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Economies and Personhood: Demand Sharing among the Wiradjuri of New South Wales¹⁾

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades in Australia, members of city and rurally-based Aboriginal communities have experienced dramatic changes in the ways in which resources are allocated to them, and in the quantities of money and services made available. Welfare-oriented funding has flowed from both Commonwealth and State Governments into organisations such as legal services, health services, housing companies and enterprise-based cooperatives. Although run by Aboriginal people themselves, these organisations are structured along conventional bureaucratic lines and operate for the most part under Commonwealth legislation. They are designed to address significant inequities in living standards of indigenous Australians, to reduce the impacts of discrimination, and, in some cases, to recognise rights based on indigeneity, such as access to land or compensation for loss of land.

With this increase in funding has come an increase in the concerns of older people in particular, about a deterioration in the social health of their communities. They comment that conflicts have increased, young people don't listen any more and core communal values are not upheld: a general sense of malaise rather than vibrancy seems to have taken hold, one that they often blame on 'the government money' or 'the welfare'. This may be due, in part, to a decade of disillusionment after the social and political movements of the 1970s and early 1980s, during which Aboriginal people demanded a greater equality, a greater capacity to determine their own affairs, and access to land and resources. Politicians promised much but have, in real terms, delivered little. Older Aboriginal people in particular are aware of social damage. They speak of it often but not in ways that are immediately understood by non-Aboriginal people. The refrain that emerges continuously in any comparison of past and present is that earlier days are characterised by what people refer to as 'caring and sharing'. It is the loss of 'caring and sharing' which is now mourned.

I have watched these changes taking place in Wiradjuri communities of central New South Wales, the most highly developed state in Australia. The Wiradjuri area, one of the largest language group areas of Aboriginal Australia, covers 100 square kilometres of central and southern New South Wales, to the west of the Blue

Mountains. About twenty Wiradjuri communities, each identifying with their own particular locality, are located in or on the edges of rural towns and small cities, whose economies are based on the rich agricultural and pastoral resources of this riverine area. The Wiradjuri population, who with other Aboriginal people of south-east Australia refer to themselves as 'Kooris', is estimated at about 12,000 people, including those in the metropolitan centres of Sydney and Canberra. Although incorporated into these towns, the indigenous residents maintain social and usually spatial distance within them. Employment in rural industries was once excellent, even though often seasonal, in past decades when Aboriginal labour was cheap, but this declined after the introduction of equal wages legislation in the 1960s. Now unemployment is high, education standards, although improving, are still poor, and there is a great need for improvements in housing and health conditions. Crime rates and drug/alcohol abuse is high. Most communities, even those with small-scale enterprises, are welfare-dependent.

Wiradjuri communities are recognised as 'Aboriginal', although many Australians would call them 'not real Aborigines' because their oppressive experiences of colonial rule have left them without many of the cultural and material resources associated with 'traditional' Aboriginal lifestyles. They are perceived more commonly as people who may be of part-Aboriginal descent but who have 'lost their culture'. What they are not seen as is hunters and gatherers, and it would not be possible for Wiradjuri people to sustain themselves, as did their ancestors until the mid-nineteenth century, through hunting and gathering. The occasional hunting of tree goanna or kangaroo are more important for their symbolic meanings to Wiradjuri people than for their contribution to their diet. It is at least one hundred years since Wiradjuri people could engage in hunting or gathering for anything other than recreational purposes—much-enjoyed 'bush tucker'. Bush tucker once supplemented food supplied in rations on managed reserves (1880s to the 1960s). Now Kooris shop freely at the supermarket like other Australians. The country in which they hunted has been progressively fenced off for grazing and agriculture, and few edible plants have survived the introduction of hooved animals. Some plants, growing as bushes in uncultivated areas, are still available for use in 'bush medicines'.

But Wiradjuri communities do have one characteristic commonly associated with hunter-gatherer societies: sharing. 'Sharing' is the word they most commonly use to distinguish themselves from non-Aboriginal Australians who 'do not share'. The term is a gloss for characteristics of Wiradjuri ways of being in relationship to one another, including their ways of distributing resources amongst each other. Wiradjuri sharing is remarkably similar to that found in Aboriginal communities throughout Australia, societies which have all had a tradition of hunting and gathering but whose different experiences of colonisation have left them with varying degrees of continuing access to this form of production.

Interpretations of sharing practices among hunter-gatherers in anthropological analyses were initially dominated by economic and ecological models, associating

sharing with the need for equitable resource distribution in situations of scarcity. In Australia, this was modified in the case of post hunter-gatherers: the continuity of relations of kinship and sharing among 'urban' Aboriginal people was interpreted as due to their poverty [GALE 1972, 1977]. There is now a significant increase in studies which focus on the social dimensions of sharing, included amongst which are studies addressing the cultural distinctiveness of Australian Aboriginal modes of sharing (see in particular, Sansom [1980]; Peterson [1993]; Martin [1995]; and Schwab [1995]). Peterson [1993] argues that the social significance of sharing outweighs the cost-benefit theories of evolutionary biology and that these theories are, in most cases, developed independent of social context. This study of Wiradjuri 'demand sharing' suggests that it continues long after any material cost or benefit has been redefined by social and economic change and, thus, that an evolutionary or economic approach is inadequate to an understanding of demand sharing. I am using the notion of 'demand sharing' as it is elaborated by Peterson [1993] in his studies in northern Australia. He uses the expression to describe a particular characteristic of Aboriginal relations: it is very common for people to ask or demand that others 'share' with them. What is referred to as 'sharing' is thus a response to a demand, initiated by the receiver. Features of Wiradjuri-style demand sharing are outlined further below.

The question I address here is how and why it is that Wiradjuri people, who are at least one hundred years or more removed from their hunter-gatherer past, nevertheless maintain a system of kin-oriented relations which is more often associated with small-scale societies than people enveloped within and dependent upon a market economy. The significance of Wiradjuri sharing practices lie not just in their economic contributions but in the ways in which they give expression to Wiradjuri understandings of personhood and the social, and hence of power. The social understandings and values packaged in sharing practices are fundamental to the ways in which Wiradjuri people and communities have been and are constituted. After outlining the characteristics of Wiradjuri sharing, I examine the relationship between sharing and exchange, suggesting that a dual model, which contrasts sharing and exchange instead of collapsing them into the same type of practice, is more useful to analysis of demand sharing practices. Then I look briefly at some ways the Wiradjuri demand sharing system has adapted to deal with change, and at the impact on sharing of current economic and development policies.

