

Additional Comments on the Historical Records for Mulga Downs and Hamersley Ranges.

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Summary

In the time allowed, all the listed reports were checked at the State Records Office of WA. Apart from confirming what has previously been discussed regarding Aboriginal resistance in the Hamersley Ranges (Day 2010; Green 2010), few connections could be made with apical ancestors for claimants. However, it is suggested that for reasons given below, “Bob /Bobby” is Banyjima apical ancestor Bob Wrrilimarra Tucker and that “Jacob” is Jacob Tucker.

The reports also give further evidence of the continuation of traditional customs and laws. In addition, there is no suggestion that Mulga Downs was not the contested traditional land of “Hamersley Ranges” or “Hills natives”.

The reports cited below indicate fights between Aborigines on Mulga Downs were conducted with traditional weapons according to traditional rules up to at least 1944. At the same time there appears to be a continuation of ceremony on the station to living memory, which would require an accepted traditional leadership with the Law passed down from fathers to sons. These ceremonies do not appear to have been contested.

Most evidence pre 1945 comes from police records, making the case of Tommy Tucker insightful, due to his brushes with police over a lifetime, requiring recorded statements as listed below. Wobby Parker was also involved in a dispute that required pages of witness statement in 1944.

Jackie Parker, the son of Daisy, an apical ancestor of the Dhu and Dershaw families, also gave useful though inconclusive statements to police after an incident at White Springs in 1925.

I have also made corrective comments regarding births, deaths and marriage certificates supplied.

Comment on the archival record

SROWA ACC 430 AN 5 Police File 4062/1913 Tableland, Journal of PC Napier, 01/05-26/06/1913. On 25/05/1913 – “Native Paddy arrived from Mulga Downs station” with note from B.O. Read stating that “on 21st inst. several natives from this station [Punch, **Bob**, Nancy, & Bidy] were under the influence of alcohol” supplied by Cornelius (Con) O’Connell. On 26/5/1913, P.C. Napier took statements from Punch, Bidy, Bob and Mary “with a view to prosecuting O’Connell later”. It is possible that this Bob is **Bob Tucker @** Wirrilmurra.

There is one other man named “Bob” recorded in the Tablelands district. The Colonial Secretary’s Office File 1351 records the pursuit of the murderers of “Swan River native Johnny” on Mr J A Hall’s Hamersley Range station in 1881. The Government resident in Roebourne wrote on 15 August, 1881:

I regret to report that the natives at the Hamersley Range continue to be troublesome and aggressive, Mr Hall came to town on the 2nd instant and reported that on the previous Saturday six natives in feathers and war paint and fully armed came to his station, having informed his native servant a few days before that they would drive the white men away. Fortunately Mr Hall with his sons, nephew and servants were a party of six, an unusual and probably to the natives an unexpected number.

Additional information comes from the journal of James Hackett from March 22 to May 4, 1881, in pursuit of the offenders into the Hamersley Ranges, including those who were charged with larceny of rations and ammunition. During this expedition, two accused Yanagar and Tommy were taken prisoner in the ranges, but Yanagar escaped and was shot dead.

JA Hall also described the theft of rations and how he showed **Bobby** the tracks and “He said he knew them quite well. He named Dickey, Toby, Petalbung, Windawirrie and Poberfenner (?) as being the natives. When we captured then 3 prisoners on the 30 July he said they were 3 of them who stole the clothes.”

“**Bobby** affirmed saith: Mr Hall showed me the 5 tracks going from the hut and then coming out. I knew them. They were Toby, Dickey, Petalbung, Chulberginner and Windawerrie. I am quite sure of their tracks.” Also: “**Bobby**, Aboriginal native affirmed saith: ‘Mr Hall is my

master, I was with my master when the three prisoners came with Charley, Chumbringinna and Winderwerrer. They had *wilgie*. I saw them coming towards the hut they all had spears. They came to fight. I think they meant to throw spears. They came close to the house. I heard master speak to them.”

From the above it can be deduced that Bobby was very familiar with the Hamersley Ranges and the Aboriginal inhabitants to be able to identify the accused by their tracks. The journal also describes how Bobby went in pursuit of one of the wanted men into the Ranges and after an hour and half returned with the prisoner. Judging by the authority displayed, I consider “Bobby” could well be Bob Wrrilimarra @ **Bob Tucker**.

