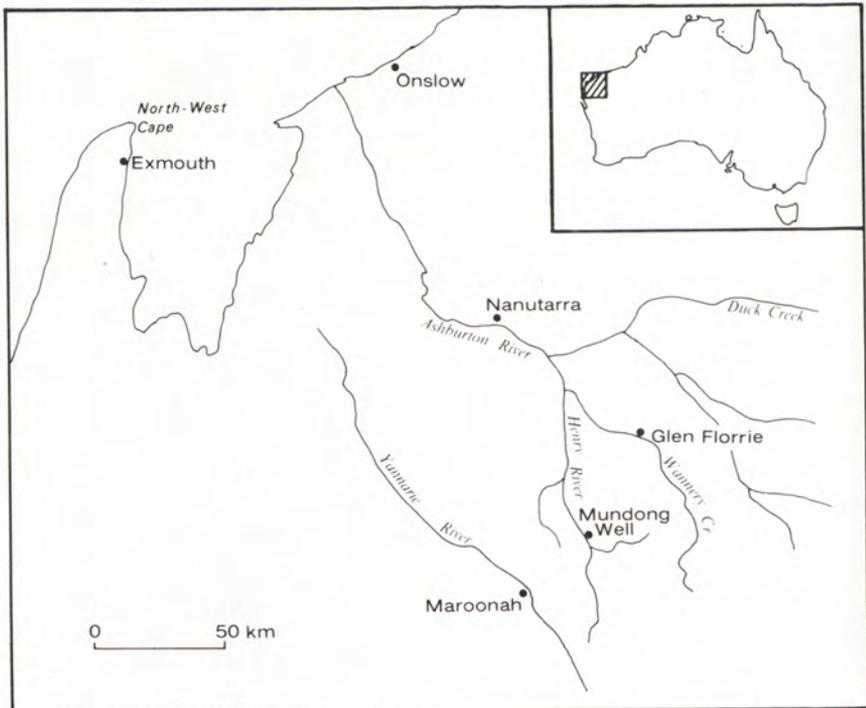




Joe Butler (left) and Jack Butler, Onslow, May 1985



Map showing Jiwari-speaking area

THE EARTHQUAKE AND HALLEY'S COMET:

TWO JIWARLI TEXTS¹

Jack Butler and Peter Austin

In May 1985 Jack Butler related to Peter Austin two dramatic stories in Jiwari 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 Jiwari 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 Jiwari traditional territory.

According to the Seismology Research Centre, Phillip Institute of Technology,² 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 Jiwari, the Aboriginal language originally spoken along the Henry River (mirtulyu) inland from Carnarvon in the north-west of Western Australia. Joe Butler understands Jiwari (and several other Aboriginal languages) but prefers to speak English. All the Jiwari data came from Jack Butler. Jack was born in May 1901 at wilukampal (Caroline Well) which was a shepherding outcamp east of Moroona station. He died on 27 April 1986. This paper is a tribute to his collaboration in the recording of Jiwari language and culture.

Peter Austin is presently senior lecturer and Head of the Division of Linguistics, La Trobe University. He has carried out linguistic fieldwork in northern New South Wales, in northern South Australia and the north-west of Western Australia. His current research focus is the Western Australia languages for which he is preparing dictionaries, grammars and text collections.

¹ Research on Jiwari 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 Jiwari 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.³ 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 *nyirlpu* (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;⁴ Glen Florrie and neighbouring stations, for example, were established in the 1880s. Aborigines were conscripted into the pastoral industry as labourers⁵ 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 bugged 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.⁶ 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.⁷

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 = intentive mood; loc = locative case; pl = plural; pres = present tense; purpDS = purposive clause, different subject; purpSS = purposive clause, same subject; spec = specifier.

TWO JIWARLI TEXTS

2. *Juma-kutharra ngali-ju-nha jimpingka-lkurni-ya.*
 child-dl we dl-excl-acc carry on back-cont-imperfDS
3. *Ngatha-thu parnka-murtu-rru.*
 I-def big-dimin-now
4. *Ngurnta-yi ngurnu-parnti-pa-thu mirni-ngka-thu mirtulyu-la yarti-ngka.*
 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-tha⁸ ngunhi*
 morning-now go-intent west allat river-loc-still fork-loc there
marntaangu-wakara-la yarti-ngka.
 place name.-?-loc river-loc
6. *Nhanya-nyja ngali-ju-ru juma-kutharra-lu kurrurtu-la yinha nyirlpu⁹*
 see-past we dl-excl-erg child-dl-erg river gum tree-loc this bardy grub
piji kurrurtu-la.
 many river gum tree-loc
7. *Papu-ju-thu ngatha-la wangka-ja.*
 father-my-def I-loc say-past
8. *Ngatha kurla-lka.*
 I climb-fut
9. *Ngunha payal-pa-nthu-rru kurla-rminyja ngunhi-pa wuru-ngka puri-jaka¹⁰*
 that later-clitic-again-now climb-past there-spec tree-loc axe-comit
jinyji-yi¹¹ 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-irarri¹² jalku-jaka mana-ngu wiingka-rnu.*
 be-intent hook-comit get-imperfSS pull-imperfSS