WIRADJURI ECONOMIES OF SHARING

'Caring and sharing' are not forceful words in English. They tend to sound as if they harken back to a romantic past. Most Wiradjuri people understand why they use such terms intuitively. They stem from their experience—they might even explain them in terms such as: 'it's our being' or 'it's the essence of Aboriginality'. But they do not put them into words which non-indigenous Australians can easily

grasp or value. The terms have distinctive meanings for them, meanings which are widely shared with people of other Aboriginal societies. 'Caring' is a reference to a legal-moral system which gives rise to a 'law of care' which once acted in concert with a 'law of justice' (a distinction I have adapted from Gilligan [1981] between a morality of care and a morality of law). In the Wiradjuri legal system, the traditional 'law of justice' has been considerably weakened by its prohibition under colonial and Australian law. Elders are not permitted by Australian law to administer punitive justice against those who transgress their laws, although there are systems of dispute management, as in fighting customs and ostracism, which persist nevertheless [MACDONALD 1988; 1995]. The other side of the system of law, the 'law of caring', or simply 'caring', has been able to be maintained. It refers to the system of etiquettes, decision-making, sharing, and respect relations by which Wiradjuri communities maintain the moral principles of their sociality, including the ways in which they differentiate insider from outsider [MACDONALD 1996]. 'Sharing' is what the same moral principles produce as an economic system. Among themselves, where the social body is primarily expressed through kinship, a Wiradjuri 'economy of sharing' shapes social and material relations. One could refer to an economy of kinship [MACDONALD 1986], one being inseparable from the other. Kin relations both structure and are structured by the system of sharing, as it in turn structures economic and social relations. Wiradjuri kinship, or the vast 'extended family' as it is sometimes known (which may be extended to non-kin prepared to enter into its constraints), is the system which provides the pathways for the expression of these systems of law and economy.

The Wiradjuri reference to 'sharing' is not limited to exchanges of material items but includes a host of values and activities. It is a general moral principle which lies behind various Wiradjuri customs, including the rules of hospitality, the way land-people relations are understood, alliances, and the strategies that animate political life. It contributes to community self-awareness, differentiates groupings within the community; distinguishes outsiders; and ensures people's continued well-being. Wiradjuri people assume that human beings are desiring creatures, so the system of sharing puts boundaries in place, through etiquettes and rituals, to express and manage their desires such that they do not do damage to valued socialities. The 'economic system' is then a reference to the framework through which desires are recognised and negotiated. It will be evident from the rules outlined below that Peterson's [1993: 863] observation in northern Australia, that demand sharing is powerfully inculcated 'as an index of the state of social relations', is also relevant among the Wiradjuri in the more settled south-east.

The focus of economic studies is frequently on the ways in which the exchange of goods takes place between individuals or groups, including the exchange of goods and information for cash or other goods and information. However, in order to analyse how Wiradjuri people have accommodated change, I have found that a different orientation is required, one which defines an economic system as a system of social relationships within which goods and services are circulated. A

study of an economic system thus includes the understandings of personhood which inform epistemological perspectives and moral principles. I argue that, in order to understand Wiradjuri economies, we need to accept that life is first of all social, and that economies as systems exist to augment and give expression to the social, not the reverse. A second point is that economies are not simply about production and consumption but also about distribution or circulation. I want to focus on circulation because the focus on production reveals only certain characteristics of the social relations involved in an economy system (cf. Sahlins [1972: 187]). The distinction is important because, as I argue below, social change may not influence all parts of the economic system to the same degree.

Colonisation has forced significant changes in the Wiradjuri mode of production but not, until very recently, in the mode of circulation. To speak of the classical (pre-contact) Wiradjuri economy as ‘hunting and gathering’ masks the fact of the continuity of the complex economy of sharing, of which production through hunting and gathering was once a part but which now has new social and material expressions. Although hunting and gathering practices no longer contribute significantly to diet, this change in the significance of a particular practice should not then lead, as it frequently does, to the assumption that the Wiradjuri economic system as a whole has collapsed, and thus is in no need of recognition or accommodation. Changes in the ways in which material items have been procured by Wiradjuri people have in some cases been able to reproduce traditions of circulation, in some cases have modified introduced practices in order to do so, and in some cases change has been enforced. It is not enough to assume that because new material items were introduced by Europeans, including cash and vehicles, that different activities are involved in their acquisition (including work for wages, receipt of rations, grants), or that they necessarily destroy or alter to unrecognisable form other parts of the economic system.

The Wiradjuri sharing is not usefully understood in the context of ‘exchange’. As Peterson [1993] has pointed out, what is referred to among Australian Aboriginal peoples as sharing is a reference to an obligation to give on demand, more aptly described as ‘demand sharing’. Demand sharing sets up a system of social obligation on the part of those who control resources rather than indebtedness on the part of those who receive them—the obligation pre-dates the asking, it does not arise as a result of it. It is thus a generalised moral obligation to respond to demands rather than an obligation to reciprocate a ‘gift’. One reason demand sharing has both fascinated and eluded anthropological analysis (see discussion in Peterson [1993]) can be seen to be the blinkers produced by the Maussian legacy: the emphasis in almost all economic anthropology on exchange as an obligation to return. The obligation to give in response to demands, without expectation of return, sets up a different dynamic in social relations, and thus invites a different approach which focuses on the economics of demand sharing as part of a system of sociality. Below I briefly illustrate some of the main characteristics of Wiradjuri sharing before developing these thoughts further in the

context of social change and current policy-making in the Wiradjuri domain. There is insufficient space to elaborate fully but I want to convey some of the ways in which Wiradjuri sharing practices articulate with other cultural practices and values.

CHARACTERISTICS OF WIRADJURI SHARING

Comparison with the work, for instance, of Sansom [1980], Peterson [1993], Martin [1995] and Schwab [1995] indicates the similarities in the practice of demand sharing in various parts of indigenous Australia. These similarities are remarkable in the light of very different histories of colonisation, differences in the extent of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal interaction, and in the duration and level of state interventions. Some of the main characteristics of Wiradjuri practices are as follows.

Everyone has a right to ask of a certain range of others in their social environment. There are various myths of 'sharing' as this concept relates to Wiradjuri people. It is not true that people share indiscriminately, or that they do not differentiate between people. No one can ask of everyone else and the rules of asking and giving are circumscribed by rules of kinship and membership of social groups. Demands are both met and limited by employing a kinship paradigm which is both exclusive and hierarchical. Kin terms can be understood as being, in part, a shorthand way of describing the limits of sharing. However, it should also be noted that kinship networks are extensive and can number in the hundreds, taking in people of up to eight or nine degrees of genealogical distance. These are generally divided into 'close' and 'distant' relations, the latter excluded from the demands of sharing except in exceptional circumstances. Some kin should not be refused, most commonly parents and one's own children, or people who have performed a parenting role. Some kin should not be asked, nor should highly respected older people to whom one is not related, or people who are perceived to have limited capacity to discriminate adequately between legitimate and exploitative requests (such as the frail aged, children or the mentally ill). In between are a whole spectrum of rules, etiquettes and negotiations, the bounds of which are derived from both kinship and from membership of a recognised social grouping, such as a card playing group, a drinking group, or people who share a household. As will become clearer, the 'ground rules' of sharing contain contradictions which can be exploited in various ways.

