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The Cultural Basis of Politics in Pintupi Life

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> . . . the politician acts on men in a way that is reminiscent of 'natural causes'; they submit to him as they submit to 'the caprices of the sky, the sea and the earth's crust' (Valéry *in* Balandier, 1970: 106).
>
> Since they have a starting point and a foothold in reality (in praxis), or rather to the extent that they do, ideologies are not altogether false (Lefebvre, 1978:71).

This paper is an attempt to explore the cultural basis for politics in the social life of Pintupi Aborigines from the Gibson Desert. Social theorists interested in meaning have emphasized that political processes occur and are realized through what Weber called 'shared understandings' (Bendix, 1966:286): people set and implement public goals for themselves or allocate power on the basis of some representation of who they are, what is, and what can be. Their actions are guided by symbols, what Geertz calls 'extrapersonal mechanisms for the perception, understanding, judgment and manipulation of the world' (Geertz, 1973:216). Through such vehicles of conception it is possible to define both order and disorder and to provide instructions for action.

The study of Aboriginal politics requires careful attention to the cultural terms in which political action takes place. Failure to take account of the relationship between cultural concepts and their social situation leads to two sorts of distortions in our understanding of Aboriginal social life. I will call these (1) the 'saintly elder' view and (2) the 'self-seeking elder' view, respectively.[1]

(1) The fact that for many years anthropologists viewed Aborigines as 'people without politics' (Sharp, 1958), or as people without change, more or less accepted the Aborigines' own view that social life is not based on the human definition of values and pursuit of power.[2] Aborigines understood their lives as part of a cosmic order, an unchanging continuation of the order established once and for all in The Dreaming. Observers assumed themselves to understand what this ideology was about, namely relations between man and cosmos, and so they tended to ignore the analytical problem which this ideology presented to them. What relationship did it have to experience? It will be argued that such a conceived 'order of things' — this denial of politics and emphasis on the society as part of 'nature' — is the result of a particular way of interpreting experience which both expresses and veils important aspects of Aboriginal life.

(2) On the other hand, operating with various versions of a simple 'base and superstructure' model, many of those most interested in politics would 'debunk' culture or ideology as *no more than* the illusory expression of or justification for underlying (and more real) material inte-

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rests and relations of power. In its most sceptical form, this scheme would view male ritual knowledge not as a continuation of a cosmic order but as the instrument by which male elders dominate women and young men as a means of monopolizing young women. Such a 'flattened view of other people's mentalities' (Geertz, 1973: 210) fails to explain *how* such an ideology might work, ignoring the whole process of symbolic formulation. Similarly, it denies (in some sense) the Aboriginal experience of their cultural representations as 'real' or authentic. This would lead to a suspicion that Aboriginal religion is a 'sham', that the value of The Dreaming (knowledge which old men give to the young) is merely a kind of false coin paid for political power. The radical devaluation of knowledge and understanding as epiphenomena is unwarranted both in the general and in the specific case. There is no evidence that elders, young men, or women regard The Dreaming as anything less than the valued ground of all being. Indeed, it regularly acquires such value as people orient their activities around it. The point, surely, is not that it is valueless, but rather that it is controlled.

Both of these distortions are a product of European attempts to grapple with a phenomenon which straddles our distinction between politics and religion along our distinction between material and ideal. (Cohen, 1974 tries to show that symbols and politics should not be dichotomized.) My claim, although not original to me (see Bourdieu 1977; Geertz, 1973; Williams, 1977), is that we should begin to examine the complex interactive relationships between historically transmitted sets of meanings and symbols and the objective social realities that constitute the world in which actors live. By examining the relationship between ideology (symbols) and experience, we might come to understand *how* ideologies work. As Geertz suggests, a symbol

> might . . . draw its power from its capacity to grasp, formulate, and communicate social realities that elude the tempered language of science, that it may mediate more complex meanings than its literal reading suggests (Geertz, 1973: 210).

This paper is concerned, then, with the persuasive structures of meanings and symbols, seeing them as situated in social contexts, speaking to experience of particular social orders and making them intelligible for action.

The Problem

Like many other Aboriginal groups, the Pintupi at Yayayi, an outstation 26 miles west of Papunya where I spent 21 months in research,[3] did not recognize an explicit domain of activity which could be called 'politics'. Except for the recently introduced Village Council, neither specific governmental structure nor true 'leaders' existed. Like other Aboriginal peoples, the Pintupi appear to have interpreted their society as the continuation into the present of a preordained cosmic order, The Dreaming (Stanner, 1956), which it has been men's duty to 'follow up'. This suggests parallels with Valéry's remark that political power may well be presented as part of nature. What should we make of this? Ideologically, public goals are represented as part of the cosmic order, and the Pintupi seem to be 'people without politics'. But why should this be so and how is it accomplished? That power — the possibility of constraining others or ruling as one wishes — should be conceived as merely a consequence of some pre-existing 'order' may be shown to be a result of the concepts of authority and order which the Pintupi use to understand and act in their social world.

In order to do so requires revealing the social reality underlying use of the important cultural concept of 'looking after' (*kanyininpa*) as the content of authority. This paper will show that the concept is used in a variety of domains ranging from child care and generational succession to a justification of male hierarchy as 'nurturance', and that its use as an 'operator' (Lévi-Strauss, 1966) to make sense of various kinds of activity gives it a persuasive force that explains its effectiveness as a political ideology. This concept brings together and synthesizes certain key concerns and experiences in Pintupi life — autonomy, freedom, nurturance — in a *convincing* way which places authority in the hands of elder males but denies this to be the result of individual will, struggle, or conflict. It is important to show why 'looking after' seems

to the Pintupi a satisfactory concept of articulating their social world; what relations and processes — what experiences — does it uncover and present to them? As Lefebvre suggests, 'ideologies are not altogether false', and this fact is of great significance. Then I will ask what this ideology 'takes for granted', what processes it ignores or conceals. In another — related — paper (Myers, 1980), I will consider the problems which have accompanied extension of the concept to the expanded political arena of contemporary life in the white man's world.

Background

Most of the Pintupi left their traditional country in the Gibson Desert between 1948 and 1966 for settled life; so until recently, they lived a traditional hunting-gathering life in small bands. The current settlement of 250 people at Yayayi Bore constituted a novel situation for them in many ways, depending on resources very different from the traditional ones. Although funded by the Australian Government, Yayayi differed from previous Pintupi settlement life in being run (in theory) by the Pintupi themselves. This provided a unique opportunity to comprehend Aboriginal politics in their terms, their priorities, albeit in a rather new milieu of tents, trucks, money, flour, and rifles. My recognition of the nature and basis of Pintupi politics derived just as much from personal participation as from theorizing.

Only after many months at Yayayi did my tacit understanding of *how* Pintupi do things become explicit recognition of the cultural content of the political activity: 'looking after' (*kanyininpa*).