The above “Dickey” could be the same escapee mentioned in a letter from Mr. Reg Hester of Mulga Downs re native Wilabung @ Kelly, causing trouble and charged with murder. Police File 295 - Roebourne Stn. Report 15/01/1894, ACC 430 AN 5/1. In 1893, PC Crockett arrested Toderbung @ Jimmy on 27 November for the attempted murder of Paddy, and Judgarra @ **Dicky** who had absconded from a Roebourne prison party some time ago. The police armed with revolver arrested Kelly at his camp “in the hills”. They then arrested Wakering @ Freddy and Nuntinbung @ Mick for the attempted murder of the Aboriginal Paddy. The police party returned to Mulga Downs and recaptured the two prisoners who had escaped by breaking chain and cuffs. Of the five prisoners, Judgarra @ **Dicky** was sentenced to seven months hard labour. The four charged with attempted murder got 18 months h.l. and “25 lashes with the cat o’ nine tails each.

ACC 430 AN 5 File 628/1913 – Broome district - Tribal fight between natives on Mulga Downs Station near Tableland. Report of T P Napier Constable 31/12/1912 Re injured Aborigines at Mulga Downs - On 21st inst. [Manager] B.O. Read JP a week previous a fight took place amongst the station natives in which several were severely hurt. I went down to the native camp that was situated about 200 yards from the homestead and saw the natives who were injured. Their names and injuries were as follows. Viz **Billenbong @ Jacob** severe spear wound on back over kidney. This native appeared in great pain, Doonseen @ Billy (boomerang wound on breast), Calgoo @ Friday spear wound through thighs, Weariparramurra @ Stanley spear through left knee; wounds dressed by Mrs Read. I made careful inquiries from the injured natives and from others who were in the camp as to what caused the fight and ascertained that **Billenbong @ Jacob** took native Alick's woman away and slept with her. Alick had found this out and fought with **Jacob** and the other natives took sides with the results as stated. The natives seem unanimously agreed that **Jacob**

well deserved all he got and the other natives who were hurt had no right to interfere as it was not their quarrel at all.

Signed PC Napier

A note from Inspector T Houlahan adds: "This was a tribal fight and no good purpose would be served by the Police taking any action. The combatants would be on friendly terms immediately after the fight."

On the same page, the Commissioner of Police noted: "I concur with Inspector Houlahan's remarks"

In 1980 Percy Tucker told the linguist Alan Dench: "My father's father was Wirrilimarra (Bob Tucker). My father was **Pilyangkanpangu** (Jacob Tucker). [Ngatharntu mayali Wirrilimarra. Ngatharnta mama Pilyangkanpangu]

My uncle was Kutiya-layi [Kutiya-layi ngatharntu yumini]"

The **Billenbong @** Jacob mentioned by P.c. Napier in 1912 (above) could also be spelled **Pilyanpangu**, with 'ang' as in 'young' and the final 'u' as a suffix. The 'B' is interchangeable with the 'P' as in Palyku - Bailgu. Therefore I consider **Billenbong @ Jacob** is the same person as **Pilyangkanpangu @ Jacob** [Tucker]. The difference in spelling being attributable to transcription by a linguist, such as Alan Dench in comparison with early twentieth century record keepers. Jacob Tucker could have been born about 1872 to have begun his family with Sally on the birth of Naijong in about 1893.

The fighting at Mulga Downs on 21/12/1912 seems to have been conducted with traditional weapons (boomerangs and spears) and although Jacob was said to be in the wrong, he appears to have had strong support from others in the camp who 'interfered' on his behalf, although others claimed they had 'no right' to do so. The comments suggest that the Police Inspector was correct in noting it was 'a tribal fight', apparently fought within culturally acceptable rules so that: "The combatants would be on friendly terms immediately after the fight."

However, the following report suggests Jacob had his revenge on Calgoo/Yalgo @ Friday by giving evidence against him for the theft of stores at Mulga Downs three years later (below).