The system does ensure that, for the majority of people most of the time, there will be someone in the social environment to turn to. There are also some people in leadership roles who are expected to share because of what and how they receive. If they receive goods defined by government agencies as communal, some system for egalitarian communal distribution will be expected of them. These expectations can cut across kin demands and produce intra-kin conflict.

One does not have to meet the demands of non-kin, nor can one demand of

them. However, non-kin can be incorporated, including non-Aboriginal people, by ascribing to them a kin status, most frequently as a junior sibling. The kin classification into which people are slotted, through use of a kin term, indicates the type of demands and the priority they must be given. There are also common interest groups which develop what might be called a quasi-kin status, such as regular drinking groups. Although members are often kin, the 'rules' of sharing may be based on committed participation and will include non-kin. Group sharing rules may override any kin claims which might make for inequality within the group.

There is an obligation to share what one has with those who ask legitimately. People in the right relationship are obliged to give on demand and there is no stated obligation to return/reciprocate, only a corresponding obligation to give. The rules of demand sharing apply to all members of the community, regardless of age: children also have to give on demand (see also Hamilton [1981]). The moral responsibility is to give to the asker: a motive for asking is rarely required and is not sought by the person of whom the demand is made. A reluctance to give, which is common, cannot be expressed by a challenge to the asker's need. The assumption is that desires are both legitimate and genuine, and should therefore be met when possible. The rules of demand sharing apply to the act of demanding and not that of giving. Giving is limited only in that it should not occur except in response to a demand (see below on over-giving). Giving is an act of both 'caring' and 'sharing', and thus an expression of moral imperatives of Wiradjuri culture. Not to give/share when one is known to have desired items can promote conflict or ultimately result in ostracism. Because breaches in these ground rules are not uncommon, one hears complaints such as 'You're more like a gubba!' (white person) or 'Are you my sister or what?' The obligation to share relates not simply to one's excess but to any goods, irrespective of whether one desires to keep/use them and demands are not always welcome. Demand sharing practices continually test, define and shape even close kin relationships.

Of course, returns are not absent. However, if someone is loaned, for instance, money, it is generally accepted that the person to whom it is owed is responsible to ensure its return. The obligation to repay is not left to the spontaneity of the recipient: it too has to be asked for. There appears to be an equalising element in the act of asking in the first place and then in the asking for repayment. Thus on pension day there will be people who make sure they are outside the post office when someone gets their cheque—to make sure they get money owing to them as soon as the cheque is cashed. If someone asks outright for a return of a loan the 'request' should not be refused. To do so will constitute an insult if it is known that the person being asked has resources (see also Kesteven [1984]).

The most frequent demands are for food and cash. People are not obliged to give to all and sundry, and, with the possible exception of food, would not expect to be asked inappropriately. Food is placed in a different category and is the most

important symbol of hospitality, caring and sharing. Food is often described as an item which should never be refused. In practice, it is, especially when the asker is deemed 'a bludger' (see below). When food is placed on a table, it is common for kin associated with the household but who are not necessarily living in it, to share in it without asking. Sometimes non-resident kin, especially children, will appear at meal times in households which they know have been shopping. Money, perhaps the second most common demand, has complex rules attached to it, based on the source of the money as well as the social proximity of the asker and giver. Other common demands are for a lift in a car and clothing.

The term 'sharing' does not imply generosity or altruism. The notion of 'sharing' avoids, but perhaps not sufficiently in English, the notion of 'generosity' [see Peterson 1993: 861]. Generosity (in its conventional standard English meaning associated with selflessness and munificence) is not seen as a virtue and Wiradjuri people are more likely to see it as a sign of stupidity, gullibility or irresponsibility (see bludging and bumming below). Kooris do not and should not part with items indiscriminately, particularly if this leaves them without. Although there is a social obligation to respond to legitimate demands, everyone knows that there are strategies that can be adopted to look after one's own interests. This is taken for granted and as I was learning the system myself I was often admonished for not holding on more carefully to my cash—perhaps by others whom I had just refused! In other words, in contrast to conventional portrayals of 'sharing', these practices encourage the high value Kooris place on autonomy as well as a self-centredness: 'looking after No. 1'. Another common expression used to complain about the recent loss of 'sharing' may be 'they're just all for themselves these days'. The self-centred aspect is foregrounded when other constraints cease to act as controls. Some of the reasons for this will become clearer below.

The act of giving in direct response to a demand fulfils the social obligation. It does not include a requirement to make some return and the idea is not to set up an exchange, whether equal or not, generalised or restricted. This does not mean that exchanges do not take place. They do, but I would argue that these take place as sets of demands. If someone demands a loan of \$5 and the lender says they want it back, 'Yes, but it better boomerang', they will usually only get it back if they, in turn, demand it. It is the giver, not the receiver, who must take responsibility for making this 'new' demand. Wiradjuri people have used the English word 'sharing' even though it works against them in some respects, because it is the closest concept in English to one way giving. Its meaning is closer to 'we respond to each other'.

Spontaneous giving is rare and discouraged. The need to pay for unexpected and costly funerals will be shared between a wide range of kin and, occasionally, the community as a whole. Funerals are the main occasion for the spontaneous distribution of food. However, food set out after a service on large tables is commonly finished by children before adults arrive back at the hall: you have to be quick. Other occasions include community functions, often put on by non-Aboriginal people who are organising an event of some kind. Food supplied at

meetings may be shared with children, who just help themselves. Non-participating adults who appear at mealtime would not have an automatic right to demand a share and would normally wait conspicuously until they are told to 'get a plate'—which will invariably happen although some meetings no longer provide food because of too many of these 'demands'. Other than such occasions, distribution takes place at the level of the 'household cluster', those close kin who live in a number of households within one community or even across communities [MACDONALD 1986]. Major disasters, such as fire, usually prompt willing assistance from a wider than normal range of kin and non-kin alike, often in response to requests from close kin of those who have experienced the loss.

Demand sharing does not indicate an absence of personal ownership, nor a system of communal property. On the contrary, obligations can only exist if highly differentiated notions of personal ownership are recognised. Sharing requires a strong conception of personal autonomy and personal property because it is precisely in the nature of how one shares what one has rights over that one is, in turn, defined. The capacity to establish one's personal integrity is deeply grounded in how one acts in relation to the responsibilities ingrained in sharing relationships. All relationships, including close kin, are continuously subject to testing and negotiation.

The onus is on a person to ask, not on the possessor of valued items to give. The fact that people do not offer would seem to contradict the notion of 'sharing' as it is commonly understood among Euro-Australians, for whom the word carries a sense of altruism. However, it is this rule which enables the economic system to which it gives rise to act as a self-regulating system. Too much giving destroys a relationship: the power becomes too great to sustain sociality (cf. Sahlins [1972: 211ff]). The act of giving is an act of power. Limits are imposed on the accumulation of prestige by the requirement that people ask rather than encouraging giving in some 'altruistic' way. People rarely offer. This rule can prevent undesirable people from acquiring too much power when they have been able to accumulate in some way (such as gambling winnings). In addition, the more powerful person will need to sustain a certain quality of social interaction in order that people will want to continue to ask of them. Not to be asked reduces one's power accordingly. One reason items are not offered is because it is rude to refuse: people are obligated by receiving something that is offered in a way that does not result from a demand. This includes praise, which is sometimes received cynically, the recipient suspecting the giver wishes to make out of place demands, curry favour, or even subtly belittle the recipient.

