

Descendants of Wirrilimarra

In the introduction to his chapter on Banyjima language, Dench (1991:243) acknowledges his debt to two Pantikura, or 'Bottom End' Banyjima men, Herbert Parker and Percy Tucker. Dench continues:

My association with the Panyjima community extends over ten years ... In particular, I thank the Parker family for their encouragement and friendship. The late Herbert Parker effectively sponsored my research from the beginning by introducing me to the best speakers of the language and keeping a close eye on my education ... But my greatest debt is to the late Percy Tucker who devoted six months of the last year of his life to this project. I believe that he was well aware of his terminal condition some time before I met him and knew that the time we had to work on the language was limited. I hope that this description does justice to his memory. (Dench 1991:243)

Percy's grandfather, Wirrilimarra, alias Bob Tucker had three children to a Banyjima woman from the Dales Gorge area (see Palmer 1980). Their children were Jacob Tucker, Tommy Tucker and Lucy Tucker, or Putha. Tommy Tucker was born in about 1882 so it would be likely that Bob Tucker was born about 1860.

Wirrilimarra's son Jacob had six children, Naidong [b.abt 1893], Elsie, Ivy, Raymond [1913], Doug (alias Darkie) [b.abt 1916], and Percy.

Wirrilimarra's son Tommy Tucker was born in about 1882.¹ A Roebourne Gaol Warrant of Commitment reports: 'Peteronbung alias Tommy Tucker of Yandeyarra was this day duly convicted before JP You the said Peteronbung an Aboriginal on the 12th day of October 1905 were found upon the premises of Herbert Reginald Hester for an unlawful purpose contrary to law etc three months gaol... In Roebourne 7/12/05 at Croydon signed McRae JP'. In 1947 Tommy Tucker claimed his niece Blanche, forty-three years younger than himself, as a wife, apparently against her will. According to a police report, Tommy Tucker made the following statement in June 1947:²

¹ Mark Chambers says Tommy was 73 years old when he died on 10-12-1955

² PDD File 2300/47

I am a station native born at Mulga Downs Station via Roebourne. I belong to the Punjamah tribe, and I am the leader of my people. My woman is named 'Blanche' she is only a young girl; I have had her since 1937; couple of years before the war broke out. When I was only young Mr William Pead of Cossack and Roebourne brought me up...At a Meeting in March of this year at Mulga Downs station, I had a bit of a fight with [Blanche's partner] and Blanche had to come back to me. We stayed at Mulga Downs for some weeks because my little girl was sick; when she died about the middle of April 1947, I started to go back to Juno Downs Station with Blanche...

Tommy Tucker died in 1955 and has no surviving descendants. Apart from the mention of 'going back to Juno Downs', he appears to have led a nomadic life. However, he returned to Mulga Downs for ceremonies in 1947 where he buried a young daughter and was also involved in a disturbance involving his nephews and nieces at Mulga Downs in 1944, when a police statement again described him as 'a native from Juno Downs Station...'³

Percy Tucker [1924-1981] firstly married an Injibandi woman and later a Nyiyaparli woman. Percy's Indjibandi wife was named Nina Wally. Nina had five children who identify as Banyjima after their father, Percy. They also acknowledge an Indjibandi man, Wally Walibong, or Bagarman, as a *bajarli* ancestor (Palmer 2009:132).⁴

Percy later had seven children with his second wife, Bonny. Herbert Parker was said to have arranged this marriage (Olive 1997: 103-4). This side of Percy's family mostly follow their mother by identifying as Nyiyaparli.

Kingsley Palmer (1980:21), an anthropologist who also worked with Percy Tucker, confirms his close association with the Hamersley Ranges, the range of mountains that the Fortescue Banyjima call 'Karijini':

Percy's [mother] was Bandjima, born on Juna Downs while his [mother's father] was Inawunga and his [mother's mother] a Bandjima probably from upper Turee. His [father]

³ Report of Maurice K R Brown, Constable Reg No 1856. 19th February 1944. WA Police File C.O. No. 952/44

⁴Palmer states: "Intrinsic to the Banjima principle of descent is the concept of ancestral family or *bajarli*. Marnmu Smyth explained this concept for me. She said, 'this is the roots of the family ... The root, the main stem. If someone asked me "what's your *bajarli*?" I'd reply, "Wirilimura and Bugaraman"'".

was a Bandjima who came from the Packsaddle area, and both his [father's mother] and [father's father] were Bandjima from the Dales Gorge area.⁵

The above paragraph suggests that Percy's mother, Sally Djanjina, was a Banyjima, 'born on Juna Downs'.⁶ However, both Gladys Tucker and Alec Tucker say that Djanjina was Innawonga and Gladys remembers her speaking that language.⁷ The fact that Palmer records Percy's mother (Djanjina) having an Innawonga father also suggests that she was Innawonga.

