

To climb or not to climb?

'The sacred deed done at Australia's mighty heart'



'Looking Down the Climb' (Photo: Wesley Stacey, 1974).

by

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Candidate's Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of the author's knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

Hannah Hueneke

Date:

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Abstract

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park is a part of a sacred landscape and homeland of local Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people. Uluru is also a national icon visited by more than 400 000 people annually. In 1985, freehold title to the land around Uluru was handed back to Anangu traditional owners, on the condition that they leased it back to the Director of National Parks and Wildlife for 99 years. The park is jointly managed between traditional owners and Parks Australia. Climbing Uluru is a popular activity in the national park, despite the traditional owners' request that visitors respect their law and culture as well as their concern for visitors' safety by not climbing. This thesis investigates visitor motivations for climbing or not climbing, and visitors' responses to the Anangu request. It uses a cultural geography approach encompassing historical research and a survey of park visitors to examine the way that the landscapes of Uluru and of the climb are imagined, produced, read and experienced.

Table of Contents

Candidate's Declaration	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Maps	vi
List of Figures	vi
List of Tables	vii
List of Boxes	vii
List of Plates.....	vii
List of acronyms and abbreviations	vii
Glossary and Terms.....	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Research aims.....	4
1.2 A geographic approach	4
1.3 Research questions	4
1.4 Relevance of the research.....	5
1.5 Note to the reader	5
1.6 Thesis structure	5
Chapter 2: Research methods	7
2.1 Research principles	7
2.2 Data collection	7
2.3 Data analysis	9
Chapter 3: Perspectives on tourism and the climb	10
3.1 Motivations for travel.....	10
3.2 Producing sights	11
3.3 Uluru the outback myth.....	11
3.4 Tourist performances	12
3.5 Overview of previous studies on the climb.....	13
3.6 Summary	14
Chapter 4: Whose history? Placing the climb in context	15
4.1 The climb	15
4.2 Representations of Anangu	20
4.3 Summary	29

Chapter 5: Results	32
5.1 Characteristics of the visitor population.....	32
5.2 Climbing behaviour.....	36
5.3 Journey to the base of the climb.....	39
5.4 Discourse analysis: opinion positions on the climb	50
5.5 Focus on Japanese visitors	60
Chapter 6: Conclusions	62
6.1 Imagining Uluru	62
6.2 Contesting the climb	63
6.3 Performance: producing local people and local spaces.....	64
6.4 Reading ‘signs’ but not the signs	67
6.5 Conclusions	71
Chapter 7: References	73
Appendix 1: Additional primary sources	80
Appendix 2: 2004 Survey form	81
Appendix 3: 2006 Survey form	84
Appendix 4: Human ethics research	87

List of Maps

Map 1: Location of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park	6
Map 2: Locations of key ‘signs’ about the request in the national park and surrounds.....	45
Map 3: Base of climb area.....	47

List of Figures

Figure 1: Two diagrams of joint management at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park	3
Figure 2: Cartoonist’s interpretation of claims of non-Indigenous sacredness at Uluru	26
Figure 3 Tourist numbers at Uluru between 1950-2005.....	29
Figure 4 Timeline of events at Uluru 1872-2005	30
Figure 5: Histogram illustrating visitors’ length of stay.....	33
Figure 6: Number of visitors in each major nationality group	34
Figure 7: Comparing the age profile of Australian visitors and overseas visitors.....	35
Figure 8: Graph illustrating percentage of visitors climbing from each major nationality.....	37
Figure 9: Differences in climbing rate according to gender and nationality	38
Figure 10: Percentage of visitors climbing in each age group.....	38
Figure 11: Age profile of climbers according to whether Australian or overseas	39
Figure 12 Conceptual outline of decision-making process	39
Figure 13: Percentage of interviews in which different sources of information about the climb request were mentioned	41
Figure 14: Aspects of the park visitors most enjoyed.	50
Figure 15: Aspects of the park visitors least enjoyed.....	50
Figure 16: Uluru in a global network of sacred sites.....	58

