

Foreword

In 1855 at Majorca near Maryborough Victoria, on the land of the Dja Dja Wurrung people, a baby boy is born to Mary Jane Tegurrk¹ and Harry Karakom Gorraakkum.² They name him Henry Harmony Nelson. In 1872,³ as a young man he travels with his tribe across country to Mount Beauty in the high country, for the Bogong Moth gathering and harvesting. It is there that he meets Maggie Stone McDonald, the girl that he will someday marry. Her mother died in child birth and she is being raised by her Grandparents, Billy and Mary (otherwise named by white man as King Billy and Queen Mary) of the Waywurru⁴ people which extends from Wangaratta to Corryong and into the Victorian high country here in Australia.

Also in the 1850s, but on the other side of the Indian Ocean, an Indian rebellion is brewing. The British East India Company has been tightening its grip across the many Indian states and principalities. It is a commercial company backed by the power of the British Crown and it employs many armed forces. After rising frustration amongst all Indian communities – Hindu, Muslim and Sikh – a revolt breaks out in 1857 with armed Indian rebels challenging and in some cases overcoming British forces. The Rebellion – known to the British and to the settlers all round the Empire as the Mutiny – is put down with great brutality but is to shape the lives of generations to come. The British government takes India over completely, setting up what they call the Raj and linking India with all other British colonies.

Amidst the turmoil in India one man's life is changed forever as he hops aboard a ship in 1854 bound for Mauritius. The British have taken over the French colony of Mauritius on the Indian Ocean coast of Africa and are shipping many unfree Indians there as indentured labourers to grow the sugar which is so profitable back in England and Europe. His name is believed to be Samson Peersahib and he will eventually build a life in Mauritius, marry Miriam Esther Thomas and have a son who will one day travel to Australia and become known as Thomas Shadrach James.

This is the story of how the grandchildren of Harry Karakom Gorraakkum, Samson Peersahib and King Billy crossed paths on the land of the Yorta Yorta people. It

1 Aka Judy Tigrook

2 There are many different spellings of his names on record.

3 Circa 1872–1874

4 N.B. Tindale states that Granny Maggie Nelson told him that her tribe was Barwidgee. Nanny Pris told me she was Yorta Yorta/Waywurru.

traces the life of Samson's son Thomas Shadrach James and the legacy he left for the Aboriginal people of Maloga, Cummeragunga and across our Nation, as told through the eyes of George Nelson.

I am George Nelson – the great-grandson of both Henry Harmony Nelson and Thomas Shadrach James and great-great-grandson of King Billy. I share this story through 'my eyes', my life growing up around Grampa James, the influence he and others had on my life and the amazing legacy he left for our people.

I am not an academic, nor am I an author. I am merely a man who has forever been grateful for how my Ancestors shaped my life. I have also been an avid keeper of the stories they told to me. This is not the end of the story nor the only story. It is just the story through *my eyes* and that is how I will tell it, written in my way, in the midst of my own life story, from the time of my very first memory, to my journey across the Indian Ocean to Mauritius at the age of 73, in the hope of learning more about Grampa's heritage; and then on to today, as I sit here now, remembering.