Kanyininpa: A Pintupi Concept

The concept *kanyininpa,* translated as 'having', 'holding', or 'looking after', articulates and unifies several areas of Pintupi life. It may be used to refer to possession of physical objects ('I have two spears ', 'I am holding two stones'), to the actualized relationship of 'parent' to 'child' (my 'father held/looked after me and grew me up': *ngayuku mamaluni kanyinu pulkanu*). It refers alto to rights over sacred sites, ceremonies, songs, and designs, all of which are owned ('dead people held and lost it': *mirrintjanyirriluya kanyinu wantingu*). The concept denotes an intimate and active relationship between a 'holder' and that which is 'held', as indicated in the primary sense of physically holding. Specifically, the word *kanyininpa* is contrasted with *wantininpa,* which means 'leaving' or 'losing' something, leaving it behind, breaking off association with it, as for instance in 'I left it, that spear' (I didn't touch it) or 'I saw the fight and left it alone'.

Thus, the Pintupi speak of 'holding' a country (e.g., ceremonial rights and obligations associated with a place) or of 'carrying the Law' (responsibilities of sacred knowledge), typically with phrases denoting some sort of physical object and indicating a weight burden, or responsibility for the 'holder'. The aptness of the term comes from its ability to articulate both control and responsibility into a moral order.

Kanyininpa and Kinship

The metaphor invoked by *kanyininpa* is probably derived from the expression used to describe how a small child is held against the chest (*kanyinu yampungka*), an image of security, protection and nourishment. In this sense, the concept *kanyininpa* is similar to what Turner (1967:30) has called a dominant symbol, having both a 'physiological' referent and an ideological or social referent to the relationship between the generations, which comes to include the Pintupi understanding of authority itself. Turner (1967:54) has argued that symbols combine abstract moral values with sensory substance: 'The values are saturated with the gross emotions evoked by the symbol's sensory aspects and at the same time the gross emotions are 'ennobled' by contact with the moral values' (Peacock 1968: 241).

The personal and physiological referent became clear while I was collecting genealogies, where I found that the notion of 'holding' or 'looking after' was central to Pintupi ideas of relatedness. One man told me that X was really his 'father', his 'old man', because 'he took me over, he looked after me'. By subsection status, the latter would have been called 'father' anyway, but the man's behavior indicated something more, that he considered his 'old man' to be an especially 'close' father, one near whom he chose to be and with whom he regularly

interacted. Likewise, when a boy was about to be initiated, a young man told me, 'They can't initiate him until his father arrives from Yuendumu. He grew up (*kanyinu pulkanu*) that boy'. The young man was referring to the boy's lengthy residence at another settlement, where he was looked after and fed by this old man, who was thus a 'father' with special concern for the boy. Among women, the person who looks after the younger girls and women in the 'single women's camp' (*yalukuru*) is said to 'hold' them: she is the focal point of their residence.

Most fully, the concept seems to define a central social fabric of senior persons around whom juniors aggregate and by whom they are 'held', rather in the way that these arid-desert people aggregated around important water and resource points. 'Holding' depicts authority as deriving from concern and protection. *Kanyininpa* is a concept used by the Pintupi to articulate the moral basis of relationships of authority and respect, to present simultaneously the dual nature of authority and responsibility and to justify authority as the appropriate social relationship among certain kinds of kin. Implicit in the concept is insufficiency on the part of the junior and an activity of transformation on the part of the senior, as expressed in the idea of 'growing up' someone. The Pintupi appear to conceptualize many experiences in social life in this fashion, and conceptualizing them thereby reproduces them as a social world.

Generational Succession

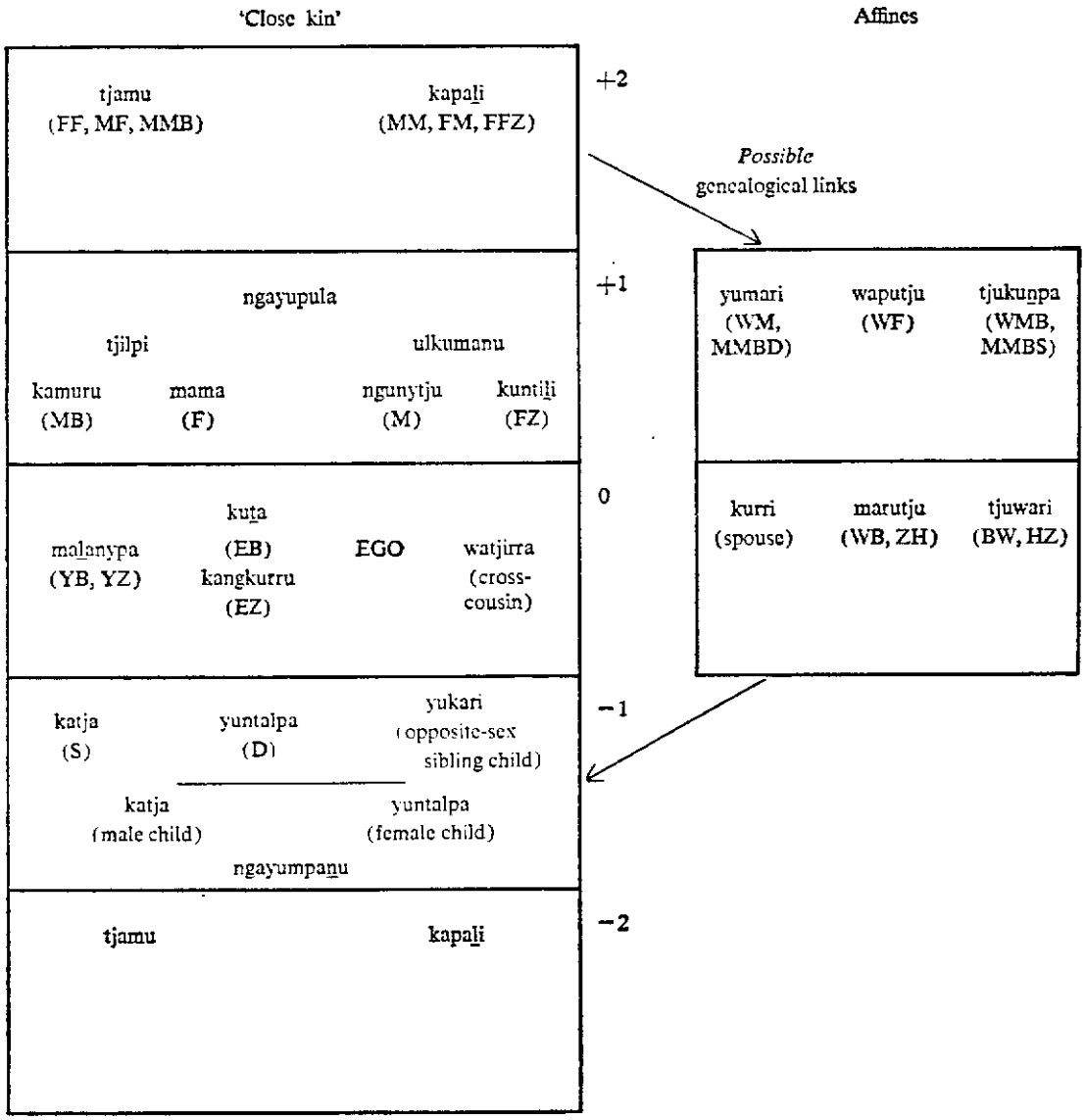
Pintupi usage and thinking about kinship gives great importance to the idea of *kanyininpa*. Pintupi maintain that the children of brothers (or sisters) are 'family' (pidgin; also expressed as '*walytja*') or 'really' siblings themselves. If one inquires of an informant, 'Who are really your siblings?' the list will include frequently the offspring of the parent's same-sex siblings. Even requests to limit the list to those 'from one father' will sometimes include such siblings. The reason given for this is that a person's siblings 'look after' his or her children in the event of his or her death. Consequently, there is a tendency, based on typical social experiences of parental death and remarriage, to consider parental siblings as real parents (they are classified under the same kinship term, FB = F, etc.). As the system works informally, all those descended from a common grandparent are considered to be siblings and called by the appropriate term.