List of Tables

Table 1: Previous studies on the Uluru climb	13
Table 2: Number of visitors from other nationalities	34
Table 3: Comparing the ratio of men to women in different nationality groups	35
Table 4: Comparison of climbing rates over time	36
Table 5: Showing sample size and percentage climbing from each major nationality	36
Table 6: Issues about the climb and the Anangu request	51
Table 7: Translating Anangu sacred values: religious analogies about Uluru and the climb	59
Table 8: The climb as a transitional ritual	66

List of Boxes

Box 1: Producing historical colour for tourist consumption	22
Box 2: ‘Who nicked the coke machine?’ Messages from the summit	28
Box 3: Effective cross-cultural communication	42
Box 4: Personal communication of the message	43
Box 5: Around the base of Uluru	48
Box 6: Misunderstanding Indigenous culture	53
Box 7: National space rubbing off	55
Box 8: Free-to-air sacredness	59

List of Plates

Plate 1: An early ascent of Ayers Rock	16
Plate 2: Climbing Ayers Rock before the installation of the chain	18
Plate 3: Posing at the summit cairn	20
Plate 4: Yulara/Ayers Rock Resort	23
Plate 5: ‘The rock belongs to all Australians!’	24
Plate 6: ‘Today the rock no longer belongs to all Australians!’	24
Plate 7: Dressed ready to climb, tourists contemplate the sign at the base	32
Plate 8: ‘Climb open’ sign at park entry and fee station	46
Plate 9: ‘We don’t climb’: interpretive signage at the base of the climb	46
Plate 10: View from the Mala car park (base of climb)	49
Plate 11: View from Kuniya car park	49
Plate 12: Advertising the Mutitjulu Foundation	49
Plate 13: Japanese advertising for tours to Uluru 2006-2007	61
Plate 14: The very base of the climb	65
Plate 15: Australian rituals on national territory	67

List of acronyms and abbreviations

CLC: Central Land Council

NTTC: Northern Territory Tourist Commission

UKTNP: Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park

Glossary and Terms

Aṅangu¹: Western Desert Aboriginal person or people (generally those Aboriginal people with traditional affiliations to the Park)

Ayers Rock: see Uluru/Ayers Rock

Kata Tjuṯa: Literally ‘many heads’, the term refers to a group of 36 steep-sided domes located approximately 50 kilometres from Uluru. The highest dome was renamed ‘Mount Olga’ by the explorer Ernest Giles in 1872, and the collection of domes is often referred to as ‘the Olgas’. In 1993 the feature was officially dual-named Mount Olga/Kata Tjuṯa. According to the Place Names Committee for the Northern Territory, dual naming is used to indicate that both names are equally important and can be used individually or together (Northern Territory Department of Planning and Infrastructure 2006). The dual name still stands, although in 2002 the order was reversed at the request of the regional Tourism Association so that it is now officially named Kata Tjuṯa/Mount Olga (Northern Territory Department of Planning and Infrastructure 2006).

Minga: literally ‘ants’ but now often used by Aṅangu to refer to tourists

Mt Olga: see Kata Tjuṯa

Nguraṯitja: traditional owners and relevant Aboriginal people

Parks Australia: Federal national park management agency

Pirānpa: literally ‘white’ but now used to mean non-Aboriginal people

Tjukurpa: the Pitjantjatjara word for Law: history, knowledge, religion and morality that forms the basis of Aṅangu values and how Aṅangu conduct their lives and look after their country, plan, story, message

Uluru/Ayers Rock: Uluru was renamed Ayers Rock by the explorer Gosse in 1873. That was its official name until 1993, when it was dual-named Ayers Rock/Uluru. The order of these names was reversed in 2002 as described above. In public discourse, naming practices reflect this history, and also have in some contexts political and semiotic connotations that distinguish a national rock from an Aṅangu sacred site (Brereton 1995). This thesis uses the name Uluru except when directly quoting Ayers Rock, or when discussing the historical period in which non-Aṅangu exclusively used the term Ayers Rock.