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
16. *Nhukuwirla-rru-nyja ngunha*.
close-inchoat-past that
17. *Parru-nthu ngunha wuru wartawarta-rru-nyja-rru*.¹⁴
and then-again that tree shake-detrans-past-now
18. *Papu-ju ngunha julyu kurrkapa-rrninyja yalha-ngka-rru ngali-ju*
father-my that grey hair jump down-past ground-loc-now we dl-excl
juma-kutharra ngathi-iniya-rru yakarri-ngu wartawarta-rru-ya-rru
child-dl cry-imperfDS-now stand-imperfSS shake-detrans-imperfDS-now
wartawarta-lkurni-ya-la-rru.
shake-cont-imperfDS-loc-now¹⁵
19. *Kurlkayi-lkarringu parlu-nyjarri-rru wiliwilirri-ya yirrara-nguru parlu-nguru*¹⁶
hear-intent rock-pl-now roll-imperfDS above-ablat1 hill-ablat1
20. *Kumpa-irarri ngurnu-pa kurlkayi-rru puni-ya ngula*
sit-intent that-dat-spec listen to-imperfSS go-imperfDS that loc
wartantari-rru ngunha-pa.
east 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 *rru* in *wartawartarri-* 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 *yirraparnti parluparnti*, using the other ablative case suffix. Jiwari 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 Warriyangka and Tharrkari languages (as well as the more distantly related Kanyara languages, Thalanyji, Purduna and Payungu), while *-nguru* is the form of the ablative in Ngayarta languages (such as Jurruru) spoken immediately north of Jiwari.

TWO JIWARLI TEXTS

21. *Nhaanha ngulha.*
something ignor
22. *Ngangkarnu-purra ngurru-nyjarri.*
ignorant-time old man-pl
23. *Papa ngunha ngurnta-iniya juma.*
water that lie-imperfDS small
24. *Ngunha-pa yana-nyja ngula wartantari-rru.*
that-spec go-past that loc east allat-now
25. *Nhanya-rarri papa-ngka.*
look-intent water-loc
26. *Papa-thu ngunha ngula-rru juku-rninyja.*
water-def that that loc-now throw-past
27. *Wartawarta-rri-nyja ngunha yalha-thu.*
shake-dettrans-past that ground-def
28. *Nhanya-rarri punyji-nyjarri-nha.*¹⁷
look-intent fish type-pl-acc
29. *Ngunhi-rru ngurnta-inha yaripirli-la parkarra-la-rru.*
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.¹⁸ The format is the same as the earthquake text above.

1. *Ngunha-purra kumpa-ja ngurnu-parnti-pa-thu.*
that-time sit-past that dat-ablat2-spec-def
2. *Ngurnu-parnti-thu ngatha kumpa-ja.*
that-dat-ablat2-def I sit-past
3. *Yana-nyja-rni parlirri-ngu mimpurn-ta-thu maya-ngka.*
come-past-hence return-imperfSS Glen Florrie-loc-def house-loc
4. *Maajaru*¹⁹ *ngunhi-pa.*
boss there-spec
5. *Parru-nthu nhanya-nyja kuntharti-jaka partara ngula.*
and then-again see-past tail-comit star that loc
6. *Ngunha partara-thu wartantu kuntharti-thu nyirnta jirnti-ngka-rru ngurnta-iniya.*
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'.

7. *Kumpa-ja juru-ngka-kunti-rru nhanya-ngu mathan-ku*²⁰ *warrkalarri-ya-wu*
 sit-past sun-loc-sembl-now see-imperfSS hill kangaroo-dat crawl-imperfDS-dat
parlu-ngka yirrara.
 hill-loc top
8. *Jirril-marri-ngu-rru*²¹ *kumpa-ja ngurru-nyjarri.*
 afraid-coll-imperfSS-now sit-past old man-pl
9. *Nhaanha ngunha nganthurra-rla?*²²
 what that we pl-allat
10. *Kuwarti maarru warnti-ja.*
 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*²³ *mathan-ku parlu-ngka warrkalarri-ya-wu*
 plains kangaroo-dat hill kangaroo hill-loc crawl-imperfDS-dat
papa-rla.
 water-allat
13. *Kumpa-ja ngurnu-parnti-pa-thu ngurru-nyjarri julyu-nyjarri*
 sit-past that dat-ablat2-spec-def old man-pl grey hair-pl
kurlkanyu-rru-ngu.
 thinking-inchoat-imperfSS
14. *Nhaanha ngunha-pa?*
 what that-spec
15. *Nhaanha ngunha-pa nganthurra-rla?*
 what that-spec we pl-allat

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 co-ordination of the two nouns expressed by juxtaposition.

TWO JIWARLI TEXTS

16. *Kuwarti maarru murlku-rru-nyja.*
 now long time presence-inchoat-past
17. *Payal-pa-rru ngunha-pa*
 that's all-clitic-now that-spec
18. *Kayanu-ra*²⁴ *ngunha-pa kartaju-la.*
 one-loc that-spec night-loc
19. *Yanyja-la kartaju-la kurni-nyja-rru ngurru-nyjarri.*
 another-loc night-loc look for-past-now old man-pl
20. *Aa wantha-wu-rru 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

- Austin, P. 'Proto-Kanyara and proto-Mantharta historical phonology', *Lingua*, 54, 1981a:295-333.
- 'Case marking in Southern Pilbara languages', *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, 1, 1981b: 211-226.
- The classification of southern Pilbara languages. Paper presented at Pacific Science Congress, Dunedin, New Zealand, 1983.
- A reference grammar of Jiwarli. La Trobe University, computer printout, 1985. MS.
- Butler, J. and P. Austin. *Jiwarli stories*. La Trobe University, Mimeo, 1984a.
- Jiwarli texts. La Trobe University, computer printout, 1984b. MS.
- Green, N. 'Aborigines and white settlers in the nineteenth century', in Stannage, C.T. ed. *A new history of Western Australia*. Perth, 1981:72-123.
- Webb, M. and A. Webb. *The edge of Empire*. Perth, 1983.