Elsewhere (Myers, 1976) I have shown that Pintupi relationship terminology should be analyzed into two alternative schemes of organization. One of these schemes, particularly, is of concern in the present context: the system used to organize the universe of 'close' kin. A principal characteristic of this scheme is that it presents the social universe as a succession of generations, as those descended from a set of grandparents and grandparental siblings (FF, MF, MMB, MM, FM, FFZ, etc.). This is apparent in Diagram 1. The basic criteria of the system are (1) the sociocentric discrimination of two generational categories, reciprocally named 'us' (*nganaanitja*) and 'them' (*yinyurrpa*), and (2) the distinction between 'close' and 'distant' kin (or consanguines and affines).[4]

(1) The 'us' category includes all individuals of ego's own generation and his/her second ascending and descending generations. The 'them' category includes all individuals of the alternate generations (see below). These categories, although reciprocally named, are sociocentric and have great behavioural significance on occasions such as male initiation, death, and in considering marriage: they are explicitly endogamous.

(2) No one who is 'close' (*ngamutja*) or whose parents are 'close' is marriageable, regardless of kintype. 'Close' kin are distinguished from 'distant' (*tiwatja*) on the basis of frequent coresidence and/or genealogical proximity. Whether a person considered 'distant' is a potential affine (spouse, spouse's parent) depends on kintype. In Pintupi expectation, since 'close' kin frequently live together, the criteria of geographical and genealogical proximity are ideally homologous. Close relatives should not become affines, so those regarded as 'close' are referred to by what I call 'consanguineal' terms, used as is appropriate to their generational level but which may ignore other features of genealogical dis-

DIAGRAM 1
THE UNIVERSE OF CLOSE KIN



tance (these may be recognized in the second scheme, not treated here).

For the Pintupi, whether someone 'looks after' (*kanyininpa*) another is an important consideration in kin relationships and how they are classified, telling us much about the cultural content of kin categories.[6] It implies feeding, protection, and coresidence. In the cultural code employed by Pintupi to articulate their world, those who 'look after' you become 'close' kin; they are 'family', or 'one country-men'. Understood by all, the code needs no elaboration since most individuals' experiences of these situations are similar (cf. Bernstein 1974 on 'elaborated' and 'restricted' codes). As a result they are addressed by consanguineal terms, and they or their offspring are not marriageable. Thus, a distant 'MMBS' is called 'WMB' (*tjukunpa*), but one who

looked after ego is called 'father'. Similarly, a distant 'MMBD' is called 'WM' (*yumari*), but if she 'held' (*kanyinu*) ego, she is called 'FZ' (*kuntili*), and her daughter is called 'cross-cousin' (*watjirra*) rather than 'spouse' (*kurri*), because 'she is like a sister'.

Returning now to the model of the Pintupi social universe, we can delineate how close kin are presented as a succession of generations, each of which is 'looked after' or 'held' by the preceding generation. From the diagram, it can be seen how, at some levels of terminology, kinsmen are lumped into categories based on generation alone; parents and parents' siblings in one category and all their children in the succeeding one. Often 'cross-cousins' who are close kin are called by sibling terms, in which case the only discriminations are generation level, affinal status, and sex. The categories are as follows:

(a) Second ascending generation—'grandfather' (*tjamu*, MF, FF, MMB) and 'grandmother' (*kapali*, MM, FM, FFZ):

(b) First ascending generation—'father' (*mama*), 'father's sister' (*kuntili*), 'mother' (*ngunytju*), 'mother's brother' (*kamuru*);

(c) Own generation—'older brother' (*kuta*), 'older sister' (*kangkuru*), 'younger sibling' (*malanypa*), 'cross-cousin' (*watjirra*);

(d) First descending—'own son' (*katja*), 'own daughter' (*yuntalpa*), 'children of opposite-sex sibling' (*yukari*); or alternatively, all children of a sibling set may be lumped together categorically as 'male child' (*katja*) or 'female child' (*yuntalpa*);

(e) Second descending — 'grandson' (*tjamu*), 'grand-daughter' (*kapali*).

The model is more informative at higher level (superclass) categorizations. On one terminological level, a man *may* differentiate his children from those of his sister and vice versa, a distinction which is important in *some* contexts for discriminating different kinds of rights and duties, but this is not appropriate in all situations. We stress here the importance of another level which lumps all the children of a set of siblings, indicating some identity of those descended from such a set. Finally there is yet a third usage, at the highest level, which stresses terminologically the relationship between succeeding generation levels, giving articulate form to this concept of the social process for the Pintupi.

The usage is as follows:

> Ego calls 'father', 'mother', 'mother's brother', 'father's sister' by the term *ngayupula*. Reciprocally, all those named may call ego *ngayumpanu*, a term unmarked for sex or relative sex of linking kinsman: it designates only consanguines of the first descending generation.

The *ngayupula/ngayumpanu* polarized set thus explicitly recognizes a particular relationship between adjacent generations: one of 'looking after'. Examination of expected behaviour shows that 'father', 'mother' and the other lumped categories all have a similar obligation or duty towards ego in this regard. In Goodenough's terms (1969), 'looking after' denotes a status relationship, a bundle of rights and duties, which all four kinship identities share towards their 'child'. The Pintupi themselves apparently recognize and express this similarity through the term *ngayupula*. Members of the *ngayupula* category, if they are coresident, should 'hold' or 'look after' their *ngayumpanu*, their 'child', they feed him, offer protection, security, they 'grow him up'. Should they fail in this responsibility, they may be subject to sanction by others in the same relation to the 'child'.

Generally, authority is spoken of as a consequence of relative age: older people look after or 'hold' those who come 'behind'. Older children are held responsible to look after their siblings, and this responsibility entails authority, justified by concern for the junior's well-being. Older siblings may 'hold' or 'look after' a person until the latter becomes independent. Responsibility and authority are inter-related in concern for the junior's well-being.

Although the concept of 'holding' is by no means restricted entirely to intergenerational relations, nonetheless it is used by the Pintupi as a way of schematically representing important features of their social world to themselves. The hierarchical relations between generations can be contrasted with those within a generation. The latter are roughly equivalent or egalitarian,

as expressed by the lack of restraint or 'shame' among brothers, in contrast with that between a man and his 'father' or 'mother's brother'. Brothers may, and are expected to, fight but this activity is prohibited between those of adjacent generations. If one hits a mother's brother, the latter should not strike back: the relationship is clearly marked as asymmetrical. Fights between brothers are, on the other hand, 'no trouble'. Intergenerational relations are seen as being characteristically hierarchical, represented as conforming to the relation described as 'holding'.

