from a very young age simply through observation and imitation, and thus they are for the most part not included in formal yidaki tuition with Yolŋu players. Many visitors nevertheless come away from their experience with Rripaŋu Yidaki feeling that they have a better sense of the role of the didjeridu in Aboriginal life, and many arrive at some degree of synthesis between their own individual playing styles and the style taught by Djalu' and other Gurruwiwi family members (Jamie Nelson, personal communication April 6, 2008; Randin Graves, personal communication April 11, 2008).

Besides yidaki playing and craftsmanship, most travelers who visit Rripaŋu Yidaki take part in a number of other activities that bring them into close contact with the regional landscape. The family leads almost all visitors on at least one outing to gather and prepare local foods. Visitors can learn to hunt stingray, mud crab, shellfish, and collect wild yams, figs, and honey. Men may receive a lesson in making or throwing spears, while women are often taught something of Yolŋu weaving and basketry
traditions using local materials. The Gurruwiwi family also often teaches its guests some of the rudiments of *buŋgu*, the ceremonial dancing in which Yolŋu dancers recreate and embody the actions of the *wayarr*, great creator ancestors that remain “sentient and ever-present in... [the] lands and waters” of Arnhem Land (Corn 2005: 26).

**Identifying with the Didjeridu**

As indicated above much early scholarship on the didjeridu in general, and on Yolŋu music specifically, emphasized analysis of particular songs as musical “works” and the didjeridu’s role within them, while since 1990 the bulk of the literature has examined the didjeridu, and other parts of Yolŋu music as markers of Aboriginal identity. The same trend can be seen in the visual arts as evidenced by the difference in formalistic treatment of Aboriginal paintings and body art by early scholars like Warner (1937) versus the nuanced and contextualized treatment of the work of individual Aboriginal artists by scholars like Morphy (1991) and Myers (2002). This shift is no doubt due in part to broad shifts in scholarly thought and practice in the last fifty years, away from treating expressive forms as component parts of what E.B. Tylor (1920) would call “that complex whole” that is a given culture, and toward the analysis of musical and artistic expression in terms of more manageable concepts like politics and identity.

I posit however, that these shifts in the scholarly literature on the didjeridu and other Yolŋu arts are also likely due to changes in Yolŋu self-identification and livelihood practices during this period, brought about by increasing interaction with non-Aboriginal Australians, and now increasing contact with international visitors. Prior to the 1950s professional identities such as “painter” and “musician” were largely foreign to Yolŋu systems of classification and thought, and to some extent this remains true today. It is true
that some Yolŋu, called djirrikay or halkarriramirri, hold the responsibility of leading song and dance during ceremonies, and some, called miny'tjimirri, do much of the painting and decoration of sacred objects prior to a ceremony. Among Yolŋu however, these peoples’ professional, ceremonial, and political identities are not tied primarily to such activities, but rather to their knowledge of the sacred histories that these art forms make manifest, and their ability to mobilize that sacred knowledge for the benefit of their families and clans. However, due to drastic changes in local politics and economics during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, some Yolŋu have also come to self-identify with European professional categories, such as “artist,” “musician,” and “dancer,” and it is likely that Yolŋu peoples’ conscious foregrounding of such identity markers has significantly impacted the work of ethnographers of Yolŋu expressive forms.

The life of Narritjin Maymuru, as detailed by Morphy (1999), to some extent encapsulates this shift. Narritjin moved to the Yirrkala mission in the 1930s, where he worked as a houseboy for the Reverend Wilbur Chaseling, the then director of the mission settlement. There Narritjin participated in a program that Chaseling had begun some years earlier of commissioning Yolŋu clan designs, or miny'tji, to be painted on bark and sold to southern museums interested in expanding their “primitive art” collections. The mission used this money to sustain and expand their operations in the area, as well as to purchase tobacco, which they offered as an incentive to Yolŋu to settle on the mission. Through Chaseling’s program, Narritjin became one of the first Yolŋu artists to have his work featured in a museum, albeit in ethnographic rather than strictly artistic collections (Morphy 1999: 14).

In 1963 Narritjin played a key role in the submission of the Yirrkala bark petitions
to the Australian parliament. Local Yolŋu elders with the help of sympathetic missionaries drafted the petitions to formally protest the grant of 300 square kilometers of their land by the Commonwealth government to the company Nabalco, for the purposes of bauxite mining. Though the petitions were ultimately unsuccessful in stopping mining in the area, they captured the attention of the Australian public, perhaps in part due to their striking appearance: the petitions were printed on paper, signed by the contributing elders, and affixed to bark panels painted with miny’tji representing the totemic ancestors of the elders’ respective clans (see National Archives of Australia 2000). Thus, the petitions did much not only to raise the Australian public’s awareness of Aboriginal peoples’ struggles for land rights, but also to heighten the seriousness with which Aboriginal art and its attendant meanings were viewed by broader Australia. They also bolstered Narritjin’s reputation as an artist, as he was one of the artists who worked on the panels.

By the 1970s Narritjin was not only making a living by selling his artwork to art galleries and tourists visiting the region, he was also self-identifying as a professional artist. Anthropologist Howard Morphy notes that when he met Narritjin in 1973, “Narritjin was well aware of the category ‘artist’ in Australian society and was determined to be accepted as an artist by European Australians,” to the extent that whenever Morphy interrupted him with questions while he was painting, Narritjin would threaten to charge the young anthropologist for an answer (Morphy 1991: 33).

Much like Narritjin, Djalu’ has not always self-identified as a musician or instrument maker. In telling of his troubled youth on Elcho Island, he presents himself as having been a dangerous ruffian, and when telling of his early work on the mission
community at Galiwin'ku he speaks of how much he enjoyed his work as a carpenter. Due to rising interest in Aboriginal art and craft though, Djalu' began to see making, selling, and teaching *yidaki* as a viable source of income for himself and his family in the new money economy that arose in the 1960s with the advent of the Nabalco bauxite mine and its attendant mining town. Fortunately for himself and his family, Djalu' was uniquely placed to take advantage of the rising interest in didjeridus and other Aboriginal crafts: the task of maintaining the Gälpu clan’s *yidaki* playing style that Djalu's father charged him with is not a common one among Yolŋu, and it gave Djalu' a stronger connection to the instrument than most young men have. Additionally, through his work as a carpenter on the mission station Djalu' had developed close ties to the missionaries, who were happy to refer visiting workers interested in the didjeridu to Djalu'.

Over time these visiting Australian workers who met Djalu', bought *yidaki*, and received lessons from him, laid the foundation for his reputation as the person to see about didjeridus in Arnhem Land. Like Narritjin’s involvement with the bark petitions, Djalu's involvement with Yothu Yindi served as a catalyzing event that cemented his reputation as a musician and craftsman in the public eye, and earned him a degree of international recognition. Today, Djalu' has come to see himself as a musician as well, and feels comfortable taking the stage at music festivals and workshops the world over, and making his living primarily by selling *yidaki* and teaching others to play them.

**Discussion**

Identifying with such exogenous categories however, can have consequences in one’s home society. I cannot say whether Narritjin experienced any recrimination from other Yolŋu over opening up previously secret and restricted designs for public view in
building his career as an artist, though I suspect this is likely the case. It is certain that for Djalu', making a living as a musician, in particular a *yidaki* player, and marketing himself as such within the Australian tourism industry has had some detrimental effects for his relationships with people in his community.

For one thing simply by continuing to play *yidaki* well into his seventies, Djalu' is engaging in an activity that many Yolŋu men think of as somewhat boyish, and more appropriate for teenagers and young men. As the Buku-Larrŋay Mulka Centre staff notes, it is primarily “young men, from late teens to early thirties [that] play the *yidaki* in ceremony. Middle-aged men will sometimes play the *yidaki* if necessary, for example if there are no young men present who are knowledgable [sic] enough about the songs” (Buku-Larrŋay Mulka Centre 2006). Middle aged men are expected to put aside the instrument eventually and dedicate themselves to leading the singing of *manikay*. Thus, while Djalu' often plays *yidaki* for his own and other clans’ ceremonies, and is always greeted publicly with respect in these settings, I have heard young men on several occasions remark amongst themselves that this is a strange thing to do. Perhaps partly in response to this quiet criticism, Djalu' has, since the death of his brother and Gälpu-clan *djirrikay* Gurritjiri in 2008, been more often leading the singing of Gälpu-clan *manikay* and delegating the *yidaki* playing to younger clan members.

Making his living primarily by selling Yolŋu music to tourists has also cost Djalu' the respect of some Yolŋu, and caused tensions between his own and other prominent families in the region. In 2006, largely in response to the numerous visitors Djalu' was regularly hosting, his then-home community of Gunyaŋara voted in council to require every visitor to the community to obtain a permit from the council office, which were
subsequently given out very sparingly. This act of the council effectively ran the Gurruwiwi family out of town, and led to significant ill will between Djalu' and Galarrwuy Yunupiŋu, a prominent figure both in the community of Gunyaŋara and in broader regional and national Australian politics and the acknowledged leader of the Gumatj clan. The resentment continued to run so deep between the two families, that in 2007 one of Djalu's sisters refused to have her son buried on his own Gumatj homeland of Gunyaŋara following his untimely death. In protest of this decision, Galarrwuy and the rest of the Gumatj leadership boycotted the funeral, which was held in Yirrkala, and in a public speech Galarrwuy called the event both sacrilegious and a personal insult.

Clearly then, while Djalu's work and identity as a musician has enabled him to make a viable living for his family, and while Djalu' finds it to be deeply rewarding work, this involvement has also created problems that must be negotiated in his and his family’s relationships within their community. Beyond these local problems however, the mobilization of Djalu's musical identity to attract tourists to the family business has broad-reaching implications for how the Gurruwiwis are perceived by overseas visitors in their role as indigenous musicians, and how the family must respond to these perceptions in order to sustain a successful business. In the next three chapters I examine three key aspects of these touristic perceptions and the ramifications they have for the viability of Rripaŋu Yiḏaki as a business.
CHAPTER 2
IN SEARCH OF “AUTHENTIC” YIḌAKI

As evidenced in Chapter 1, the didjeridu has long been a staple of the ethnomusicological literature, due to its relative uniqueness in organological taxonomy and its now-widespread use as a marker of Aboriginality in film, music, and other media. Rarely though has this unique musical instrument been discussed in relation to discourses of authenticity, another perennial favorite topic for musicological inquiry. “Authenticity” is a key criterion that many didjeridu aficionados use to discuss instruments and experiences, including their visits to Rripaŋu Yiḍaki. Because it is the topic of an extensive scholarly literature, well-read didjeridu aficionados, of which there are quite a few, often use the discourse of authenticity to lend a kind of literary weight to their opinions when debating with each other or evaluating recorded music, video, and instruments from northeast Arnhem Land on internet forums and at other gathering places. As such “authenticity” stands as a key part of the Gurruwiwi family’s musical identity, as it is one of the main lenses through which they are perceived by their prospective clientele. This poses problems for a tourist business burdened with expectations of authenticity however, as it is rarely clear what didjeridu aficionados and other music fans mean when they refer to the “authentic.”

The topic of authenticity also holds a perennial interest for scholars, sparking numerous debates and manifestos in a variety of humanities disciplines; especially, it seems, in the fields of ethnomusicology and tourism studies. Yet for all that the topic has been debated, no one formulation of “authenticity” has gained ascendancy within

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1 Save for a cursory discussion by Neuenfeldt in his examination of an exchange over a didjeridu email list about ideal construction materials for didjeridus (Neuenfeldt 1997b).
academic discourse.

Through the examination of both the scholarly literature and statements made by the Gurruwiwi family’s visitors, I argue that authenticity is a fragmentary discourse without a clear referent. In each use the term carries all the discursive baggage of every other possible meaning. Even when understood in a seemingly innocuous way, as a marker of the quality of personal experience, the concept can be damaging to any “authentic” objects and practices at hand. Thus I contend that while discourses of “authenticity” do often point to real differences amongst objects and practices encountered by tourists, *yidaki* aficionados, and other music fans, they do not provide a useful framework for understanding these differences.

**Why do they come?**

Chapter 1 details a variety of *didjeridu*-related and recreational activities in which most visitors to *Rripaŋu Yidaki* take part. While all these activities no doubt appeal to the Gurruwiwi family’s visitors, and are likely not the type of activities easily available in most of these tourists’ home environments, it is nonetheless remarkable that the family receives so many visitors when most, if not all, of these activities are offered at much more easily accessible tourist hubs elsewhere in Australia. One can for instance, during a visit to Cairns to see the Great Barrier Reef, spend half a day visiting the nearby Tjapukai Aboriginal Culture Park, and during a two-hour stay take part in activities including the “Tjapukai Dance Theatre, Bush Foods and Medicines demonstrations, didgeridoo [sic] demonstration and spear and boomerang throwing” (Tjapukai Aboriginal Culture Park 2008). Further, traveling to visit the Gurruwiwis in remote north Australia is an undertaking that most tourists would find exceedingly difficult. The typical journey to
visit Rripaŋu Yidaki for overseas visitors, by far the most common patrons of the family’s business, involves spending between twenty and forty-eight hours in airports to get to a remote community that is inaccessible by road for half the year, and over 350 miles from the nearest urban center. Most visitors elect to bring their own camping gear and spend the durations of their visits outdoors in an unfamiliar climate, as the Gurruwiwis’ limited house space is almost always overcrowded to the point that many family members live primarily in tents, and the only local motel is prohibitively expensive for most travelers, even those with the means to make this trip in the first place.

