Joe Butler (left) and Jack Butler, Onslow, May 1985

Map showing Jiwarli-speaking area
THE EARTHQUAKE AND HALLEY'S COMET:
TWO JIWARLI TEXTS

Jack Butler and Peter Austin

In May 1985 Jack Butler related to Peter Austin two dramatic stories in Jiwarli of events which took place when he was a child. One event occurred while Jack was travelling near Glen Florrie station with his mother and stepfather. He described the occurrence in graphic terms. There was a loud noise, trees and the earth shook and water, together with the fish in it, was thrown out of the waterholes. At the time, no one knew what had happened; Jack was later to learn that it had been an earthquake. The other event described by Jack Butler was the appearance in the sky of Halley's comet in 1910.

The following Jiwarli texts are thus eyewitness accounts of two significant natural occurrences which date to early this century.

THE EARTHQUAKE

The first text describes an earthquake which took place while Jack Butler was travelling with his parents in Jiwarli traditional territory.

According to the Seismology Research Centre, Phillip Institute of Technology, a major earthquake (of approximate magnitude 7.5–8 on the Richter scale) took place at 07:18 GMT on 19 November 1906. The earthquake was centred at 22° S and 109° E, which is off the North-West Cape of Western Australia. Jack Butler's story took place at marntaangu, Mundong Well (see map), which is located at approximately 23° S and 115° E. The earthquake is described as coming from the north and heading east, a description which fits well with advancing shock waves from a point off North-West Cape. A date of 1906 also fits with Jack Butler and his younger brother Joe were the last two people who knew Jiwarli, the Aboriginal language originally spoken along the Henry River (mirtulyu) inland from Carnarvon in the north-west of Western Australia. Joe Butler understands Jiwarli (and several other Aboriginal languages) but prefers to speak English. All the Jiwarli data came from Jack Butler. Jack was born in May 1901 at wilukampal (Caraline Well) which was a shepherding outcamp east of Moroonah station. He died on 27 April 1986. This paper is a tribute to his collaboration in the recording of Jiwarli language and culture.

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1 Research on Jiwarli and neighbouring languages has been carried out since 1978 supported by grants from the Department of Anthropology, University of Western Australia, La Trobe University School of Humanities, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and the Australian Research Grants Scheme. For the classification of Jiwarli see Austin 1981a, 1983.

2 I am grateful to Mr Garry Gibson for providing this information.
the description; the two boys were being carried by their parents, though Jack is described as a 'little bigger', suggesting perhaps that he was able to walk. In 1906, Jack would have been five and his brother three. A date in late spring or early summer is also suggested by the fact that the family was travelling, there was water in the waterholes and there were nyirilpu (bardy grubs) in the river gum trees. It seems highly likely then that this text is a record of the 1906 earthquake, recalled almost eighty years later.

Apart from its historical interest as an account of an early Aboriginal experience of an earthquake, the text is also interesting for what it reveals of daily life of the people at that time. The country of the Jiwarli had been occupied by white settlers since the 1860s; Glen Florrie and neighbouring stations, for example, were established in the 1880s. Aborigines were conscripted into the pastoral industry as labourers but they seem to have maintained much of their traditional lifestyle outside the demands of the white economy. Apart from the presence of a puri, an introduced European axe, the text describes a purely traditional journey. Other descriptions of his childhood from Jack Butler support this contention. It was not until the 1920s, when Aborigines were impressed into the pearling industry, that the traditional cultural and social system was irreparably disrupted. Jack Butler was unable to be initiated because 'the whites had buggered it', although he did repay the debt to his potential initiator in the traditional manner.

The Text.

The following Jiwarli text was tape recorded at Onslow, Western Australia on 18 May 1985 and transcribed the same day. The transcription follows usual Australianist conventions; hyphens indicate morpheme boundaries and a morpheme-by-morpheme gloss as well as a free gloss is provided. For a full description of the grammar of Jiwarli the reader is referred to Austin 1985. Other Jiwarli texts may be found in Butler and Austin 1984b.