This analysis of kinship data, then, shows that the Pintupi structure and experience their social world as a series of generations, each of which 'holds' the succeeding generation. Reciprocally, the succeeding generation owes obedience and acquiescence to those who 'look after' them. The concept grasps, as it were, their experience of the social process which is involved in authority and responsibility.

'Boss'

The expectations and the social experience encoded in the concept 'looking after' are well-expressed in the myth of two young carpet snakes. It is said that a third snake took care of them: 'the old man "held" those two' (*yinalupulanya kanyinma*). He provided them with food and protection, and as the narrative reveals, they were obliged to heed his advice when he ordered them to cease attacking a woman.

In the Pintupi view, a 'boss' is one who looks after his subordinates. For example, one's 'father' and 'mother's brother' are often referred to as one's *mayutju* or in pidgin as one's 'boss', as those persons who can tell ego what to do. Persons of these categories as well as 'mother' are a girl's 'bosses' in regard to bestowal. Although there are specializations of status separating 'mother's brother' from 'father' and from 'mother' and so on, the stated duty is that 'one should work' for all those of the 'parent' category. They tell one what to do but it is also expected that they will be generous.

Again, both 'father' and 'mother's brother' are addressed by the respectful term 'old man' (*tjilpi* or *yayu*), a term not limited to kin terminology but designating an elder male. 'Mothers' and 'father's sisters' are addressed as 'old woman' (*ulkamanu*). Such terms are partly equivalent to 'boss', since old age should be respected. Ideologically, the 'old men' (*tjilpi tjuta*) are deemed to be the locus of authority within the community and to possess autonomy *vis-à-vis* younger people.

When I asked two men whether they had 'bosses' (*mayutju*) in traditional times, one replied first: 'No, we could go wherever/however ["anyway" in pidgin] we liked,' meaning that there were no over-riding sources of authority such as the government presently constitutes. The second informant added, 'Only father' (*mama*). Both then continued, 'or older brother (*kuta*) or own mother's brother, those who gave us meat'. In general, the criterion for inclusion in the 'boss' category for ego is that a person 'looked after' ego. Authority, the right to constrain others to one's wishes, is seen as a complement of the duty to look after, to grow up — to transform — ego. (Other usages of the category *mayutju* will be discussed with reference to the Aboriginal Village Council and with reference to whites who work for the Government or employ Aborigines in Myers, 1980.)

The moral basis of authority differential, as we saw in the kinship domain, is that the 'boss' does more, contributes more of value to the junior. Aboriginal societies have been described often enough as 'gerontocracies' (Rose, 1968), implying rule by the elderly males. In the Pintupi view, elders 'look after' the rest of the group, and their authority is legitimized by the way in which they 'hold' those who follow. The authority of the elders is not absolute, but has its locus primarily in the domain of ritual, sacred sites, and marriage, in and through which the elders have considerable 'power' over their juniors. Outside of these areas, social relations are generally more egalitarian, access to natural resources is relatively free, and there is no monopoly of force (Maddock, 1970:183).

Kanyininpa and the Social Order

In this section, we will see how the content of and basis for authority (like the divine right of kings or the Constitution for other

societies) finds its ground in the Pintupi conception of human nature and its place in the cosmic order. As in other egalitarian societies (Read, 1959), hierarchy and consensus for public goals present difficulties which the Pintupi solve through presenting such goals as sacred law. People are bent to the pre-existing consensus, The Dreaming or 'Law'.

It has been frequently remarked how traditional cultures without separate political domains often employ comprehensive, unspecialized models (Levi-Strauss) — very general cultural orientations (Geertz, 1973: 219) — to integrate diverse domains. As a dominant symbol, 'looking after' has a similar place in Pintupi life, drawing together several domains into a single process. This concept assimilates kinship, temporal progression, political power, and the natural order into a single social process, representing their social world as a moral order. In traditional life, the Pintupi experienced these analytically separable dimensions as one process, which they represented as the passage of The Dreaming through the generations, the continuous manifestation of the Law in the phenomenal realm. 'Holding' is a collective symbol of authority experienced not in the abstract but as part of this context.

The concept of 'holding' examined thus far may be viewed as an ideology which 'makes sense' out of Pintupi experience of the social world. The schematic image of social order which it offers is that of generations succeeding one after another, each nurturing and mediating authority to the next. This social model is articulated through the kinship system's succession of generations.

The model, in this form, corresponds to a more general notion in Pintupi cosmology that what comes first is an important and definitive model (or *mould*) for that which follows. It is by virtue of their idea of the relationship between generations that the Pintupi are able to represent their society to themselves as conforming to the cosmic order, being but a manifestation of these first principles. As Munn (1970) points out for related groups, the ontological orientation to experience of the physical environment (the 'totemic landscape') and to experience of the social order are identical. The concept 'holding' integrates these assumptions into a shared understanding, a theory of authority and obedience.

Kinship does not constitute the whole of Pintupi social life; it does not provide their most general orientations. As Durkheim perceived for the Aranda long ago, the Pintupi understand themselves most fully as a 'society' through the idiom of 'religion', or Law. This complex of initiation and cult-ritual is also the basis of the most prevailing and enduring power relations in the society. Through control of ritual and ritual knowledge, initiated males (particularly elders) exercise considerable authority over male juniors and the whole body of the uninitiated.

The source of male authority is the very basis of authority itself, as the Pintupi see the world: knowledge of The Dreaming (*tjukurrpa*) or 'Law'. By these items, Pintupi refer to what is for them the origin of all things, all being. In The Dreaming, the world was given its significant shape, and the subsequent plan of life was laid down. What happened then is seen as the definitive plan for how things should happen now — a plan known through myths, songs, and ceremonies related to the actions of Dreamtime ancestors at known geogrophical places. If life is to be maintained, Pintupi believe each generation must *learn* and *conform* to the Law.

Elder males are deemed more valuable, more competent, more knowledgeable and thereby more powerful, in regard to The Dreaming. Through 'giving' (*yunginpa*) the Law — revealing ceremonies and giving instruction — they validate their authority, their right to implement goals for the society. These goals, however, are not thought of as man-made, but as being legitimate through continuity with the pre-existing cosmic order which male elders mediate and in whose name they rule.

The power which males exercise through their control of The Dreaming is of two sorts. One kind of power, direct and dramatic, is the power exercised by senior males over novices in periods of seclusion and the power exercised by males over the un-

initiated during ritual: shouted commands, belligerancy accompanied by threat of violence if disobeyed. Not all authority relations involve giving commands in this fashion. Often, public goals are set or power exercised through limiting participation in decision-making, limiting the opportunities of speaking publicly (Bloch, 1975). Such is the case with much of Pintupi gerontocracy, wherein 'authority' is often the right to speak.[6] The moral basis for both kinds of 'power' in the Pintupi case is the same, the survival and security of the subordinates. Elders conform to this criterion by the representation of gerontocracy as 'looking after' or nurturance. Just as seniors physically 'look after' juniors, so is a similar process experienced as taking place at more profound levels, in the transmission of sacred knowledge. Power has its base in control of this major resource in Pintupi life: esoteric knowledge.

The Pintupi see esoteric knowledge as the basis of authority and also as a responsibility, having the same duality as the concept of 'holding' or 'looking after'. Those who hold (*kanyininpa*) the story of a place have the right to decide when, where, and who will perform the associated ceremony; they decide what is correct and they take priority in discussions of it.