SROWA Police File 2972/1916, Roebourne - Journals Vol 1, 28.12.1915-18.8.1918, ACC 430 AN 5, Journal of C Thurlow, Constable 854

Thursday 18th January 1916

Police Court held at 10 a.m. before Mr J H Church J.P.

Abo natives Geneben @ Jimmy, Naranbardie @ Jerry, **Wangie @ Sam**, Yalgo @ Friday charged with having in company about 20th December 1915 stole 50 lb of flour, 20 lb of sugar, 2 lb of tea at Puthna outstation - valued at 2 pounds, the property of Samuel L Burges and Frederick Withernoom [sic]. After hearing the evidence of Mr Hancock, the Police and abo native witness **Jacob**, the accused were found guilty and sentenced to 4 months h.l. each. (SROWA Police File 2972/1916, Roebourne - Journals Vol 1, 28.12.1915-18.8.1918, ACC 430 AN 5).

The above **Wangie @ Sam** charged with theft at Mulga Downs in 1916 is likely to be Sam Coffin (1893-1961), who was also known as 'Wanyi', according to my records.

In the unnaturally close confines of the Aboriginal quarters at Mulga Downs, there was something of a tradition of men fighting over women. At least until 1944, traditional weapons were used and fights were settled in traditional manner, as when Herbert Parker speared his brother Wabby (Parker) in the leg to prevent a revenge spearing for the wounding of Darkie (Doug Tucker). Darkie later died of his wound and some would say that scores between the Tuckers and the Parkers have yet to be settled (*pers comm*).

The incident was recorded in a Police report dated 19-2-1944, No. 952/44 (Native Welfare File 295/44 Native Darkie of Mulga Downs Station – assault of by Wabby).

[On 28 January 1944] three native sisters were arguing over cards in the Mulga Downs native camp. Blanche [Tucker] and Gertie [Tucker] were combined against Selina [Tucker]. The natives Wabby [Parker] and Herbert Parker took the side of Selina, who is Herbert Parker's woman, and Darkie [Doug Tucker], who is the uncle of all three sisters, took the side of Blanche and Gertie, with the result that about sundown or a little after Parker and Darkie had a fist fight. Darkie's sister Ivy [Tucker], and another male native ... joined in to assist Darkie, but before the fight had properly started it was stopped by other natives in the camp. Ivy then went and told Albert George Turvey, manager of Mulga Downs Station that that there had been a fight and he went to the camp, and on his arrival there the natives who were still quarrelling stopped and all was quiet for the rest of the night.

On the following day, 29th ultimo the natives went to work as usual, and there would have been no further trouble only natives came in from an out-camp, and wanted to know all about

the fight the previous night. Darkie, who from inquiries made, is not on friendly terms with Parker's family, came out with a shield, but no kylie or boomerang, and said that he had it 'on the gizzard' about arguments with Parker's family and wanted to spear Selina badly before he would be satisfied. Parker told Darkie not to fight a woman, but if he wanted to have a fight to have it with a man, and Darkie went back to his camp.

About sundown, Elsie and Ivy the sisters of Darkie, during the general discussion, began to quarrel and Darkie joined in and told Elsie to hit Selina, which Elsie would not do.

Wabby who was armed with a kylie and a shield, as he evidently expected trouble, tried to stop the argument, and was challenged to fight by Darkie, Darkie had a shield but no kylie so he used a piece of water pipe about 2 ft long instead...

To end the quarrel [Herbert] Parker pushed a spear into his brother Wabby's left thigh.

Tommy Tucker, a native from Juno Downs Station, then took up the fight for Darkie, and struck Wabby on the head with a *wanna* or (big woman's stick), but none of the natives took the part of Wabby and the brawl finished ... The native Tommy Tucker left Mulga Downs, on his way to Juno Downs, directly after the fight."

Herbert Parker, half-caste native, 23 years, stockboy, Mulga Downs Station states (File 295/44 Native Darkie): "I pushed a spear into my brother Wabby's leg to finish the argument. Tommy Tucker took Darkie's part, and hit Wabby on the head with a *wanna* (big woman's stick). ... Five days after the fight, Doctor came down in the plane and took Darkie and his woman Ida away."