While it might seem odd initially that overseas visitors choose to make such a difficult and expensive sojourn when didjeridus and didjeridu instruction are widely available (and less expensive) in major urban centers in the south of Australia, like Sydney and Melbourne, and even in other popular Australian tourist destinations like Cairns and Alice Springs, it nevertheless makes sense in light of the fact that many of these travelers come in search not of a didjeridu experience, but of an “authentic” yidaki experience. While largely unimportant to the Gurruwiwi family and other Yolŋu, the semantic distinction between “didjeridu” and “yidaki” is important to the family’s visitors, as it encapsulates their expectation that their Rripaŋu Yidaki experience will be somehow different than and superior to didjeridu experiences available elsewhere in Australia.

A large number of Rripaŋu Yidaki’s previous visitors, as well as those who hope to visit in the future, convene regularly on online forums and mailing lists dedicated largely to the discussion of what their members hold to be “authentic” didjeridus and didjeridu playing (see e.g. http://forum.serioussticks.com; http://forum.ididj.com.au).
Indeed, many of the Gurruwiwi family’s visitors initially learned about Djalu' and his yidaki teaching activities through one of these online meeting spaces. In many instances these forum sites are affiliated with a didjeridu retail establishment specializing in the sale of such “authentic” instruments, and thus their moderators have a vested interest in fueling discussion of and interest in “authenticity.” Nevertheless forum members subscribe to this discourse to the extent that many of them are willing to spend significant sums of money, time, and effort to travel halfway around the world to have a certifiably “authentic” didjeridu experience, and there is broad agreement amongst this online community that northeast Arnhem Land is the ideal place to witness and experience such “authenticity.” Yet while it is easy to note the interest in “authenticity” on such online forums and amongst visitors to Rripaŋu Yiɗaki, it is much more difficult to ferret out precisely what these didjeridu aficionados mean each time they use the term.

**Debating Authenticity in Scholarship**

The situation is no better amongst those who have spent a great deal of time and effort studying the concept of “authenticity.” Scholars in both music and tourism studies have long held an interest in the topic, and have advanced numerous definitions of the term as frameworks for understanding musical and tourist experiences. As a result there are now seemingly as many definitions of authenticity to be found in the literature as there are scholarly commentators. By my survey of the music and tourism literatures on authenticity, I count at least five senses in which the term is used by scholars, some related and some directly opposed.

The first of these, drawn from the tourism literature, and perhaps the most common sense in which the term is applied to the didjeridu, is the framework of object
authenticity. Object authenticity simply refers to the perceived genuineness of an object, an act, a practice, or an event. Bruner’s (2005) study of New Salem Historic Site as an “authentic reproduction,” stands as a case study in object authenticity. Bruner identifies four chief criteria that tourists and museum professionals use in their evaluations of the site’s authenticity: verisimilitude, or conforming to what the casual observer expects of the object; genuineness, or a close enough resemblance to fool someone familiar with the “real” object; originality, or actually being the original object; and perhaps most interestingly, authority, or being authorized by those who hold the power of arbitration as a truly authentic object (Bruner 2005: 149-150). Reisinger and Steiner (2005) have also studied the concept of object authenticity only to conclude that it is the subject of too much scholarly contention to serve as a useful analytical framework.

Another framework for understanding the “real” and “genuine” advanced by tourism scholars is that of existential authenticity. Following Heidegger, Steiner and Reisinger (2005) define existential authenticity as a state of being in which a person acts in accordance with his or her own unique potentials, causing the world to respond in a likewise “authentic” manner. While this definition of authenticity holds a certain appeal due to its philosophical sophistication, it remains in limited circulation in academic discourse and does not reflect the common use of the term in the context of tourism.

The third, and perhaps most common, definition of authenticity found in the tourism literature is what I would term experiential authenticity, or the search for others being true to themselves, and acting in accordance with their own unique potentials. This use of the term is evident in both the writings of Boorstin (1964) and MacCannell (1973), though the two scholars take very different positions on the place of authenticity in tourist
experience. Boorstin (1964) laments the bygone days when travel was the difficult enterprise of a privileged few, complaining that contemporary tourists hold the paradoxical expectation of an exotic, exciting experience, with all the comforts of home close at hand, or, in a word, a pseudo-event. MacCannell (1973), contrarily, holds that all tourists seek the authentic in people of the societies they travel to visit, but never find it, as the tourist industry supplies only false “back regions” and not the real “back regions” where “authentic” cultural activity takes place.

Music scholars and critics have most often used the term “authenticity” to refer to how closely any given performance or musical activity conforms to a composer’s intentions, or the prevailing performance practices of a particular style or period in the history of western music. Taruskin (1995) and Kivy (1995) both trace this “historical authenticity” to the historical performance movement in Western art music, but Livingston (1999) notes that concern with this type of authenticity is a common, defining characteristic of all musical revivals, including the blues revival of the 1970s and 80s in the United States, and the Brazilian choro revival of the 1970s. Historical authenticity in music scholarship resembles the concept of object authenticity in being essentially a token-to-type relationship, but differs in that it refers only to what Bruner terms verisimilitude and genuineness, as no performance of historic music can be “original” in the sense of being the first.

Both Taruskin (1995) and Kivy (1995) criticize the concept of historical authenticity, arguing instead for what I will call personal authenticity: playing music based on a sense of personal conviction and a sense for what works musically, rather than in reference to the conventions of a style, or the perceived wishes of a deceased
composer. Turino (2008) also advocates a conception of personal authenticity in music performance, grounding it in Peircean semiotic theory. Turino holds that “given practices that serve as signs of identity may be understood as authentic when they are the result of habits that are actually part of the person producing those signs” (Turino 2008: 161-2). In Turino’s formulation this personal authenticity resembles in many ways the Heideggerian existential authenticity advocated by Steiner and Reisinger (2005), differing only in that Turino’s personal authenticity is not predictive of how the world will respond to “authentic” behavior. In the frameworks advanced by Taruskin and Kivy however, personal authenticity need not imply that performers be true to their own unique qualities and potentials, merely that they be true to their personal and musical convictions.

The only clear piece of information to emerge from the above survey is that no two academics are likely to agree about the precise meaning of the term authenticity, or how best to apply it to understanding social phenomena in music and tourism. While I have identified five general senses in which the term is used, even scholars who use the term in the same sense are likely to disagree about what that means for the broader study of music and travel. Thus, for the most part scholars who study authenticity are simply talking at each other, rather than building consensus, as they are not in fact discussing the same thing.

**Constructing Authenticity in the Didjeridu World**

A similar situation prevails amongst didjeridu enthusiasts who travel to northeast Arnhem Land and visit Rripaŋu Yiɗaki in search of authenticity, except the ambiguity of their use of the concept is even greater, as in most cases these tourists do not bother to define precisely what they mean by “authenticity.” During my visits to northeast Arnhem
Land, I was continually impressed by the diversity of motivations visitors stated for their initial travels to study *yidaki* with the Gurruwiwi family. Often these preconceptions that motivate visitors to visit Rripaŋu *Yidaki* are reinforced, sometimes problematically, by local Yolŋu, and external academic and popular discourses.

When I first met Randin Graves while traveling in northeast Arnhem Land in May of 2006, he was working as one of the co-directors, and *yidaki* specialist at the Yolŋu-owned arts center Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka in the community of Yirrkala. He had first visited the area in 1999 to meet Djalu' Gurruwiwi who he had initially heard about while looking for didjeridus in the north Australian city of Darwin. Following his first visit, Graves organized a group tour to visit Rripaŋu *Yidaki* in 2001, and subsequently in 2003 applied for and received a Fulbright Fellowship to spend time in Yirrkala studying ways to foster communication between interested Yolŋu elders and the online didjeridu community, which he ultimately parlayed into a job at the arts center. When asked about his reasons for his initial visit to Arnhem Land, Graves emphasized a wish to experience original-ness and historicity, stating “I wanted to see where it all started” (personal communication, April 11, 2008). In making this statement Graves references the perception of Arnhem Land as the place where the first didjeridus originated, and thus the home of the “original” and therefore “authentic” didjeridus.

This perception is supported by both academic findings such as Moyle’s (1981) study of didjeridus depicted in cave paintings, as well as by information propagated by online retailers specializing in the sale of Arnhem Land instruments (see e.g. http://www.jdidj.com; http://www.serioussticks.com). Never mind that didjeridus produced in northeast Arnhem Land today are most likely produced in a manner quite
different to the first didjeridus made 1,000 or more years ago\(^2\), northeast Arnhem Land has nonetheless achieved a reputation as the place to go for tourists like Graves seeking historically authentic *yidaki*. Interestingly, Graves’ Fulbright research, published online as *Yidakiwuy Dhäwu Miwatjiŋurunyda* by the Yirrkala arts center (see Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka Centre 2006) strongly advocates the use of the term *yidaki* by non-Aboriginal didjeridu enthusiasts to designate “authentic” instruments from northeast Arnhem Land, as opposed to didjeridus in general.

*Yidaki* tourists also visit Djalu’ and family in search of instruments of quality, made by those who hold the proper authority. I met Matthias Müller in August of 2007 when he arrived in Yirrkala to attend the formerly annual *Yidaki* Masterclass at the Garma Festival of Traditional Culture,\(^3\) one of the most widely attended Aboriginal cultural festivals in the Northern Territory. At the time I was volunteering at the Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka Centre, filling in for Graves in the *yidaki* office, as Graves had recently taken over the coordination and development of a new multimedia archive project housed in the arts center. When I met Müller, a German-speaking Swiss musician who makes his living playing, teaching, and selling didjeridus, in the Yirrkala arts center he asked for my assistance in selecting and bundling a *yidaki* purchase, as he had arrived a few days early for the Masterclass specifically to buy the highest quality “authentic” didjeridus, which he saw as being available only in Arnhem Land. About half of the didjeridus Müller selected from the arts center’s stock were Gurruwiwi family instruments. Müller told me

\(^2\) Moyle (1981) notes that such early instruments appear to have been fashioned from bamboo, because of their appearance as depicted in cave paintings, and the unavailability during the period in which the images were made of tools needed to work dense eucalyptus wood, the favored *yidaki* material amongst Yolŋu craftsmen today.

\(^3\) Sadly the *Yidaki* Masterclass is currently suspended under a five year moratorium, due to the untimely death of prominent *yidaki* player and maker Milkayŋu Munuŋgurr, who was slated to co-host the Masterclass with Djalu’ in 2007.
it was important to him to stock instruments made by Yolŋu craftsmen in his didjeridu retail business, as only Aboriginal craftsmen from Arnhem Land had the “strong culture,” traditions, and expertise necessary to craft the highest quality didjeridus (personal communication, August 1, 2007). Thus for Müller “authentic” didjeridus are instruments with good playing characteristics made by Aboriginal people from Arnhem Land, who he sees as holding the cultural property rights to the authorized craftsmanship and sale of the instrument.

Müller’s perception of authenticity is reinforced by Yolŋu claims to cultural property rights over *yidaki* craftsmanship. In 1999 Yolŋu elders participating in a key forum at the annual Garma Festival of Traditional Culture at the sacred site of Guḻkuḻa on the globalization and commercialization of the *yidaki*, drafted a statement to be published online at the Festival’s homepage, claiming that Yolŋu hold lawful authority over the instrument, and that others wishing to craft *yidaki* themselves must seek permission from authorized Yolŋu custodians of the instrument (see Garma Festival of Traditional Culture 1999). Yolŋu leaders have made more recent public claims of authority over the instrument as well. In recorded statements made to Graves during his Fulbright research, Dhaḻwaŋu clan leader Burrŋupurrŋu Wunuŋmurra states his opinion that Yolŋu instruments are superior to didjeridus made overseas, while Gälpu clan elder Badikupa Gurruwiwi states that only Yolŋu have the ancestrally-bestowed right to sell the instrument for profit (Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka Centre 2006).

Another tourist interpretation of didjeridu authenticity is evident in the motivations and interests expressed to me by Joannes Wetzel. I met Wetzel, a Romansch speaker from a village near the Swiss-Italian border, in the Gurruwiwis’ home community
of Gäluru in late June of 2007. Unlike Graves and Müller, Wetzel had not originally planned a visit to Rripaŋu Yidaki as part of his Australian travels. While enrolled in a one-month intensive English language program in Cairns, Wetzel had expressed an interest in didjeridus and was directed to Djalu' as the person to see for anyone traveling in ‘Top End’ Australia interested in the didjeridu. After completing his program Wetzel arrived at the local airport just east of Yirrkala, for an impromptu four-week visit to study yidaki with the Gurruuwiywis, before finishing his Australian travels with a brief visit to Darwin and departing for a tour of the Asian subcontinent. Wetzel came to Rripaŋu Yidaki not in search of an experience of original-ness, or of quality objects made by people with proper authority. Instead Wetzel expressed interest in an “authentic” experience of spirituality and nature. At his home in Switzerland Wetzel managed a small holistic healing venture in which he concocted herbal balms, and practiced the laying-on of hands. Aware of the didjeridu’s reputation as an instrument of healing amongst certain New Age spiritual practitioners, Wetzel was interested in adding didjeridu playing to his own healing repertory. He wanted therefore to experience the use of the didjeridu as a channel for spiritual and natural healing power in the hands of a person reputed to be a master player and teacher, namely Djalu'.

