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Politics of Aboriginal Land Tenure

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Burning the Truck and Holding the Country: Pintupi Forms of Property and Identity¹

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If they are not given their shares, this denies their kinship. . . . A man's variegated relationships with others run through his chattels as well as his land; and the measure of how far he feels the correct sentiments in those relationships is the way he deals with his property and his produce.

—[Gluckman 1965:45]

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF OBJECTS

I am concerned here with the indigenous meanings attributed to a variety of "objects" among Pintupi-speaking Aborigines of the Australian Western Desert. My argument is that "things" (objects, ritual, land, prerogatives, duties) have meaning—that is, significance or social value—for the Pintupi largely as an expression of autonomy and what I have elsewhere defined as "relatedness" or shared identity (Myers 1986b). In this regard, landownership is not a special kind of property, not a special set of rights defining relationships to an ecologically necessary "living space."² Instead, it is one more form of objectifying social relationship of shared identity.

Among the Pintupi, as among many hunter-gatherers, the use-value of rights to things is not at all obvious. Rather than, as Radcliffe-Brown (1930-31) once thought, corporate groups forming around

some valued property or estate, Pintupi seem to constitute social aggregations (see also Sansom 1980) and give them identity through time by projecting them into shared relationships to objects.

My essay begins, then, not so much in disagreement with Gluckman's views on property but in my discomfort with the notion of property as being too concrete and specific for the meanings that Pintupi give to objects. Legal language may be useful for characterizing certain similarities in the relationship between persons and things, but it does not make for entirely adequate translation. In exploration of this theoretical problem, and in search of deeper understanding of the social significance of things among hunter-gatherers, therefore, I want to focus on similarities and differences between land and other forms of property. The distinction on which I draw is not unlike the French contrast between *propriété* (personal property) and *immeubles* (real property), a contrast enshrined in Mauss's (1954) *The Gift* and recently resurrected in Weiner's (1985) article, "Inalienable Wealth."

Two basic issues arise. First, is land tenure different from relationships between (and among) people and other objects? Second, the question of concerns over temporal continuity is, according to Woodburn (1980) and Meillassoux (1973), central to understanding hunter-gatherers. Whereas Woodburn attempted to locate the source of Aboriginal concerns over enduring relationships in the "farming" of women (in bestowal), I see the basis of temporal continuity in the process of objectification. In articulating this process, some sorts of objects have different capacities than others. It is of critical importance, as I shall show, that a Pintupi can "give away" (or share) some rights to named places without losing his or her own intrinsic identity with the place. This inalienability of land, that it cannot really be lost, differs from the way most other objects enter into processes of exchange.

While these issues cannot be fully resolved here, I would like to begin by exploring the different ways personal identification with objects occurs in Pintupi social life. How is identity extended in the negotiation of shared rights to objects and processes of exchange? And why, for example, are "personal effects"—but not country—destroyed, effaced, and given away at death? What, if anything, is inherited, or what does inheritance accomplish?

OWNERSHIP AND IDENTIFICATION

A basic issue at all levels of Pintupi social organization is transaction in shared identity. What is most impressive to me about the Pintupi

conception of objects is the continual negotiation about relationships to them and a willingness to include others as what, for the want of a better heuristic term, I will call "co-owners." Such ambiguity is deeply seated in the negotiated quality of much of Pintupi social life. Relationships among people are not totally given in the rules of a defining structure, not in landownership, kinship, or residence (Myers 1986b). Instead, the relationships must be worked out in a variety of social processes. The politics of Pintupi life, however, should not be confused with an aim for domination over others. Its roots lie in the emphasis placed on shared identity with others as a basis for social interaction.

This framework suggests a simple and obvious conclusion, namely, that "property" be viewed as a sign. The immediate material use-value of most forms of propertied objects among the Pintupi (tools, clothing, food, etc.) is not great. While such objects are clearly useful, that which is necessary for simple production is rather easily obtained, constructed, or replaced. The rapidity and ease with which things move through a network of relatives and friends show that objects are important as opportunities to say something about oneself, to give to others, or to share. Like any signs, however obviously "useful" they might be, objects are tokens that represent an opportunity not so much to sustain exclusive use but to constitute other sorts of values defined by a larger system of exchange. That these values are ultimately convertible to labor or political support, far from subtracting from the significance of a semiotic analysis, suggests that such analysis should be based on a temporal perspective that focuses on value as being constituted in the process of *reproducing* social life.

Analysis of the cultural relationships between persons and objects should begin appropriately with Pintupi ideas of "ownership"—a conception better translated as one of "identification." The Pintupi words most closely approximating "property" in English are *walytja* or *yulytja*. While the former may be translated as "relative(s)" or as "one's own personal effects" (see Hansen and Hansen 1977:152) and the latter as "baggage and personal effects" (*ibid.*, 190), the significance of identification is clearer when one understands the entire semantic range of *walytja*. In addition to objects associated with a person, it can refer to "a relative," to the possessive notion of "one's own" (such as "my own camp" [ngayuku ngurra walytja] or "my own father" [ngayuku mama walytja]), or to reflexive conceptions like "oneself" (such as "I saw it myself" [ngayulu nyanju walytjalu] or "He sat there by himself" [nyinama walytja]).

Examining this range of meanings offers some perspective on the almost natural reifying of legal conceptions of rights and duties in

our common usage of "property." Indeed, a similar foundation of property in rights deriving from some concept of personal identification is suggested by the shared root of "proper" (my proper father) and "property" in the Latin term *proprius*, "private or peculiar to oneself" (Partridge 1983:529).

There is a certain ambivalence or ambiguity about Pintupi relationships to objects. There is clearly a sense that objects might "belong to" someone—the idea that X is the *walytja* of a person contrasts directly with the idea that an object X is *yapunta*, a word whose literal meaning is "orphan," without parents. To follow the linguistic usage further, one's parents are said to *kanyininpa* one, meaning "to have," "to hold," or, more loosely, "to look after one." Thus, an object that is *yapunta* does not belong to anyone, but it appears that this might mean also that it has no one who is holding or looking after it. The question remains of what it means for something to belong to—to be *walytja* of—someone. An object becomes *yapunta* when it is no longer "held" but has instead been *wantingu*, "lost" or "relinquished," released from an active association with a subject. For objects to belong to someone means as much that they are expressive of that person's identity as it does that they are simply identified with or related to that person. To say that something is "one's own" implies, for the Pintupi, that one does not have to ask (or defer to) anyone about its use.

Leaving aside for a moment the issue of co-owners, the right to use an object without asking—even the claim that it is "my own"—expresses one's autonomy. By "autonomy," I mean self-direction, although we will have occasion to see that this is not necessarily self-created. In contrast, rights to objects that might be regarded as personal effects still seem less exclusive among the Pintupi than Americans, for example, would tolerate. The very notion of ownership as identification provides also a sense that rights to objects can, and should, be more widely distributed, a willingness (not always ungrudging, of course) to include others with oneself as co-owners.