Wabby described the motives for his brother's action differently: "As soon as Darkie fell down, my brother Herbert speared my in the leg to stop me." Darkie was buried in Karrakatta cemetery in Perth.

Jackie Parker @ Whippingba is a key figure in the Banyjima claim, being a son of Daisy, the mother of Susie and Ivy Swan and a white pastoralist, Harold Parker. Some clues to his origins are given in statements made during inquiries into the shooting death of an 11-year-old boy, "Pigey" on 4/3/1925 at White Springs station, north of Mulga Downs, for which Parker was originally charged with wilful murder (SROWA Acc 653 Dept of North West File 140 /1925. "Death of Cliff Smith from gun shot wound at White Springs Station").

A recorded statement by Jackie Parker states: “I am a half caste aboriginal about 17 years of age. I am not exempt from the provisions of the Aboriginal Act. I came from Roy Hill station a long time ago and worked at White Springs.” In another statement, Jackie Parker says: “Pigey was my friend and countryman. We belong to Tableland.”

[Note: According to Neville Green, “Tableland is the high country as one leaves Roebourne and travels towards the Hamersley Range. In later records, the use of ‘Tableland’ to describe the inland region is dropped and ‘Tableland’ becomes associated with a police station of that name situated about 160 kilometres from Roebourne on the track to Coolawanyah and Mt Florance.” However, in this context, Jackie Parker would be referring to the geographical region, rather than the police district].

Pigey’s uncle, Tommy Tucker, made two statements which differ in that police records show that in April 1925 Tommy brought Pigey from “Hammersley [sic] Station” whereas earlier he stated in a police interview that Pigey came from “Hammersley Ranges”.

“Bedangbung alias Tommy Tucker, aboriginal states: ‘I know the boy Pigey, his proper name is Cliff Smith, he has no native name, he is 10 years old, I am his uncle, his mother is dead, I last saw the boy about two months ago when I left him with Edmondstone [at White Springs] while I went away to work, I brought the boy from Hammersley Ranges about 2 years ago, his father is a man named Smith who is at Tableland.’ Signed Tommy Tucker.”

The second statement by Tommy Tucker states: “Deposition of Witness saith upon oath 22/4/1925, Port Hedland. ‘I knew Pigey his proper name is Cliff Smith, Pigey is only his nickname. I know his father. He is a white man named Smith. He belongs to the Tableland District. I am the boy's uncle. I brought the boy from Hammersley Station to White Springs.’ Tommy Tucker.” Tucker is also described as “Tommy Tucker @ Bedanganbury of Woodstock”.

Whether Pigey was transferred from Hamersley Ranges or Hamersley Station may be immaterial since he is firmly located in “the Tablelands” (the region).

From the above statements it can be surmised that Pigey and Jackie were “countrymen” who “belong to the Tablelands” and that Tommy Tucker was the boy’s uncle and guardian following the death of Pigey’s mother, despite the fact that the boy’s white father is “at Tableland”. Presumably then, Tommy Tucker and Jackie Parker were also “countrymen” and related, although Jackie “came from Roy Hill Station”. (Note: a woman at Hamersley station, born about 1903, was also known as Pigey @ Figi from at least 1945, but no connection is known to the boy, Pigey @ Cliff Smith).

Despite his wandering ways, or perhaps because of them, more is known about Tommy Tucker. In 1947, following an abduction the police recorded: “Tommy Tucker claims that he is head of his tribe; and for a station native he is well educated. He is known as a native lawyer. His native name is ‘Bedernungbung’ ... Tommy regained possession of Blanche at the gathering of the natives at Mulga Downs Station during March 1947...” (see PDD File 2300/47). (Note: The so-called “gathering” would have been a Law meeting. WBD).

After the runaway couple had been captured on Juna Downs station, Tommy Tucker stated to police: “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.”

The Journal of a Constable Napier of the Tableland District, July 1st to July 31st, 1914, records a mixed gathering of Aboriginal people on Mulga Downs for initiation ceremonies (SROWA ACC 430 AN 5 Police File 5368/1914 - Tableland, Journal of PC Napier, 1.7.1914 -31.7.1914):

Sunday 12-7-14

Left camp at 8 a.m. and arrived at Mulga Downs Station at 1 p.m. and camped. Saw the manager Mr S Criddle.