A good deal of 'impression-management' is involved in maintaining and legitimizing this power. Prominence or priority in public discussions depends upon convincing others that one truly knows more about the story, the ceremony, or the place than anyone else. Such men have 'power' which is as jealously guarded as any copyright. Concomitantly, the 'holder' is held responsible by his fellow men to see that everything is carried out properly, that the sacred sites in his care are 'looked after'. Should he fail, everyone may suffer. Because looking after sacred sites is necessary to maintain the world and its resources, to hold the Law is both a privilege and a responsibility. The pidgin description of ritual responsibility as 'men's work' is the Pintupi way of explicating its obligatory characteristics.

In this gerontocracy, then, 'old men' present themselves as 'looking after' the rest, their ability to do so based in large part on the possession of special knowledge: the Law. The passage of Law through the generations is seen as the passage of responsibility and authority from senior to junior, from one generation to the next. It is said that when a man dies, his 'son' (*katja*) 'takes on' his country and its ceremonial associations; the image of a burden or responsibility is striking. His 'son' (or 'sister's son') is said to 'carry the Law' (*kanyininpa*). Or again, the dead man 'loses' (*wantininpa*) the Law and the succeeding younger men 'grab' and 'hold' it. In this way, the social order is presented as a series of generations 'holding' and 'passing on' the Law. A similar concept of responsibility is applied to 'holding' children. When an older sibling dies, his younger brother 'takes on' his children, to look after them. An important feature in both domains is that the authority of one generation over the next is experienced as following 'naturally' from their priority in the temporal transmission of The Dreaming: power is not the result of personal struggle, and it cannot be achieved through egotism. In Pintupi theory, the authority of seniors derives from having undergone the process of transmission first, a circumstance which leaves plenty of room for impression-management. No one *knows* what an elder has learned.

In fact, much of the 'power' of older men derives from their oratorical abilities, the priority which they have in speaking publicly. Young men are 'too shy' to speak because they have not mastered the speech forms or the traditional and often secret lore which is frequently the subject of discussion. Were they to speak, they might embarrass themselves through ignorance or clumsiness or both. Disputes over points of esoteric Law leave younger men in the awkward position of being uncertain about what they know. In other words, the concept 'looking after' *assumes* these aspects, because (in Pintupi experience) 'looking after', age, and ability to speak are part of an inseparable process. By virtue of these circumstances, only the older have the ability to 'look after' the rest.

A body of esoteric knowledge called Law provides an ideal medium through which elders can assert precedence and priorities

in the name of the whole society. Young men who aspire to power see that the course of authority and autonomy is *through* the Law, through submission.

Such knowledge is a great source of power and responsibility, but it is a resource which is *not* freely available. It is thought of as deriving from The Dreaming and as being transmitted from 'older' to 'younger' through the generations. It is passed from the 'old men' to their 'male children' (*katja:*, 'son', 'sister's son'), from 'all the old men' (*tjilpi tjuta*) to 'all the boys' (*katjapiti:* 'the group of male first generation descendants'). Care in transmission of esoteric knowledge preserves it and keeps it out of the hands of the uninitiated, retaining power among those who 'know'. Because knowledge is dangerous, as the Pintupi see it, only the mature and responsible are to be entrusted with it. This is important in validating the 'truthfulness' of the symbolic system in relation to social experience: without gaining knowledge of the Law, males cannot 'grow up,' cannot marry and take on adult status. To be without Law is to be 'powerless'. To have it is to be in a position to look after dependents.

The domains co-ordinated by the single image of 'holding' — of knowledge and children — are both depicted as a chain of transmission from senior to junior, a transmission of authority pictured as a transformation between polarized statuses in the social order (Munn, 1970:154). Each generation must incorporate the Law through subordination to it and become thereby the mediators of The Dreaming for the next generation. Ultimate authority and potency are in The Dreaming, the cosmological datum given once for all and to which all persons are subordinate.

Individual males have authority and autonomy just because they have incorporated the Law. As noted, most of this authority is exerted in ritual and Dreaming-related contexts, those concerned with maintaining and transmitting the Law. This view of the world and the source of authority allows men to enforce 'public goals', without seeming to do so on the basis of their personal, egotistical wishes. They are only passing on The Dreaming. As conceptualized by the Pintupi, legitimate authority is without despotic or personal overtones, taken on as a responsibility to ensure the security and benefit of its objects. Having internalized the Law and been thereby transformed, the wishes of the mature men are viewed not as their personal whims but as externalizations of that which they have previously taken in.[7] And to this juniors must conform. As men say, 'It is not *our* idea; it is a big Law'.

What elders tell one to do is 'right'; its legitimacy is assured by its continuity of passage from The Dreaming.[8] Examples are cited, frequently enough, to convince power holders and subjects that ignoring or rejecting this 'protective restraint' will have disastrous consequences and that performance of obligation will prove beneficial. As the Pintupi say, does not the black currant grow year after year because we do the ritual?

This does not mean that individuals follow the Law *automatically*, out of moral imperative alone. Normative obligations for behaviour among kinsmen, affines, and in ritual are, to be sure, transmitted as 'from The Dreaming', but violations occur. Conflict is as much a part of Pintupi life as it is in any other group. The Law provides, instead, a basis on which individuals can mobilize others to defend their interests, a standard against which the whole community can judge the merits of a case. The medium is impersonal, and does not, theoretically, reflect the interests of any individual or group.

For example, if X's 'mother's brother' fails to protect his nephew, another 'mother's brother' may abuse the first for failure to uphold his responsibility. Whether or not others will intervene or defend the first depends on how they view the merits of the case against him. In other words, what *is* appropriate is not usually a matter for dispute; problems arise deciding whether an action conforms or not. The Law itself as a set of stock solutions for expected and repeated situations is seen as beyond question or criticism and as binding — representing the 'good' of the society.

Typically, then, failure to conform to the Law is sanctioned by the party who is thereby injured in his rightful expectations, be

it a kinsman deprived of his share of meat or a ritual elder whose rights to be consulted in a particular religious performance are ignored. Whether the nonconformist is punished depends on establishing the violation of a norm and convincing others to consent to this interpretation. Thus, decision to take action depends on widespread consensus on the legitimacy of the norm, the Law. Similarly, there are two constraints on personal abuse of the Law by the old: (1) other elders know The Dreaming, so *significant* departures arouse protest, and (2) older men have internalized the Law, have become structured by it.

That knowledge of The Dreaming also confers 'power' on the elderly through negative sanction is also clear. One old man, it was said, always wanted to get the emu heart. A young man explained to me, 'If we didn't give it, he might sing the sun to stop. Those old men have a lot of tricks.' He further explained that one could never know for certain the extent of their powers or knowledge. It seemed safer not to test. Part of the power of the old men (and women) seemed to rest on just this uncertainly, that they have a lot of tricks, that may be something they know which is dangerous. Threat, therefore, may be an important aspect of their power.

Male Life Cycle

For the Pintupi, submission to authority is a stage in the succession to authority and with it to *responsibiity* and duty. This transformation from passive receptivity and subordination, from being 'held', to autonomy and authority, to 'holding' and 'looking after' others is a significant theme in male cult and in the life cycle of males. As the following account shows, experience of this life cycle validates the ideology of authority as a 'true' representation of the social world: ideology is shaped by experience of the social order.