Rights to objects enter into a system of exchange that constantly negotiates the relationships of shared identity. In the examples that follow, I want to show how negotiation of the meaning of ownership rights moves within a dialectic of autonomy (as in the right to be asked) and relatedness (exemplified in the tendency to include others and to share rights with others who one recognizes as identified). This sense of property as potentially providing a temporally extended objectification of shared identity has much in common with Sansom's (1980) treatment of fringe-dwelling Aborigines in Darwin as "people without property."

TO SHARE, PERCHANCE TO GIVE

Let me begin with a simple and striking example of how Pintupi regard personal possessions. Cigarettes, purchased through the cash economy, are a popular item among Western Desert Aboriginal men. Men cadge each other's tobacco and cigarettes almost without thought. Although my Pintupi comrades were generous with me in sharing their cigarettes, I often found my supply depleted all too quickly. On just such an occasion, a young man named Jimmy came to my camp and asked if I had any cigarettes. Aggrieved, I replied with some anger that people had taken all of mine, more or less including him in the group of those who had taken advantage of me. Rather than taking offense, he was sympathetic and offered me some of his cigarettes. Further, he took it upon himself to explain how I should not give my things away so easily. Instead, he suggested that I should hide what I had. He showed me how he had hidden a packet of cigarettes in his socks under his trousers and suggested that if I did the same, I could simply tell people that, unfortunately, I had no cigarettes—although I would surely give them if I had. Giving me a whole packet, Jimmy told me he had several buried near his camp.

This example illustrates some common themes in Pintupi action about sharing, owning, and asking. I interpreted Jimmy to mean I did not have to refuse anyone overtly. It is clear that it is very difficult for Pintupi to simply refuse or to accept from others. Sympathy and compassion are the appropriate and moral responses to co-residents or relatives. Outright refusal, conversely, constitutes an open rejection of the other's claim to having a relationship with one (see Myers 1979). To "say no to someone's face" is something very unusual and dangerous in Pintupi social life. Those so denied may respond with anger and violence.

Were Jimmy's buried cigarettes to be taken by others, he would certainly be angry. In similar cases, people talk of "theft." That is, Jimmy might say, "Someone has taken my cigarettes, *mulyartalu* ("thieving"; ergative case)." Even though he might have been obligated on the basis of his relationship to a thief to give some cigarettes, to take "without asking" (*tjapintja wiya*) would be regarded as a violation of his personal rights to them. In other cases like this, people often argued that the owner got them with his own money. This is to say that the cigarettes were not a product of cooperative or joint activity through which others could claim identification with the product.

No one else would be very concerned about such an event, as long as their ox was not gored. Indeed, it might be claimed, in counter,

that Jimmy should not have hidden (*yarkatjunu*) his cigarettes, or, as I have heard in "thefts" of radios and cassette players, that he should have hidden them better (so the thief would not be tempted). Jimmy's claim would be that he should have been asked. Under such circumstances, in which refusal is impossible, the only way to maintain one's possessions is to place them out of immediate reach. To give one's cigarettes in response to a request, however, is to build a right to ask others because reciprocity in these matters is expected. By not asking, it would appear, one is doing more than simply taking an object; one is denying to the "proprietor" the opportunity to give it, that is, to be generous and to thereby build a debt. "Theft," defined as taking without asking, is a serious interruption to one's ability to express the self, albeit through a gift, and to build through exchange an expanded shared identity with the other.

It is illuminating, finally, to reverse the conception offered here. Consider that one might claim a right to be given some object, claiming co-ownership or a relationship with the proprietor that obligated him or her to give. While the proprietor might choose to give, for propriety's sake, or to be diplomatic, he or she might still claim that the other was really "nothing to do" (*mungutja*)—having no basis for shared identity either with the object or with the proprietor.

THE EXCHANGE OF FOOD

It is obviously not possible here to circumscribe the entirety of Pintupi relationships to things. Nonetheless, consideration of rights in food that is gathered or hunted can inform us more deeply about what is at issue in establishing one's primary identity with things.

While women frequently forage for vegetable foods and small animals in a group, each woman has exclusive rights to what she produces—when the actual productive activity is not cooperative. Much of her production is brought back to the residential camp for final preparation and consumption. Characteristically, women prepare what they collect themselves. In camp, the product is (1) shared with the immediate family, (2) given in exchange for child care services rendered, for example, while a mother was foraging (B. Clark, personal communication), and/or (3) distributed to co-residents who had not fared well. While such people may have claims on the producer's services, they have no special claim to the product itself. What she gives is conceptualized, therefore, as exchange. Although co-residents in this situation are expected to share with each other, the sharing often takes place only on request, giving to the distribution of pro-

duction a character of "mutual taking." Based on their technology and resources, cooperation in production among Pintupi men is unnecessary, though beneficial, in certain circumstances. When men engage in cooperative drives, the kill is distributed among all who participate. Most hunting, however, takes place alone or in small groups, and when a man is successful in hunting large game, it is distributed interdomestically, to those others in the residential group who have shared their production with the hunter. Gifts of meat could satisfy other exchange obligations as well, namely, to one's in-laws or parents.

Anthropologists have frequently pointed out the practical economic benefits of such interdomestic distribution, so I need not emphasize that point here. In any case, the preparation of large game treats it as a social product. A hunter is supposed to give the kangaroo he kills to others for preparation, although his activity in the hunt provides for him the right and responsibility to direct disposition of the cooked animal in exchange (if he uses another's spear or rifle, the owner of the hunting implement has this privilege). Success in the hunt provides food for the hunter, of course, but this does not exhaust its significance. His success also secures a particular set of rights to the animal, providing him with an opportunity to give—to engage in interdomestic exchange that establishes or promotes a kind of moral identity with recipients.

The social value of this exchange of meat is not simply that of caloric satisfaction. Rather, these exchanges among individuals provide a moral basis for continued and ongoing co-residence and cooperation among members of a group. They constitute, that is, a moment in the reproduction of shared identity (people who "help each other") that is the foundation of band organization. Failure to share or, as I would prefer to describe the activity, to exchange within such groups, has predictable consequences. The idiom of shared identity sustained through exchange provides the very basis of possible criticism: conflict ensues as those neglected make accusations of being rejected or neglected as "relatives" (*walytja*). Such neglect is understood as "not loving," not regarding people as related.

Distribution of foraging production in a large group does present a problem. Frequently, the conflicts that develop in such aggregations concern sharing and are brought on by the difficulty of allocating products and services among a large group of co-resident "kin." Since all such co-residents have claims on each other, at least to some extent, large groups place a considerable strain on individuals, producing conflicts of loyalty as well as continuous imposition on one's gen-

erosity (not to say diminishing people's incentive to overproduction). Thus, the rights to the kangaroo as property are involved immediately with an exchange used to maintain one's relatedness to others. It is possible, of course, for a person to assert his (or her) autonomy, the right to decide who gets a kangaroo. Rights exist, but what do they mean? Insofar as exercise of choice may defy other people's claims about their relationship or obligations, these choices are likely to create a threat. Herein lies the tension between a valued autonomy and the claims and necessity of shared identity.