Note: Mr Criddle informed the P.C. that there were a number of strange natives in the Station Native Camp that he would like to have shifted or cleared away.

After making careful inquiries P.C. Napier “found everything alright and in fact all the natives appeared perfectly healthy”. On 12-7-1914, Napier added the note: “After making careful inquiries the p.c. ascertained that the reason there was such a number of strange natives about

Mulga Downs was owing to there being three young boys belonging to the Station about to become circumcised and go through some tribal customs that are still practised in this District.”

The constable seemed assured that the gathering at Mulga Downs for ceremonies presented no concerns, despite the request by Mr Criddle to have the “strange natives ... shifted or cleared away”. The constable also found it noteworthy that “tribal customs are still practised in this district”, customs that require some sense of recognised land rights and participation from neighbouring groups. To “go through” is the general term for initiation ceremonies that last for a month or more. Obviously by 1914, after the date when many ancestors of present claimants were born on the station, the people living on Mulga Downs were confident enough to be hosting ceremonies and conducting “meeting camps”.

In addition, on 12-7-1914 Constable Napier noted (SROWA ACC 430 AN 5 Police File 5368/1914 - Tableland, Journal of PC Napier, 1.7.1914 -31.7.1914): “Also made careful inquiries re the death of Abo native women Judy and **Maggie** at this station peacefully (see special report).”

Although the above mentioned “special report” has not been sighted, it is possible that this woman Maggie is the same Worambung @ Oroma @ Maggie who was the partner of stockman James Coppin when he was murdered on Mount Bruce station on or about 20th August, 1891. The Supreme Court was told that the prisoners “belonged to a tribe adjoining that of the woman Maggie” (*Nor’West Times* December 10, 1892). Maggie was taken by the accused men after the murder, but protected by her father, Parody, who was later found guilty of the murder and was due to be hung back in his country “near the Hamersley Range”, but died on the return journey (*Nor’west Times* June 4, 1892).

As discussed in Day (2010) and Green (2010), up until the 1890s the settlers viewed attacks from ‘hills natives’ as a serious threat. The threat took another form in 1905 with the newspaper headlines, “SOME ALARMING RUMOURS. ARMED BLACKS IN THE NORTH. “POISON CORROBOREES. STATION OWNERS WARNED” (Western Mail, Saturday July 1, 1905, page 25.

Sub-inspector Lappin telegraphed on April 29, Pyramid notified on 15th inst. that a large corroboree called a ‘poison’ corroboree had been on there for days. No whites were allowed

near. A similar corroboree, it was said, was being held at Tableland. This class of corroboree is unusual, and, consequently, I sent two constables to Tableland to warn the settlers and the police... The whites do not know what is said or arranged at these gatherings and so far nobody has been terrorised by the corroborees. The suggested danger is that arrangements might be made at a corroboree for attacking the settlers on a fixed night, when the natives owning rifles would be most dangerous.” Mr T Mallet, a contractor, residing in the Tableland district, said he had heard natives conversing about a big corroboree which was to take place at Middle Creek. The natives seemed unanimous in the opinion that they should arm themselves and kill the white settlers.” (Western Mail, Saturday July 1, 1905, page 25).

The poison corroboree cult may have resulted from a growing feeling of powerlessness amongst Aborigines, but came to nothing at Mulga Downs (see C.S.D. 1096/1905).

Comments on Births, Deaths and marriages.