As a child, a male is subject to the authority of all his seniors, male and female. They 'look after' him. Along with all the uninitiated males and females, he is in a polar position of subordination and passivity over and against the group of initiated men. This is manifest on occasions of secret male ritual when all persons of the uninitiated category are subservient to the dictates of senior initiated men (and to the Law of The Dreaming which they embody). This constraint may take the form of avoidance by junior males of designated geographical areas; at other times they must cover their heads and avoid looking at a ritual occurring almost within their reach. Failure to observe such regulations may, in serious cases, result in punishment of death. Senior males seem to emphasize their autonomy on ritual occasions, shouting orders, and threatening violent sanctions for disobedience, but also viewing their own actions as benevolent in warding off the dire consequences of misbehaviour. Outside of such periods as ceremonial, the lack of discipline and control towards the very young is, for an American observer at least, remarkable.

As a young child, one is thought to be 'unknowing, unsensitive' (*patjarru*) and unable to know when to be 'ashamed' (*kunta*). Later, restraint becomes customary. Relations with the parents' generation ('them', *yinyurrpa*) are supposed to be characterized by 'shame' (*kunta*), and this is especially true towards those whose age mirrors the generational separation. From the age of eight or nine years, boys are resident in separate 'single men's camps' (*tawarra*), which are, ideally, of one's own generation category ('us'). Here they are under the authority of older boys and young men who are 'older brother' to them. I rarely observed, for example, boys hunting with their fathers. They travel, rather, with age-mates and young men only slightly their elders. Boys, however, continue to be fed by their 'parents' and 'parents' siblings', who are still concerned for their welfare.

There is a violent change when the time of initiation comes, around sixteen years. During this and subsequent periods of seclusion from the uninitiated and women, young men come under the watchful eye of their elders and this instruction accompanied by discipline and a series of physical ordeals (things done *to* him: tooth evulsion, nose-piercing, circumcision, subincision, fire ordeals, fingernail pulling) produces — over time — real personality changes. During periods of ritual seclusion, following instruction in and revelation of Law, the young men must go out and hunt meat for the

senior men who 'give' them such knowledge. Novices may be beaten and threatened for too much talking, inattention, misbehaviour, or insolence, as well as for previous offences against individual older men. Young men in seclusion now refer to this period sometimes as 'high school' and sometimes as 'prison', emphasizing both tutelage and restriction of personal freedom. The novices are dependent on their seniors to bring them food, although it is prepared often by women in the ordinary camp, and the period is one of relative privation as regards food. The young men are awakened at any hour of night, chased with bullroarers on enforced hunts, often leaving at night. They are lined up, heads bowed, symbolizing their subordination to those of greater autonomy towards them. Decisions for such procedures are made by all of the older men in discussion. The superordinates see their responsibility as 'holding' the subordinates and training them.

Within the overall group of initiated 'men', the Pintupi distinguish several relative stages which represent a series of polarized positions relative to each other; each is subordinate to those higher in the hierarchy and superordinate with respect to those below. The basis of the graduation is 'knowledge' of myth, ceremony and song. Each man experiences the Law, then, through members of the next higher superordinate category, which is, as regards ego, an objectification of The Dreaming and a restraint on one's freedom. It is usually these men of the next higher status who most actively interact with novices and who 'hold' (*kanyininpa*) and 'train' them.

Young men who have finished their instruction and other mandatory ceremonial obligations describe their situation as that of a 'free man', as the absence of restraints imposed. They can go where they want, because there is no danger of stumbling onto a male ceremonial performance which they are not permitted to see. Learning the Law is seen as an obligation and as a constraint on one's movements and free will. By being subjected to it, one eventually reaches a position of 'freedom', lack of constraints, that is, what we are calling autonomy (cf. Fried, 1967, for a discussion of 'autonomy' as the ultimate goal in egalitarian political orders).[10] The freedom is, of course, ultimately the freedom to follow the Law which they have incorporated and to impress it upon successors. Those who have passed through the Law make decisions about when and where the ceremonies will take place, who will be instructed, who take part — participation in this domain is a source of prestige, accomplishment and personal pride. Finally, having passed through the Law, one may take a wife.

At each stage reached, a man has both a wider domain of autonomy and is seen to have a greater responsibility. This 'ideal' and structural picture corresponds with other facts of personal deveolpment as described in individuals' accounts of their youth. One man told me of his illegal youthful spearings of cattle, his many fights, trickery, and wild travels, saying, 'I was a "silly man" then, but now I have children' (and responsibility). The periods of seclusion, ritual discipline and subordination, then, seem to develop in men a sense of responsibility and duty. Such is the Pintupi experience of the male life cycle. This life cycle is seen, then, as a continuous progression towards autonomy and potency, a progression (in Pintupi eyes) towards greater identification with the moral order. The consent of younger males to the authority of the older seems to rest on the expectation that there is something to be gained — something of value — both for them and for the whole 'society'. It is something they do for themselves but it is also seen as something they do for the continuation of life itself. The power and authority of older men is seen as necessary to make everyone conform to the cosmic plan; essentially their ability to 'look after' the juniors, the legitimacy of their decisions, is guaranteed by their proximity to the Law.

Although this authority is not usually viewed as personal gain-seeking or aggrandizement, the Law which they pass on as value is still the instrument of their power. Through it, men come to exert power and authority without accusation of being non-egalitarian or egoistical: they only mediate the Law. Thus is hierarchy achieved in an egalitarian society and thus is social consensus maintained for important social regulations. The social order and the prevailing

power relations are secured through presenting the political order as the social organization of esoteric knowledge, presenting the power and domination of males as a result and mainstay of the cosmic order. This view of authority depicts as *natural* and *necessary* the protracted immaturity of younger males while they pass through the ritual cycle allowing the older men to keep the women for themselves while providing them with a domain in which to exercise their authority.

Freedom and Responsibility

The symbolic emphasis of the widespread Kangaroo Dreaming Circumcision ceremonies confirm this interpretation (for more details of the analysis, see Myers, 1976). This first ceremony of manhood is dramatization of a man's becoming responsible for himself, a negation of being 'looked after' by 'fathers' or 'mother's brothers'. This theme is presented through the initiate's continual separation from the alternate generation and the latter's relative inactivity in the event. 'Own' generation men instruct him in the duties and knowledge of manhood at this time and responsibility towards the wider society is assumed, symbolized by taking on affines: these seem to mark the terms of his new identity as a 'man'.

Emphasis is on equivalence and equality, symbolized by *intra*generational relations rather than hierarchical, intergenerational ones. Thus, the initiate becomes one of the equal men of the male ritual corporation over and against the uninitiated. Subsequently, with the physical marks of initiation (circumcision, subincision), he can 'pay' for his ceremonial breaches or other wrongdoings by offering his penis to be held. Men told me, 'With this one you can go anywhere', and that it is 'like a hundred dollars' with which you can pay. Hereafter, as well, he begins to be concerned with his obligations to his potential affines, giving them gifts of meat. These are long-term relations of reciprocity, involving prototypically one's circumcisor who 'cut' the initiate and who must repay him for the injury with a wife; in return for this, the initiate must give meat and otherwise help his circumcisor. The young initiate is now no longer cut off from the activities of men's ritual cult life, which he enters, however, as passive and subordinate in relation to seniors, but as superordinate regarding females and the unitiated. He is 'free', but now responsible, and he begins his career towards full autonomy.