While discourses of the didjeridu as a tool for spiritual healing are fairly common in the New Age literature, and even in some New Age-tinged scholarly literature (see e.g. Turner 1991: 35-36), the power of the didjeridu to heal or lack thereof is not a subject frequently discussed in public circles by Yolŋu. Djalu' however is an exception to the rule, as he frequently employs the didjeridu played towards another person’s chest in order to heal their aches and ailments. This practice however is based not on Djalu's
Gälpu-clan religious beliefs, but on a fusion of these beliefs with his deeply-held Christian spirituality, which Djalu' adopted after a vision he received while watching televangelist and faith-healer Benny Hinn preach. While other Yolŋu acknowledge that the *yidaki* plays a role in their healing ceremonies, they hold the details of these ceremonies to be sacred and secret, and do not speak of them publicly (see Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka Centre 2006: http://www.yirrkala.com/yidaki/dhawu/36healing.html for further details). The connection of the *yidaki* and of Yolŋu people to nature on the other hand, is a discourse frequently reinforced both by Yolŋu themselves and by the scholarly literature (see e.g. Williams 1986; Toner 2005b: 14-18; see also Chapter 4 for an extended discussion).

Omid Laridjani expressed a related, though somewhat distinct, interpretation of the authenticity of the Rripaŋu *Yidaki* experience to me during a telephone interview in April of 2008. Though I had never met Laridjani in person, I knew of his reputation as a highly enthusiastic *yidaki* player and friend of the Gurruwiwi family, and had spoken with him on the phone on several previous occasions. Laridjani first met the Gurruwiwis in 2003 when they made a featured guest appearance at the annual Joshua Tree Didgeridoo Festival in southern California. His enthusiasm impressed the family, and he quickly received a Yolŋu adoption from Djalu' (see Chapter 3 for further details about this practice). In 2005 he traveled to visit the Gurruwiwis at their home in Arnhem Land to learn about *yidaki* and other Yolŋu expressive media in order to establish roots by connecting with what he saw as timeless and natural cultural practices. Laridjani told me that as an Iranian-American who moved to this country at a young age he felt “de-rooted.” He lamented that:

I was not given songs. I was not given pictures. I was not given art, because I had left
there during war… and so, I don’t have that, and I’m sure that many people today don’t have the songs for their land where they come from. Don’t have the meanings of the wind directions. Don’t have a way to feel the rhythms of part of the sunset, or certain connections to the birds (personal communication, April 1, 2008).

Through his Rripaŋu Yidaki experience Laridjani felt that he was able to reestablish roots in his home town of Austin, Texas because he had reconnected to nature and unbroken tradition while in Arnhem Land.

Assertions of timelessness and unbroken traditions are exceedingly common, if not omnipresent in popular New Age literature about Australian Aboriginal peoples, which inevitably discuss a hazy conception of Aboriginal creation history glossed as the “Dreamtime” (see e.g. Lawlor 1991). Yet Yolŋu also frequently proclaim the unbroken transmission of their expressive practices, and their roots in the ancestral past. Djalu' for instance frequently declares to his visitors that he plays yidaki the same way as his father and his father’s father. The same holds true for other Yolŋu arts. Dhuwarrwarr Marika, a noted Yolŋu painter, told me while painting one morning in July of 2008 that even though her personal painting style differed slightly from her father’s, the designs she paints are the same in that they represent a link directly to the wayarr—a period of formation and creation, during which Yolŋu were given painting, music, and dance by powerful ancestral beings—through an unbroken line of family and descent. This connection to the creation epoch and its powerful beings, she said was like a rock on the shoreline: “even if the cyclone destroys the land, the rocks and the water remain” (personal communication, July 6, 2008).

It is clear then from the statements of these four visitors that yidaki aficionados who visit Rripaŋu Yidaki hold no more consensus about the meaning of authenticity specifically as it relates to the didjeridu, than do scholars who study the concept of
authenticity in the abstract. Graves traveled to Arnhem Land seeking primarily the “authentic” original didjeridus, Müller seeking quality instruments “authenticated” by Aboriginal people, Wetzel seeking an “authentic” natural spirituality, and Laridjani seeking an unbroken “authentic” tradition. Clearly these didjeridu enthusiasts hold a wide variety of preconceptions of the “authentic” that motivate their visits, which are frequently confirmed and reinforced by Yolŋu, academic, and popular discourses that they encounter during their stays in Arnhem Land. It follows then that when these enthusiasts gather online to discuss perceived issues of authenticity, none of them are really talking about the same thing, and much like the aforementioned scholars are not building toward any kind of consensus. Yet the external confirmation of each visitor’s preconception of the “authentic” in northeast Arnhem Land tends to confirm his or her belief in a personal conception of “authenticity,” and therefore perpetuate the discourse.

**The Impacts of Authenticity**

It is precisely this multivalence of the concept of authenticity which makes it so problematic. Even when used in a seemingly benign sense, such as the Heideggerian being true to oneself, the term “authenticity” still carries connotations of historicity, original-ness, and genuineness, and thus has the potential to harm the things it is used to describe. When applied to didjeridu craftsmanship and performance practices, the discourse of authenticity tends to create a demand for what Bruner (2005) might call historic verisimilitude: or instruments and playing styles that most closely resemble the historic instruments and field recordings with which many tourists who visit Rriŋaju Yidaki for the first time are already familiar, such as those seen and heard in the works of Elkin (1953), Moyle (1964), and Marika (1977).
Such tourist demands, even when unstated, are almost always felt and responded to by host societies, especially in the case of craftspeople and performing artists who serve the tourist industry. Hagedorn (2001) for instance notes that recently many Santería initiations have become much less harrowing, much more comfortable experiences, largely in response to the fact that much greater numbers of foreign visitors are being initiated into the faith. Because these visitors are willing to pay much higher fees for an initiation than local Cubans, many Santeros enthusiastically agree to officiate ceremonies on their behalf, and in many cases modify them according to the request of the tourist initiates, who often object to the ceremony’s seven-day length, or the necessity to sleep on bare floors (Hagedorn 2001: 219-222). This may have the effect of eventually diluting the impact and efficacy of a ceremonial practice intended to mark the transition into religious life. Likewise tourist demands for “authentic” yidaki that resemble historic instruments and field recordings may have a constraining effect on the contemporary practice of making and playing yidaki.

One frequent concern articulated by yidaki aficionados is that to be truly authentic, instruments should be painted in only ochre pigments rather than acrylic paints, as ochre painting existed in Yolŋu artistic life prior to extensive European contact. Never mind the fact that when Yolŋu do paint with ochre today they use hardware-store-bought wood glue as a binder, that Yolŋu generally do not paint yidaki that they keep for personal use, and that when they do paint a yidaki intended for sale with ancestral designs so that they can be proud of sending it out into the world they prefer to use acrylic paint as it holds up better under the repeated handling that comes with playing the instrument. Because of the demand for “authentic” ochre-painted instruments, it is these instruments
that tend to command a higher price, rather than the acrylic-painted instruments that many Yolŋu craftsmen prefer to make.

Interest in “authentic” yidaki playing styles resembling those heard on field recordings also harms tourist perceptions of yidaki playing styles being pioneered by younger generations of Yolŋu. One recent online discussion in the comments section of a YouTube video depicting the up-tempo playing style of a young Yolŋu man illustrates this process perfectly (see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gga45xVR8o). In his comments Laridjani, who I spoke with in 2008, criticized Elijah Gunydjurruwuy’s performance of a yidaki improvisation, as his fast-paced, highly-syncopated rhythms did not resemble the styles of Djalu' and his son Winiwini, with which Laridjani was most familiar. Laridjani’s criticisms of Gunydjurruwuy’s playing however, was premised on his misconception of yidaki playing as an unbroken, “authentic” tradition. Contrary to his impression, yidaki accompaniment styles change significantly with each new generation of yidaki players, as evidenced in the difference between Wandjuk Marika’s (1977) renditions of the yidaki accompaniments to Rirratjiŋu clan manikay and those played by Narripapa Yunupiŋu on Ralkurru Marika’s (2001) more recent recording of Rrirratjiŋu clan songs. The trend over the last thirty years has been for young yidaki players to play increasingly faster and more syncopated accompaniments to manikay on higher pitched yidaki. Further, it has long been the practice of teenage yidaki players to improvise fast and rhythmically complex solos in recreational settings in the interests of improving their technique. Even Winiwini, who adheres to Djalu's stricter, older fashioned style when accompanying manikay, frequently plays such improvisations when showing off for friends and visitors (see e.g. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DC9w4KWEgJE).
Thus Laridjani’s criticism was premised on a fundamental misunderstanding of the context of Gunydjurrwuy’s recording, coupled with an expectation that all *yidaki* playing conform to a sort of false historic verisimilitude in which all Yolŋu players would always play exactly the same way as did their parents and grandparents on field recordings made over thirty years ago. While this demand for historic verisimilitude has not negatively affected the perception of Djalu's playing style, as it does closely resemble styles heard on historic recordings such as those made by Moyle (1964) and Marika (1977), it may negatively affect the economic viability of a new generation of Yolŋu *yidaki* performance practice in the tourist industry.

But, while it does not negatively affect tourist perceptions of Djalu's playing style, the demand for historic verisimilitude set up by the discourse of authenticity may negatively color perceptions of other aspects of Djalu's performance practice. When idiosyncratic and newly innovated uses of the didjeridu by Yolŋu people do not line up with practices documented in the available historic and anthropological record the online didjeridu community may come to question their authenticity. In online discussions *Yidaki* aficionados have, for instance, questioned whether Djalu's idiosyncratic didjeridu faith-healing practices might in fact be a response to interest expressed by some of Djalu's visitors, and not Djalu's own deeply held religious beliefs (see e.g. http://www.forum.ididj.com.au/healing-powers-of-the-yolngu-yidaki-t689.html). It is clear then that the connotations of history, originality, and genuineness always present in the discourse of authenticity stand to significantly constrain the continuing renegotiation and reinvention of contemporary Yolŋu didjeridu performance and craftsmanship practices.
Discussion

Thus far I have criticized the discourse of authenticity as employed both among scholars and among didjeridu enthusiasts who travel to northeast Arnhem Land for its lack of a clear referent and its potential to harm the perception and viability of the objects and practices it is used to describe. The fact remains however that tourist preconceptions of the “authentic” practice of didjeridu performance and craftsmanship are often observed and confirmed during their travels in Arnhem Land. It is my contention that even though authenticity is a fragmentary and harmful discourse, it nonetheless points to real differences between certain objects, actions, and events.

As applied to *yidaki* originating in northeast Arnhem Land and didjeridus found elsewhere in Australia, the discourse of authenticity indicates a number of differences in craftsmanship practices. It highlights the difference between instruments made by hand and given individual care on one hand, and those made quickly and often sloppily in factories on the other. It also points to the difference between tried and true methods for hunting *yidaki* that rarely yield unusable trees, and the recent practice of clear-cutting entire tracts of forest with a chainsaw and taking only those few trees with a suitable hollow (see Taylor 2002).

“Authenticity” also points to real differences between Yolŋu *yidaki* playing style and didjeridu playing heard elsewhere in Australia and around the world. Whereas the Yolŋu styles that accompany their indigenous musical genres of *manikay* and *djatpanyarri* share much in common from player to player, such as a common timbral syllabary, fixed rhythmic cycles, and characteristic gestures for particular songs, the recently innovated styles of didjeridu playing heard in southern Australian cities and overseas are
Idiosyncratic to the point that virtually no two players sound anything alike. Further, Yolŋu yidaki playing and the meanings it is imbued with are integrated with other long standing Yolŋu artistic practices including song, dance, painting, sand sculpture, and storytelling. This stands in distinct contrast to recently innovated non-Yolŋu styles, which are most frequently soloistic.

While “authenticity” points to such differences in objects, actions and events however, its lack of a common referent and potential to do harm negate its value as a descriptive framework. I would suggest that things commonly described using discourses of authenticity by academics, tourists, and music fans could be better understood using a simple and perhaps less value-laden tripartite framework of long standing, newly innovated, and idiosyncratic practices. Such a framework would be less apt to carry loaded connotations, and perhaps more useful for describing objects and phenomena accurately.