Yulara: town located just outside Uluru-Kata Tjuṯa National Park, gazetted in 1975, consisting almost exclusively of resort accommodation. The resort opened as Yulara Resort.

Ayers Rock Resort: the resort was renamed in 1992 (it is currently owned by the hotel chain Voyages, and known as the Voyages Ayers Rock Resort)

¹ Explanations of Aṅangu terms are taken from the UKTNP Plan of management (2000).

Chapter 1: Introduction

'Here Landeth [names of four men], at Ayers Rock – a magnificent Moment in the History of Australia' (Entry in summit visitors' book, Uluru, 29/6/91).

'This is Anangu land and we welcome you. Look around and learn so that you can know something about Anangu and understand that Anangu culture is strong and really important. We want our visitors to learn about our place and listen to us Anangu. Now a lot of visitors are only looking at sunset and climbing Uluru. That rock is really important and sacred. You shouldn't climb it! Climbing is not a proper tradition for this place' (Tony Tjamiwa, traditional owner of Uluru, in Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Plan of Management, 2000:119).

The area that now includes Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park is part of a cultural landscape and homeland of local Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara speaking people, who refer to themselves as Anangu. In the past, Anangu often visited Uluru as they travelled across the wide expanse of their country. Today, Anangu live in widely scattered communities around the Western Desert, but continue to travel frequently across their land (see Map 1). The first tourists arrived at Uluru just fifty years ago, but today more than 400 000 people visit the park every year. Uluru is widely imagined as representing and epitomising Australia. It is a place where nationhood is celebrated and has been described as 'Australia's heart and most significant site for black and white Australians' (Australian Broadcasting Commission 2005). Uluru was chosen as the launching site for the 1988 Bicentenary celebrations advertising campaign, the Sydney Olympics torch relay in 2000, and the National Australia Day celebrations in 2005. The reconciliation movement that gained widespread support in the 1990s has embraced Uluru as a shared symbol (Butler 2000; Hill 1992; Brereton 1994).

The national park was created in 1958, and in 1985 freehold title to the park was handed back to the Uluru-Kata Tjuta Aboriginal Land Trust (representing traditional owners), on the condition that they leased it to the Director of National Parks for 99 years. Under the lease agreement, the park is jointly managed between Anangu and Parks Australia, the park management branch of the federal Department of the Environment and Heritage. The lease provides for traditional owners to receive a percentage of the park's gate takings, and a fixed lease fee annually. The joint management structure includes a Board of Management² with a majority of Anangu members, and a joint management officer appointed by the Central Land Council (CLC) to consult with and represent the interests of traditional owners. This structure is

² The Board of Management comprises four Anangu men, four Anangu women, the Director of National Parks, and a representative each from the Northern Territory government, the tourism industry, and the environmental community.

illustrated in two ways in Figure 1 below. Comparison of these two diagrams highlights significant distance between the conceptual ideals of joint management, and the organisational and political structure in which it operates.

Under joint management, the park managers have obligations to take into account the law of both Anangu and Pīranpa (non-Indigenous people). Tjukurpa, a term Europeans sometimes translate as ‘Law’ or ‘Dreaming’, provides the foundation for Anangu culture, encompassing Anangu religion, law, and history. Tjukurpa ‘tells of the relationships between people, plants, animals and the physical features of the land. Knowledge of how these relationships came to be, what they mean, and how they must be carried on is explained in the Tjukurpa’ (Uluru-Kata Tjuṯa National Park 2006: 18). Tjukurpa also prescribes

‘the nature of the relationships between and the obligations of those responsible for the maintenance of Tjukurpa and the associated landscape and those who visit that land. The central attributes of these relationships are integrity, respect, honesty, trust, sharing, learning, and working together as equals. In all interactions with visitors to their land, Anangu stress the need for: *‘Clear listening, which starts with the ears, then moves to the mind, and ultimately settles in the heart as knowledge’* (Tony Tjamiwa).

