

UNITING ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER CHRISTIAN CONGRESS



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Tjirbruki Story

In the time of Creation, Tjirbruki was living at one of the summer camping places near Patpangga (Rapid Bay) with his clan when a Kari (emu) hunt was organised in lands to the north, in Tarndanyangga (the Adelaide region) as there were many kari there. His three nephews Kulultuwi, Jurawi and Tetjawi and others went on the hunt. Kulultuwi was Tjirbruki's nangari, sister's son, and much loved by him. Jurawi and Tetjawi were from other mothers.

Tjirbruki did not go on the hunt but moved his camp to Witu-wattingga (Brighton region) to fish, catching heaps of kurari, (beaked salmon). The kari hunters went north and moved across Mikkawomma, the open plains between Tarndanyangga (Adelaide area) and Yarta Bulti (Port Adelaide area) to drive the birds towards Mudlunga Nose place (Le Fevre Peninsula) and trap them at the tip of the peninsula. Whilst some birds got away, the hunt was successful.

Meanwhile Tjirbruki moved camp to witu-wittingga, (Brighton region) and then went inland to hunt kari for himself and saw the fresh tracks of a male bird which he decided it would be his. According to Kurna custom, the first to sight the presence of game had the right to take it. After finishing his fishing Tjirbruki followed the kari's tracks south towards Witawodli (Sellicks Beach) where they turned inland. Tjirbruki decided that the bird would later come back towards the coast so he travelled further south to intercept it.

Kulultuwi had also come back down south and saw the kari's tracks, followed them and then killed the bird. But he crossed Tjirbruki's footprints and in doing so he broke the lore, he should have known it was Tjirbruki's because of his footprints. Tjirbruki realised the bird was not coming his way and began to back track. He saw smoke from a fire and headed that way, soon hearing Kulultuwi singing whilst a cooking fire was being prepared with Jurawi and Tetjawi. Tjirbruki confronted Kulultuwi about killing his bird. Kulultuwi said he

was sorry and apologised, saying he had not realised it was his uncle's bird and so offered him the meat. As Tjirbruki had some kangaroo meat with him he took only some of the kari and went on his way. He had forgiven Kulultuwi for his mistake.

As Kulultuwi was finishing the cooking, he checked its progress and a burst of steam from the kari blinded him. Jurawi and Tetjawi rushed in and speared and killed Kulultuwi, reasoning that they had done so because of jealousy that Kulultuwi wasn't punished. They then shared the meat with their own clan and told them what had happened. The clan then started smoking Kulultuwi's body before later taking it to Warriparringga (Sturt River) to continue smoking the body.

The two brothers then made up a story to cover up what they had done, that Kulultuwi, in fear of Tjirbruki's anger, had gone elsewhere to hunt kari. Tjirbruki soon heard the false story and also asked people of the Witjarlung clan to pass on his forgiveness to Kulultuwi if they saw him. Although they knew of his death, the Witjarlung concealed it from Tjirbruki who then went looking for his nephew. Eventually, near where he had last seen him, he came across sugar ants on the track and saw they were carrying human hair and blood and red ochre. He realised his nephew was dead and then saw where the body had been and the smoking of the body had already started.

Tjirbruki, being a man of the law, had to decide if Kulultuwi had been lawfully killed. He determined Kulultuwi had not been killed within the law and that he had to avenge the murder. He went and obtained some good spears and travelled north along the hills before making his way back to the coast and found out that there was a big camp at Warriparringga. He first went to Witu-wattingga to rest and was greeted there by the two brothers who still deceived him about Kulultuwi's death, blaming it on others who may have been Peramangk (from the Adelaide Hills). Tjirbruki knew they were lying but did not say so, he went along with their deception. The next day they went inland to the camp at Warriparringga (where Kulultuwi's body was still being smoked). In the evening they danced for the old man Tjirbruki who then sang the camp to sleep. He made sure all were asleep by calling out but there was no response.

Tjirbruki was a master at fire-making. He used powdered morthi bark from a stringybark tree as tinder and set it round the hut they were sleeping in with piles of grass, leaving only a small gap at the entrance. Then, using a baruke (iron pyrites stone) and a piece of paldari (flintstone), he started fires at each pile of morthi tinder, telling the fire to blaze up quickly. He cried out loudly, 'You are getting burned! Camp on fire'. When Jurawi came out he speared him with a wundi dread-spear, and then the same to Tetjawi. When he knew they were dead he pulled out his spears.

In the morning Tjirbruki carried Kulultuwi's partly smoked dried body to witu-wattingga, and began to cry creating Tulukudangga (Kingston Park spring) he went on to complete the smoking. Many people gathered for the ceremony and the names of the two killers and the way Kulultuwi was killed were confirmed.

Tjirbruki then wrapped Kulultuwi's remains into a traditional woven mat and headed south to Patpangga (Rapid Bay) to place the remains into a cave. Along the journey he stopped several times to rest and overwhelmed by sadness at his favourite nephews death he wept and his mekauwe (tears) dropped to the ground a spring of fresh water welled up. That is how the freshwater springs along the coast at Tulukudangga (Kingston Park) Garildilla (Hallet Cove), Tainbarilla (Port Noarlunga), Karkungga (Red Ochre Cove), Wirruwarrungga (Port Willunga), Witawodli (Sellicks Beach), and Kongaratinga (near Wirrina Cove) came to be. And each place became a camping place.

Along his journey south Tjirbruki also punished others who had deceived him about Kulultuwi's death. He walked into the offender's camp and speared four men, Ngarakkani, Nenaratawi, Limi, and Tulaki in the leg as retribution; it was the right punishment to spear people in the leg. The people in the camp knew Tjirbruki was serious and took fright, some jumping into the sea to become various kinds of sharks which we now know as Ngarakkani Gummy Shark, Nenaratawi, Southern Fiddler Ray or Banjo Shark, Limi Cobbler Carpet Shark and Tulaki, Bronze Whaler or Cocktail Shark. These fish became the totems of the Witjarlung clan. Any others left in the camp also fled and they turned into birds.

Tjirbruki was then there alone, satisfied with what he had done and after resting, continued his journey. When he finally came to the right cave he went into the darkness and found a rock ledge to make a small platform on which to place Kulultuwi's remains. He then went further in, travelling to the depths of the cave before coming to an opening further inland at Wattanggal (Mt Hayfield). There he emerged covered in yellow dust which at the foot of the hill he shook off, forming yellow ochre at that place.

Saddened by these events and feeling old, Tjirbruki decided he no longer wished to live as a man. He travelled to Lonkowar (Rosetta Head) in Ngarrindjeri Country where he decided to rise into the sky and his spirit became a bird, tjirbruki (Glossy Ibis). His body became a martowalan memorial in the form of the baruke iron pyrites outcrop at Barrukungga, the place of hidden fire (Brukunga – north of Nairne in the Adelaide Hills).