How Pintupi manage this tension is clear in a case of "hidden meat." In 1979, I lived at the small outstation community of Yayayi, then, population 15. Having been successful the previous day in hunting kangaroos and bush bustards, we were enjoying the cooked fruits of our labor on one cold midmorning when we heard the approaching sounds of the tractor from the nearby community of Yinyilingki. Long-time and frequent co-residents with the Yayayi mob, the Yinyilingki people were close and often generous relatives only temporarily separated. To my surprise, the male leader of Yayayi decided we should hide our cooked meat, which we did, inside the many flour drums around the camp. When the Yinyilingki people arrived, they asked, of course, whether we had any meat. One of the Yayayi, Ronnie, sitting on top of some drums, replied that we were, unfortunately, empty-handed. His good friend from Yinyilingki, Ginger, was not fooled, since he could plainly see the evidence of recent cooking as well as the feathers we had plucked from the birds. Laughing and without any rancor, he opened a few flour drums until he found what he was looking for. Inescapably, for better or worse in his case, Ronnie's identification with the cooked meat truly spoke to the world about him—communicated, that is, about his identity. Nonetheless, the case is instructive about the cultural meaning of "property" as an expression of identity, a node of personal identity caught at once in webs of shared identity.

Materially, Ronnie's strategy of the polite rejection through hiding was a failure, although it did not lead to the conflict or antagonism that shatters the sense of shared identity. I believe this is so because often enough he was generous. Indeed, the strategy of hiding one's property to avoid either having to give it away or having to overtly deny the other is a common enough practice. Ginger recognized Ronnie's rights to the meat, but these rights did not really sustain exclusive use. What Ronnie did with the meat was necessarily and unavoidably meaningful, a sign of their relationship, just as Ginger's jocular but insistent demand highlighted his sense of a closeness that allowed

him to intrude. The potential dangers of such selfishness, however, are clearly outlined in Pintupi myths, where long cycles of vengeance follow on a constant failure to share. And conflict over food has altered the relationships in many Pintupi camps, so that the continued identity of a community, what the Pintupi call "the people with one camp" (*ngurra Kutjungurrara*), is essentially a temporary objectification of these relationships of exchange.

MOTOR VEHICLES AS MEDIA OF IDENTIFICATION

Among the most valuable objects in contemporary Pintupi life are motor vehicles, especially the trucks and four-wheel drive Toyotas that are able to carry large loads (and people) in difficult terrain. Vehicles are necessary and valuable for getting supplies from the store, for hunting expeditions, and for visits near and far. The problem of ownership is compounded in the case of such objects, of which there are few, in that Pintupi recognize two categories of "property"—what they call (in English) "private" as opposed to "community" or "company."

Vehicles that are private are those purchased with money that belongs to an individual or, occasionally, to some individuals who jointly buy a car. The purchaser is understood to be the proprietor of the vehicle, that is, to have the right to decide on its use and nonuse. It is unlikely that the proprietor will be the sole user of a vehicle, but as in the case of other personal effects, relatives and friends must ask permission to gain its use. The very autonomy of ownership (the possibility of giving) is the basis for the establishment of extending shared identity with others. To have a car, one might say, is to find out how many relatives one has.

Those without their own vehicles draw especially on their kin relations for help, placing those in possession of a car under almost constant pressure of such demands. Where the moral rubric of shared identity guides the relationships of those who live in the same camp, such requests are difficult to refuse, and open rejection is impossible. Those who refuse are said to be "hard" or "jealous" for the motorcar. Anyone who has lived in a Pintupi community will recognize just how much conflict, how many fights, are occasioned by relationships to motor vehicles because of misuse and requests for and refusals of use. Indeed, sometimes owners are relieved when their cars break down, only then seeming to be free of demands. Disputes among kin about the use of a vehicle have, I understand, led proprietors to set fire to and destroy their own cars as a desperate and angry resolution.

In contrast, "ownership" provides an opportunity for a person to "give," and one who helps his relatives is not only understood to be generous but also gains a degree of respect and authority for having "looked after" them. The demands on a proprietor are not entirely a bad thing, then, insofar as they provide one with an opportunity to "be someone." Proprietorship can make a person central to the planning of activities that require transportation. More important, however, is the general attitude toward personal possessions. No matter what they cost, it would appear, Pintupi regard vehicles as replaceable, like spears or digging sticks. Thus, even when a \$4,000 car is destroyed after only a few weeks of use, they say, "There are plenty more motorcars; no worries." To be sure, this reflects an expectation that someone else will have a car, that another relative will help one to obtain the bare necessities—that is, an expectation of long-term reciprocity prevails.

I believe this attitude to property underlies much of Pintupi social life. Put in familiar terms, if faced with a choice between caring for their property or for their relatives, they prefer to invest in people rather than things. Without granting this any special moral status, let me say that under the conditions of settlement in the traditional life of hunter-gatherers, such "investment priorities" may be a realistic appraisal of resources. Nonetheless, the conception of property as replaceable guides our attention to a conception of things as relatively transparent signs of social relationships, vehicles for another sort of value. Many Pintupi recognize a difference between their conception of the relationship between persons and things and that of whites. A long discussion I had with a middle-aged man resulted in his contemplating the difference thus: "You white people are always worrying for money. You don't think about who will cry for you when you die." This is a salutary comment on commodity fetishism as Marx comprehended it. The accumulation of private objects, while not entirely ignored (Pintupi do work and save to get cars), is not the means through which one's identity is transmitted through time. That is secured in part through giving such things away.

If it is difficult to give help, private cars are the basis on which a sort of shared identity is constructed, those with whom one shares the use reflecting an ongoing exchange. Pintupi themselves regard particular vehicles as representing a cluster of associates who, often for the life of the car, travel together: a certain blue Holden is "that Yinyilingki motorcar," identified with a group of young men. The car is the occasion for the temporary realization of their relationship and obligations to each other. When driving past old wrecks on the road,

Pintupi habitually identify them with the persons, communities, and events they were involved with. Cars become, in other words, objectifications of a set of social relationships.

The other category of motor vehicle, the "community" one, has been the occasion for conflict and confusion in many settlements. Such objects are usually the product of government or foundation grants, not the result of a community's joint, voluntary contribution to a collective enterprise. The problem with community vehicles is, who actually can be said to own something that belongs to a community?

Ordinarily, Pintupi have assimilated this problem of property to their ambiguous notion of *kanyininpa* ("to have, to hold, to look after"), and they recognize that Pintupi Village Councillors "look after" such vehicles. Indeed, in all the cases I have seen, a particular councillor assumes responsibility for a vehicle. "Shorty," they might say, "is looking after that Bedford truck." They do not mean, of course, that he is its "owner." Their conception, as I understand it, is that Shorty must be asked, but conversely, as a Village Councillor he *must* help them. Although he might try to explain that there are other uses for the truck and try to relate these to everyone's benefit, he cannot really refuse.