1. Pipi-ju-ngarla papu-ju-ngarla mimpurn-parnti yana-nyja karta-wu-rru
   mother-my-also father-my-also Glen Florrie-ablat2 go-past direct-dat-now
   kawarilari ngurnta-yi yarrkiya-la jirlirr-a papa ngurnta-iniya jirlirr-a.
   east allat lie-purpSS place name-loc claypan-loc water lie-imperfDS claypan-loc

3 The story must date from before 1908 since it was in that year that Jack’s sister Molly was born at Glen Florrie station.
4 See Webb and Webb 1983:47-64.
5 See Green 1981 for a detailed account of the practices of the pastoralists in this area at the time.
6 Austin fieldtape SP40; Austin Southern Pilbara fieldnotes, notebook 12, pp.76-78.
7 Abbreviations used in the morpheme-by-morpheme glosses are:
   ablat1 = ablative case; ablat2 = ablative case (see n.16); acc = accusative case; allat = allative case;
   coll = collective; comit = comitative; cont = continuous aspect; dat = dative case; def = definite;
   detrans = detransitivizer; dimin = diminutive; d1 = dual; erg = ergative case; excl = exclusive; fut =
   future tense; imperfDS = imperfective, different subject; imperfSS = imperfective, same subject;
   inchoat = inchoative verbaliser; intent = intensive mood; loc = locative case; pl = plural; pres =
   present tense; purpDS = purposive clause, different subject; purpSS = purposive clause, same subject;
   spec = specifier.
child-dl we dl-excl-acc carry on back-cont-imperfDS

I-def big-dimin-now

lie-purpSS that dat-ablat2-spec-def place name-loc-def Henry River-loc river-loc

5. Muntu-rru yana-rarri warlpari yarti-ngka-manta karlkany-tha\(^8\) ngunhi  
morning-now go-intent west allat river-loc-still fork-loc there  
marntaangu-wakara-la yarti-ngka.  
place name-?-loc river-loc

see-past we dl-excl-erg child-dl-erg river gum tree-loc this bardy grub  
piji kurrurtu-la.  
many river gum tree-loc

father-my-def I-loc say-past

I climb-fut

that later-clitic-again-now climb-past there-spec tree-loc axe-comit  
jinyji-yi\(^11\) wantha-rnu jalkunungu-wu ngurnu nyirlpu-wu.  
step-dat put-relSS grub type-dat that dat bardy grub-dat

10. Jalkunungu ngunha yini-thu nyirlpu.  
grub type that name-def bardy grub

11. Kumpa-irrari\(^12\) jalku-jaka mana-ngu wiingka-rnu.  
be-intent hook-comit get-imperfSS pull-imperfSS

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\(^8\) karlkany is a fork, as in a tree or road. It denotes here the place where the Henry River divides into the south and east branches.

\(^9\) nyirlpu is a generic term for edible wood grubs. The particular species is later identified as jalkunungu, which seems to be derived by a non-productive process from jalku, the term for the hook used to remove these grubs from trees (see line 11).

\(^10\) puri is an introduced European axe, as distinct from yirrangu the traditional stone axe.

\(^11\) jinyji are steps cut into trees to assist climbing.

\(^12\) The intent(ive) verb inflection is commonly used in narrative to signify an event which follows in sequence from foregoing events (see also lines 19, 20, 25, 28). It is particularly common to find such usage in procedural texts such as recipes (see Butler and Austin 1984b).
12. *Parru-nthu* *papu-ju* *wangka-ja* *yirrara-thu*.  
and then-again father-my say-past above-def

13. *Kurlkayi-nha nhaanha ngulha*\(^{13}\) *puni-a-rni* *yapurru*.  
hear-pres something ignor come-pres-hence north

14. *Nhuku-rru* *puni-a-rni* *nhaanha*.  
close-now come-pres-hence something

15. *Nhaanha ngulha-thu*.  
something ignor-def

close-inchoat-past that

17. *Parru-nthu* *ngunha wuru wartawarta-rr-niya-rru*.\(^{14}\)  
and then-again that tree shake-detrans-past-now

18. *Papu-ju ngunha julyu kurrkapa-rrinyja yalha-ngka-rru ngali-ju* father-my that grey hair jump down-past ground-loc-now we dl-excl  
*juma-katharra ngathi-iniya-rru yakarri-ngu wartawarta-rr-ya-rru*  
child-dl cry-imperfDS-now stand-imperfSS shake-detrans-imperfDS-now  
*wartawarta-ikurni-ya-la-rru*.  
shake-cont-imperfDS-loc-now\(^{15}\)