If scholars could adopt a less discursively encumbered framework than authenticity to discuss differences in objects and practices perhaps it would eventually pass out of fashion amongst tourists and music fans. In this case musical tourists would no doubt perceive the musical identities of their hosts in a less caricatured light. This would in turn alleviate the need of businesses like Rripanŋu Yidaki to respond to a discourse that demands historic verisimilitude, and allow tourist businesses to simply present their cultural products as they are. It is only by removing the gloss of authenticity that things like didjeridus can be fully understood for what they are without undue preconception.
CHAPTER 3
INDIGENOUS SOCIAL FRAMEWORKS IN TOURISM BUSINESS PRACTICE

Many tourism businesses are labeled “indigenous tourism” simply because they employ or provide limited, consenting contact with indigenous peoples. How many of these businesses though, even those that are wholly or partly owned by indigenous peoples, premise their operations on indigenous values and social frameworks remains unclear. This chapter examines the centering of Yolŋu spiritual and economic values in the business practice and group identity of Rripaŋu Yiḏaki, and its attendant benefits and consequences for the Gurruwiwi family and their visitors. It is my view that the premises of businesses based on indigenous performance and artistic practices are matters of vital concern for both tourism scholars and ethnomusicologists who work with indigenous peoples. After all, if one accepts McIntosh’s (1993: 4) contention that “cultural survival is founded on self-determination: the ability to determine one's own future on one's own land,” it follows that the extent to which a tourism business is predicated on local, indigenous values and customs will determine the extent to which local, indigenous people are able to maintain control of that business. I would wager that the same holds true for dance troupes, “folk” music ensembles, and other indigenous cultural performance enterprises: those not predicated on the values of the indigenous people who comprise their membership are likely to slip out of those peoples’ control, or to have never been in their control in the first place.

Rripaŋu Yiḏaki is therefore of interest to ethnomusicology and tourism studies because, as a business, the Gurruwiwi family enterprise operates on somewhat different

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1 Much of the material in this chapter was previously published in the Journal of Ecotourism (See Clark 2009). It is used here with permission.
premises to many conventional tourist operations. While sharing a few commonalities with many cultural tourism ventures, it differs from most in that it does not offer a standardized cost-to-product schedule to its visitors, meaning that there is no fixed cost for any of the educational and hospitality services that the family offers its visitors. Pricing is instead negotiated between the Gurruwiwis and their visitors on a case-by-case, and often a day-by-day or per-service basis, reflecting Yolŋu concepts of value and exchange that differ significantly to those of the prevailing Australian cash economy. Likewise Rripaŋu Yi’daki’s marketing and development strategies differ substantially from standard practice in the Australian tourism industry, relying heavily on both word of mouth and on the Yolŋu practice of kin adoption and the reciprocal system of obligations it entails. This different mode of operation has drawn the scrutiny of the Northern Territory Department of Business, Economic and Regional Development, who have identified Rripaŋu Yi’daki as one of the businesses in the Northeast Arnhem Indigenous Tourism Hub “requiring product development, training and planning” (Stepwise Heritage and Tourism 2008: 1).

Such criticisms should hardly come as a surprise to readers familiar with the work of postcolonial researchers. As Povenelli (2002: 39) notes, in almost every interaction with the apparatus of the state, indigenous peoples are inspected and found to be “always already... failures” both in terms of their ability to negotiate the legal, political, and economic channels of liberal democracies, and in terms of their very indigeneity, or at least the state’s preconceptions and legal definitions of it. Far from dysfunctional though, the Gurruwiwi family’s current business practices have roots in long-standing, indigenous social and cultural frameworks and serve to better meet the desires and expectations of
both the Gurruwiwis and their visitors than models for indigenous cultural tourism exhibiting a much more standardized tourist product seen elsewhere in Australia.

**Heritage, Value, and Yolŋu Knowledge**

Rripaŋu Yiđaki shares some commonalities with conventionally operated tourism ventures in that, like all other cultural tourism enterprises, Rripaŋu Yiđaki sells heritage. Kirschenblatt-Gimblett (1998: 149) defines heritage as a “new mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past.” Rripaŋu Yiđaki’s recourse to the past is clearly seen in public statements made by family members, such the story of the *Djungirriny*, which Djalu’ has published in a variety of media (see e.g. Gurruwiwi 2003; Gurruwiwi *et al.* 2005), a creation history detailing the entrustment of a sacred, ancestral yiđaki to Gälpu clan ancestors in reward for their musical and spiritual prowess. For Yolŋu clanspeople, the yiđaki is part of the madayin, the body of sacred and restricted images, songs, stories, dances, and objects that constitute the physical evidence and recurring manifestations of the creative and bestowing acts of a clan’s waŋarr ancestors. In telling stories to his visitors that relate his use of the yiđaki to other parts of Gälpu-clan madayin (such as the story of the *Djungirriny*, which will be further detailed in Chapter 4), Djalu' explicitly positions his business practices in continuity with Yolŋu sacred histories, and thus produces heritage.

Unlike other heritage producers however, Rripaŋu Yiđaki operates somewhat differently from what Kirschenblatt-Gimblett (1998) terms a “value-added industry.” Kirschenblatt-Gimblett (1998: 150) holds that “[h]eritage adds value to existing assets that have either ceased to be viable (subsistence lifestyles, obsolete technologies, abandoned mines, the evidence of past disasters) or that were never economically
productive.” On these terms, Rripaŋu Yiďaki’s capitalization on the traditions of making and playing yiďaki runs counter to Kirschenblatt-Gimblett’s formulation in that the yiďaki has always held—and continues to hold—value for Yolŋu. While many young Yolŋu men can play the yiďaki, only a few are good enough to be acknowledged as “players” or yiďakimirri and recruited to play in ceremony. While this acknowledgment alone carries a measure of prestige, playing yiďaki in ceremony also puts the yiďaki player in an excellent position to learn to sing manikay. Those who have knowledge of many manikay, and the meanings of the songs, may become very influential in their own communities, as they can be afforded the status of ceremonial leaders known as djirrikay and dalkarramirri.

Further, in Yolŋu relations with non-indigenous people interested in didjeridu, the Yolŋu style of yiďaki-playing is an inside knowledge and all inside knowledge is valuable. Morphy (1991) explains that all Yolŋu religious knowledge, or knowledge related to the madayin, is multivalent containing on one side of a continuum surface meanings and explanations available to anyone, or outside (warraŋul) knowledge, and on the other, deeper meanings revealed only to a select few initiated men, or inside (djinawa) knowledge. Gaining access to relatively inside levels of Yolŋu knowledge requires payment, and it seems that such has long been the case. Thomson (1949c: 38), writing of experiences in the early days of contact between Yolŋu and European-descended Australians, notes that his chief interlocutor, after accompanying Thomson to ceremonies for years, requested to be excused from attending further ceremonies in which inside knowledge was revealed, as those he had already attended had incurred a debt of girri, or material wealth, that would take him many years to repay. Thomson also
notes however that in ceremonial payments of this type, the act of payment and the
goodwill that it engenders are more important than an actual assessment of the value of
the goods exchanged for knowledge. It is perhaps this custom of exchange of what one
has to offer, rather than a fixed price to pay for valuable knowledge that leads to
statements like Djalu' insisting at a 1999 forum on the international spread of the *yidaki*
that “no price whether it be $500 or $5000 can be placed on *yidaki* or the spiritual
covenant with ancestors that they represent” (Corn 1999).

In keeping with his assertions about the pricelessness of the *yidaki*, Djalu' operates
his business without a fixed pricing schedule. Individuals staying with the Gurruwiwis
must negotiate appropriate compensation for the family’s hospitality and services, often
on a continuing basis, for the duration of their stay. While some individuals visit the
Gurruwiwis as part of an organized group, and pay a fixed fee for the trip, these fees are
negotiated on a case-by-case basis between the family and the group organizer. Prices for
these fixed fees range significantly. In the past Djalu’ has taught the *yidaki* masterclass at
the Garma Festival of Traditional Culture, one of the most attended Aboriginal cultural
festivals in the Northern Territory (see Appendix A, Figure 3.1), and prices for entrants
have typically ranged upwards of $1000 AUD. Djalu' has also scheduled various private
workshops and masterclasses, both at home and abroad, with the help of volunteer
organizers, and fees for these have ranged anywhere from $300-$2000 AUD or the
international equivalent.

For those visitors that do not take part in an organized group event, the cost for a
visit to Rripaŋu Yi*daki* is much more fluid. Costs are often negotiated between the
Gurruwiwi family and such visitors on a per-service basis. For instance, Djalu' will often
ask for $100 AUD for a one-hour *yidaki* lesson, and many visitors will be asked by Gurruwiwi family members to help out with grocery purchases during their stay, and sometimes for help with larger ticket items like plane tickets to funerals on island homeland settlements. Most of these visitors will also purchase a *yidaki* during their stay for between $300-500 AUD, which is a significant discount compared to Gurruwiwi instruments purchased abroad, at southern Australian retailers, and even those available at the local arts center. Additionally, as mentioned previously, there is no set agenda for travelers visiting Rripaŋu Yidaki outside of an organized tour group. They are instead “integrate[d]... with the general flow or pulse of community life” (Lim 2001b), giving each visitor a unique experience. This lack of a cost-to-product schedule, along with other factors such as the prominence of individual personalities in the family, a reliance on word of mouth marketing, and the importance of repeat visitors to the enterprise, mark the Gurruwiwi family business as somewhat distinct from more conventional heritage-based tourism ventures.

The Tjapukai Aboriginal Culture Park is a paradigmatic example of such conventional Aboriginal cultural tourism businesses. In this twenty-five-acre park just north of Cairns, the tourist hub of north Queensland, members of the Djabugay Aboriginal community in nearby Kuranda are employed by park management to present their cultural practices for tourist consumption. The Park’s facilities consist of “a museum; history, creation and dance theatres; a traditional camp; and a retail outlet that encompasses an art gallery.” (Dyer, Aberdeen, and Schuler 2003: 83). Tourists can explore these facilities by purchasing one of a number of ticket packages, including “Tjapukai by Day,” “Tjapukai by Night,” and a joint package in conjunction with Cairns
Tropical Zoo called “Iconic Australia.” All of the Park’s packages use a fixed, age-based cost-to-product schedule, with “Adult,” “Children,” and “Family” pricing categories (Tjapukai Aboriginal Culture Park 2008). While Rripaŋu Yiḏaki’s operations clearly differ from the conventional mode of operations at Tjapukai in terms of pricing, there are much deeper differences as well.

The Tjapukai Aboriginal Culture Park purports to educate tourists about Djabugay culture and provide financial resources for development of the Djabugay community, but in their 2008 study Dyer et al. found dissatisfaction with the Park’s operations among both Djabugay community members and Djabugay Park employees. Among the concerns identified were uncertainty about the level of Djabugay equity in the park, lack of Djabugay control over representation of Djabugay culture, miscommunication between the largely non-Djabugay Park management and Djabugay employees, and a desire on both sides for more contact between tourists and Djabugay Park employees (Dyer et al. 2003). Through maintaining self-management of the business, and premising their operations on long-standing local social frameworks, Rripaŋu Yiḏaki avoids many such inequitable aspects of conventional heritage-based tourist operations like Tjapukai.

Strong Personalities and Self-Management

The Gurruwiwi family owns and manages all of Rripaŋu Yiḏaki’s operations. The primary actors in the business are Djalu’, his wife Dhopiya who crafts and paints yiḏaki, his sons Winiwini and Vernon who assist him in crafting instruments and teaching, and his sister Dhāŋga who plays an important logistical and cross-cultural interpretive role. Djalu's role in Rripaŋu Yiḏaki, in addition to yiḏaki craftsmanship and teaching, involves providing leadership, inspiration and name-recognition to the family business. It is
impossible that the family business could have flourished to the extent it has without him, and it remains uncertain in what form business will continue without him; though the family maintains that Djalu’s adult son Winiwini is ready to take over operations of the business when the time comes, and that his grandsons are already being groomed for this role as well (Dhäŋgal Gurruwiwi, personal communication, January 29, 2008).

While Djalu’s presence is integral to the operations of Rripaŋu Yidaki, the role played by his sister Dhäŋgal is also critically important. Dhäŋgal acts as the family’s communicator, maintaining an active phone line at her home in Gäluru through which visitors can reach the family, and also translating during tuition sessions. Djalu’, like many Yolŋu, has some command of English, gained in spite of his never having attended an English medium school, but an unknown affliction some years back left part of his voice box paralyzed, thus making his speech soft and difficult for some visitors to understand. With her mission education Dhäŋgal has a fluent command of English, the primary medium of interaction with the Gurruwiwis for all Rripaŋu Yidaki’s visitors regardless of nationality. She is also comfortable operating across cultural boundaries, perhaps in part because of her work as a consultant and educator in Charles Darwin University’s Aboriginal Studies department, making her an excellent guide to Yolŋu ways of life for first time visitors.

In this reliance on strong personalities within the family, Rripaŋu Yidaki reflects trends seen in grassroots cultural tourism ventures elsewhere. Sarkissian (2000: 79) likewise notes the dependence of tourist performance groups in Malaysia’s Portuguese settlements on a limited number of aging “stars.” This importance given to individuals in such small-scale, family-operated ventures stands in significant contrast to conventional
cultural tourist operations such as those seen in the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park, where, as employees of the Park, “Djabugay people lack power and influence in the Park because of their minority shareholding, minimal voting powers, and lack of employee and managerial representation,” and express “concerns about a lack of control over when and how to represent their culture at the Park” (Dyer et al. 2003: 93).