These community vehicles are interesting from another point of view. To the Pintupi who are granted them, such vehicles seem to embody a recognized "community" identity. When Pintupi refer to the Yayayi Toyota or the New Bore Toyota, they are saying more than that the vehicle belongs to that place. In a particular Pintupi sense, such objects represent the community's collective identity as an autonomous social entity. They do not do so, however, legally; if it crashes, the community is not held liable collectively, and individual members would undoubtedly claim that they were "nothing to do" (*mungutja*) with the action.

For historical reasons, Pintupi associate the founding of past outstation communities with the granting of four-wheel drive Toyotas by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs or the Aboriginal Benefits Trust Fund. As a result of this association, it appears, they believe that a community's autonomy will be recognized in the granting of such a vehicle. Men often say that they are the "boss" of an outstation at such and such a place, but they are waiting to go there because the government has not yet given them their Toyota. Possibly, the attraction of gaining control over such a vehicle is the very reason that people have been eager to establish outstations. Much of the politics of autonomy that matter so much to men gets worked out around

control of the motor vehicles of the community. At the first Yayayi community where I worked in 1973, there were two community vehicles, each associated with historically and geographically distinctive segments of the camp, one for the people "from the east" and the other controlled by those whose traditional country had been farther "from the west." The controllers of these resources became the nodes of community organization.

The ambivalence about proprietorship of community vehicles is made clear in the case of the death of a person who controlled a vehicle. When the "boss" at Alumbra Bore died in 1981, the community was faced with the problem of what to do with the orange Toyota that was theirs from a community grant. Personal property of a deceased is always destroyed or given away to that person's "mother's brothers" from far away, because a person's effects are identified with him or her and make close relatives sad. The Alumbra community planned initially to swap vehicles with another community in order to remove their truck from sight because it reminded them of the dead man. They eventually thought better of this, realizing they would still have to see this truck often since it would be in the area. They decided to burn it and thus efface its association with sad memories.

OWNING THE COUNTRY

If the objects considered so far are recognizable as personal effects in their extendibility to others, landownership is not a special kind of property. Among Pintupi, shared identity is readily extended to others in the form of recognizing their identity with named places, an identification formulated through a particular cultural logic.

In contrast to traditional views of Aboriginal landowning groups as patrilineal, Pintupi landownership is better understood as the negotiated outcome of individual claims and assertions. Maintaining relatedness with others is a striking feature of this organization. The emphasis on sociability underlies the variety of claims that individuals make to multiple affiliations to landowning groups and gives an omnipresent quality of negotiation to the processes of local organization. Through allowing others to become joint custodians of one's own estate, people maintain important ties with each other throughout the region. Landownership, then, is not first an ecological institution but rather an arena in which Pintupi organize relations of autonomy and shared identity with others.

Ownership as the Pintupi understand it—that is, "holding a coun-

try" (*kanyininpa ngurra*)—provides opportunities for a person to be the organizer of a significant event and the focus of attention, albeit in limited contexts. Owners are in a position to exercise equality with other fully adult persons, to offer ceremonial roles to others (as part of an exchange), and to share rights in ritual paraphernalia. At the same time, people view "country" as the embodiment of kin networks and as a record of social ties that can be carried forward in time.

Various means exist by which individuals may make claims of identification with the "country" (*ngurra*) as their "own." But the fundamental notion of "identification with country," rooted in the fact that places always bear the imprint of persons and their activities, refers to the whole range of relationships a person can claim or assert between himself or herself and place. These provide the cultural basis for its ownership. Thus, if the place is called A, the following constitute bases for such a claim:

1. conception at the place A;
2. conception at a place B made by and/or identified with the same Dreaming ancestors as A;
3. conception at a place B whose Dreaming is associated mythologically with The Dreaming at A (the story lines cross);
4. initiation at A (for a male);
5. birth at A;
6. father conceived at A or conditions 2-5 true for father;
7. mother conceived at A or conditions 2, 3, and 5 true for her;
8. grandparents conceived at A or conditions 2-5 true;
9. residence around A;
10. death of close relative at or near A.

Through this logic, individuals can have claims to more than one country, but it is through political process that claims of identification are converted into rights over aspects of a country and knowledge of its esoteric qualities. Identification is an ongoing process, subject to claim and counterclaim, dependent on validation and acceptance or invalidation and nonacceptance. It is by such political processes that claims of identification are transformed into rights over related aspects of a country. Such rights exist only where they are accepted by others. The movement of the political process is along a graduated range of links or claims of increasing substantiality, from mere identification and residual interest in a place to actual control of its sacred associations. The possession of such rights as recognized by others, called holding a country, is the product of negotiation. Ultimately, owner-

ship is not a given here but an accomplishment, although this historicity is disguised by the fact that the cultural basis of claims is the ontological priority of the Dreaming (*tjukurrpa*; see Myers 1986b, chap. 2). In the end, ownership of country, denoting close association among a set of individuals, is a projection into transhistorical time of the valued social relations of the present. This is accomplished, however, without calling attention to the boundaries it draws.

In substance, ownership consists primarily in control over the stories, objects, and rituals associated with the mythological ancestors of the Dreaming at a particular place. Access to knowledge of these esoterica is requisite, and the creative essence they contain is restricted; one can acquire it only through instruction by those who have previously acquired it. Important ceremonies are conducted at some sacred sites, and other sites have ceremonies associated with them which adult men (particularly) may perform to instruct others in what happened in that important period (the Dreaming) in which all things took on their form. Because such knowledge is highly valued and vital to social reproduction, men seek to gain it and to be associated with its display and transmission. Their major responsibility, in fact, is to "follow up The Dreaming" (Stanner 1979), to look after these sacred estates by ensuring that proper rituals are conducted.

From the Pintupi point of view, the emphasis is just as much on the social production of persons who can hold the country, that is, on initiating young men and teaching them the ritual knowledge necessary to look after the country, as it is on getting the country. The Pintupi image of social continuity is effectively one in which "country," as an object, is passed down, is "given" as a contribution to the substance and identity of the recipient. This is a kind of transmission of one generation's (or person's) identity to the next. By learning about the Dreaming and seeing the rituals, one's very being is altered. People become, Pintupi say, "different" and stronger. One cannot become adult without the help of others; to be sure, no one can become a man by himself. Certainly, while younger recipients are supposed to reciprocate for the gift of knowledge—in hunting meat for the givers and in deference—they cannot really repay what they have been given. They have, as it were, acquired an obligation, a responsibility that they can repay only by teaching the next generation. Pintupi stress that men must hold the Law and pass it on. Men are enormously concerned to pass on their knowledge and identification with places to their "sons" and "sister's sons."