Bludging and bumming are not encouraged. Those who overdo the demands without responding to them as well are regarded as 'bludgers'. People are expected to keep their own affairs in order and there are limits to sharing once it becomes bludging. People who have asked too often, who 'bludge' too much, can be refused except for food. If food is seen as the source of the continual bludging it might occasionally be refused, but tolerance of food requests is much greater.

Although there is often grumbling about parting with food when people have 'drunk' their own money, even the drinkers will usually be given a feed. There are other values which circumscribe giving. Some people who do not approve of, for instance, drinking or smoking, would not give money for alcohol or cigarettes, and thus would rarely be asked. Their stand, as long as it is consistently applied to all askers, is respected. A person who keeps giving to a known 'bludger' may lose their own standing because they, too, will reduce their autonomy. To continue to meet demands demeans the giver, they are being 'conned' and thus not being respected.

The person with resources (as perceived by the asker) who never gives is refusing to enter into a relationship. What is perceived as selfishness will cut them out of social interaction, even to the point of people denying their relationship with them as kin: 'he's no brother, he's as mean as all hell'. There is, however, a distinction between asking, bludging and 'bumming'. The latter is a low-key demand and does not imply a pre-existing relationship. People can bum off strangers, non-Aboriginal people or others in the community. Usually these are people within the vicinity at any particular time. Items which can be bumed are few: the most usual is a single cigarette or a couple of dollars. Bumming off unknown, particularly white people is usually marked by polite request language, 'You wouldn't have a spare smoke on you, would you?' rather than the more normal 'Give us a smoke!'

The focus is always on the relationship. In contrast to Euro-Australian attitudes in relation to the accumulation of and attachment to material objects, Wiradjuri, like other Aboriginal people, do not fixate on the object as an abstract thing in itself to be acquired as part of the pursuit of individual gratification. Objects function as mediums through which social relations are negotiated and shaped on an on-going basis; they are the medium through which demands can be recognised. The value of an object is relative in terms of its potential to influence and determine the nature of various social outcomes. It is more a case of how it can be used rather than what it is in itself.

Autonomy is highly valued. One of the major principles of Wiradjuri interaction concerns the tension between wanting to assert one's autonomy and wanting to be included in social relations. Kooris continually balance these contradictory demands through the obligations and rights of demand sharing which bind people without submerging their sense of self. Because the giver does not give unless requested to and should only give in appropriate measure, the receiver is not crushed or over-burdened and the autonomy of the receiver is protected. An important constraint on the power which stems from giving is that it is defined in terms of the moral act of 'caring' (doing the right thing by one's people) and not in terms of the value or power of the object given. Thus, power does not increase with the relative value of the objects given. The giver retains no power over the object given when an exchange is not required—the 'gift' does not come with a package of obligations when the receiver can comment, for instance, 'Well, she's

got to give it to me, she's my sister, ain't she!' or 'It's his job to get all that (anything from jobs, to travel vouchers, to housing) for us'.

These dynamics maintain the autonomy of the asker. The underlying moral message is not that one day you may need people to share with you, so, in the meantime, you make sure that you share with them. It is not, I believe, so centred on items exchanged between individuals but rather on the self-in-relationship. Social obligations are understood as a part of the social within which autonomy is able to be experienced. Indebtedness, on the other hand, is a contradiction of autonomy. In Wiradjuri communities, people start off from the time they are very small understanding that sharing is the requisite social value for belongingness, irrespective of what may or may not be returned.

Nevertheless, to give is to increase one's power through prestige. But, by instituting a requirement that one gives only in response to a demand, the system limits the tendency to accumulate power through over-giving or through accumulation. The obligation to give on demand embodies its own internal constraints. Over-giving can be as demeaning to the giver as over-asking is to the bludger. The most respected people are those who give in appropriate circumstances, defined according to context, and who make appropriate demands on others to maintain socialities and not create an imbalance. There should be occasions when the looked after can look after as well, something which would occur in the normal course of hunting activities, in seasonal work or in the fortnightly patterns of wages and welfare receipts. In extreme cases of imbalance which can arise these days through disparities in income between employed and unemployed, or when some people 'monopolise' jobs which enable control and allocation of resources (these are often permanent roles but this permanence can be resented), there is still a tendency to avoid having to accept stratified power relations. It may lead, for instance, to fissioning as groups or individuals move off to other areas where they can establish a new base. It also leads to one 'mob'²⁾ controlling a particular organisation and another mob a different one, or to people trying to start rival organisations.

Power, derived from prestige, is acquired and maintained through control of resources. The Wiradjuri political economy has as its foundation the principle that power is in proportion to giving away—the inverse of western societies' principle in which power is in proportion to accumulation. Giving, of course, includes other persons within a relationship of sociality. Accumulation is based on exclusion. Demand sharing is part of a system of allocative power, in which the act of giving shores up allocative power and thus prestige. Leaders are identifiable by the prestige they acquire through their actions of 'caring and sharing' in terms of Wiradjuri moral codes, and not in what they have accumulated or achieved in Euro-Australian terms. Thus they are frequently non-visible to non-Aboriginal outsiders. Wiradjuri 'culture heroes' of the past stand out as strong individuals because they are seen to have provided for their people: they are described as having 'looked after' others. Sharing or 'doing things for' others has much greater status

value than anything perceived as being solely for self-advancement (see also Myers [1982]). Prestige here can be understood as the respect within which people 'who do the right thing by their people' are generally held, although it can be a precarious prestige and will be contested by those who feel they are missing out relative to others, or by those who wish to control resources themselves. Such miscontents have become more common now that resources are channelled through fewer avenues and competition for the key roles in organisations which have some allocative power (housing companies, land councils or community development corporations) is intensified.

While Kooris see consumption as a legitimate activity, only certain forms of accumulation are sanctioned because this leads to inequalities. Whilst to give is to increase one's prestige, one cannot accumulate without negating the moral principles of sharing. Thus, the prestige of giving is also contingent on being able to continually access sources of supply. In the hunting practices of the past, supply was subject to the constraints of weather, skill, movement of game, and so on. It was not possible for any one person to monopolise resources (and totemic taboos may also have limited even the most proficient hunter from accessing all the game all of the time). Today, monopolies and over-giving threaten the autonomy of others, and a person's prestige decreases accordingly. These values explain the resentment of Kooris towards those people in full-time jobs through which allocations are now received, such as in housing companies. Although bureaucratic controls limit the power of such people, a perception that they are monopolising resources is common, perhaps only because it is a long-standing cultural expectation that allocative power follows the rules of demand sharing, with its privileging of certain kin. Members of different mobs will not all have access to people in such jobs. One way of undermining allocative decisions is to accuse people of nepotism, which will invariably get a response from government agencies on the lookout for misappropriation of funds, whether it is based on fact or not. These dual systems of values create many contradictions which can be manipulated.