19. *Kurlkayi-lkarringu parlu-rryari-rru wiliwilirri-ya yirrara-nguru parlu-nguru*\(^{16}\)  
hear-intent rock-pl-now roll-imperfDS above-ablat loc-ablat

20. *Kumpa-rrari ngurru-pa kurlkayi-rru puni-ya ngula*  
sit-intent that-dat-spec listen to-imperfSS go-imperfDS that loc  
*wartantari-rru ngunha-pa*.  
est allat-now that-spec

\(^{13}\) *ngulha* glossed as 'ignor(ative)' follows an interrogative-indefinite term such as *nhaanha* 'what, something' to indicate that the indefinite interpretation is intended.

\(^{14}\) *rr* in *wartawartari* here is a restricted detransitiviser which converts transitive verb roots into intransitive verb stems.

\(^{15}\) Notice the juxtaposition of intransitive and transitive verbs 'to shake' here. The locative case on the subordinate different-subject verb indicates temporal location 'at the time that...'.

\(^{16}\) In checking the transcription Jack Butler stated that it was also possible to say *yirraparni parluparni*, using the other ablative case suffix. Jiwarli has two ablative cases, -*nguru* is basically a locational ablative while -*parnti* is a causal ablative (for full details of their distribution see Austin 1985). Interestingly, -*parnti* is the only ablative in the closely related Warrilyanga and Tharrkari languages (as well as the more distantly related Kanyara, Thalanyji, Purduna and Payungu), while -*nguru* is the form of the ablative in Ngayarta languages (such as Jurruru) spoken immediately north of Jiwarli.
TWO JIWARLI TEXTS

   something ignor

   ignorant-time old man-pl

23. Papa ngunha ngurnta-iniya juma.
   water that lie-imperfDS small

   that-spec go-past that loc east allat-now

   look-intent water-loc

   water-def that that loc-now throw-past

   shake-detrans-past that ground-def

28. Nhanya-rarri punyji-nyjarri-nha.\(^{17}\)
   look-intent fish type-pl-acc

   there-now lie-pres river sand-loc flat ground-loc-now

Translation.

1. My mother and father went from Glen Florrie direct east to camp at Yarrkiya claypan where there was water in the claypan.

2. They were carrying us two children on their backs.

3. I was big then.

4. After that we stayed at Mirni on the Henry River.

5. In the morning we went west still in the river to the fork there at Marntaangu.

6. We two children saw lots of bardy grubs in the gum trees.

\(^{17}\) punyji are described as a type of small freshwater fish; the particular species has not been identified.
7. My father said to me:

8. ‘I’ll climb up’.

9. Later he climbed up there in the tree cutting steps with an axe for the *jalkunungu* grubs.

10. *Jalkunungu* is the name of that grub.

11. He was getting them with a hook and pulling them out.

12. Then my father said up above:

13. ‘I can hear something coming in the north.

14. Something is getting close’.

15. We didn’t know what it was.

16. It got close.

17. And then the tree shook.

18. My old father jumped down to the ground as we two children stood crying, as the ground was shaking and being shaken.

19. We heard the rocks rolling down from the hill up above.

20. We sat listening to it going east.

21. We didn’t know what it was.

22. The old people didn’t know then.

23. A little water was lying there.

24. That thing went east now.

25. We looked in the water.

26. The water had been thrown out there.

27. The ground had shaken.

28. We looked at the *punyji* fish.

29. They were lying out on the river sand in the open.
TWO JIWARLI TEXTS

HALLEY'S COMET

The return of Halley's comet this year to that part of its orbit closest to the earth captured
the imagination of the Australian general public. The event, which occurs approximately
every seventy-six years, attracted wide media coverage and aroused a great deal of interest.
Telecom established a comet hotline and there were a large number of publications dealing
with the comet, its orbit, its nature and possible origins, and the history of its sightings by
observers on earth. Jack Butler witnessed the comet in the natural observatory of the out­
back on its previous appearance in the earth's skies in 1910.