This was evident on a trip to the Gibson Desert that I made with an older man, Wuta Wuta tjangala, and several others. On our return,

Wuta Wuta decided he wanted to take us all to see an important place to the north where his father had died in order to *ñintintjaku* ("show" or "teach") his *katja* ("son" or "sister's son"), Ronnie (his brother's son), Morris (his own son), and Hillary (his sister's son). Two other older men opposed this, saying they were afraid the young men would use the sorcery spells from this place when they were drunk. Keen for knowledge of his country, Ronnie objected in a noteworthy fashion. "All right," he said, "then nobody will ever know about that place when you all die. If people travel around out here, they'll just go up and down this road only." In other words, this place would be lost. Wuta Wuta hoped to establish an outstation near the place where his father had died. His brothers, he told me, were nearly dead; only he was still strong enough, and he was concerned to "give the country" (*katjapirtilu witintjaku*) for these descendants to hold.

Ownership derives from such processes as well as those by which in-laws and other distant relatives come to be attached through exchange of obligations. Since knowledge and control of country are already in the hands of "owners" (my gloss for the Pintupi term *ngurrakartu*, referring particularly to custodians of named place), converting claims to an interest in a named place requires convincing the owners to include one in knowledge and activity. Identification with a country must be actualized and accepted by others through a process of negotiation.

A group of individuals, then, can affiliate with each significant place. The groups may differ for each place considered; the corporations forming around these sacred sites are not "closed." Instead, there are descending kindreds of persons who have or had primary claims to sites. Of all those "identified," only a portion are said to hold (*kanyininpa*) a country and to control its related rituals. These primary custodians are the ones who must decide whether to teach an individual about it; it is they who decide on the status of claims. Men are quite willing to teach close kin about their country and to grant them thereby an interest in the place.

For claimants who are remote genealogically, or are not co-residents, there is less persuasiveness to claims. These processes make it likely that claims of a patrilineal core will be acceptable. It is men who control these rights, and because at the height of his influence a man is likely to live in his own country, it is predictable that he will pass it on to his sons. Rights are also passed on to sister's sons, who are also frequent co-residents. If such persons or those with other sorts of claims (conception from the Dreaming, a more distant relative from it, etc.) take up residence in an area and convince the custodians

of their sincerity, they can become important custodians too. Conversely, failure to maintain some degree of regular association with a place seems to diminish one's claims. As I have written elsewhere (1982), this is a process, then, by which cooperative ties among frequent co-residents ("those from one camp") may be transformed into a more enduring one.

The fact that men do seek rights for many "countries" leads to extended associations of individuals with places, surrounding a core of those with primary claims. The Pintupi data show not only numerous individuals with extensive estate rights but also individuals having very different personal constellations of such rights. One's identification with a named place is, in this sense, at once a definition of who one is and a statement of shared identity with others. In most cases of conflict, the agreement and disagreement about who should be accepted follows closely current ties of cooperation among people, attempting to project their associations into the past and to embody their contemporary shared identity in the same objective form.

Thus, it is often difficult to determine exactly who is and who is not a member of a Pintupi "landowning group." Rather than being given, membership is usually negotiated, often extended to include those present with one who is already an owner. If others show an interest and a willingness either to participate with owners in activities or to exchange with them, Pintupi seem inclined to include them rather than to negate the proffered shared identity.

I have written at length elsewhere about the processes and politics of landownership (Myers 1982, 1986b). Here, I would like to offer an example to show how Pintupi reasoned about landownership as a form of identification, as they began to consider moving west to establish a new community in the Kintore Range. For most of the Pintupi, the possibility of a settlement in that area raised the question of who could live there and who would be the "boss" (*mayutju*) of the place. No one had lived out west in their country for twenty years, and no one had lived at Kintore for at least thirty. Its traditional custodians probably deserted the area in the 1930s, moving east to the missions. Warna Tjukurrpa tjungurrayi, a man in his sixties who was anxious to move out of the Papunya area, had written to the government for help in setting up a community out west, and the grant of a truck had been promised. While he assumed that this would be under his control, the question of rightful ownership of Kintore brewed. (Two named places in the Kintore Range are central, Warlungurru and Yunytjunya.)

Warna explained to me that Wiri tjungurrayi and his brother Willy

Nyakamparla tjungurrayi were important owners. Their father, Murruntu tjapaltjarri, who died at the settlement of Haasts Bluff, was associated with Kintore, and his brothers Ngapa Tjukurrpa tjapaltjarri (Warna's own father), Naapi tjapaltjarri, and Kurupilyaru tjapaltjarri were all from Kalipinna (a place distantly to the north of Kintore) and Warlungurru. It is noteworthy that most people identify Warna closely with Kalipinna; he has named an "ownership" base for Kintore that includes people associated with his own country and with Warlungurru, implicitly linking them to him. These places, he insisted, were not far apart; they were "one country." This was in reference to the fact that people traveled frequently and easily between these places, residing, as it were, in a single range. Furthermore, Warna's grandmother, Marrawilya nangala, was the mother of Murruntu and Naapi. Also, Charley Tarawa's father, Nuunnga tjapaltjarri, was identified with Kintore. The "older brother" of all these tjapaltjarri men, Tjanganatjanunya, according to Warna, died at Ngutjulnga, which is only a few miles from Kintore. Warna described the place as "part of Kintore." The father of all these men, he said, was Kunkunnga tjungurrayi, an owner of Kintore. Other genealogical information makes it clear that all these tjapaltjarri men, while they consider themselves to be brothers, are not in fact biologically related. The "descent" imputed by Warna is culturally constructed in the sense that Kunkunnga looked after these men, either when their fathers, his "brothers," died or as part of a group of "brothers" who considered their sons to be sons collectively.

The ultimate basis of the claim is not really explained in Warna's account. From another man I found out that Murruntu tjungurrayi, the very man with whom Warna began, was really "from Kintore" in the sense that it was his own conception Dreaming place. His Dreaming was the monitor lizard (*Ngintaka*), the mythological ancestor who created the hill known as Yunytjunya. This would, in the cultural logic of claims, make sense as a powerful starting point for ownership rights for his descendants. It is a measure of the multiplicity of means through which people establish and argue claims of identification that Warna did not even mention this.

Other people were also related to Kintore, according to Warna's reckoning: Marlamarlka tjupurrula, the grandfather of Pantjiya nungurrai and of Charley Tarawa (their "mother's" father; Pantjiya's mother was Charley's father's second wife), and Wartaru tjupurrula were from Kintore—providing another link. Charley himself subsequently described Wartaru as being conceived at Putjanya, midway on the Dreaming track the *Tingarri* ancestors took from a place called

Mitukatjirri to Warlungurru, and from these relatives he says he "grabbed," or took on responsibility for, the place. This Dreamtime line I take to have provided a basis on which his descendants, who are deeply identified with Mitukatjirri, can argue their claim to Warlungurru and the Kintore Range as well. Thus, through Marlamarlka and Wartaru, for example, based on genealogical connections, I could predict that Billy Baku tjupurrula and his children, his sister Tartuli and her children, Mikini tjupurrula and his children, and many others could lay claim to Kintore, all as grandchildren of the brothers Marlamarlka and Wartaru. Indeed, this large related group continues to act together in visiting, residence, and marriage arrangements. Even in this incompleting reckoning, it is possible to see how a country owning-group objectifies past and present shared identity. The country stands for the relationship among those who are related through an earlier marital exchange and who continue to cooperate, based on that tie, as relatives.