(Parks Australia and Uluru-Kata Tjuṯa Board of Management 2000: 18).

The plan of management states ‘Tjukurpa above all else’ (Parks Australia and Uluru-Kata Tjuṯa Board of Management 2000). The popular practice of climbing Uluru, established in the years before handback, goes against the wishes of traditional owners and park management. The Plan of Management explains this preference:

‘Although climbing Uluru remains a popular activity for some visitors, it is the view of Nguraṯitja³ that visitors should not climb. They consider that to climb is to show disrespect for the spiritual and safety aspects of Tjukurpa. They are very concerned about visitors’ safety. Each time a visitor is seriously or fatally injured at Uluru, Nguraṯitja share in the grieving process. Tjukurpa requires that Nguraṯitja take responsibility for looking after visitors to their country: this ‘duty of care’ is the basis of their stress and grieving for those injured. Parks Australia shares these views’ (Parks Australia and Uluru-Kata Tjuṯa Board of Management 2000: 119).

Park management aims to discourage climbing and promote the cultural values of the landscape to visitors. However, large numbers of visitors to Uluru continue to climb. The two quotes at the opening of this chapter illustrate the very different ways in which visitors and Anangu experience the landscape of Uluru and the practice of climbing.

³ Traditional owners and relevant Aboriginal people (see Glossary).