Taking on Responsibility

Taking on responsibility has political ramifications in Pintupi society, as a way of advancing one's personal position. Men who are desirous of enhancing their reputations and esteem do all they can to 'help' others. Typically, the arena for such activity is in white-Aboriginal relations. The aspiring 'leader' offers his abilities to translate for other Pintupi into English, and to translate English into Pintupi, voicing their concerns and interests to the white representative of the Government (usually) and explaining the latter's concern to the Pintupi. He may show initiative in requesting help for individuals, interceding with Europeans for them. In the cases I observed, men of previously low esteem gained much credence for their opinions; people listened when they spoke at meetings. One was considered, as a result, to be a village Councillor. Another man, long ago, became spokesman for and 'King of the Pintupi', by building his status through helping others. He decided where he and his people would camp and guided their relations with whites, but his position declined when people began to suspect that he was not really looking after them.

We should note that these sorts of patron-client relationships are different from the traditional Dreaming-derived authority relations, for important reasons. The former concern special abilities of the patrons for dealing with whites. Traditionally, the only similar 'specializations' were those of the older men regarding The Dreaming and those of 'parents' to feed their children. What politics there were, then, derived from the maintenance of a monopoly on ritual knowledge.

The Pintupi concept of hierarchy and authority envisions a status relationship in which the superordinate's obligation is to 'look after' (*kanyininpa*) the subordinate, in return for which the subordinate owes his 'boss' deference, respect, and a degree of

obedience to his wishes. It is felt that he can tell one what to do, although contemporary life shows how problematic this becomes in regard to the range of his authority (Myers, 1980). Ascendance to authority and autonomy is gained through acceptance of responsibilities, through generosity and concern for the welfare of others.

Pintupi ideology and experience sees these conditions as being 'naturally' met through the gerontocratic mediation of the sacramental plan of The Dreaming on which the welfare of future generations depends. The authority of elder males is legitimized as acceptance of a responsibility to 'carry' and 'pass on' the Law and to 'look after' those who follow. Thus can we regard 'holding' (*kanyininpa*) as a dominant symbol in Pintupi social life, a schematic image of social order.

We are also now in a position to better appreciate some of this symbol's particular value for the Pintupi. The image depicted by 'holding the child at the breast' (*kanyininpa yampungka*) can refer, ambiguously, to nursing as a primary experience of social concern. My argument that this concept is extended to the hierarchy of elder males seems to lend some credence to Roheim's (1945) analysis of male initiation as a symbolic declaration that henceforth it is men who will be nurturant and protective. In other words, through control of The Dreaming and male ritual, it is senior men who will 'look after' and 'hold' younger men. The data which Roheim gathered among neighbours of the Pintupi on the symbolic emphases of male 'motherhood' (his term, not theirs) could be brought in here as well. The special ability of Pintupi conceptions of hierarchy is that authority and control are presented in the guise of concern and nurturance. Indeed, it seems we must go further and see in the Pintupi conception of these 'opposites' as a necessary unity — a mature and transcendent grasp of the complexity of social life — similar in type to the Ndembu (Turner, 1967:57-8) notion of matriliny as simultaneously nurturance and authority.

Reciprocity

The talk about one's 'owing' obedience and work to those who 'look after' him — of authority as the complement of generosity— requires some elaboration. Reciprocity — an expectation of transactions resulting in parity — is a vital and central principle in all Pintupi social interaction, from 'revenge parties' to the bestowal of women. Giving, they maintain, should not be 'only one side'; rather it should be 'level', 'square and square', or *ngaparrku*, signifying an equivalent return.

When I refused to give up my shoes, my brother Pinta Pinta reminded me of the cigarettes he had recently given me. Requests are often phrased to remind one of previous actions, just as men remind their juniors 'I was at your initiation'. Men to whom I was generous in non-pay weeks insisted on my eating with them when food was abundant, so that it would not be 'too much one side'. The expectation of fights similarly is for a transaction of equal exchange: X spears Y and then offers his leg to be speared in return (*ngaparrku wakanu*). A young man whose broken leg had been repaired by surgery in a hospital assured me that the doctor would pay him — because the latter had *cut* him, a situation parallel to expectations of a wife from one's circumcisor.

Conversely, unfulfilled expectations of reciprocity — what Sahlins (1965:148) calls negative reciprocity — often lead to conflict and social disturbance. The literature on disputes about bestowal is testament to this.

In the acquisition of ritual knowledge, novices especially must reciprocate the "gift" of each ritual revelation with a ceremonial gift of meat to the 'old men' who showed it to them. All stages in the accession to important ritual status seem to be accompanied with the novice undergoing an ordeal and pain, as a kind of payment. As the Pintupi say, ritual knowledge is 'dear'. Older men 'give' knowledge and instructees 'pay' with pain, meat, and obedience, the sort of transaction which I describe as transformative (and hierarchical). As a result of the transaction, there is an increase of 'value' on the part of the junior. In these kinds of transaction, what is exchanged is *not* similar in kind or value. Since elders 'control' the specialized resource, juniors can never overcome the differential.

This kind of exchange constitutes and continually revalidates the *value* of knowledge; it is 'dear' because access is difficult and restricted. This is the way, of course, that the Durkheimian circuit (which bring together experience and symbol) works: what Geertz (1965:207) has captured in his definition of symbols as 'models of and for behaviour'. Thus does the Pintupi image of their social order as generations 'looking after' successors inform their lives and reproduce their social mode of being.

Summary and Conclusions

> Ideologies are thus ignormant of the exact nature of their relations with praxis — do not really understand their own conditions and presuppositions, nor the actual consequences to which they are leading. (Lefebvre, 1968:71.)

The goal of this paper was to investigate the relationship between Pintupi cultural constructs and politics: to ask how certain cultural constructs both express and veil important aspects of their life and why this way of interpreting experience takes the particular form it does. Thus, I have sought to treat cultural analysis in relation to a particular political 'problematic' (or contradiction, if you will) — the achievement and maintenance of legitimate hierarchy in an egalitarian society. This has required demonstrating how the concept of 'looking after' is convincing as a view of reality by virtue of its capacity to model the actor's experience of the social world in a useful way (i.e., its validation in experience), its operation on multiple domains, and its implied linkage of these domains. The resultant 'ideology' — of authority as nurturance — is seen, then, as the means through which 'hierarchy' is both justified and limited. I have tried to explain why it actually can be said to work in this pre-state society.

This account of traditional Pintupi politics may be viewed as a gloss on the theoretical underpinnings of both Marxian and Durkheimian analysis, which relate ideology to experience and the processes underlying experience. I have tried to show how the viability and persuasiveness of the Pintupi concept of authority as 'holding' or 'looking after' depends for its legitimacy on a set of expectable social processes and experiences in the lives of individuals. Parental care, the system of kin classification, the nature of knowledge as a resource, free access to other resources, the control of knowledge by elder males, male initiation, and the high value on egalitarianism all converge as formative elements — as parts of the system. Because these central experiences intrude into the life of every Pintupi — indeed, constitute that life — they are so common and expectable that little conceptual effort has gone into distinguishing them one from another. The result is similar to the situation noted by Stanner (1966) among the Murinbata: the Pintupi appear to have little objectivity or critical distance on these qualities of their experience. It was Stanner who, in his extraordinary way, called our attention to the 'embeddedness' of Aboriginal thought, its profoundly analogical quality: 'some kind of intuitive fitting together of the primary conceptions' (Stanner, 1966:15), thought which is 'innocent of detached intellectualism' (Stanner, 1966:44). It is, one might say, thought which has not been called upon to consider its own grounds of being.