Prestige is also affected by the differential values placed both on items supplied and on the source of supply. A prestigious item is one on which one has expended one's own intellectual or physical labour, in contrast to government, for instance, as a source of supply. Likewise, people in private employment are often respected more than those in government-funded Aboriginal organisations. The latter are sometimes told they should make way for others to have their turn, irrespective of whether they are doing a good job.

Such a system of power depends, of course, on one having access to resources that others value and will thus demand. As I point out below, the ways in which resources are now acquired, through individual welfare or work payments, or through organisational channels, significantly reduces the ability to shore up allocative power. Resources to allocate are difficult to access in the contemporary environment of economic and policy instability for Aboriginal people, high dependence on government funding and high unemployment outside of Aboriginal

organisations which administer government programs. This has led to the demise of people who have had authority based on prestige in the past, and sometimes to the collapse of any stable authority at all as different mobs vie with one another for the next round of jobs.

Refusals to share, and resultant conflicts, are common. Demands should not, in principle, be refused. Kooris often make their sharing practices sound harmonious but, in reality, the ground rules are recognisable because of the conflicts which occur when they are breached—and these are frequent. Relationships in a Wiradjuri community can be, and constantly are, tested, negotiated and challenged, depending on the situation and stakes at hand. A person celebrating the fact that the other is his brother over a drink one night might find himself with cause to challenge the other's right to use the term brother if he doesn't share something with him the next day. There exists a complex repertoire of strategies for refusing to share, even with those people to whom one has obligations. This includes face-saving excuses which do not appear to amount to a rejection. To be refused an item is insulting. Legitimate reasons for not giving are recognised: 'I'm sorry, love. I've just enough for the power bill and I'll be without me'self then'.

The important thing is to devise ways of refusing without causing a loss of face—by claiming an inability to meet the demand because other commitments must take precedence, or by stating that one does not have the required resources—money having to be spent paying back-rent or a large electricity bill. This is obviously more difficult if the item requested is visible, sitting on the table at the time. The person asked can persuade the asker that visible items are the property of another ('That's not my ten dollars, I'm only minding it for Annie') which one has no right to distribute.

A demand can be refused if the requested item is not yours to give (something belonging to another or purchased by another). Mum may be encouraged to buy a car even if she does not have a driving license so that the demands made of drivers can be limited ('Sorry, you'll have to ask Mum'). Carving or burning names into possessions, including inking clothes, is a way of discouraging others from asking for them. Items will also be hidden so that people can make demands on others, a strategy which works well on gullible non-Aboriginal people and is well-captured in a Slim Dusty song about Wiradjuri 'Grandfather Johnson' who donned his 'poor fella' clothes to attract tourist dollars. As long as refusals or denials are handled properly they cause no offence. It can, and should, be hard to distinguish the little white lie. Later discovery of refusal strategies is bound to result in angry words and they can lead to loud and abusive insults and even physical fights.

There are plenty of conflicts which arise when people believe they have been refused without due cause, and which thus test the extent of sociality in the relationship in question. Verbal and physical fights are a common way of restoring loss of face and a relationship after the infringing of moral expectations (see further Macdonald [1995]). Every demand is a demand on a relationship. Not to give

when one is in a position to be able to is not to be in relationship at all—and it is this which causes the disputes associated with not giving, it is a repudiation of the relationship (which is also why, in some close relationships, refusals also can be used to provoke humour or sarcasm). Those people who manage their affairs so as not to have to ask others for anything may become too independent. This not only encourages inequality, it can also lead to a denial of sociality. It creates resentment, leads to ostracism, and eventually people become removed from social relations. Such people may be referred to as being more like Gubbas (white people), having learnt ‘Gubba way’ (in contrast to ‘Koori way’).

Non-Aboriginal people are recognised as not knowing the rules of sharing. The non-recognition or understanding of these rules by non-Aboriginal people makes them seem both gullible, on the one hand, and selfish on the other. Unlike Wiradjuri people, they do not have an etiquette repertoire which allows them to deal with requests in the same way, and which can thus limit what is given. Many humorous stories are told of white people who empty their wallets as a result. Few Europeans get beyond an acquaintance relationship because they are not willing to enter an economy which makes such material and moral demands of them, and they are often reluctant to become askers. Nevertheless, it is not surprising that, from the early days of contact, attempts were made to slot Europeans who had the potential to become sponsors or partners into kin classes—the closer the better. As Sutton [1978] has pointed out, Europeans were generally slotted into junior status, in the adjacent descending generation. What has often been referred to as a form of ‘adoption’ of Europeans into Aboriginal socialities is often a move by an Aboriginal person to co-opt another into relations of sharing, with all the attendant obligations. Successes are probably rare but highly valued.

Euro-Australians past and present have largely failed to appreciate the meaning and function of demand sharing in the Wiradjuri world. White people, as individuals and corporate bodies such as government, have given in such a way as to assert their superior status and coercive power. Giving to Kooris, far from promoting relationships, has preserved distance: whilst honouring the providing aspect which flows from resource control, Euro-Australians allowed the interactive aspects to atrophy. The relationships have been unequal and demeaning, reducing Koori capacity for autonomy within them. For whites to give begrudgingly or to refuse to make demands themselves negates the qualities of relationship building in demand sharing.

The looking after role is an obligation for Kooris and people with allocative power are expected to use it for the good of others and to take initiative in restoring imbalances. Among themselves, Kooris have a great capacity for setting up situations which avoid a relationship of inequality from persisting over time. Kooris promote demands because this is the basis of present and future sociality. Koori expectations of employers and white administrators of Aboriginal affairs make more sense if viewed in this light. Their criticism of people who control resources but do not enter into a ‘looking after’ relationship is based on the

resentment that structural imbalance creates.

Knowledge is not subject to the same rules of sharing outlined above and will not be dealt with here except to say that knowledge is part of the way in which the person is constituted and thus is also owned. It is not a public resource. The use to which non-Aboriginal people put stories they have heard is a constant source of concern because they do not observe the etiquettes of ownership. They come from a tradition in which the right to retell the story has been 'given' in the act of telling. Among Wiradjuri, no rights attach to hearing unless specifically stated.