As Warna was giving me this account, Willy Nyakamparla, a classificatory brother whom he had imputed to be a co-owner with him, approached us. Whether he perceived what we had been talking about I do not know, but he immediately began to tell Warna that "some people are jealous for Kintore," such as Nolan tyapangarrti. "He is nothing to do," Warna replied; "his father is buried at Turkurrnga [another place]"—implying that Nolan belongs elsewhere. Willy tells me, then, that Kintore is the place of *his* mother and mother's brother (Warna adds, in explanation, that it belonged to Willy's grandfather), who were from Mitukatjirri and Nyurnmanu, two relatively nearby places. Papulu and Mikini tjupurrula (descendants of Wartaru) might go too, he thinks, because they are owners of the country. The men tell me Papulu's father was from Nyurnmanu and Mitukatjirri, a brother-in-law of the tjapaltjarri people Warna had described. Warna regards Papulu's father, Ngungkuyurriyurri tjakamarra, as the brother of his own mother's brother, Wintarru tjakamarra (Mikini's father). Finally, Willy explains to me that his father's country was Nyirpi and Kunatjarrayi, places ordinarily considered to be Warlpiri, north of Kintore and actually near Kalipinna (as Warna had said). People of their country traveled regularly to the north and south to Kintore, meeting each other.

From their accounting as a whole, it becomes clearer that Kintore was a central place to which northerners came to visit and from which southerners traveled north. While Warna emphasized Kintore was their country through the father's tie, Willy emphasized connection through his mother, talking about how his father came south to visit

with in-laws. The basis of their claim, then, is that their fathers married women who had close association with Kintore and as a result spent a lot of time in the area, coming to take on ceremonial responsibilities for the country of their wives and brothers'-in-law. More important, however the claim is ultimately decided, the conceptualization of country represents it as an objectification through time of a complex set of past activities. Kintore represents a node of shared identity for all of these people, the descendants of these marriages of several generations ago. Obviously, Warna and Willy have claims in other areas that represent their identity with other persons as well.

According to Willy and Warna, Nolan was not an owner of Kintore, but Nolan firmly believed himself entitled to claim identification with the place. He had several reasons for this. First, he derived a claim from Long Jack tjakamarra, his cross-cousin (his father's sister's son). "In the bush" (i.e., before white contact), Long Jack was the custodian (*ngurrakartu*), presumably somehow through his father. Second, Nolan maintained, his "father" Tatjiti tjapanangka died at Tjukanyinanya (i.e., Sandy Blight Junction), very close to Kintore. This man was Nolan's actual father's younger brother, and his death and burial in the area is a source of identification. Nolan's own mother was from the south, so he has important ties to that area as well, but Long Jack's father, he argued, belonged to Kintore, and Nolan was related to him through his father's sister's marriage. Long Jack and Nolan should cooperate in ritual. This is not to say that Nolan rejected other people's claims. Turkey Tolson tjupurrula (a descendant of Marlamarlka and Wartaru tjupurrula, like Mikini), he suggested, had rights in Kintore and in Mitukatjirri. Nolan said that Long Jack was the proper custodian but that he had already "gotten" (*mantjину*, obtained) a place in Pitjanytjarra country, so he was not concerned about taking control of Kintore as a community. Part of what was at issue for Nolan and what may have been inspiring conflicting claims was the question of who, rightly, should be given the Kintore truck.

Even before this, however, a variety of claims of identification for Kintore had been bruited about. Shorty Lungkarta always claimed it as "his country" (but not exclusively) because his mother and her sisters (nakamarra, women) were from there and because he had lived around here as part of his range. According to Shorty, Likili tjapaltjarri was a "holder" of Kintore—*mamangkatja kanyinin*, holds through the father. Likili's "father," Kamutu tjungurrayi, one of the earliest Pintupi migrants to Hermannsburg (see Lohe et al. 1977:49, 53), is generally considered to have been a primary owner, although he was conceived further north at Tjunginna. Likili's own Dreaming-place (conception)

was Nyurnmanu, to the east of Kintore. Likili died, however, before anything was settled in the control of Kintore, and his own children seem not to have been interested in pursuing their claim. Long Jack himself, when the question of moving to Kintore arose in a meeting, insisted that the people who were really from Kintore were dead. The people who were talking, he said, were all "from outside." His own country was not far either, but he was not worrying about that country; then again, Long Jack did not think people should move.

What is important to recognize in the Kintore case is that claims to ownership are fairly widespread. Almost none of the claims are really those of direct genealogical descent, not only because members of the original landowning group have died out or disappeared. Instead, most of the claims to identification are traced through extensions in the past, established through affinal exchange and prolonged residence. Furthermore, the agreement and disagreement about who should, and should not, be accepted follow fairly closely current ties of cooperation among people, attempting to project their associations into the past, to embody their contemporary shared identity in some objective form. Conflicts emerged but were never vocalized overtly in a challenge that would have definitively excluded the "opposing" claimants from having a relationship. In subtle ways, despite their opposition, the two major protagonists in the conflict, Nolan tjanganarti and Warna tjukurrrpa, came to support each other as both having an influential relationship to Kintore. At last report, however, neither was actually in a position of control over the community.

The significance of country (ngurra) as a cultural entity is twofold, both given form in processes of exchange. With its origin in the Dreaming, it is defined as a form of valued knowledge that is esoteric, transmitted—or, as the Pintupi say, "given" (*uyungu*) to younger men, but restricted in access. At the same time, country constitutes an object of exchange between equal men. Moreover, in this light, for Pintupi, country provides an (perhaps *the*) embodiment of identity that allows for the performance of autonomy in exchange.³

If we consider how people become "members" of landowning groups through politics of persuasion and exchange, it is clear that these groups represent an objectification of shared identity. That is, people's joint relationship through time to a named place represents an aspect of an identity they share, however limited. The process through which membership is established is precisely one in which people attempt to convince others that they are already related, that they care. Each named place, then, commemorates, records, or objectifies past and present achieved relations of shared identity among

participants. Each place, however, represents a different node of relations.

The ultimate expression of this principle whereby shared identity among participants is projected out into the object world (and seen as deriving from it) is the way Pintupi verbally extend identification with a place, describing some important site as "belonging to everybody, whole family" or, as they say alternatively, "one country." In reverse, one may and should read this as representing their sense of the Pintupi as a unity; that is to say, of themselves—people with no distinctive organization as a political entity—as "all related" (*walytja tjurta*), as one group, albeit this context-dependent claim is not to imply an identity for all time. Land is, for them, a sign that can carry expressions of identity. What Pintupi refer to in this fashion, it is critical to add, is not a "community" in the sociological sense of people who physically live together; rather, each place represents an aggregation of individuals from a wide area of the region in which they live, a form of regional integration through individual ties.