The Pintupi, for instance, had little contact with varying cultures and little experience of that internal variation which might exist through a more specialized division of labour. Nor, apparently, was Pintupi history marked by the sort of dramatic and sudden changes which provide the experience that things could in fact be different, that things are a certain way as opposed to another. These may be the sorts of conditions which make possible the cultural integration in which a single concept or symbol articulates several domains of activity.

In showing a symbolic system as emerging in relation to (or conditioned by) the experiences it confronts, I have presented the Pintupi use of 'looking after' as somethings like what Bernstein (1974) has described for 'restricted codes'. Like such codes, while it successfully articulates the experiences encountered, such a symbol does not consider the system in which the subjects and their experiences are equally parts. Characteristically, restricted codes

arise in small-scale social situations 'in which the speakers all have access to the same fundamental assumptions' (Douglas, 1973:43). Because these 'assumptions' are frequently the recurrent conditions in which communication takes place, Bernstein describes restricted codes as deeply enmeshed in the social structure: while every utterance conveys information, it also affirms the social order by taking it for granted. My reason for calling attention to the similarity is two-fold: (1) the embedded quality of such codes is well-suited to maintaining the linkage between domains of experience, mediating potential inconsistencies by calling attention to similarities (between kinship and politics, for example); (2) on the other hand, since such codes depend for their practical use on the context of which they are part, their extension to changing conditions may be problematic. The present paper constitutes a groundwork from which such a situation could be considered.

Traditional Pintupi society, with its repetitive and highly-shared social experiences (as in the life-cycle), is typified by use of a 'restricted code', precisely the kind of symbolic structure which does not make explicit (or even recognize) its underlying assumptions. Such a code, by taking for granted the regularity of experience, hinders recognition of the activities which regularly constitute that experience as a 'fact of nature'. When the conditions for regularity in Pintupi social experience are not met (as with the interruption of an extremely stable and continuous adaptation to a fairly constant environment which has produced little specialization of labour), the code begins to lose effectiveness in providing a guide to action and some of its assumptions may come to light as contradictions. This has been the case in contemporary settlement life — with the emergence of Village Councils and black-white relations — as I show in a related paper (Myers, 1980).

Within such constraints, I have argued that the image of the Pintupi as 'people without politics' is the consequence of a particular concept of authority as 'looking after' which presents hierarcy as nurturance. The employment of this same metaphor to 'grasp' several domains of Pintupi life depicts the world as proceeding from and being defined by a set of first principles, familiar to students of the area as The Dreaming. Such a view and justification of 'political power' or precedence by initiated, mature males as part of Nature rather than as a product of human activity (or history) is typically validated by experiences in individuals' lives: maturity and responsibility do come to males after ritual instruction, and it is then that they may marry. The very symbol of 'holding', linking parental concern and social authority, presents Society as a natural order.

It could be argued that parental concern and old men's authority are not the same, that parents give something in return for respect while old men extract obedience and give only meaningless songs and words. Besides imputing a kind of 'bad faith' to older men which is belied by all accounts, to call this a 'mystification' in the sense of intentional deceit misses the point that actors' experiences conform to the ideological view: elders do nurture (give things of value). This is a mystification only insofar as, like all ideologies, actors are largely unaware of the social productive processes, 'taken for granted', on which the 'truth' of their representations relies (and which the pursuit of their representations makes possible).

The concept works as a model of and model for Pintupi social reality. Through the long period of submission, it appears that rebellious young males internalized and came to identify with important aspects of the Law, eventually taking on responsibility for its enactment and transmission. Learning the Law is a route to the achievement of power, but the despotic qualities of that power are greatly constrained by previous submission to an internalization of a set of norms representing the social good. Thus, gerontocracy exists and is justified in the Pintupi view because fully-initiated older males 'look after' and protect those without knowledge.

NOTES

1. It is interesting that versions of these distortions also once reflected European attitudes to Aborigines. In the nineteenth century, many writers denounced the oppressive evils of Aboriginal society as superstition and cruelty; later, there followed the period of

apologetic defense of Aboriginal life, old men often being presented as wise and concerned for the good of all.

2. We might excuse the 'without politics' view as consciously referring to the absence of separate political institutions (i.e., the 'kinship' and 'government' distinction), but many of these writers simply regarded The Dreaming as 'religion' and failed to consider its relationship to political processes. Thus, they did fall prey to accepting the Aboriginal ideology without awareness of its preconditions (see *Summary and Conclusions*).
3. Field research with the Pintupi was supported by NSF Disseration Improvement Grant No. GS 37122, an Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies Living Stipend, and NIMH Fellowship No. 3FOIMH57275-01. Invaluable help in the Pintupi language was provided by Ken Hansen of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. This article is based on Chapters 10-12 of a PhD dissertation written at Bryn Mawr College under the direction of Jane C. Goodale. I gratefully acknowledge the helpful suggestions of Bette Clark, Don Brenneis, Nic Peterson, Michael Goldstein, Bob Rubinstein, Nancy Williams, and Jane Atkinson.
4. These criteria constitute the basis for the four-section systems so widespread in Australia.
5. Freddy West tjakamarra considers Yanyatjarri tjampitjinpa to be a 'close' relative; they say they are 'from one country'. Ordinarily men of the tjakamarra subsection refer to *tjampitjinpa* men as *tjamu* (a term often glossed as 'grandfather', but which also marks degree of genealogical distance. However, Freddy calls Yanyatjarri 'elder brother' (*kuta*) and Freddy called to Yanyatjarri's father (*tjangala* subsection) by the term 'father' (*mama*) instead of the 'wife's mother's brother' (*tjukunpa*) term ordinarily used between men of their respective subsections. Freddy calls Yanyatjarri's daughter by the 'daughter' term (*yuntalpa*), although she is of the subsection which usually entails the affinal term 'wife's mother' (*yumari*) and strict avoidance. He said, 'I looked after her. She's no mother-in-law.' Examples like this can be multiplied, but they follow a consistent pattern.
6. Much work remains to be done on the content, goals, and logic of politics in non-state societies—especially on the issues of "power" and "autonomy".
7. The extent to which males are truly transformed by initiation is described by Stanner (1960).
8. Pintupi youths, of course, feel somewhat differently and the supposedly impersonal authority of elders is often used personally enough to punish a youthful violator of one's sexual rights to certain women.
9. Although the ideology we are examining maintains that the hierarchy derives from The Dreaming and the natural order of things, the orientation to the natural world is itself a projection of experience of the social world, as Munn (1970) has argued *à la* Durkheim. A similar argument has been made by Barth (1975) regarding the relationship between epistemology and experience of esoteric cults.
10. Another paper (Myers, 1979) provides further elaboration of the emotional basis of this egalitarianism.

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