- Marriage Certificate Registration 3/1957 Roebourne district - married 13/3/1957, Horace Parker aged 45, stationhand, born c.1919 on Mulga Downs, then residing at Mulga Downs in 1957, child of Ronald Parker (pastoralist) and Whitehand (mother). Comment: If Parker was born in 1919 he would be aged 38 at the time of his marriage. The police statement cited above says Herbert Parker was 23 in 1944, making his birth year as 1921.
- Banjo (born 1881) according to my information was a partner of Artu (born about 1895) and may have been the father of Artu's daughter Ida Wally (Artu had six children). According to Henry Long his Aboriginal name was Barlungawaningga which may mean 'fell off a cliff'. According to my information, Banjo was also a partner of Naidjong (born 1893). If Banjo is described as a partner to 'Ivy Tucker @ Naijong', then there is confusion between **Naijong** and her sister Ivy **Nulingu** Tucker who was the partner of Spider (no children). Naijong was definitely the mother of Harold etc as listed but Nulingu @ Ivy had no children.
- It was Naijong who had children to Gayuna (Banyjima), Harold Mayer (white), Spiro Cosmos (white) and MacArthur (white). Naijong is also recorded as a partner of Hickey Bung and Banjo.
- Re: Death Certificate of Ivy who died 9/3/1960 (not 1963). Note Ivy Nulingu Tucker is not Naijong Tucker (sisters). Ivy and Naijong are two separate people.
- Death Cert. 18/1956 Sally Dundy. I presume that this is Sally Djanjina @ Janti, mother of Naijong etc and wife of Jacob Tucker. Palmer says she was born on Juna Downs ("Percy's [mother] was Bandjima, born on Juna Downs") but the death

certificate says born Mulga Downs. If so, this would be a new fact. Strangely there are no children listed or a spouse, but this could have been an oversight, like the spelling of her name and perhaps the place of birth, suggesting that whoever filled in the certificate was not familiar with the family.

- Death Certificate Registration No 27/1969 Roebourne district - Wimi Tilley, pensioner aged 72 years, born c1897 at Mulga Downs Station child of father: Jimmy and mother Sally, deceased 21/08/1969 in Roebourne where she was last Resident; Widowed (name unknown). Children: Daisy P (dec'd), Topsy M (61yrs), Egypt T (57yrs). Buried: Old Native Portion of Roebourne Cemetery. Comment: Alec Tucker has never mentioned to me the women listed in this certificate as sisters of Egypt (Alec's mother). He informed me that Egypt's father was a Nyamal man. If this place of birth is correct it is significant because Egypt (mother of Alec Tucker and Ronnie Mills) identified as Yindjibarndi. Egypt was buried Wittenoom cemetery. Wittenoom Cemetery records show "Egypt Tucker aged 57" died in the District Hospital, Tom Price, on 19 March 1972, and was buried on 23 March in Wittenoom cemetery. I have been to the gravesite with Alec. He did not mention any sisters of Egypt, WBD
- Marriage Certificate Registration 3/1954, Pilbara district, married 24/06/1954 at Marble Bar between - William Clement Green (contractor), bachelor aged 57 born at Stawell, Victoria resident at Comet Gold mine, Marble Bar, child of Thomas Green (deceased builder) and Hannah Copley (deceased); and Susie Dhu (home duties), widow aged 51 (born c.1903) at Mulga Downs Station resident at Comet Gold mine, Marble Bar, child of James Swan (deceased stockman) and Daisy (deceased). Comment: Susie Swan 1903-1967 had 4 spouses: Ted Fisher (son Ned b.1920) Harry Stevens (Alice b.1922 and Jack b.1924); Edward Dhu died 1952 (9 children); William "Billy" Green. All 12 children used the Dhu surname.
- From various birth certificates, obviously Horace Parker did not wish to be known as the son of a Chinese employee of Mulga Downs as recorded by O'Connor. Fair enough, it is more important culturally for boys as to who 'reared them up'. However, Horace Parker was not the son of Ronald Wyborn Parker. Neither is listing Parker as father culturally appropriate. The Parker surname was given later to the brothers, Wobby and Horace. As Percy Tucker told Alan Dench: "All of these Marntiyarrangara of this name - my grandfather, Herbert Parker's grandfather, **the father belong to them**, my father, my uncle [Jurulu-layi, jurulu-rla marntiyarrangara nyiya yini, Wirrilimarra, Pirtupiri, **Marntunha**, Pilypangkanpangu, Pirtanganpangu], In this hill,

on the top of the Hamersley Range, they were the boss of what's left behind, us little fellas...

According to Rose Hancock in *A Rose By Any Other Name* (1992:273), Lang Hancock said when George Hancock moved to of Mulga Downs, 'It was feeding seventy spoilt, unruly blackfellers ... [in the early 1900s] Dad christened two brothers after the two comic characters of the time, 'Orace and 'Erbert. 'Erbert stayed on with me for a long time...'

References

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