SHARING THE BOARDS

A powerful example of the tendency to inclusion and proffering of shared identity is presented in rights to "sacred boards" (*turlku*), the sort of object referred to by Strehlow (1947) for the Aranda as *churinga*. As Lévi-Strauss (1966), among others, has noted, these objects may constitute title deeds for rights in land, although they are not reducible to this. Throughout Central Australia, sacred boards represent, for men at least, the epitome of value, objects said to be "left by The Dreaming" (although fashioned by men) and which men are permitted to know about and view only after initiation. Individual boards are always associated with particular Dreaming stories and usually with one or more named places created by that Dreaming. Rights to such objects, as to songs and stories, are part of the "estate" associated with mythologically constituted places. Presumably, a man has rights to manufacture and/or possess boards related to his own conception place.

A number of men have described to me their conception, for instance, in the following terms: such and such a Dreaming was traveling at a place, performing ceremonies, and they forgot or left behind one of their sacred objects, which (eventually) became the person.

The value of such sacred objects is constituted by their imputed indexical relationship to the Dreaming, by the restrictions on knowledge about them, by the difficulty of acquiring them, and by their

historical associations with the subjectivity of people who once held them and have since died. Pintupi men often emphasize how such objects were "held" by people who are now dead ("ancestors") and how seeing the objects makes men "sorrowful" and the objects "dear." In some sense, a sacred object is a powerful representation of one's identity, hidden from the sight of women and children and shown only to initiated men of one's choosing. A man keeps his sacred objects in several places, many of them being held jointly with other men in one place or another. Only authorized men can manufacture a sacred object, that is, only a person who has passed through all the stages of initiation and has been granted ("has been given" [*yungu*]) the right to make a board for a particular site by being taught the design by a legitimate custodian. This is a province of Aboriginal life about which our understanding is unsatisfactory.

Knowledge of such matters, as with much of religious life, is restricted in access, not only difficult to learn about but also problematic for publication because of the desire for secrecy. Nonetheless, it is clear that the exchange and circulation of these objects is a matter of intense interest and concern among men. Indeed, while such boards come "from the country," more or less representing the country, as it were, they are detached from it and movable. In this lies part of their power. Their exchange among men who may live far apart may constitute a distinctive level of organization, a transformation of marriage exchange, ritual exchange, and the like, through another medium that has the capacity to constitute a common identity among those not in daily contact. While it is much like these other "levels" of exchange, the negotiation of identity through sacred objects has its own properties.

Among the Pintupi, boards are frequently exchanged as a result of bestowals between a man and his male in-laws, sometimes as a result of initiation, sometimes to settle long-standing disputes (such as murders). Obviously, access to sacred boards is an important condition of autonomy and equality with other men. A young man must, consequently, rely on elder male relatives to supply him with sacred objects for marriage and for fulfilling his social obligations. What is involved in such transactions, however, is not completely revealed by this. Basing his analysis on Strehlow's (1947) ethnography, Lévi-Strauss (1966) likened the exchange of such objects to the loaning out of one's basic identity to the care of another group, the ultimate sign of trust.

The first point I should like to make is that a Pintupi man has rights to more than one sacred board; his total identity is not wrapped up

in one. Second, it was enormously difficult to find out who were the "owners" of the sacred boards that I was shown. While this derived partly, no doubt, from the secrecy surrounding boards, it is also the case that boards are rarely owned by a single person. When I was shown and told about boards, I noticed that a man would tell me this one belonged to him and also to such-and-such other men, that another one belonged to him and X, and so on. Frequently, a group of "brothers" (rarely genealogical, however) "held" boards in common. The way in which I was told made me feel that, as in landownership, there is a tendency for individuals to extend ownership of sacred objects to men with whom one identified. This is consistent with Pintupi stress on the enormous dangers involved if one should try to make a sacred object by oneself. To do so, I was told, would inevitably arouse the jealousy of other men who would kill him. Making a sacred object oneself, it would appear, is to assert one's total autonomy, to deny other people's relationship to oneself and to the object. One should have *kunta*, that is, "shame" or "respect" for others.

Thus, I believe, Pintupi are inclined to share out ownership of, and responsibility for, sacred objects with men they regard as close. Conversely, their planning of, and participation in, cycles of exchange with other men always involves a set of men who cooperate as brothers as a node in the exchange, just as a group of brothers will stand as a party in arranging marriage bestowals. Joint participation in exchange, then, constitutes an identity among the men who jointly accept a responsibility: the boards they possess in common are an objectification of their shared activity, their joint responsibility, of who they are. Failure to fulfill one's obligations in a board exchange is described as "having trouble" (*kuunkarrinpa*, i.e., being under threat of revenge and retaliation); fulfilling one's obligations is described as "clearing oneself" (*kilinipa*) or being free. Joint participation may reduce the danger of failure.

What happens in the exchange itself is equally illuminating. Men often described to me, for instance, how they had lived in other people's country for some time (as young novices or in bride service), and when they made ready to return to their own country, "owners" of the host country "gave" them sacred boards. What they meant by this, they explained, was that the owners drew designs on a fashioned board that a young man then carved; he then took this finished object back with him to his own country. Effectively, he had been taught the design and given the right to reproduce it, although it appears, not the right to teach other people. His possession of the board from

the host country recognizes his prolonged residence and shared identity with other owners of that country, converting residence and cooperation through time into an identity projected into landownership. It is important to recognize also that in "giving" the board, the original owner had not actually lost it, indeed, had not lost anything. While he recognized or granted to another rights in the country and shared identity as embodied in that object, he still retained his own identification with the place.

DEATH, MEMORY, AND THE SOCIAL TRANSMISSION OF IDENTITY

My argument has been that the tendency to extend rights to property through exchange and the extension of rights in land bear much similarity. As objects, land and other forms of property have the capacity to embody the relationships among people in outward form. Proprietorship, then, provides a basis on which identity can be built through exchange, both establishing one's autonomy through the possibility of taking part in an exchange and creating the possibility of expanding that identity to include others. Both possibilities are encoded in the meaning of *walytja* as "relative," "oneself," and "something owned." Nonetheless, these objects have very different potentials as constituting identity through time. I believe this becomes clear when we consider how the Pintupi deploy them in the case of a proprietor's death.

In death, accumulation of personal effects throughout a lifetime is denied, not transmitted as an estate or as personal mementos, to those heirs most closely identified with the deceased. Because, in the Pintupi view, things associated with the identity of a dead person make the relatives of the deceased sad, such things are effaced. All of a person's *yulytja* and *walytja* are given away to distant relatives, preferably of the mother's brother kin category. Typically, these effects include a person's blankets and swag (the bedroll in which the living person camped), his or her hair (which is cropped close at death), and his or her tools and personal items—even including an automobile if one had been owned. Objects are given away or destroyed. In the "finishing up" ceremonies, as Pintupi have called the distribution at death, the carefully rolled up swag of the dead person seems to stand for the body and is placed in front of the mourners as the silent and untouched focus of attention. For one such ceremony at least, it was the dead man's wife who oversaw his swag, while it was the group of women mourners who carried it about preparatory

to each performance of finishing up (i.e., for each arrival of groups of kin from other places whose willingness to take part shows they are not guilty of ill will). Invoking the identity of the dead, the swag occasions elaborate expressions of grief and anger at loss. The camp or house they inhabited is abandoned; relatives in other communities may move their own camps as well if they remind them of the dead person.