**Gurrutu Networking**

Another way Rripaŋu Yidaki differs from standard cultural tourist ventures is its reliance on word of mouth marketing and the participation of repeat visitors in supporting the family enterprise. While festival appearances and the teaching CDs released by the family play a large part in bolstering Rripaŋu Yidaki’s international reputation, much of the marketing and, most importantly, the organization of visits to the Gurruwiwis are handled by those who have visited the family previously. A few repeat visitors to Rripaŋu Yidaki have organized nearly all of the multi-day, large-group visits to the enterprise, and while they often negotiate a set fee per person for these visits with which they pay the Gurruwiwis, none of the repeat visitors I interviewed claimed profit as a motive, or indeed made any profit from taking on such organizational roles.

These repeat visitors act in this organizational capacity not simply out of goodwill toward the Gurruwiwi family, but also out of a sense of familial obligation and responsibility. In Yolŋu society each person relates to everyone else as close kin, because their concept of family, or gurrutu, is much more inclusive than concepts influenced by Western European formulations of kinship. A Yolŋu person will, for example, relate to all his or her father’s brothers as a father, and mother’s sisters as a mother, and each of their children as a brother or sister. Each of these relationships entails certain expectations of
sentiment and behavior. For instance a husband, or dhuway, will relate to many people other than his spouse, both male and female, as galay, or wife. These relationships are expected to be affectionate and respectful, like the relationships of many close cousins in American families. Young men in this relationship will in fact refer to one another as met, translated by Yolŋu as “cousin,” and are often good friends who hunt, fish, work, and hang out together.

Many of these relationships also entail material obligations to the other member. A male gutharra or “grandchild,” is expected to put himself at the service of all his nominal mother’s mothers and mother’s mother’s brothers, or märi, performing helpful tasks for them, and sharing food, cigarettes, and other comforts with them. Perhaps the most intricate of these relationships is the one between a male gurrŋ, or son-in-law, and his mukul rumaru, meaning mother-in-law, or, more literally, “poison aunt.” While it is considered taboo, and very bad luck, for a gurrŋ to look his “poison aunt” in the eye, much less speak to her, he is never the less expected to ensure that she is happy and well accommodated. He does this by asking others about her, though never by name, and giving her relatives gifts to take to her.²

This Yolŋu kinship network encompasses every Yolŋu person in Arnhem Land, and some non-Yolŋu Aboriginal people as well, so that a Yolŋu person will relate to literally every other Yolŋu person through a specific kin relationship. The network is also frequently extended to incorporate those who were previously outsiders. If a visitor makes a good impression by making themselves helpful to their Yolŋu hosts and not

² These examples of Yolŋu kinship customs and expectations are largely drawn from my own observations and informal kinship lessons during my fieldwork visits. Corroboration of this material and further explication of this subject may be found in the work of Williams (1986) and Christie and Gaykamaŋu (2001).
breaching local etiquette, or if a local resident works frequently with Yolŋu, he or she will often be “adopted” by a Yolŋu person who will relate to the former outsider as a sibling, child, parent, or grandparent, with all the entailed obligations and expectations.

Of course, not all relationships perfectly meet societal expectations. Many galay/dhuway cousins are not particularly fond of each other, and as often seen elsewhere, many sons-in-law do not live up to their mother-in-law’s expectations. Yolŋu also hold differing attitudes toward their nominal relationships with adopted outsiders.

Many Yolŋu who interact frequently with visitors and non-Yolŋu community workers use adoptions as a sort of teaching tool to make the adoptees slightly more aware of local custom, but do not expect much of those they adopt. Some Yolŋu reject the practice altogether, seeing adoptees as foolish cultural dabblers, and never truly family. But, some relationships between Yolŋu and adopted outsiders are very close and affectionate, much more like those between two Yolŋu of the same kin relationship.

Yolŋu adoptions can likewise mean different things to different adoptees, especially given that various adoptees have drastically different levels of understanding regarding the meaning of Yolŋu adoptions and the responsibilities they entail. But, as Randin Graves—one of the former coordinators at the Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka arts center in Yirrkala, a primary point of interface between tourists to the region and Yolŋu—notes, in many ways a Yolŋu adoption:

means what you make it mean through your actions. Most people don’t earn Yolngu [sic] adoptions, don’t know what it means, and don’t follow the protocols determined by them. Most people just leave and proudly say they’re adopted… or use it as a credential to teach didj workshops. It indeed can be meaningless, or you can make it meaningful by living it. (Serious Sticks Forum 2007: http://forum.serioussticks.com/viewtopic.php?f=12&t=427&p=5189#p5189)

Visitors adopted by the Gurruwiwi family, who return to visit the family again and help out with yidaki production, or who organize groups to visit Rripaŋu Yidaki, are in a sense
“living” their adoption. Many attempt to give something back to the family through acting as word of mouth advertisers and educating others about what they have learned of Yolŋu lifeways through their contact with the Gurruwiwis. In doing so they not only help the family materially by attracting more paying tourists to the business, they also bolster Rripanŋu Yidaki’s reputation as instrument makers and authoritative custodians of the yidaki among the international didjeridu enthusiast community. Some also provide crucial voluntary support in organizing occasional masterclasses and workshops; acting as points of contact for individuals interested in visiting Rripanŋu Yidaki; preparing first time visitors for their cross-cultural experience with discussion and written materials; and acting as hands-off workers, or djämamirri (Guan Lim, personal communication, March 22, 2008), for the family during large group visits.

Guan Lim of Melbourne-based iDIDJ Australia, a didjeridu retail and information outlet, is one such adopted repeat visitor who has organized numerous tour groups to visit Rripanŋu Yidaki. He was also instrumental in constructing the Rripanŋu Yidaki website, an important marketing tool for the Gurruwiwi family business, in 2001, and more recently he has also assisted Djalu' with the organization of an annual yidaki masterclass at his home community, in lieu of the currently-suspended Garma Festival masterclass. Likewise Graves, who first visited and was adopted by the Gurruwiwis in 1999, organized two North American tour groups to visit the family business, before obtaining his Fulbright grant to develop materials aimed at increased communication between Yolŋu yidaki players and non-Aboriginal didjeridu enthusiasts. The website and instructional CD that emerged from Graves’ research have proved to be some of the most important educational and preparatory materials for didjeridu enthusiasts traveling to visit
Rripaŋu Yiḏaki for the first time (see Munungurr 2005; Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka Centre 2006). Clearly such efforts are an important boon, if not essential to the continued operation of the Gurruwiwis’ small-scale tourism business.

**Motivation, Self-Selection, and Sustainability**

My research indicates that, while Rripaŋu Yiḏaki’s business practices are unconventional, and in the eyes of some are not recognized as properly constituting a business model, they may be better suited to meeting the stated needs and desires of both the family and their self-selecting group of visitors than more standard cultural tourism models like that of the Tjapukai Aboriginal Culture Park, as well as others seen in Arnhem Land like the Garma Festival of Traditional Culture. While the family makes a relatively stable living with its yiḏaki business, statements made by family members indicate that their primary motivations for engaging in Rripaŋu Yiḏaki’s operations are not financial, and that they may in fact not be interested in further development or expansion of the business. Djalu' indicates that his primary motivation for continuing his work with yiḏaki is spiritual. Djalu' continues to play and teach in his old age, unlike most Yolŋu men who give up the yiḏaki in favor of singing during middle age, because of the trust of the stewardship of Gälpu clan yiḏaki playing, part of the clan’s madayin, given to him as a young man by his father Monyu. Djalu' frequently tells his visitors of this trust, along with the trust of Gälpu clan manikay singing given to his brother Gurritjiri (see Gurruwiwi et al.: 2005). Djalu' also connects his work with the yiḏaki to his Christian spirituality: “God gave me the job to make yirdaki [sic]. That is my job now, not anything else” (Lim 2001a: 4). Dhäŋgal likewise emphasizes the role of both Yolŋu indigenous and Christian spiritualities in laying the “foundation” of the business...
Dhäŋgal also indicates that the present level of visitors to Rripaŋu Yiđaki is more than enough for the family’s needs and capacity (personal communication, January 28, 2008). In addressing what skills would be most useful for young family members to foster, she indicates not the skills necessary for business expansion, such as marketing, tourism planning, and web development, but the *djalkiri* or foundational skills of Yolŋu ceremonial law, such as “yiđaki, manikay, ga dhäwu [didjeridu, songs, and stories].” “By coming back to the foundation,” Dhäŋgal maintains, “Kids will achieve anything. And just having a stronger foundation, then from there they can venture out into the world” (personal communication, February 18, 2008). Such statements indicate that the primary intent of the family members involved with Rripaŋu Yiđaki differs significantly from the fundamental profit motives of many heritage-producing tourist businesses, and that the family might in fact not want further product development and expansion.

Rripaŋu Yiđaki’s nonstandard mode of doing business may also better meet the demands of a specific, self-selecting market niche than other Yolŋu tourist ventures operating in Arnhem Land. In comparing Rripaŋu Yiđaki with the Garma Festival of Traditional Culture, an annual Yolŋu-operated cultural festival run with a much more conventional business model, Graves notes that while some visitors enjoy the constancy and variety of activity provided at the Garma festival, others are disappointed that they “didn’t really get to know any Yolŋu that well” (personal communication, April 11, 2008). Rripaŋu Yiđaki’s mode of operation better meets the desires of this latter group of visitors. In statements made to me in informal conversation about their experiences, visitors to Rripaŋu Yiđaki emphasize that they value and desire close personal contact
rather than spectacle in their travels to Arnhem Land. These desires are often met and exceeded by the warm welcome extended by the Gurruwiwis, and often by adoption into the family. Satisfied Rripaŋu Yidaki visitors also stress the value of cross-cultural learning obtained through getting into the flow of community life for a little while and negotiating with Yolŋu on their own terms. Jamie Nelson notes of the relaxed pace of activity during his visit: “That was good... just sort of waiting for things to happen. Because, they did eventually. It’s not like I could say, ‘Hey let’s go look for yams!’ or, ‘Hey, let’s go didjeridu cutting!’” (personal communication, April 6, 2008).

Still, not all visitors to Rripaŋu Yidaki are satisfied. Some are put off by the tension of negotiating an unfixed cost-to-service schedule; as Graves indicates, some are bored by a lack of constant action; and some simply expect something different than what the Gurruwiwis offer. Djalu' has frequently recounted to me the story of one particular yidaki workshop attendee who was deeply unsatisfied by not getting precisely what he thought he was paying for. Like many a good music teacher, Djalu' allows time for students to process new concepts before moving ahead to something else, and does not push students past their abilities, and in this case the student who had signed up for Djalu's workshop had never played a didjeridu before. As such, Djalu' simply showed him how to make a basic sound on the instrument by vibrating the lips, and then played a yidaki in the direction of the student’s heart. Djalu' considers this practice an act of blessing, and uses it for a variety of purposes including healing and encouragement. Most frequently though he uses it as a way of spiritually sanctioning students’ use of the yidaki, allowing them access to part of his Gälpu-clan ancestral heritage, and “opening their hearts” or “opening their spirits” to the knowledge of yidaki, which will begin to flow
into them. The student was deeply unsatisfied however, as he had expected assistance in reaching a certain level of proficiency on the instrument in a short time span in return for his admittance fee of $1,000 AUD. The student became angry to the point of demanding his money back, but was told by the Gurruwiwis that that was not the way the exchange worked: the family saw both the student’s money, and the basic knowledge of didjeridu playing he received coupled with Djalu's blessing as gifts given according to Yolŋu custom, meant to be evaluated on the basis of intent more than in terms of material worth. Thus the student left unsatisfied with expectations confounded and unmet.

Discussion

While some visitors do indeed leave unsatisfied, the overwhelming majority I have observed have come away from their experience happy, feeling they got what they came for. This is because, for a self-selecting niche of the didjeridu tourist market, Rripaŋu Yiḏaki’s mode of operations meets their desires and expectations for close personal contact with something that is perceived as “authentically” indigenous quite well. No doubt the necessity of negotiating on Yolŋu terms without a fixed cost-to-product schedule, while at times frustrating, also adds to such perceptions of authenticity and indigeneity.

Perhaps more important though, the centering of Yolŋu values and exchange customs within Rripaŋu Yiḏaki’s business model, also serves the stated needs and desires of family members quite well. The lack of standardization and the attendant potential for mass production of packaged tours keeps the family business small, and the small scale of the business avoids the pitfalls of inequitable business models like those seen at the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park. Because Rripaŋu Yiḏaki has not sold shares or taken
loans in the interests of product development or business expansion, the Gurruwiwis maintain total control over their affairs, and are free to represent themselves and their cultural practices however they see fit within the tourist encounter. The centering of Yolŋu values and practices, such as exchange for priceless knowledge and *gurrutu* adoption, are an important aspect of this representation, playing a key role in attracting a self-selecting niche of the didjeridu tourism market and encouraging visitors to become active participants in the promotion of the business. In this sense the Gurruwiwis’ nonstandard business model, is not only more fully indigenous than many “indigenous” tourism ventures, but may in fact be more sustainable than conventional “indigenous” tourism products like Tjapukai, in that it is less likely to degrade its socio-cultural resource base.