In addition Palmer (1980:21) records that Percy's father (Jacob) was a Banyjima 'from the Packsaddle area'. According to Palmer (1980:21), Jacob's father (Wirrilimarra) and Jacob's mother (Thalana) were both Banyjima 'from the Dales Gorge area'. If both Percy's paternal grandparents were 'from the Dales Gorge area', on the knowledge available it is difficult to make the connection of their son (Jacob) to the Packsaddle area, except that he was 'from' that area, close to the country of his Innawonga in-laws. On the contrary, descent from his paternal grandparents would account for Percy's primary connection to the Hamersley Ranges.

Brown and Mulvaney (1983:6) describe the Packsaddle area as 'a "divide" (watershed) with water courses draining north and east to the Fortescue River and south and west to the Ashburton River.' Central Pilbara Aboriginal people often describe such divides as boundaries between groups.⁸

A statement by Percy Tucker recorded by Alan Dench confirms the close association between Percy Tucker, his father and grandfather and the Hamersley Ranges. The statement also acknowledges the close relationship between the Parker and Tucker families:⁹

My father's father was Wirrilimarra,

My father was [Jacob Tucker].

My uncle was Kutiya-layi.

My name, with these two fella, is Karlayurangu.

⁵ Palmer uses the abbreviations 'M', 'MF', 'FF' etc.

⁶ O'Connor (1991:26) says 'Dandina, a Pandjima-Inawongga woman from Minthay Spring, married a Mr Tucker, a Pandjima man from the same camp.'

⁷ Personal Communication.

⁸ Personal communication, Darren Injie.

⁹ Transcript of interview with Percy Tucker recorded by Alan Dench at Onslow Nhuwala Centre, 19 June 1980.

These ones, they are the gang, the boss for the Hamersley Range,
All of the gang of this name – my grandfather [Wirrilimarra], Herbert Parker's
grandfather [Pirtupiri], the father belong to them [Marntunha], my father
[Pilypanganpangu], my uncle [Pirtanganpangu].
In this hill, on the top of the Hamersley Range,
They were the boss of what's left behind, us little fellas (translation by Dench 1980).

Percy Tucker's statement suggests that his grandfather Wirrilimarra [b.abt 1860] and Herbert Parker's grandfather, Pirtupiri, or more commonly spelt Pirripiri, were contemporaries and 'the boss of the Hamersley Ranges.'

Percy Tucker had died 18 months before Brown conducted his survey for the Great Northern Highway realignment (Brown 1983:6). Brown consulted Herbert Parker who knew the general area around the Lake Gundawuna and Munjina claypan and gorge. He knew of Aboriginal sites in the gorge and wanted these recorded. Brown (p.10) states:

In the present situation, there seems to be no descendants of specific 'owners' of, or of local descent groups from, this area of land. Percy Tucker seemed to have the strongest claim in this regard. Generally the Pandjima have taken responsibility to 'speak for the country'. Specifically Herbert Parker and his two brothers appear to be the 'caretakers' and spokesmen for this area. However, Jerry Wing [Top End Banyjima], who is recognised as being the most authoritative person for an area west of the survey area, seems to have the most knowledge of the southern Packsaddle area.¹⁰

Brown's comments are in conclusive; however, he suggests a shared interest in the Packsaddle area.

The husband of Jacob Tucker's daughter, Naidong, was a Banyjima man named Kayuna, who was the brother of Whitehead (the mother of Herbert Parker). Naidong had sons Eric, Harold and Douglas to three non-Aboriginal men. The three boys were removed from the Mulga Downs/White Springs area by government officials. The descendants of Naidong's sons are the White, Conway and Macarthur families.