ECONOMIES, PERSONHOOD AND CHANGE

What Wiradjuri Kooris refer to as 'sharing' is not merely a system of distribution, a way of ensuring that people within a society have what is required to sustain them. It is an expression of a particular understanding of personhood in which the person is constructed through social action. Autonomy is highly valued but within a social context and there is an ever-present tension between autonomy and belonging in relationship [MACDONALD 1986; MARTIN 1995]. Frequent conflict attests to an intolerance of the kind of insults which deny either a person's autonomy and/or their right to be in relationship. A refusal to share denies the right of the asker to demand, and thus denies the relationship which ought to prevail between the two [MACDONALD 1995]. Requests give rise to social arenas within which relationships are continually reaffirmed or reconstituted. Demand sharing is a system of social obligations which arise from moral imperatives, in which both people and goods are bound by the act of sociality implied in the asking/giving. Wiradjuri economies exist to augment and give expression to the social, not the reverse.

Exchange, unlike demand sharing, does not entail the same kind of moral responsibility. It allows for the development of non-morally constituted social relations, including contracts and the rendering of the person as consumer or client. Although kin-based moral communities do exchange, exchange is at its most abstracted in a market economy in which individuation leads to a separation from the social, and the individual is only incorporated back into the social having been successfully institutionalised into its value system. The notion of wholeness is individual not social and exchanges take place between people or groups constituted as separate from each other. While exchange relations do at times have characteristics akin to those of a system of demand sharing, for instance within families, exchange relationships need not imply any continuing social obligation between the persons exchanging. Indeed, if the exchange is defined as being of equal value, the relationship is actually nullified (cf., Sahlins [1972: 186ff]). I take goods from the supermarket, I pay the cashier, and that is the end of my social relationship with the cashier or the shop owner. In valued relationships, indirect or even unequal exchange is common. Exchange implies that people can agree upon the values of goods, services and ideas exchanged, according to the way in which the

relationship is defined. Unequal exchange signifies a relationship of unequal power, as in the gifts exchanged between parents and children at Christmas. It is exchange which underlies the idea of the gift as power.

I do not mean to suggest that Wiradjuri people, past or present, did not exchange or barter. The historical record indicates that they did, although the brief reports (as in Fry [1993]) are usually references to exchange between neighbouring groups, especially during ceremonies, and it is not possible to determine what actions are actually taking place. Although exchange effectively nullifies the relations of demand sharing, there are relationships in which this may be desirable. One might expect Wiradjuri-style economies to be able to articulate at different levels, demand sharing operating in close kin contexts and exchange relations beyond one's own mob. In their engagements with Europeans over two centuries, Wiradjuri people have demonstrated their capacity for entering into exchange relations without rendering all relations those of exchange.

Exchange enables a social relationship at one remove. It need not, in theory, negate the economy of sharing within a group but may, rather, protect it by providing a means of limiting its range. Wiradjuri kin relations include sometimes vast numbers of kin and demand sharing might be an intolerable burden if it was required of all relationships. A switch to exchange relations for 'outsiders', Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, could be assumed to be of value in limiting obligations where kinship has not the same force. The notion of 'my mob' is indicative of the limits a person places on those who can freely demand.

Wiradjuri people do not emphasise the individual (monadic) self as in the European tradition. This does not mean that Aboriginal societies devalue the power of individuality in the formation of the social self. On the contrary, the primary implication of living within a system of moral codes and social relatedness which privilege the social good is that the self is formed within a constellation of acceptance and recognition. This is what it means 'to be' in the world of collective entities, as opposed to the epistemological imperatives of western forms of education and socialisation which centralise 'knowing' rather than 'being' in order to achieve at the level of the person. Aboriginal moral codes and kinship frameworks are more concerned with how to be uniquely oneself in the context of obligations and concerns which involve a deep relatedness to significant others. This is the primary reason why and how Aboriginal socialities have survived throughout the progressive changes wrought by their colonisation (see further Macdonald [1996]).

Together the terms 'caring and sharing' form a shorthand way in which Wiradjuri refer not only to their understandings of personhood and sociality, but to the complex systems of responsibilities, obligations and rights through which they are expressed. The capacity of the practices associated with caring and sharing to absorb the hostilities of the colonial order, the restrictions on movement in the landscape, and the unstable nature of mission and government control have been underestimated because they have been tied to particular practices, such as hunting

and gathering, or ritual activities. Change in practices has been assumed to mean change in systems of meaning and value, but this then distorts the ways in which practices can be replaced, modified and transformed to accommodate valued socialities. If one were to reduce all notions of economic systems to forms of exchange, it would follow that any economic system can be integrated into another. The expectation would then be (and frequently is) that Wiradjuri people could integrate into a capitalist economy with just some slight modifications of their economy of sharing, just as the more sharing-like economy of an Euro-Australian family can be integrated into capitalism. However, if, as I am arguing, the two systems are not compatible, then the integration of Wiradjuri people into relations of exchange can only be done at the expense of relations of sharing. They could only continue with an intra-Wiradjuri economy of sharing if the Wiradjuri economic domain is able to maintain a degree of separateness from the mainstream market economy: in other words, a dual economy.

ADAPTING TO SITUATIONS OF CHANGE

The Wiradjuri experience of colonisation has spanned almost two centuries. During this time they have lost control of most of their country, have spent eighty years on managed reserves under ration systems, and have been subjected to various policies of assimilation. Nevertheless, they have not made the transition expected into the abstracted relations of the market system. In assessing the capacity of demand sharing to withstand change, it is necessary to acknowledge that one reason Wiradjuri people have been able to maintain a dual economy (demand sharing within the community, exchange beyond it) to date is because of their comparative social isolation resulting from a history of discriminatory policies. Wiradjuri people, like other indigenous Australians, were not able to participate fully in Australian society until they acquired the full range of citizens' rights in the mid to late 1960s. Discriminatory policies thus provided a cultural buffer. However, despite this, until World War II, Wiradjuri Kooris were well-employed, albeit it often in seasonal work or on lower wages. Opportunities to change their internal economic values would not only have been available to them, they would have been encouraged by Euro-Australians. The latter have long been critical of the ways in which Aboriginal people meet the demands of their kin because, in doing so, they prevent themselves (as individuals) from 'getting on'.

The maintenance of demand sharing among the Wiradjuri cannot be reduced to a lack of choice, nor to continued Aboriginal poverty, even if these have been contributing factors. Demand sharing is one expression of cultural values and social practices which have continued to constitute Wiradjuri life worlds. There have been various strategies by which Wiradjuri people have been able to continue demand sharing practices, and three main ones can be outlined by way of example. The first is the continuing centrality of kinship in the organisation of social life. This includes the role of kinship in setting up the pathways by which social action

takes place—how work is found, how political allegiances are formed, how and why travel around the country is undertaken, and so on [MACDONALD 1998]. Sahlins ([1976: 212–213, cited in Austin-Broos [1996]) made a contrast between bourgeois societies in which ‘material production is the dominant locus of symbolic production’ and primitive societies in which the locus is ‘the set of social (kinship) relations.’ Wiradjuri demand sharing has been able to continue because kinship continues to govern the social world. Although the kinship system is currently under intense pressure, in large part from the economic and policy changes noted below, it nevertheless still assumes more importance than, for instance, notions such as Aboriginality or citizenship which might promote the more abstract relations required of assimilation into a market economy [see further, Austin-Broos 1996 on the contrast between kinship and the market as sites of moral order).