Paradoxically though, or perhaps predictably according to post-colonial scholars like Povinelli (2002), it is precisely the indigenous aspects of the family business’ identity that mark it as distinct from standard cultural tourism practice and make it a target for criticism from the conventional tourism industry and government bodies. Because government bodies and non-profit groups that track indigenous enterprise focus so heavily on developing indigenous tourism products that resemble models for conventional cultural tourism seen elsewhere, they are apt to miss the value that grassroots enterprises like Rripaŋu Yiḏaki hold for their operators, visitors, and communities, and instead criticize such enterprises for lacking “product development.” If such groups could move beyond perceptions of indigenous peoples as “always already… failures” (Povinelli 2002:39), they might learn to see the benefits of alternative models of product development, based on meeting the stated needs and desires of indigenous artists,
craftspeople, and musicians and their visitors. Rripaŋu Yîdaki could then serve as a model for encouraging grassroots tourism efforts in indigenous communities without massive inputs of outside capital and labor, and thereby provide indigenous communities with a more self-determined avenue by which to negotiate the international tourism industry.
CHAPTER 4
ECOTOURISM AND INDIGENOUS ENTERPRISE

Many indigenous tourism businesses are forced to address or otherwise negotiate the assumption on the part of many of their guests that indigenous peoples are more in-touch with the natural world, or ecologically wise than Westerners and others living in industrial and post-industrial societies. The Gurruwiwi family enterprise is no exception. In the case of Rripaŋu Yiḏaki the problem is compounded by the fact that Yolŋu cosmology asserts deep links between expressive cultural forms, including music, and specific tracts of land. This aspect of the family’s musical identity is in fact proclaimed on the Rripaŋu Yiḏaki website. Guan Lim of iDIDJ Australia (see Lim 2008), a long-time repeat visitor to the Gurruwiwis, has on numerous occasions organized what he terms “eco-cultural” tours to visit the family; and due to his involvement in the development of the family’s business website, the “eco-cultural” label has been included in Rripaŋu Yiḏaki’s online advertising materials (Lim 2001b: 4).

Lim’s “eco-cultural” label references the relatively new discursive sphere of “ecotourism.” Originally stemming from the writings of a few well-meaning environmentalists, such as Ceballos-Lascurain (1987), in the past twenty-years the discourse of ecotourism has given rise to a major new branch of the international tourism industry. Many government bodies and non-governmental development institutions that work with indigenous people have even come to see this new model of ecologically and culturally “sustainable” tourism as a panacea for struggling economies in indigenous communities. Due to this interest, studies now abound concerning the feasibility of

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1 Much of the material in this chapter was previously published in the Journal of Ecotourism (See Clark 2009). It is used here with permission.
implementing and maintaining ecotourism programs involving indigenous peoples, based on existing, non-indigenous tourism business models, and the investment of outside capital (e.g. Dilly 2003; Fotiou, Buhalis & Vereczi 2002; Nepal 2004). But as McIntosh (1999: 3) observes, “[i]n a perfect world, the impetus for travel programs on indigenous lands would come from indigenous peoples themselves.” This chapter begins to address a gap in the ecotourism literature by examining Rripaŋu Yiḏaki as a grassroots ecotourism business initiated, owned and maintained by one Aboriginal family in the far north of Australia. In this chapter I consider the ecotourism label as applied to the Gurruwiwi family business on the basis of statements made by the family themselves and their visitors in light of recently-advanced frameworks in tourism scholarship that attempt to identify the components of a legitimate ecotourism business. I also outline some of the problems inherent in the labeling of indigenous business as “ecological” and argue for careful, reflexive consideration of the ecotourism label as applied more generally to indigenous tourist enterprise.

The “Ecology” of Indigenous Peoples

While the Rripaŋu Yiḏaki business website has billed their tourism venture as an “eco-cultural program,” and while many of the activities visitors participate in are closely connected to the natural world, the question should occur to the mind of the critical observer: is this enterprise properly labeled as ecotourism? Many of Rripaŋu Yiḏaki’s nature-based activities are to some extent extractive; after all there is nothing inherently green about burning fossil fuels to fly halfway around the world and cut down trees. Further, many animal-rights and conservation groups would squirm at some of the nature-based activities that many of Rripaŋu Yiḏaki’s visitors are treated to: including frequent
fishing trips, string-ray hunts, and the rare exciting sea turtle cookouts that are a community favorite among Yolŋu in far northeast Arnhem Land (see Appendix A, Figures 4.1 and 4.2). But as Weaver (2001: 17, 23) notes of popular perception within the tourism industry, “the boundary between the cultural and the natural environment is hazy... in the case of many indigenous cultures,” and therefore many times Aboriginal tourism in Australia is unthinkingly labeled as ecotourism. Such glib usage of labels however, runs the risk of conflating indigenous people and the environment as one and the same.

This sort of conflation and the blurring of the “animal or actor” distinction (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 41) have a long history in Western thought regarding “uncivilized” peoples, and are particularly evident in the ethnologic and museum sciences of nineteenth century Europe and America. Indeed as Kirschenblatt-Gimblett notes:

It was not uncommon in the nineteenth century for a living human rarity [i.e. an indigenous performer] to be booked into a variety of venues—theaters, exhibition halls, concert rooms, museums, and zoos—in the course of several weeks or months as part of a tour (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 42, emphasis added).

Carelessly dubbing all indigenous activity “ecological,” regardless of its environmental impact, simply because of perceived or stated links between indigenous cultural practices and the environment reinforces the misperception that indigenous peoples are somehow more “natural” than other human beings. It may also perpetuate the blurring of the “actor or animal” distinction so often evident in nineteenth century World’s Fairs and museum dioramas.

In addition to this sort of dehumanization, misuse of the ecotourism label also perpetuates what Fennel (2008) identifies as the myth of indigenous peoples as natural stewards of their environments, espoused in both academic writing and the marketing efforts of the ecotourism industry. Through a review of literature on ecotourism,
supplemented by a review of corollary scholarly literatures in anthropology and conservation science, Fennel’s (2008) work identifies a widely held assumption in these fields that indigenous people, due to their purported closer contact with the natural environment, are inherently better environmental stewards than peoples living in urbanized and industrialized societies. Fennel notes a lack, in most cases, of the evidence necessary to support this position, and criticizes it, armed with archaeological evidence of prehistoric over-hunting, and evidence of the intensification of over-hunting amongst some indigenous groups following the introduction of high-tech weapons such as rifles. In making this critique Fennel makes the far too common mistake of conflating the indigenous present with a prehistoric, or “primitive” past, but his point is duly noted: indigenous peoples are no different from other groups in their capacities to harm their environments.

Warned by the findings of Kirschenblatt-Gimblett and Fennel, I am inclined to approach the positioning of Rripaŋu Yiŋaki as an “eco-cultural” enterprise with some caution. However, in light of strong cosmological connections expressed by Yolŋu between themselves and their land, learning experiences about the natural world related by visitors to Rripaŋu Yiŋaki, studies of the sustainability of Aboriginal didjeridu harvest practices in Arnhem Land, and statements made by Gurruwiwi family members in discussing the ecological components of their business, I believe that in this case the ecotourism label is provisionally appropriate. It is my contention though, that indigenous tourism enterprises should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis before they are labeled “ecotourism” simply on the basis of assumed links between indigenous people and the environment.
Defining Ecotourism

Numerous competing definitions have been advanced by industry participants, government bodies, and academics, attempting to describe what properly constitutes ecotourism. Fennel (2001) conducted a content analysis of eighty-five such definitions, advanced largely in the 1990s, which found that reference to natural areas, conservation, culture, benefits to locals, and education were the most frequently incorporated variables in the ecotourism definitions surveyed. Donohoe and Needham (2006) conducted another more recent content analysis of thirty academic definitions of ecotourism, identifying “nature-based,” “preservation/conservation,” “education,” “distribution of benefits,” and “ethics/responsibility/awareness” as the most common variables found in contemporary ecotourism definitions. While such studies are valuable for illuminating core themes in discourses surrounding the topic of ecotourism, they do not provide a specific prescriptive framework for analyzing whether specific aspects of an enterprise are properly defined as ecotourism. I premise my discussion of Rripaŋu Yiḏaki’s activities vis a vis ecotourism on Weaver’s (2001) definition of ecotourism for three reasons: I feel that as a scholar of ecotourism in the Australian context his definition may be more applicable to Aboriginal enterprise; Weaver’s definition provides a list of criteria that ecotourism ventures should meet; and it is broad enough to encompass aspects of the Gurruwiwi family’s operations within the purview of ecotourism, thus giving the “eco-cultural” label under which Rripaŋu Yiḏaki is marketed the benefit of the doubt.

Weaver’s (2001) primer on the subject gives his readers a “textbook definition” of ecotourism comprised of four criteria:

- Ecotourism is a form of tourism (criterion 1).
- Attractions are primarily nature-based, but can include associated cultural resources and influences (criterion 2).
• Educational and learning outcomes are fostered (criterion 3).
• Ecotourism should appear to be sustainable from both a biocentric (ecological sustainability) and anthropocentric (socio-cultural sustainability) perspective, based on best practice (criterion 4).
(Excerpted from Weaver 2001: 16).

Based on statements made by both hosts and visitors, the Gurruwiwi family’s tourism enterprise seems to meet each of these criteria, though not always unequivocally.

A Form of Tourism

Clearly, an enterprise that hosts travelers who pay for hospitality, educational, and recreational services engages in tourism, and in this sense Rripaŋu Yidaki meets Weaver’s first criterion of ecotourism. However, many visitors to Rripaŋu Yidaki express discomfort with the term “tourism” as applied to their experiences. Many visitors feel that “tourism” poorly describes the very personal interactions that they have and relationships they develop with the Gurruwiwi family while visiting Rripaŋu Yidaki: “What I experienced with Djalu' and his family, I don’t think I’d call it tourism, because it would trivialize the meaning and effect of what I experienced” (Jamie Nelson, personal communication, April 6, 2008). Others feel that the word “tourism” should refer to a more standardized, packaged experience than that offered by the Gurruwiwis. These statements should come as no surprise when seen in light of MacCannell’s (1999: 10) findings that many tourists hesitate to self identify as such, and indeed in many cases, “tourists dislike tourists.”

In the case of Rripaŋu Yidaki though, this rejection of the “tourist” label may stem more from the unusual nature of the enterprise rather than an unwillingness to self-identify as an “outsider.” As described in Chapter 3, Rripaŋu Yidaki’s mode of operations differs significantly from many conventional cultural tourist ventures, involving significant contributions from repeat visitors. These repeat visitors, many of whom have
been ‘adopted’ by one of the Gurruwiwis or their relatives, may come to see themselves as friends and even as members of the Gurruwiwi family, rather than simply as tourists interested in visiting northeast Arnhem Land again. Still many, particularly those who have organized groups to visit the Gurruwiwis, recognize that the family enterprise is fundamentally a tourist business offering a “kind of product,” which is reflected by the fact that many elements, like food-gathering, and yidaki crafting and tuition are common to almost every visit to Rripaŋu Yidaki (Ben Hicks, personal communication, April 8, 2008).

A Nature-Based Enterprise

Weaver’s (2001) definition also requires that ecotourist attractions be primarily nature-based, but may include a cultural component as well, and many visitors’ experiences match this prescription precisely. As noted in Chapter 1, yidaki cutting and craftsmanship are deeply nature-based activities in which virtually every visitor to Rripaŋu Yidaki takes part. Cutting trips with the Gurruwiwis typically last between three and seven hours. Visitors accompanying Djalu’ and his family on these trips trek several kilometers into stringybark forest, assist the family in felling suitable trees with axes and hand saws, and often spend at least an hour hauling the cut yidaki logs out of the forest and back to Djalu’s vehicle (see Appendix A, Figure 4.3). These trips inevitably involve encounters with local fauna. Nearly every Rripaŋu Yidaki visitor can recall the feeling of a being bitten by green ants, a tree ant species that inhabits the termite-hollowed stringybark trees and has a tendency to fall from the air onto the head and shoulders of anyone who swings an axe at their home. Some visitors even have stories of more dangerous encounters with larger forest denizens, such as the poisonous king brown
snakes and the famously aggressive water buffalo that inhabit the region. Even after the harvested logs are hauled back to the Gurruwiwi family home, fashioning them into musical instruments takes several more hours of work conducted under the tropical sun in Djalu's outdoor workshop (see Appendix A, Figure 4.4).

Indeed, stories of cutting trips and the subsequent craft of the harvested logs into musical instruments are among the most common stories swapped by yiŋkakinyu aficionados who have visited northeast Arnhem Land, as these trips are for many visitors the highlight of their stay with Rripaŋu Yiŋkakinyu. As Jamie Nelson, who visited the Gurruwiwis in 2006, notes of his experience:

I really enjoyed going out into the bush and cutting trees, and getting to do work on some of the yiŋkakinyu. But, that was because I wholly understood what was going on, and could contribute in a whole-hearted way. Whereas a lot of my experience was sort of tentative, being an observer rather than a participant… In a way it was the most concrete and comprehensible thing tied to my expectations (Jamie Nelson, personal communication, April 4, 2008).