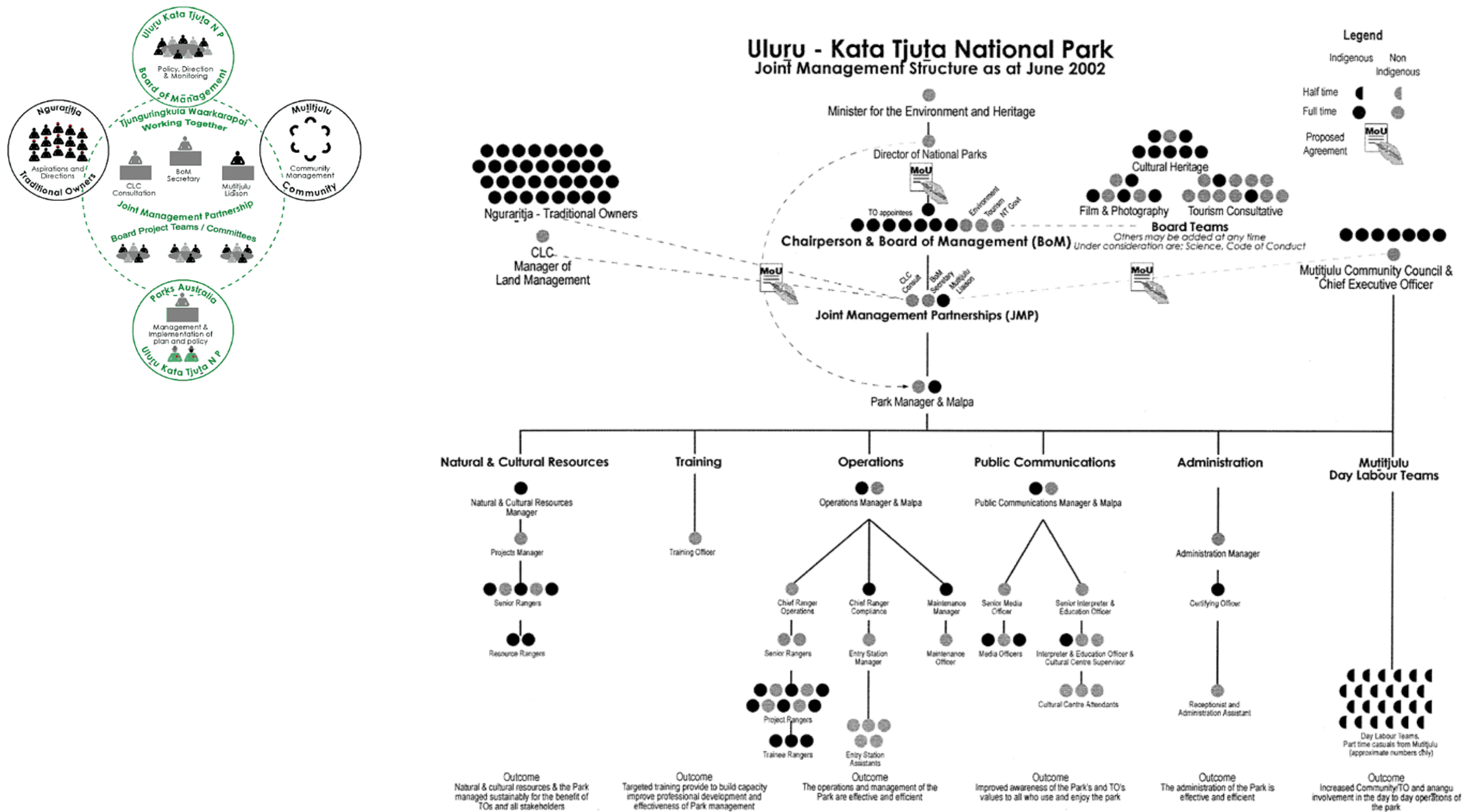


Figure 1: Two diagrams of joint management at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park

These two figures illustrate the complex structure of joint management relationships. This structure incorporates both traditional owners (Ngurartija) and members of the approximately 400 strong Mutitjulu community, located at the base of the rock inside the park (Smith 2001). Source: (Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage 2006a)

Over the past two decades, increased legal recognition of Aboriginal land rights has called the ownership of Australian national parks into question. Governments and Aboriginal people have in some cases negotiated joint management of national parks as a way of addressing native title. Such arrangements have been lauded as a way of addressing native title, achieving protection of natural and cultural heritage, and working towards social justice and reconciliation, while also facilitating tourism (English and Lee 2004; Powers 2002; Gelder and Jacobs 1998; Waite and Figueros 2006; Birckhead et al. 1992). More generally, there has been a growing recognition and appreciation of Indigenous cultural heritage and values in national parks more generally, and of the need to interpret and manage them (Staiff et al. 2002). The Uluru climb provides an example of the challenges that joint managers face in accommodating such disparate and sometimes competing interests. It highlights the way in which the relationships with visitors that are prescribed by Tjukurpa, and that Anangu aspire to, must be negotiated within the constraints of joint management, mass tourism, the legacy of past uncontrolled use of the park, and the ongoing socio-economic disadvantages of Indigenous communities.

1.1 Research aims

This research aims to understand what influences visitors' attitudes to Uluru, and how visitors respond to park management for and interpretation of Anangu cultural values.

1.2 A geographic approach

The study is informed by cultural geography's concern with how social, cultural, and political meanings of landscape have emerged in historical contexts and are expressed today. Landscapes not only reflect or express existing social practices and relationships (Morin 2003), but are also sites of social struggle and engagement. Here, '*landscape* is the discursive terrain across which the struggle between the different, often hostile, codes of meaning construction has been engaged' (Daniels and Cosgrove 1993: 59). The geographical approach taken in this study encompasses examination of the way that the landscape of Uluru is spoken of, managed, experienced, mapped, sanctified, and imagined.

1.3 Research questions

This thesis aims to answer the following question:

- Why do people decide to climb or to not climb Uluru?

It poses several subsidiary questions:

- How do tourists respond to the 'please don't climb' message?
- Who is climbing Uluru, in terms of nationality, gender, and age?
- What is the historical context of the contemporary climb situation?

1.4 Relevance of the research

This research has specific application in informing climb management at Uluru. Its findings may also be applicable to understanding how visitors respond to management for Indigenous cultural heritage values more generally.