¹⁰ Palmer (1980) describes Mindi Springs (Mindayi) as 'The place where the spiritual essence or Dreaming of Jerry Wing's M.F. was located.'

Naidong also had three daughters, Garditha, Selina and Blanche. Blanche is the mother of Greg and Archie Tucker. Strengthening the connections to the Parker family, Garditha was the wife of Ginger Parker (a son of Whitehead and George Marndu). The Robinson family are descendants of Garditha. Police records show that Naidong's daughter Selina was a young, probably 'promised', wife of Herbert Parker¹¹ who later 'gave' her to Pat Long.¹² According to Greg Tucker, Naidong's son Eustace was at one time the partner of Olive Long.¹³

Greg Tucker, who has ancestors from both families, has worked tirelessly to establish a community and Law Ground on Mulga Downs station. He was initiated at Wittenoom Gorge. Greg's connection to the area is supported by a statement made by his mother, Blanche Tucker, who told the Seaman Inquiry in 1984:

I was born and reared up [sic] on Mulga downs. Mulga Downs is my cousin Alec Tucker's country. It is my son Greg's country too. It has been handed to them through Aboriginal law. They know all about that country through the old people. I have some country at Mulga Downs through my grandfather but it is not really my place to talk about it. Alec has more right to talk about it. It is my spirit country. (ALS 1984).¹⁴

In recent times Greg has incorporated the name of his maternal grandfather, Kayuna (brother of Whitehead), into his business name.

Jacob Tucker's sister was Putha, otherwise known as Lucy Tucker.¹⁵ Lucy, or Putha, was the grandmother of Lola and Nicholas Cook and Elizabeth and Margaret Dowton.¹⁶ Elizabeth and Margaret also refer to the mother of the Parker brothers as 'Aunty

¹¹ Police report 19-2-1944, No. 952/44 [on 28 January 1944] three native sisters were arguing over cards in the Mulga Downs native camp. Blanche and Gertie were combined against Selina. The natives Wabby and Herbert Parker took the side of Selina, who is Herbert Parker's woman, and Darkie, who is the uncle of all three sisters, took the side of Blanche and Gertie...

¹² Personal communication with Pat Long.

¹³ Personal communication, Greg Tucker.

¹⁴ Statement given to Sandy Toussaint by Blanche Tucker in Roebourne, 1984.

¹⁵ Native Affairs citizenship file 1957 says Jack Dowton's mother was 'Lucy Tucker'.

¹⁶ Elizabeth and Margaret's father, Chookie (Jack Dowton), was a son of Putha. Lola's father was Cookie, a son from a different father.

Whitehead'.¹⁷ Putha was the sister of Jacob Tucker, making Jacob's daughter Naidong a cousin-sister of The Dowton's father, Chookie. Likewise, Putha was Naidong's father's sister, so Putha would have been a 'mother' (aunt) of Naidong. Naidong married Kayuna who was Whitehead's brother. So Whitehead was a sister-in-law of Naidong and a daughter-in-law of Putha and therefore the Dowton's 'aunt'.

In preservation evidence, Elizabeth Dowton speaks of her grandmother, 'Budda' [sic]:¹⁸

ED: Brothers and sisters of Budda.

GM: Yeah.

ED: Tommy Tucker.

GM: Any others?

ED: I think he had a few more brothers and sisters.

GM: Do you know Jacob Tucker?

ED: Yeah that's a brother of Tommy Tucker now.

GM: Yeah and sister Budda?

ED: Budda is a sister to them.

In reply to similar questions, Margaret Laphorn also states:¹⁹

GM: And do you know who Buda's [sic] father was, what about Buda?

ML: Buda?

GM: Yeah, who were her parents?

ML: Bob Wirrilymurra was father to Tommy Tucker, Jacob? [sic] and Buda.

¹⁷ Personal communication, Elizabeth Dowton. Preservation of Evidence: Interview with Elizabeth Dowton and Greg McIntyre, 29/01/2008, p.4.

¹⁸ Preservation of Evidence: Interview with Elizabeth Dowton and Greg McIntyre, 29/01/2008, pp.3-4.

¹⁹ Preservation of Evidence: Interview with Margaret Laphorn [sic] (Nelma) and Greg McIntyre, 29/01/2008, p.2.