Such statements highlight the centrality of nature-based components of the Rripaŋu Yiŋkakinyu experience in both meeting and reinforcing visitor expectations and preconceptions of their hosts as indigenous and therefore “ecological” people.

Visitors to the Gurruwiwi family often encounter the “ecological” in unexpected settings as well. While many of Rripaŋu Yiŋkakinyu’s activities such as cutting yiŋkakinyu and food-gathering are self-evidently nature-based, statements made by the family indicate that they view yiŋkakinyu playing and tuition and other cultural practices as rooted in the natural world as well. When asked about how the family’s teachings and business practices relate to the natural world Dhäŋgāl replied:

When we speak it’s not just us speaking, it’s the land as well speaking within us. We’re connected. Like every plant and animal are special to Yolŋu. And we need to maintain that for the rest of our lives, no matter what happens with everything. That can’t be taken from us. Because you know we came from the land, and we go back to it, so there’s no difference in that. And the land is part of us, we can’t differ the land from who we are, especially the Yolŋu (personal communication, January 28, 2008).
In this statement, Dhäŋga is referring to spiritual-ancestral links and kinship ties with specific tracts of land. Through the actions of their waŋarr ancestral beings, each Yolŋu clan inherited rights to pieces of land that each member of a clan relates to as his or her own, and as constitutive of his or her spiritual being. The names of Yolŋu clan members reflect this relationship, as many Yolŋu are named after particular places or landforms where their clan’s waŋarr ancestors did great deeds or performed creative acts.

Additionally, individual Yolŋu may have certain rights, obligations, and spiritual relationships to other clans’ land, such as the land of their mothers’ or grandfathers’ clans (see Williams 1986 for a detailed account). These family-land relationships are a fundamental part of the Yolŋu system of gurruṯu, or family, in which almost all visitors to Rripaŋu Yiḏaki receive a basic initiation.

The relationship between the Gurruwiwi family’s cultural teachings and the natural world are also reflected in the story of the Djuŋgirriny, frequently told to visitors by Djalu’. The Djuŋgirriny is one of the sacred yidaki types in the custodianship of Djalu’s Gälpu clan, and is connected to the West Wind, one of the Gälpu-clan waŋarr ancestors. In the story, all the Yolŋu clans gathered at a sacred place for a yidaki playing competition to see who could make a sound travel far to the west in order to make the West Wind blow. Only the Gälpu clan succeeded, and it is because of this that Gälpu clan leaders hold the intellectual property rites to that sacred yidaki, the Djuŋgirriny, special relationships with all the places that the sound of the Djuŋgirriny traveled to, and a special relationship with the yidaki in general (see Gurruwiwi 2003; Gurruwiwi et al. 2005). Djalu’ also tells his visitors that, when entrusting him with the custodianship of Gälpu-clan yidaki playing, his father Monyu foretold that the sound of the yidaki would
keep traveling to the west and that one day visitors from overseas would arrive and ask to study *yidaki* with Djalu' (Djalu' Gurruwiwi, personal communication, May 30, 2006). Djalu's custodianship of the *Djungirriny*, and its sound calling up the West Wind, thus constitutes a deep cosmological link between his *yidaki* playing and tuition practices and the natural world. Such links are significant in considering the “eco-cultural” label as applied to Rripaŋu *Yidaki*, because the label is based less on “packaging aboriginal ecotourism according to a superior environmental ethic, i.e. indigenous ecotourism... special by virtue of the opportunity to teach non-aboriginal people how best to co-exist with nature” (Fennel 2008: 144), than on cosmological relationships between people, musical and manufacturing practices, and the natural landscape.

**Education and Sustainability**

According to Weaver (2001), learning should also constitute a central part of ecotourism, and indeed cross-cultural learning about the environment features prominently in the recollections of visitors to Rripaŋu *Yidaki*. Nelson recalls that his experience made him more aware of and open to very different perceptions and experiences of the natural environment:

> There are other ways of looking at life’s experience... People who can do things that seem fantastical in the context of the West, like hearing the sound of grass grow in the rainy season. Things like that seemed almost laughable. I no longer feel that way. It just opened me up to the many facets of reality that one can live in (Jamie Nelson, personal communication, April 6, 2008).

Omid Laridjani, who has visited Rripaŋu *Yidaki* twice since 2003, was likewise deeply affected by his experiences, and was so moved by what he learned about the spiritual-ancestral connections between Yolŋu people and land, that he was inspired to promote land conservation in his home community. In 2006 Laridjani brought his lessons from Arnhem Land home when he started the Love Our Springs Community Ceremony, an
annual prayer gathering dedicated to raising awareness of Barton Springs, a local wetland in Austin, Texas, and to protesting slated real estate development projects that threaten to destroy the Springs (personal communication, April 1, 2008).

Perhaps the most important criterion of Weaver’s (2001) definition to address though in assessing whether or not an enterprise is properly labeled ecotourism is sustainability. While given fourth place in his list, sustainability is the only criterion of Weaver’s model that sets ecotourism apart from other types of tourism, as there are many nature-based tourist activities like zoo and aquarium visits that involve nature and learning, but are not often included under the ecotourism rubric. Weaver’s (2001) sustainability criterion requires that ecotourism enterprises appear to be sustainable, according to the best information available; meaning that they do not appear to compromise either biological or socio-cultural resources for future generations. While some of the business practices of Rripaŋu Yiḏaki are extractive, there is good evidence to indicate they are biologically sustainable. In a report to the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife service, Taylor and Baker (2002: 41) found it unlikely that “current rates of harvesting [didjeridus] are impacting on structure or functioning of the forest ecosystem” on Wangurri clan land, one of the most heavily utilized areas for didjeridu harvest in all of Arnhem Land. Dhāŋgaŋ also emphasizes the family’s attention to sustainable harvest practices, noting that they only cut down trees that have been tested and proven hollow, rather than clear-cutting as do many large-scale commercial didjeridu producers (see Taylor ed. 2002), and that the family never cuts in the same area consecutively, thus avoiding the overuse of particular tracts of forest (personal communication, February 18, 2008).
Discussion

While the rubric of ‘ecotourism’ may fit some of the practices of Rripaŋu Yiđaki then, the fit is not perfect. The business is based on extractive practices and involves international travel, which consumes fossil fuel and creates carbon emissions. Dhängal, in discussing the application of the ecotourism label to her brother’s business, determined that while it is a category foreign to Yolŋu thinking about the land, she feels it does accurately describe aspects of Rripaŋu Yiđaki’s business ethic, particularly its biological sustainability and the strong cosmological ties between Yolŋu people and land, which the family shares with their visitors (personal communication, February 18, 2008).

It is for this reason that I believe the “ecotourism” label is provisionally appropriate in the case of Rripaŋu Yiđaki. While visitors may hold faulty preconceptions about the connections between indigenous peoples and the natural environment, there is also an internal Yolŋu conception of a relationship between people and their lands, which is important to the Gurruwiwis, and which they do everything in their power to communicate to their visitors in order to overturn preconceptions and stereotypes.

Nevertheless, such careful consideration is necessary prior to applying the ecotourism label to indigenous tourist enterprise, as it can have unintended business consequences. This is true even in the case of the Gurruwiwis who do actively emphasize their connections to land in their work with Rripaŋu Yiđaki. While the “ecotourism” label no doubt attracts visitors interested in green practices, it may ultimately put off such didjeridu-curious environmentalists who come expecting a low-impact experience but come away with impressions of the wasteful and extractive practices involved in harvesting wood and crafting musical instruments, not to mention the potential for
harrowing memories, such as watching an endangered sea turtle slaughtered and having its meat offered to them.

More broadly, the unreflexive dubbing of all indigenous business activity as somehow “ecological” runs dangerously close to classifying landscapes and indigenous peoples as coterminous. Misuse of the “ecotourism” label may also lead to overly Romantic and distorted perceptions of indigenous cultural practices, such as the myth of indigenous people as natural conservationists (Fennel 2008), through setting up prior expectations that color tourist experience. As Sarkissian (2000) notes, “what tourists expect to see... strangely enough... is what many actually do see: by measuring reality against a preconceived image it is possible to selectively edit out the bits that do not fit” (Sarkissian 2000: 10, emphasis original).
CONCLUSION: RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT FOR INFORMED MUSICAL TOURISM

In the foregoing chapters I have highlighted the centrality of identity to the business success of tourism operators and musicians, particularly those operating in cross-cultural settings, by examining the multifarious impacts of the Gurruwiwi family’s musical identity upon their ability to maintain a successful tourism business. Chapter 1 notes the now-widespread recognition of the didjeridu as an emblem of Aboriginal identity, describes the process by which it has become a part of Djalu' Gurruwiwi’s professional identity, and illustrates the ways that his particular association with the instrument in a business context has affected his relationships with other Yolŋu in his home community. Chapter 2 demonstrates that for the Gurruwiwis, simply being Aboriginal people who identify as professional musicians and instrument makers incurs a varied, and sometimes contradictory set of expectations on the part of many prospective visitors that they be “authentically” indigenous, original, natural, and spiritual producers of high-quality instruments. Such expectations significantly constrain the types of materials, playing styles, and religious beliefs that Djalu' and his family can profitably use, teach, and espouse in the day-to-day conduct of their business. In Chapter 3 I analyze the way that the Gurruwiwi family predicates much of their business practices on certain social frameworks, like kinship networks and exchange customs that are also a significant part of their self-identification as local, indigenous, Yolŋu people. These social frameworks allow the family significant independence in the management of their business, and have contributed to a more-or-less successful business model, but have also limited the scope of the business to a self-selecting niche market. Finally, as with many
Aboriginal enterprises, some are quick to slap the “ecotourism” label onto Rripaŋu Yidaki. In Chapter 4 I suggest that in some ways this label fits, as it is in alignment with the family’s own discourse about the importance of land to everything they do. But the fit is not perfect, and the label may run the risks of both perpetuating subtly dehumanizing stereotypes about indigenous people, as well as driving away some of the visitors it attracts in the first place.

To my mind the most interesting and potentially important fact to emerge from the evidence presented thus far is that, from a business standpoint, the most beneficial aspects of the three key musical identity markers surveyed in this work are those with which the family truly self-identifies; and, contrarily, the aspects most detrimental to the business are those derived from tourist preconceptions, which ultimately constrain the ways in which the family can do business. While identifying as a professional didjeridu maker and teacher in a remote Aboriginal community has certainly had some adverse consequences for Djalu’s relationships with other local Aboriginal people, it has also brought him international recognition and celebrity among didjeridu aficionados, which he has parlayed into a sizable income stream that supports his family. Likewise, while the Yolŋu social frameworks of kin adoption and trading for knowledge based on one’s means may limit the scale of the Gurruwiwi family business, they also attract an underserved corner of the Aboriginal tourism market and empower the family members who operate the business to do so on their own terms without the need for outside investment or management.

Conversely, preconceptions of authenticity and eco-friendliness certainly play a role in attracting paying visitors to Rripaŋu Yidaki, but as mentioned above they may also
carry burdens the family finds difficult to conform to and long-term consequences that impact the sustainability of their business. In Chapter 2 I argue for the necessity of less value-laden frameworks than that of authenticity for the evaluation of tourist experiences and musical performances and products. I believe though that the same could be said of all preconceptions that color the experiences of tourists and music fans, as they often lie at the root of dissatisfaction with an experience.

One of the attendees of the last Garma Festival of Traditional Culture yidaki masterclass in 2007 expressed such dissatisfaction to me, saying that he was unhappy about being asked to pay for a yidaki on which he had done most of the cleaning and carving work under Djalu's tutelage. Randin Graves of the Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka arts center acted as liaison for the yidaki masterclass in 2007, but unfortunately was stretched a bit thin at the time, as he was also working to debut a new community multimedia archiving effort at that year’s Garma Festival. If he had been more available though, he may have been able to alleviate some of the disappointed attendee’s concerns by helping Djalu' and his family explain something about Yolŋu systems of knowledge and valuation. This would have helped the attendee understand that he was paying for knowledge and access to land rather than a physical object, contrary to his preconception of the yidaki as simply a musical instrument rather than a knowledge tradition deeply tied to Yolŋu religious practice and inside knowledge. Similarly, Omid Laridjani, though he had an otherwise positive experience with both of his visits to Rripaŋu Yidaki, said that he experienced a painful “culture shock” during his first visit to Arnhem Land, over the levels of poverty and financial dependency he encountered, as well as the alarmingly high rates of depression, crime, and suicide amongst Yolŋu youth (personal communication,
April 1, 2008). If he had had the benefit of advice from someone who had lived or traveled extensively among Yolŋu, as well as some basic information about the socio-economic history of Arnhem Land, Laridjani would not have expected to find Yolŋu people living happily off the land, in harmony with nature, and could perhaps have better prepared himself for being constantly “humbugged” for money, and the grim realities of suicide and depression amongst the area’s indigenous youth.

