

# *The Desecration of Natural Power Sites*

*Charles Shahar*

Natural power sites are places where energy is especially concentrated, usually because of the way it is directed or funneled by the surrounding environment. Such currents of energy often arise because of specific geophysical characteristics, including the composition and contours of the landscape. These factors interact with fluctuations in the earth's magnetic and electrical fields, weather patterns, the solar wind and the moon's gravity to create high-energy environments.

These energies are not so subtle, because sometimes even people who do not pay attention to such phenomena will notice that they feel different when they walk through such places. Some of the more obvious symptoms may include tingling skin, strange sensations or pressure in the head or face, lightheadedness and even a sensation of being detached from one's body.

The energies that flow through these sites can have more than just physical effects. They can have an impact on the consciousness of a person as well. When visiting these sites, a person can feel quite meditative, experience profound revelations or become deeply introspective. They may cry for no apparent reason or have deep feelings bubble to the surface. In some cases, these experiences can be life-altering.

Many of these power sites are also considered sacred by indigenous populations and their spiritual and communal lives are intimately linked to them. Some native mythologies speak about how such settings were created by divine beings, still thought to dwell in these places. These native peoples also believe that the spirits of their ancestors are found in the forms and figures of the natural environment and that these spirits can be summoned through sacred ceremonies that invoke help or protection. Many native tribes consider themselves protectors and custodians of these sites and their interests are often at odds with those who seek to exploit such places.

Power sites are under threat. There are numerous reasons behind this state of affairs but one factor relates to their popularity. Because they have a certain atmosphere and intensity and are often beautiful and striking in their appearance, not only are genuine seekers and pilgrims attracted to these special places but also tourists, land developers and general entrepreneurs. Each of these latter groups represents a different level of exploitation.

Industrial development and tourism often obscure or diminish the natural power of such sites. A highway, restaurant, souvenir shop, hotel or resort will corrupt what was once a pristine environment. There is no faster way to erode the energy of a site than to mix it with commercial or industrial activities. The energies that naturally flowed through the countryside become blocked or diverted, corrupted by human insensitivity to the subtle aspects of the landscape. On another level, human transaction and general interaction make for busy and scattered emotional and mental atmospheres.

For instance, tourists bring with them their busy minds, their loud chatter and their frenetic emotions. But the energy at a true power site will sometimes override such vibrations and sometimes even tourists have what seem like out of the ordinary or memorable experiences at the site. On the other hand, for the spiritual person their presence may be annoying or distracting. So it is better to frequent such places when there are fewer tourists around, in the early morning perhaps.

Tourists can cause significant damage to a natural power site: trample over sacred grounds, deface a place by uprooting objects, moving them around, carving into them, or carrying them away. They can also leave litter behind or even urinate on the grounds. All of this can impact the energetic signature of a site. Some tourists are quite respectful but others have much less refined sensibilities and are

oblivious to the consequences of their actions.

Aside from damaging physical property, the behaviours of some tourists may be offensive on a different scale. These sacred sites have special vibrations and one should approach them with respect. Loud, boisterous, spiritually unconscious people walking through such sites pollute the environment on numerous levels. The pristine energies get mixed with these coarser vibrations, creating disturbances that are resented not only by aware people but by ethereal beings as well.

Most natural power sites, particularly those in remote corners of the world, are attractive for nature spirits. These ethereal creatures live in a parallel world to humanity but often shun the company of people whose vibrations seem heavy or coarse. Genuine pilgrims to sacred sites may be considered with less caution (or revulsion) as are the indigenous peoples of these areas who are often connected to these subtle beings through the ceremonies and visions of shamanic elders. These nature spirits are part of the energetic fabric of a place and their presence can be felt in a subliminal way if a person has a particularly refined disposition.

A good example of the desecration of power sites involves Uluru (Ayres Rock) in Australia. Indigenous Australians have fought a long battle to restrict access to Uluru by tourists. This rock is extremely sacred for Indigenous tribes, particularly the Anangu. They believe that ancestral spirits formed this site during the creation of the world and that they are descendants of these beings and are therefore responsible for its protection<sup>1</sup>. The Anangu have constructed numerous paths that connect the sacred spaces around the site. They use these trails and never otherwise climb on Uluru itself because they consider such an act to be highly disrespectful<sup>2</sup>. They also believe that photographing or filming the rock is like taking away a part of its soul<sup>3</sup>.

The indigenous people manage Uluru jointly with the government of Australia. Although the Aboriginal peoples have asked people not to climb the rock, many tourists still attempt to do so; some camp out on the top overnight. Many think nothing about taking pictures of it. In 2010, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were outraged when a controversial Australian football personality was photographed hitting a golf ball off the rock and another man was pictured naked on top<sup>4</sup>. These are only a few examples of the rampant desecration that continuously takes place there.

Attitudes regarding the site are quite polarized. An Anangu who works as a ranger in the park surrounding Uluru notes, "If Anangu people came to your church and walked all over the seats and the altar, how would you feel?"<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, one Australian visitor, who reflected the attitude among many non-Aboriginal Australians, remarked: "I think it's a crock of shit that they ask you not to climb. It's our country too."<sup>6</sup> As these comments suggest, it is a tricky balance between the desires of tourists to visit and appreciate the majesty of this site and the deep reverence Australia's First Peoples have for Uluru.