In 1910 Jack was living at Glen Florrie Station (see map) and had begun riding horses and
doing yard work on the station. One night early in the year he saw what he describes as a
star with a long tail cross the sky. It was so bright that kangaroos could be seen crawling on
the hills near the station. According to Jack, the white stockmen said the light was so intense
that they could count the sheep in a mob they were looking after. In May 1985 Jack Butler
told the story of seeing Halley's comet in Jiwarli.

The Text.

This Jiwarli text was tape recorded at Onslow on 18 May 1985 and transcribed the same
day. The format is the same as the earthquake text above.

   that-time sit-past that dat-ablat2-spec-def

   that-dat-ablat2-def I sit-past

   come-past-hence return-imperfSS Glen Florrie-loc-def house-loc

   boss there-spec

5. Parru-nthu nhanya-nyja kuntharti-jaka partara ngula.
   and then-again see-past tail-comit star that loc

   that star-def east tail-def here sky-loc-now lie-imperfDS

18 SP 40; notebook 12, pp.78-80.
19 maajaru is a loan from English 'master'.
   sit-past sun-loc-sembl-now see-imperfSS hill kangaroo-dat crawl-imperfDS-dat
   parlu-ngka yirara.
   hill-loc top

   afraid-coll-imperfSS-now sit-past old man-pl

9. Nhaanha ngunha nganthura-rla?
   what that we pl-allat

    now long time get up-past

11. Ngangkarnu.
    ignorant

12. Kumpa-ja ngunhi-pa juru-ngka-kunti-rru kartaju-la nhanya-ngu
    sit-past there-spec sun-loc-sembl-now night-loc see-imperfSS
    kurrpirli-yi mathan-ku parlu-ngka warrkalari-ya-wu
    plains kangaroo-dat hill kangaroo hill-loc crawl-imperfDS-dat
    papa-rla.
    water-allat

13. Kumpa-ja nguru-parnti-pa-thu ngurru-nyjarri julyu-nyjarri
    sit-past that dat-ablat2-spec-def old man-pl grey hair-pl
    kurilkanyu-rru-ngu.
    thinking-inchoat-imperfSS

14. Nhaanha ngunha-pa?
    what that-spec

15. Nhaanha ngunha-pa nganthura-rla?
    what that-spec we pl-allat

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20 Dative case is assigned to mathan 'hill kangaroo' because it is the direct object of an imperfective dependent clause (see Austin 1981b). Note the case agreement on the following dependent verb.
21 marri is an intransitive verbaliser (glossed 'collective') which takes a non-singular subject.
22 Note the lack of a verb in this line (and line 15).
23 Dative case appears on kurrpirli and mathan for the same reason as noted in n.20 above. Note the coordination of the two nouns expressed by juxtaposition.
TWO JIWARLI TEXTS

   now long time presence-inchoat-past

17. Payal-pa-rrru ngunha-pa
    that's all-clitic-now that-spec

    one-loc that-spec night-loc

    another-loc night-loc look for-past-now old man-pl

20. Aa wantha-wu-rrru ngunha-pa-thu yana-nyja kuntharti-jaka partara?
    oh where-dat-now that-spec-def go-past tail-comit star

Translation.
1. Then after that I was (there).

2. After that I was (there).

3. I came back to the house at Glen Florrie.

4. The boss was there.

5. Then I saw a star with a tail there.

6. The tail of the star was here in the east.

7. It was just like daytime and you could see hill kangaroos crawling about on top of the hill.

8. The old men were afraid.

9. ‘What was that (coming) to us?’

10. ‘This is the first time it has appeared’.

11. They didn’t know.

12. It was just like daytime in the night and you could see the kangaroos on the hill crawling to water.

13. After that the old grey-haired men thought:

24 The English word ‘only’ appears on the tape before kayanura. It was deleted by Jack during transcription.
14. 'What was that?'
15. 'What was that (coming) to us?'
16. This was the first time it turned up.
17. That was all there was.
18. That was on one night.
19. On another night the old men looked for it.
20. 'Oh where has that star with a tail gone?'

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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______ Jiwarli texts. La Trobe University, computer printout, 1984b. MS.