During my own first visit to Arnhem Land to study with Djalu' Gurruwiwi, I was fortunate to have the benefit of an experienced guide in the person of my friend Ben Hicks, a didjeridu maker and yidaki importer based out of Colorado. Hicks had visited the Gurruwiwis on several previous occasions to acquire yidaki for sale in his hobby business. Hicks, like other repeat visitors described in Chapter 3, was adopted by the Gurruwiwi family on a previous visit, and worked with them during the year of 2006 to put together a small tour group that included myself, another American, and an Australian from Melbourne. In preparation for the trip, Hicks distributed to all of us a brief written guide that detailed the logistics of living in a remote Aboriginal community, including what to bring; the availability of food, banking, and communications; and some information on health and sanitation concerns when traveling in remote Aboriginal communities. When I asked Hicks for any good books to read in preparation for the trip, he recommended Trudgen’s (2000) work *Why Warriors Lie Down and Die*, which details the socio-economic history of the region during the twentieth century, as well as some of the contemporary cultural and economic challenges faced by Yolŋu living in northeast Arnhem Land. Armed with this small preparation, I was able to avoid much of the unpleasant “culture shock” cited by Laridjani. Thanks to Hicks’ previous experience
interacting with Yolŋu in their homeland communities, he was also able to help translate some of the Yolŋu customs and social frameworks that the Gurruwiwis explained to or expected of me, such as kin adoption and its attendant responsibilities. Additionally, being an accomplished player of the instrument, Hicks helped all of us more easily grasp the techniques and rhythmic patterns that Djalu' presented during yidaki lessons. This preparation and facilitation provided by Hicks was absolutely critical to the positive experience I had when first visiting Rripaŋu Yidaki, and the continuing relationships I formed with members of the Gurruwiwi family.

Hicks is not alone in providing this type of guidance for visitors to Rripaŋu Yidaki. As noted in Chapter 3, other repeat visitors adopted by the Gurruwiwi family, some of whom have developed considerable fluency in Yolŋu languages and customs, provide assistance to the family business in a number of ways. They engage in word of mouth marketing and advocacy, speaking of their Rripaŋu Yidaki experiences at didjeridu festivals and gatherings both in Australia and overseas; they provide resource development in the form of web design and recording studio time for the production of CDs; and they organize study tours like the one I attended, acting as facilitators and cultural translators based on their varying levels of experience interacting with Yolŋu. These activities are essential to Rripaŋu Yidaki’s continued operation, as it is through the efforts of these repeat visitors that first time visitors are able to approach the experience with better information and less preconception, and thus able to hear and understand more clearly the things that Djalu' and his family attempt to convey about Yolŋu identity. Without an experienced guide, new visitors to Rripaŋu Yidaki may find the social frameworks and identity categories that the Gurruwiwi family introduces and includes
them in, such as kin adoption and the responsibilities and expectations it entails, to be confusing and in some cases even aggravating. But, with a better understanding of the Yolŋu practice of adoption, facilitated by someone with prior experience who can help bridge the cultural and linguistic gap, new visitors who take their adoptions seriously may be more inclined to take an active role in advocacy, resource development, and cross-cultural facilitation themselves, thus sustaining the foundations of the family business.

Ethnomusicologists who have conducted fieldwork on Yolŋu lands would seem uniquely placed to help Rripaŋu Yiḏaki in this capacity, familiar as they are with Yolŋu social frameworks, as well as some of the musical concepts that many of Djalu's visitors come to learn. Interestingly though, none of the people that I have met or spoken with who are doing the critical work of advocacy, resource development, and musical and cultural interlocution on behalf of Rripaŋu Yiḏaki are ethnomusicologists, or indeed have any ongoing involvement in academia. This is not for lack of ethnomusicological activity in the area. Indeed several prominent scholars have conducted recent fieldwork in Arnhem Land amongst Yolŋu musicians (see e.g. Neuenfeldt ed. 1997; Toner 2001; Magowan 2007), and in at least one case worked closely with Rripaŋu Yiḏaki as part of their research (see Corn 2005). Yet none of these researchers have to my knowledge taken an active hand in the burgeoning tourism industry in northeast Arnhem Land, of which Yolŋu music and dance are key parts.

Further, given the relatively scant amount, and in some cases the negative tone, of recent ethnomusicological studies on music and tourism, I would hazard a guess that the same holds true of ethnomusicologists’ current involvement in the tourism industry in
Scholarly reluctance to engage with tourism, even as subject matter, can perhaps be traced in part to overarching negative perceptions of the tourism industry within academia, following the writings of scholars like Boorstin (1964) and MacCannel (1973) who criticize the industry for its inability to provide “authentic” experiences. Indeed, Stepputat (2006: 111), cites precisely this perceived lack of “authenticity” for the lack of ethnomusicological literature on the Balinese gamelan rindik, which is often performed as background music in touristic settings such as restaurants. Moreover, beyond studying music and tourism and touristic musics, many scholars are likely doubly reluctant to actively involve themselves in the tourist industry in a resource development or facilitation capacity due to criticisms of cultural mediation between local and extra-local interests for its capacity to foster economic dependency (see e.g. Adams 1970; Silverman 1979).

Yet, I would argue that in the case of tourism businesses that operate across cultural and linguistic boundaries, mediation is needed for a more comprehensible, less exoticized experience. Wells (1983: 772) makes a useful distinction between cultural mediators who act as brokers on the one hand, who seek to benefit by controlling the flow of cultural resources, versus advocates on the other, who seek to promote those cultural resources on behalf of their producers. Scholars of Yolŋu music are uniquely poised to do precisely this kind of advocacy on behalf of Yolŋu tourism businesses like Rripaŋu Yiḏaki using a familiar skill set. The same instructional, writing, and performance skills that they bring to the classroom could be deployed equally effectively.

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1 See Meredith 2003; Harnish 2005; Stepputat 2006; Rommen 2009 for a sampling of the few articles on music and tourism in cross-cultural contexts published in ethnomusicological journals in the last ten years. Harnish (2005) in particular articulates a negative view of the interaction of music and tourism, linking it to the processes of colonization, globalization, and cultural homogenization and dilution.
in the context of tour group visits or website content development to help alleviate the
tendency that Sarkissian (2000) identifies for tourists to see what they expect, editing out
the bits that do not fit. Likewise the familiarity of many scholars with field recording
methods could be put to use in the development of new instructional or presentational
recordings with better documentation than those produced by amateur recording
engineers. In doing so they would be helping not just to broaden the horizons of their
students, Rripaŋu Yidaki’s visitors and prospective visitors, but actively contributing in a
direct and meaningful way to the Gurruwiwi family’s livelihood by helping them to
sustain and broaden the kinship-based, repeat visitor network that underpins their
business.

This type of active involvement in grassroots musical tourism like Rripaŋu Yidaki
is to my mind an exciting, and thus far largely untapped opportunity for applied
ethnomusicology. By developing informational resources for grassroots tourism
businesses and their visitors and acting as cross-cultural facilitators \textit{in situ},
ethnomusicologists could engage in an applied ethnomusicology much broader than
Keil’s (1982; 1998) formulation of the field as being primarily concerned with giving
people musical tools to resist encroaching and oppressive outside musical forces. Indeed,
resource development and cross-cultural facilitation on behalf of musical tourism
businesses, seems to fit much better within Sheehy’s (1992: 324) broader framework of
applied ethnomusicology as techniques to achieve the end of “a better life for others
through the use of musical knowledge.” In the case of Rripaŋu Yidaki both visitors to the
business and the Gurruwiwi family stand to benefit from scholarly involvement and
advocacy. The tourists gain the benefit of an ethnomusicologist’s experience with Yolŋu
social frameworks and languages, as well as musical expertise, while the family gains additional tools to make the Rripaŋu Yiɗaki experience more intelligible and to recruit new repeat visitors to help sustain the business.

Moreover, I believe that with increased scholarly involvement and further study the Rripaŋu Yiɗaki business model of bringing outsiders into the fold could serve as a model for applied ethnomusicologists seeking to help grow grassroots musical tourism businesses in other remote and underprivileged communities. By developing resources and facilitating communication between interested visitors and musicians seeking to turn their music into a livelihood, scholars can help these visitors understand more clearly the parts of their hosts’ identity that the musicians themselves hold to be most important. Armed with this understanding some of those visitors can then become advocates and facilitators themselves, helping to perpetuate and grow their hosts’ nascent businesses. It is only through mutual understanding of the parts of our identities that we ourselves hold most important that true mutual benefit can be achieved. This I believe is one of the key lessons that the discipline of ethnomusicology has to offer, and it forms the basis for the best help that we as ethnomusicologists can provide to grassroots music and tourism businesses like Rripaŋu Yiɗaki.
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Figure 1.1: Map of Arnhem Land showing large northeastern Yolŋu Communities
(from Yothu Yindi – A Band With A Vision 2009:
http://www.yothuyindi.com/thebandinfomap.html)
Figure 1.2: Buŋgul dancing at the funeral of one of Djalu's sisters on Galiwin'ku Island in July of 2008.
Figure 1.3: Yidaki lessons at the Gurruwiwi family home in May of 2006.
Photo by Jamie Nelson. Used with permission.
Figure 3.1: Djalu' and the attendees of the Yidaki Masterclass, at the 2007 Garma Festival of Traditional Culture.
Figure 4.1: Djalu' and family lead Yidaki Masterclass attendees on a stingray hunt during the recreation day of the 2007 Garma Festival of Traditional Culture.
Figure 4.2: A beachside sea turtle cookout on the shores of the Gunyaŋara homeland community in November 2007. These turtles are endangered species, but provisions exist within Australian law for Yolŋu to continue their customary harvest of sea turtles at sustainable levels (see Dhimirru 2006: 25-26 for further discussion).
Figure 4.3: Trekking through eucalypt forest undergrowth in search of suitable trees to fashion into *yidaki*.

Photo by Jamie Nelson. Used with permission.
Figure 4.4: Jamie Nelson assists Djalu' in cleaning out the bore of a newly-cut yidaki log. Photo courtesy of Richard Millott Photography (http://www.millott.com). Used with permission.
APPENDIX B
YOLNU MATHA PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

D or ŋ: a soft “ng” sound as in the word “singer.” The letters “ŋ,” “ŋg,” and “ng” indicate three different phonemes in Yolŋu Matha languages.

Dh or dh, Nh or nh, Th or th: the letter “h” indicates pronunciation of the preceding consonant with an interdental tongue position, that is placing the tongue between the teeth to pronounce the hard consonant. There are no fricative sounds in Yolŋu Matha languages.

D or d, L or l, N or n, T or t: consonants pronounced in a manner similar to their non-inflected English counterparts, but with the tongue retroflexed against the palate just behind the gum ridge.

’/: a glottal stop, shortening the previous syllable of the word, as in the “ah, ah, ah” sound frequently employed to scold children in the United States.

A or a: similar to the vowel in the word “sun.”

Ä or ä: similar to the first vowel in the word “father.”

E or e: similar to the vowel in the word “feel.”

I or i: similar to the vowel in the word “pit.”

O or o: similar to the vowel in the word “hot.”

U or u: similar to the vowel in the word “put.”

R or r: similar to the “r” sound in the word “rum.”

Rr or rr: pronounced by rolling the tongue.

All other letters are pronounced roughly as they would be in American English.
APPENDIX C
GLOSSARY OF YOLṆU MATHA TERMS

bäpurru – can mean either clan or funeral

bilma – paired clapsticks used to accompany manikay and djatpaŋarri

bungul – ceremonial dances that form part of Yolŋu clan identities and are paired with manikay

dalkarramirri – leader of ceremony

dhäpi – circumcision ceremonies that mark the initiation of young boys into men’s sacred knowledge

dhäwu – stories

dhuway – husband, or any male or female person that has a reciprocal relationship with others who occupy the kin position of galay in relation to themselves

djalkiri – roots or foundation

djatpaŋarri – Yolŋu song genre intended to accompany recreational dance

djinawa – inside; sacred and secret knowledge

djirrikay – leader of ceremony

Djuŋgirriny – a sacred yidaki in the custodianship of Djalu' Gurruwiwi’s Gälpu clan

galay – wife, or any male or female person that has a reciprocal relationship with others who occupy the kin position of dhuway in relation to themselves

galka – evil sorcery/evil sorcerer

girri – material wealth, things, stuff

gurrųțu – the Yolŋu network of family and kinship

gurrųj – “poison cousin” or sons-in-law and their brothers and sisters

gutharra – “grandchild”; more specifically a woman’s daughter’s daughters and their brothers, or a man’s sister’s daughter’s daughters and their brothers.

maŋayin – the body of sacred knowledge given to Yolŋu clans by their wajarr ancestors
manikay – songs that form a key part of the spiritual identity of Yolŋu clans

māri – “grandparent”; more specifically a person’s mother’s mothers and their brothers

met – the term used by young male dhuway to refer affectionately to their male galay (or vice versa) as a “cousin”

miny’ți – art, clan-specific sacred designs, colors

miny’tjimirri – painter of sacred, clan-specific Yolŋu designs

mukul rumaru – “poison aunt” or mother-in-law

raypirri – discipline and adherence to Yolŋu law

wāŋa – land or home

wanjarr – ancestral beings who shaped the land, created people, and vested Yolŋu clans with land and knowledge, commonly glossed as “totem”; also refers to the time period during which these ancestors performed their acts of creation

warranju – outside; public knowledge

yidaki – didjeridu

yidakimirri – didjeridu player