A second strategy for dealing with change has been to redefine the value of items, including cash, entering the community in terms of their source rather than their value in white domains. For instance, Kooris make a distinction between welfare money and wages ([MACDONALD 1986]; see also Sansom [1980]). Money that comes to an individual through effort or initiative he or she has taken, such as work (labour), is subject to greater discretionary privilege on the part of the owner and only close kin would make demands. This also applies to some windfalls, such as winnings from the TAB or lotteries when tickets are bought with one’s own money. Greater demands can be made, however, of winnings from card games that one has participated in (see below).

Money that is expected to be shared with a wider range of people is that for which one has not had to expend one’s own money or labour to obtain, such as social security or pension income. This is money over which others feel they can lay greater claim. This may be because its source, government, is seen as a supplier of communal resources. Sansom [1980: 245] has also noted the difference between the wage and welfare dollar. He argues that the wage dollar amongst Aborigines has been dependent upon a rural market which is characterised by seasonal work and it is thus unstable. In contrast, the welfare dollar is wholly predictable. Different sources of supply influence the range of people who may demands. In the case, for instance, of child endowment, children may make extra demands.

Wiradjuri involvement in European-derived work, either full or part time, has been valued for the ways in which it has provided opportunities to increase or augment demand sharing socialities. The ‘windfall’ effect of seasonal work has been valued because it limits periods of high demand and does not encourage the long-term structural inequality inherent in full-time work. This is illustrated in a mid-nineteenth century tale from New South Wales [AIRD 1894, interview with Carl Kopp] which indicates another adaptation to accommodate demand sharing:

When Carl jnr was in his early twenties he would ride over to the mission to hire workers. In this particular instance a labourer to do the crutching³ [was] required. One particular fellow pleaded that he had 3–4 children to

support and that he needed the money. 'I'll give you the job and it will take about three weeks', Carl stated. The next day he arrived with twelve men and they completed the job in 2–3 days. When asked why did he put all those men on for [sic], he replied, 'If I would have come here and worked for three weeks, and got paid, they would have asked me for money. I would have to give them some, so they may as well work for it'.

Wiradjuri people speak highly of graziers and other employers for whom they worked. Their wages constituted a form of pride in that they were derived by them as labouring subjects. The allocative power was thus more prestigious than that of the welfare recipient and less open to demands.

Associated with this strategy of redefinition is another activity which rapidly became popular throughout Aboriginal Australia: gambling in card games. This has been a significant means of transforming resources so as to meet the requirements for demand sharing. Although the Berndts [1947] in the 1940s deplored the popularity of gambling among Aboriginal people, more recent studies [ALTMAN and PETERSON 1988; GOODALE 1987] have focussed on the structural similarities to traditional economic life and demonstrated how gambling can re-open channels of redistribution within the fixed parameters of the welfare economy (see also, Peterson [1993]). The parallels to the hunter gatherer economy are all too obvious. Somebody 'makes a killing' as the saying appropriately goes, and the social space is immediately enlivened through the politics of obligation and reciprocity. The socially debilitating forces of welfare predicability are effectively countered through once again submitting the economic realm to fate and personal skill. Once more the themes of fate and causation are at play within the social group. The uncertainty of fate's hand intertwines with the will of the skilled player and the outcome is an opening up of the pathways of demand sharing.

From an Aboriginal perspective, the logic of the gambling circle is a potent reminder of the perdurable quality of structural forms. Card playing has played an important role in providing a vehicle for Wiradjuri socialities, values and moral codes whose expression might otherwise have been prevented through the loss of former practices. In some respects, gambling takes over some of the values of hunting. It provides a means of circulation by which a pooling of welfare money can be recirculated on the basis of 'fate', and thus redefined as more prestigious income. Gambling enables both men and women to participate in a generalised distribution based on fate which obviates the inequalities which the colonial system of work introduced. Thus, it prevents the hierarchies which fixed incomes introduce; redefines any pejorative meanings attached to cash received (the 'social'—unemployment benefits—becomes 'my winnings'); and it introduces a structuring of givers and receivers which is constantly in flux.

THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

The economy of sharing is one example of ways in which Wiradjuri people

have been able to maintain valued traditions through drawing on their own systems of meaning and lived experience to deal with significant change. When activities are introduced, they have been modified in form or meaning in such a way that they continue to express Wiradjuri socialities, through Wiradjuri understandings of personhood. In the past they would have given expression to their socialities not only through kinship and demand sharing but also through myth, ceremony, song, ritual and various other activities of classical Wiradjuri lifeways. Nowadays they have different cultural expressions which, as would be expected in a situation of continuing colonial encounter, focus on political activities and articulations, on ritualised stories of past contrasted with present, of the old people and of Wiradjuri-European encounters: in other words, of the things that make contemporary life, and its traditions, meaningful.

Through this entire history of colonisation, even under the reserve managers, Wiradjuri people have maintained a degree of control over resources entering the community. This has allowed for these transformations, and thus continuities, to take place. Major change occurred from the 1970s with the introduction of a plethora of Aboriginal organisations, with new structures and legislative requirements. These were specially designed in many cases to enable greater and more efficient channelling of resources into needy communities. While Wiradjuri people explicitly and intuitively, if not always analytically, recognise that one of the major mechanisms for cultural adjustment has been what they call 'sharing', their adaptive strategies have not been adequate to the challenges posed by these changes in government funding policy. The changes have had a significant impact on Wiradjuri sharing, evident in almost every assessment of the quality of Wiradjuri cultural life today, affecting kin relations, the exercise of authority, intra-community relationships and obligations involved in demand sharing. As they explain it themselves, 'People do not care and share like they used to'.

It is also clear that significant problems have existed for policy makers, successive Australian governments, and welfare agencies in trying to improve living standards in Aboriginal communities. In New South Wales, these have arisen in large part from an unwillingness to recognise that Aboriginal cultural practices in this State were not totally destroyed by the end of the nineteenth century, as popular thinking would have it. It is the presence of this unrecognised dual economy, comprising demand sharing and a market economy, with their two very different understandings of personhood, power, autonomy and sociality, which arguably prevents Aboriginal organisations from achieving what they and their funding bodies may have anticipated would be the outcome of increased resource allocation. The choice that Wiradjuri people have been required to make is between valued traditions of sociality on the one hand, and improvements in the material conditions in which they live and a greater equity in Australian society on the other.

Folds [1993: 31] has argued that development policies, whether directed towards housing, health, education, employment or self-determination, are

intrinsically assimilationist because the thinking underlying them is assimilationist. They are directed towards involving Aboriginal people in relations of exchange and the setting up of democratic and collectivist structures contrary to Aboriginal cultural values. Social justice and social disadvantage are measured through white indicators which ignore the antithetical nature of the two cultural domains. Material advantages are imposed, but values which allow for the use of such material advantages are not internalised and thus the advantages are not experienced. This leads to contradictions and to the collapse of well-meaning programs to alleviate social disadvantage. Common reasons put forward to explain the apparent 'failures' in New South Wales point to supposed Koori inabilities: that they are unable to manage their own affairs; they are ill-educated; they need supervision; they are not sufficiently accountable; or they are irresponsible.