1.5 Note to the reader

It was not the aim of this study to assess or interpret Anangu opinion on the climb. Rather, I have taken the ‘please don’t climb’ message, as it is articulated in UKTNP interpretive literature, to represent Anangu opinion. The park’s Joint Management Officer, who represents the interests of traditional owners in park management, confirmed this position, as well as pointing out that Anangu opinion on the climb was diverse and dynamic. He emphasised Anangu’s particular concern with tourist safety (Moran 2006 Pers. Comm.)⁴. This study focuses on tourists’ responses to the Anangu request.

1.6 Thesis structure

This section outlines the thesis structure.

Chapter Two introduces the methodological approach taken in this thesis and outlines the data collection and analysis methods used.

Chapter Three introduces relevant theory on the social and cultural meanings of travel and sightseeing, and of tourist behaviour. It discusses the way travel to the outback and to Uluru has been analysed in previous cultural studies, and critiques previous research on the Uluru climb.

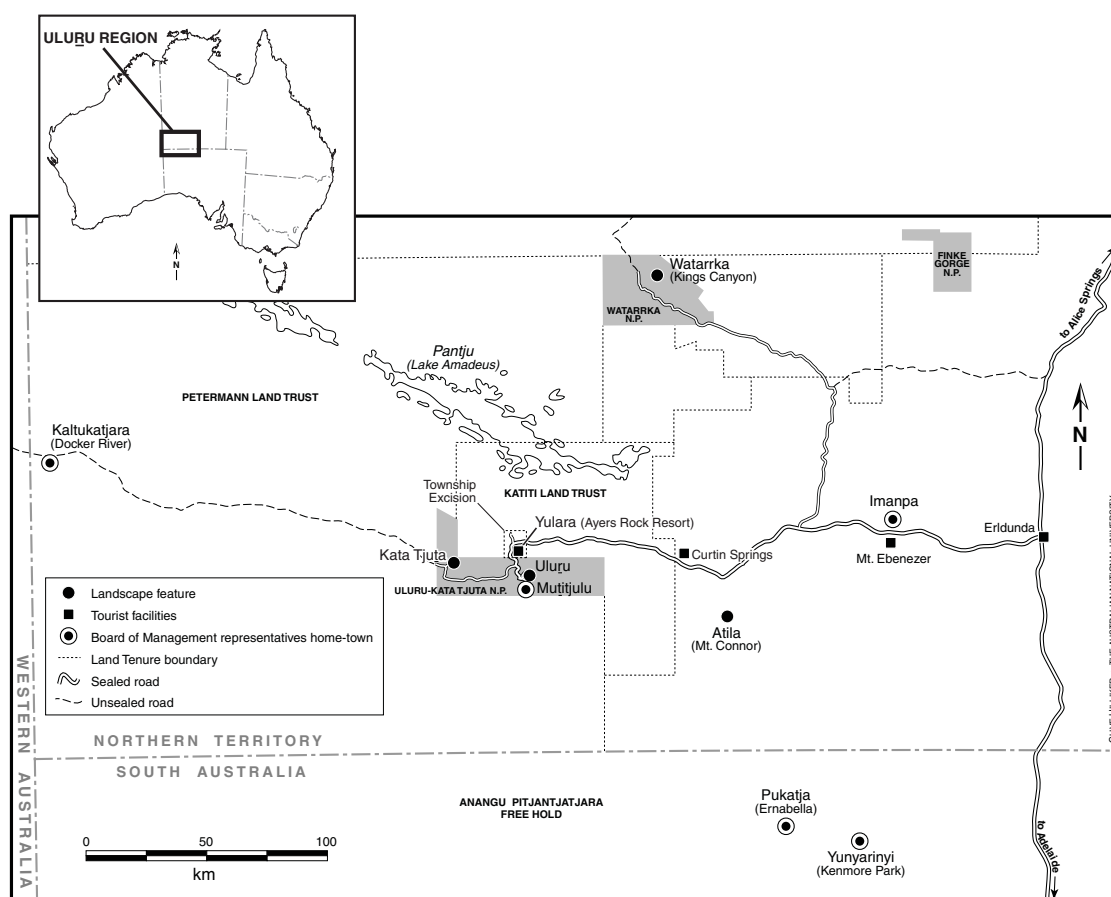
Chapter Four traces two distinct histories at Uluru and shows how they meet in the contemporary management of the climb. First it describes the early days of the climbing tradition, and then it considers the changing ways that Anangu and their interests in land have been represented and recognised.