Unconscious people will never understand the Indigenous populations' ties to the site. Each encroachment by tourists who trample through its sacred grounds is an intrusion, not just on a physical level but on an energetic one as well. It erodes the power of the site and it demeans the people who look after it. For Aboriginal peoples, every violation feels like an assault on their own body.

One of the most difficult sentiments for outsiders to understand is the Anangu's wish that individuals not take pictures of Uluru. An Anangu elder pointedly remarks:

*"The tourist comes here with their camera taking pictures all over. What has he got? Another photo to take home, keep part of Uluru. He should get another lens - see straight inside. Wouldn't see big rock then. He would see Kuniya [carpet snake] living right inside there as from the beginning. He might*

- 1 The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) website. Retrieved from <http://aiatsis.gov.au/exhibitions/tjukurpa>.
- 2 Retrieved from [www.sacredland.org/uluru](http://www.sacredland.org/uluru).
- 3 Gaines, Patrice. Uluru: Sacred Ground. Essence (Time Inc.). September 2002, Vol. 33, Issue 5, p. 208.
- 4 Donnan, Shawn. *Summit of an Aborigine Battle for Respect*. Christian Science Monitor. February 18, 2000. Retrieved from [www.csmonitor.com/2000/0218/p1s4.html](http://www.csmonitor.com/2000/0218/p1s4.html).
- 5 James, Sarah. *Constructing the Climb: Visitor Decision-making at Uluru*. Geographical Research. December 2007; 45(4): p. 401.
- 6 Abitbol, Chantal. *Uluru: The Debate Over Climbing Australia's Sacred Monolith*. CNNGo, August 17, 2011. Retrieved from <http://travel.cnn.com/sydney/visit/uluru-should-you-climb-world-heritage-sacred-monolith-486495>.

throw his camera away then.”<sup>7</sup>

These comments are a plea for people to see the situation from the Anangu perspective, using a lens that reveals a much more subtle reality than a mundane perception can appreciate. This perspective requires an appreciation of reality that sees behind the world of obvious forms and phenomena. Getting in touch with the soul of a place is not something that comes easily to the typical mindset of non-indigenous people.

I have thought carefully about the Anangus' pleas not to take pictures of Uluru. I enjoy photography and considered becoming a professional photographer at one point. From a personal perspective, I know that sometimes I try to capture the special ambience of places through my photography. When I view the pictures at home, in a slight way I rekindle the special feelings I had there. However, if I am focused only on my photography I won't get the full experience of a place and its more subtle aspects will largely escape my detection. By not practicing reverence and attention while I am there, such an attitude demeans the special significance and power of a site, as does relying on an indirect and much-diluted experience at home.

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In an article entitled *Making Places Sacred*, Thomas Bender reflects sentiments similar to the Anangu elder and reaches conclusions in line with my own. He describes the reactions of a friend regarding how tourism was destroying the sacred qualities of the great cathedrals of Europe, powerful energetic sites in their own right. The friend remarked, “Each person came and took away a little of the cathedrals — in their cameras, in their minds or in their conversation — and now nothing remains.”<sup>8</sup> Bender concludes that we lessen the soul of places when we take without giving, or enter them without reverence.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps the most heart-wrenching destruction I have noted of a natural power site is the forest fire that was set by a negligent hiker in 2011, which destroyed thousands of hectares in Chile's Torres de Paine National Park in Patagonia. This park is among the most vibrationally pristine of all locations on earth. The myriad nature spirits that populate this part of the world are truly wondrous and the fire did untold harm to their domain, particularly on the ethereal level.

Industrial development, commercial exploitation and general human encroachment are lamentable issues. Administrators and leaders of modern societies generally have a 'flat-level' consciousness: they often see things in starkly political or economic terms and respond to the natural environment in callous and insensitive ways. Every time a natural power site is damaged or destroyed because of human ignorance, the vitality of the earth is negatively affected. Areas that previously had wonderfully pristine energies will now become energetically anemic.

Imagine a pristine environment, one with a sacred power, abused and destroyed by human ignorance; perhaps replaced with factories, strip mines, petroleum refineries, clear-cut forests or ski resorts. It is a tragic scenario. Those who inflict this type of damage on the body of the earth and its energy system must likewise be disconnected from the life force within themselves. The fact is that if we deny our innate spirituality, we will also ignore or discount the spirit within nature; hence the adage “as within, so without.” That is why I believe that although political (legislative) reforms and educational campaigns related to environmental conservation are important, respect for sacred sites must also be part of an overall spiritual awakening in humanity.

### Biography

Charles Shahar is a clinical psychologist by training, and social researcher by vocation. He has lived and studied Vedanta philosophy in India, and has been teaching yoga and meditation to diverse populations for over 17 years.



7 James, op. cit., pp. 398-399.

8 Bender, Thomas. *Making Places Sacred*. In James A. Swan (Ed.), *The Power of Place and Human Environments*. Gateway Books, Bath, United Kingdom, 1993, p. 321.

9 Bender, op. cit., p. 322.