Among Kooris there is also a recognition that there are debilitating levels of conflict and things are not as they should be. They tend to blame each other, citing greed, power games, and the like, usually seen as based on particular personalities or family feuding. Even so, they also express bewilderment at times at the extent of negativity and conflict which have followed the introduction of new structures and programs. However, I am suggesting that it is the non-recognition, by Kooris themselves as well as policy makers, that Wiradjuri people have maintained an intra-community economy of sharing, with its profound differences to the underlying values of the Euro-Australian mainstream, which produces many of the problems. The unrecognised contradictions have given rise to the conflicts, cynicism, resentment and disillusionment which have been apparent over the past two decades. Governments have not understood the impact of their policies, and nor have Wiradjuri people themselves. On both sides people talk past each other. Governments continue to design remedies to improve the lot of Wiradjuri and other indigenous people, and the remedies continue to fail.

There are increasing signs that the greater pressure for Wiradjuri and other Aboriginal people to change their intra-community economy so as to accommodate market thinking is taking effect. Although the rules of sharing are still applied, their range is lessened, the sanctions harder to apply and the resources one shares on demand are not received in ways which promote the autonomy and equality of earlier years. It is not uncommon for Wiradjuri people, when they mourn the loss of the days of sharing, to blame the introduction of social security benefits (including unemployment benefits, single parent benefits, pensions and child endowment) for their difficulties, stating that these have produced a lack of effort, energy, or will to work: 'They won't work these days, they just pick up the pension every fortnight'. It is also the case that work opportunities have been significantly reduced since the introduction of equal wages for Aborigines in the 1960s, and that racism in the classrooms and workplace closes off many opportunities. A likely reason why a correlation is intuitively made between social security payments and increasing lack of sociality is because they are individuated. They are also

relatively small and do not lend themselves to the scale of sharing that prestige-maintenance requires, nor to demands made beyond an increasingly smaller family group. Even card games are being replaced by an interest in poker machines with their large jackpots: rather than a social game, one machine to one player means that people play as individuals and others have no claim on a jackpot.

On the wider front, where there are, for instance, houses, jobs and home or business loans to allocate, responding to kin demands to share will leave people open to accusations of nepotism. The clash of cultures turns a valued kin-orientation in one domain into a cardinal bureaucratic sin in the other. These kinds of resources cannot be assimilated into the Wiradjuri system of meanings because they are 'public funds', and accountability for their acquisition, circulation and re-circulation remains bound to the value system of the supplier (government). The practice of demand sharing can even be deemed illegal, interpreted as a form of misappropriation if one is seen to be responding to kin demands instead of allocating funds along bureaucratic principles. This also means that the 'person' in the social relationship has to be redefined, conceptualised awkwardly in terms of roles (such as supplier/client), something which Wiradjuri people resist. Wiradjuri understandings of power and personhood, articulated through demand sharing, unwittingly become the target of policy and practices which place pressure on Aboriginal people to incorporate and conform to the demands of Australia's market economy.

Temple [1988b: 47], in examining the ways in which economic change was used in the destruction of Kanak culture, argued that this was achieved through the imposition of both privatisation and collectivisation on an economy of sharing. He points out that, in ignoring the unconscious principles which underlie a manifest culture, one authorises the substitution of alien principles which, in turn, distort the meanings in the manifest culture. In severing a culture from its source, albeit a non-visible one, a replacement is made with Euro-Australian sources of understanding. Temple [1988a: 11] speaks of this as the 'policy of the severed flower':

Just as one cuts a flower, admires it and even protects it, so one carefully severs an indigenous culture from the structures that gave birth to it, one protects it and even praises it, but henceforth one is sure that it will quietly die its own death, because it can no longer be nourished and regenerated by its roots.

Whether Wiradjuri 'caring and sharing' are sufficiently robust to withstand the recent pressure on kin-based socialities, perhaps more intense than at any time in their two centuries as colonised subjects, remains to be seen. Governments in New South Wales have consistently refused to acknowledge the presence of indigenous societies, informed by their own adaptive cultural practices. Policy in this State has been based throughout the twentieth century on compensation for loss rather than recognition of difference. It is thus not to be expected that governments could

or would be prepared to operate within a dual framework, with the attention to culturally-sensitive policy formation this would entail. In addressing Aboriginal poverty and poor health, for instance, the policy thrust is assimilationist. A concern for 'Aboriginal culture' refers to heritage issues rather than contemporary lifestyles.

During the past two decades in New South Wales, Wiradjuri and other communities have felt the full force of these processes on their social relations, without necessarily understanding the dynamic in the contradictory economic systems which has given rise to the conflicts amongst them. Demand sharing has become increasingly unworkable but solutions to the impact on Wiradjuri socialities tend to be sought in the very programs which produce the problems. Indigenous-run organisations set up under Commonwealth and State legislation to increase the flow of much needed resources such as housing, health care, employment training and legal aid have nullified the legitimacy of locally-based authority structures because of the way they are structured. They introduce three particular problems: first, a system of election of office bearers based on a liberal humanist franchise: one person, one vote, irrespective of one's cultural legitimacy or origins in indigenous terms. This has allowed for non-local indigenous people and young people to usurp the place once taken by older local people. Second, they introduce an individualistic notion of exchange as the mode by which organisations should be managed and made accountable. Third, they emphasise collectivisation under a rubric of 'community' which, as Temple [1988b: 46] has noted 'suppresses the individuation of personal prestige and responsibility'. Collectivised forms of production, passed off as more culturally sensitive, push in the direction of exchange and towards the adoption of an exchange economy among indigenous people themselves. The organisational structures required of Aboriginal communities are far more bureaucratic than those expected within Australian society more generally but they allow governments to 'develop' Aboriginal communities under the rubric of concern and respect. In trying to do so without taking account of the cultural arena within which they must operate, they become, as Temple [1988b: 40] has put it, a Trojan Horse: the gift that destroys.

Notes

- 1) Thanks are due to the editors and two anonymous reviewers whose constructive critiques introduced further clarity into some still dense text and who raised various issues of interest, not all of which could be expanded within this paper.
- 2) One's 'mob' is a common way in which Aboriginal people distinguish the kin-based groupings with which they identify. It may refer to one's own kin in the community, in contrast to other residents; to one's ancestors through time in contrast to other descent lines (irrespective of residence); or to one's language group. Among Wiradjuri, groups are most usually referred to by use of a surname, 'the Smith mob', or a locality or language group name, 'the Bathurst mob', 'the Wiradjuri mob'.
- 3) Crutching involves clipping wool from the tail and under-belly of sheep to keep them

clean and free of disease.

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