Chapter Five presents the results of the surveys and fieldwork at Uluru, mapping the tourist’s journey to the base of the climb, and the discursive practices in which climbing is constructed as ‘okay’ or ‘not okay’.

⁴ Informal interview conducted June 2006 at UKTNP with Sean Moran, Joint Management Officer employed by the Central Land Council and UKTNP.

Chapter Six discusses how park management and interpretation, tourists' imagined geographies and behaviours, and wider political contexts intersect in the contemporary climb situation. It discusses how these factors influence visitors' decisions to climb or not.

Chapter Seven concludes the study by outlining the implications of this study for climb management, and for cultural heritage management at tourist sites more generally.



Map 1: Location of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park

The national park is extremely remote, and its traditional owners live in widely scattered communities in the surrounding region.

Map: Clive Hilliker, SRES Cartographer.

Chapter 2: Research methods

This chapter describes and justifies the methods applied in this study.

2.1 Research principles

This research seeks to investigate why visitors to Uluru climb or not, and therefore a qualitative study is suitable. As climbing practices and management occur in spatial, social, and discursive contexts that have developed over time, a combination of historical research, observation, and interviews with visitors is appropriate (Llobera 1998; Jacobs 1999). The research is applied, in that it considers a real-world problem, and offers possible solutions to that problem.

2.2 Data collection

2.2.1 Surveys

This thesis comprises one part of a larger project conducted by Richard Baker and Cathy Robinson investigating visitor responses to the ‘Please don’t climb’ message. The current study adapted a survey created and used by Baker and Robinson in 2003 and adapted for further use in 2004 (see Appendix 2: 2004 Survey form), providing continuity of data across the longer study period⁵. This thesis analyses data from 2006 unless otherwise stated.

The surveys for this thesis were conducted over a 17 day period in June-July 2006 by Baker, two research assistants, and myself (see Appendix 3: 2006 Survey form). We conducted 542 verbal, face-to-face surveys at four sites within the national park; the base of the climb, the cultural centre, and the car and bus sunset viewing area (see Map 2). We used an approach developed over previous Uluru surveys. Each survey took about 10 minutes to conduct. At the cultural centre, where tourists are generally moving through, we used a ‘next-to-pass’ sampling procedure, approaching the next visitor to pass as each interview was completed (Jacobs and Gale 1994). At the car sunset viewing area, where large numbers of people congregate in a long line, we walked along the row approaching the next visitor we passed (‘next-to-be-passed’ procedure). At the base, where some visitors are walking through, and others are seated, we alternated between these approaches in order to keep ourselves continuously occupied. A sample bias may exist towards visitors with more generous schedules. They would be more likely to be approached using the ‘next-to-be-passed procedure’, and, less likely to refuse to participate (while this rarely occurred, tourists who did refuse usually cited time constraints).

⁵ In July 2003 Baker and Robinson conducted approximately 90 preliminary surveys of tourists, and in July 2004 a team of five interviewers led by Baker conducted approximately 450 surveys.