In the seminomadic life of traditional times, the place of death and burial would be avoided for years until all traces of the dead were gone. For similar reason, the personal name(s) of the dead person, and anything sounding like it, is avoided, substituted for in everyday speech by synonyms or the avoidance phrase *kunmarnu*. The deceased is subsequently referred to by the name of the place where he or she died. As an example of the degree to which such effacement may be extended, when Likili died, his relatives proposed burning the nearly new truck that had been granted to the outstation community he led. Sight of the truck, even if they gave it away to distant relatives, would cause them grief.

Despite the dramatically enacted grief at the loss of a relative, the symbolic effect of these practices is quite the opposite of commemorating the dead through inheritance. Relatives of the deceased's own generation, rather than parents or children (in the case I was best acquainted with the deceased's own close younger brothers), are responsible to collect his or her goods and to see to their dispersion among other distant relatives. As far as I could tell from the activity after Likili's death, the sending off of the *yulytja* is the primary responsibility and activity for close relatives; the funeral, albeit a Christian one now, could not take place until this had been completed. Likili's brothers collected his bag (which, I presume, contained some of his personal ritual paraphernalia—hair string, arm bands, small sacred objects), and his close mother's brothers (who had actually been living with him) seem to have overseen the planning and organization of the sorry business of distribution of goods. The sense of obligation is pressing during such occasions. It was important, Likili's mother's brothers told me, to send this bag off to the mother's brothers in Yuendumu quickly, lest people begin to talk about them (*wangkakaturripayingka*, "to avoid moving toward talk").

In a sense, these goods are not allowed to carry the deceased's identity forward in time. This is accomplished in the grief and lives of those whom he or she "held" (or looked after), especially those he or she "grew up." The Pintupi man who criticized white concerns with money and accumulation by asking "Who will cry for you when

you die?" was pointing to this alternative form of accumulation, of investing identity in and increasing the social value of people through caring for them as a relative. This is the focus of Pintupi social reproduction, which emphasizes so strongly the role of seniors as "nurturing" those who come after. Pintupi often explain their grief at loss by referring to the way the person held them. Further, the people who have been looked after by the same person seem to consider themselves related as if they share substance by that contribution. It is also through such links to some shared predecessor that groups of people formulate their shared identity, referring to themselves as "real siblings," for example, because they have "one father" or "one grandmother."

Unlike the personal effects (related to a transient historical identity) that are dispersed at death, men particularly strive to pass on to their successors an identity formulated through ties to named places. Shorty Lungkarta, as a case in point, placed constant pressure on his son Donald to attend his ceremonies and to learn so that he could pass on his country. As Shorty and a number of other Pintupi explained to me, the process they desire is one in which "*Mamalu wantintja, katjapirtilulpi witinga*," that is, "The fathers having lost (relinquish) it, the group of sons grab it." What they pass on, or transmit, in this way is not a personal property that they have created or accumulated themselves but an identity that is already objectified in the land. Recipients acquire rights to a named place that has preexisting relationships with other named places on its Dreaming track, and through rightful possession of this knowledge, inheritors gain the possibility of taking part in equal exchange with other men and the capacity to nurture the coming generation of men with the gift of their knowledge.

This knowledge of country and the rights to place represented in knowledge is a form of inalienable wealth, as Weiner (1985) describes it. Unlike the spear one has made or the kangaroo one has hunted and cooked, one can "give" one's country to others, take part in exchanges, without really losing it. One has accepted others as sharing identity, represented in the shared relationship to an object that stands for one, but one has not lost the ability to give it away again. Indeed, by including more people as "co-owners," one has to some extent increased the value and importance of a place, as long as one is recognized as the principal custodian. As Munn (1970) clearly realized, the country is perceived by Western Desert Aborigines as symbolically bearing an identity that when taken on (or "held"), comes to be possessed as one's own identity. On death, these special

"objects" with which a person came to be associated in life remain in the landscape, and those to whom that person contributed, by growing them up and teaching them, are precisely the people able—even obligated—to carry on responsibility for this country. This is the identity that endures and is reproduced through time in the social production of persons, an identity that each generation takes on from its forebears mediated through the "inheritance" of place.

The freedom with which Pintupi are willing to part with their personal possessions owes something, I believe, to this enduring dimension of identity. Spears, rifles, clothing, food, even the costly automobile—these are all, in the Pintupi view, replaceable. There are always "plenty more motorcars." While such objects provide a basis through which identity can be created and extended, the Pintupi take part in such exchanges with an assured foundation. Everyone, according to their conception beliefs, comes into the world with an association with the Dreaming at a place. In some critical way, Pintupi regard themselves as having an assured identity no matter what happens to personal possessions. This is very different from a world in which accumulated personal property constitutes the only medium in which identity can be realized. Several years ago, when the Native American activist Vine DeLoria spoke to a class I was teaching, a student with a beginner's ethnocentric background in psychology tried to question him about the way in which some Indian religious concepts provided for them a sense of self. "The Self," DeLoria snorted, "is not an Indian problem. That's something white people worry about."

A recognition of hierarchy in Pintupi organization of relationships to objects takes away from "property rights" the simple notion of legal problems and suggests that objects, as property or not, have meanings for these people which cannot be limited to the analytic domains too often prescribed by our own Euroamerican cultures. For Pintupi, I would maintain, identification with place as an object assures an identity in the world whereby the more transient exchanges of daily life can take place without threatening to reduce participants to the emptiness of pure despair that economic failure too often brings to us.

NOTES

1. Fieldwork with the Pintupi has been funded by the National Science Foundation, the National Institute for Mental Health, and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies at Yayayi, N.T. (1973-1975), Yayayi and Yin-

yilingki (1979), New Bore (1980-81), and the Central Land Council at Kintore and Kiwirrkura (1984). This chapter is an expanded version of a paper that was first presented at the Fourth International Hunting and Gathering Societies Conference (London) in September 1985; that version appears in the volume originating from that conference, *Property, Power, and Ideology in Hunting-Gathering Societies*, edited by T. Ingold, D. Riches, and J. Woodburn and published by Berg Publishing Company, London. The present version is dedicated in "whitefellow way," to my close friend Shorty Lungkarta, who died after it was written.

2. The focus here is on the logic of relatedness. This is not to deny entirely the ecological significance of landownership but rather to point out that the uses to which land is put for the Pintupi are equally cultural. For more detailed discussion of the relationship to foraging uses, see Myers (1982, 1986a, 1986b).

3. The possibility of handling "country" in this way arrives for men through initiation and the very possibility of two other basic forms of autonomy through exchange, marriage, and fighting.