In the first part of the survey we asked the interviewee for the age, gender, nationality and climbing behaviour of all members of their group. This increased the sample size for the 2006 climbing behaviour and visitor characteristics data set to 2175 visitors. We then asked several open-ended questions concerning visitors' experiences of the park, their personal reasons for visiting the park and for climbing or not climbing, and their response to the Anangu message 'please don't climb'. We approached individuals and directed our questions towards one interviewee, but recorded the responses of any group or family members who contributed. During interviews we took handwritten notes on the survey forms, and within twenty-four hours of the interviews we entered data and transcribed the forms, expanding the notes taken into sentences whilst preserving key vocabulary.

We targeted Japanese visitors (who had been identified in previous surveys as a significant visitor group but who were sometimes difficult to interview due to the language barrier) through the presence of a Japanese-speaking survey assistant for four days.

2.2.2 Historical research

Primary sources examined include old newspapers, magazines, films, travel writing, ethnographies, UKTNP visitor's comments books, government reports, and UKTNP plans of management. A range of secondary sources were also consulted.

2.2.3 Rationale

A combination of quantitative and qualitative questions allowed the survey to gain both an indication of the numbers and types of people climbing, as well as an understanding of what survey participants themselves found important in their decision to climb or not (Patton 1990; Seale and Filmer 1998). Importantly, this approach allowed the study to address issues that joint managers of the park are keen to better understand. This technique also has methodological drawbacks – it limits the sample size of the structured data set, and the depth of the open-ended responses – but this was considered an acceptable compromise.

A potential disadvantage of a public face-to-face survey is that interviewees may give what they perceive to be the socially acceptable or respectable answer (De Vaus 2002; Bryman 2004). The object of this study, however, was in part to understand what is perceived to be socially acceptable, and why. While climbing may be viewed as offensive by some, it is also legal, popular, and very visible in the park. Interviews and observation showed that many visitors discuss their decision openly amongst themselves. Another potential bias is that interviewees may differ in their stated and actual behaviour (De Vaus 2002; Bryman 2004), but this was minimised by the reasonably public nature of the surveys in which family and group

members often listened in and participated. As interviewers we conveyed a neutral position on the climb, pointing out our independence from park management, and our interest in visitors' own experiences and opinions. In light of these points, I am confident that the survey results provide a representative snapshot of the diverse informal public discourse on the climb operating within the park, where the climb decision is made.

2.2.4 Triangulation

Using more than one method of data collection in a study is referred to as triangulation and lends greater reliability to a study (Bryman 2004). Several strategies were employed to increase the validity and reliability of the results (Patton 1990). I observed tourists, rangers, and tour guides in the park, participated in ranger-guided and unguided walks, and examined national parks interpretive materials. I visited Ayers Rock Resort and its interpretive Information Centre. Comments books from the summit cairn and the Cultural Centre dating from the 1980s to the present day were examined, as well as comments made by visitors in the quarterly Northern Territory Travel Monitor survey between July 2004 to June 2005. On completion of the field work I conducted a short participatory workshop with park staff and rangers, presenting preliminary results of the research, and discussing their experiences of the climb, and of interpreting the request to visitors. I also conducted informal interviews with the Secretariat of the UKTNP Board of Management, and with the CLC representative at the park. A plan outlined in my original research proposal to conduct in-depth informal interviews with tourists in the park was dropped due to practical difficulties, in particular the short time-frames of visitors.

2.3 Data analysis

I have taken an interpretive approach, seeking to understand climbing or not climbing from the point of view of visitors themselves. I analysed the open-ended survey questions and other textual materials using techniques developed in grounded theory and discourse analysis. Discourse analysis considers language and texts as discourses (sets of statements) that create and reproduce systems of social meaning (Tonkiss 1998), and that structure the way we understand the world and shape how we act upon our understandings (Potter 2004; Rose 2001). This approach involves attempting to understand what meanings and social identities the use of discourse creates, and how such meanings are created (Tonkiss 1998). I applied text analysis techniques developed in grounded theory, involving close reading and a careful and iterative process of coding responses into categories or classifications in order to deepen understanding (Ritchie et al. 2003; Strauss and Corbin 1998).

Chapter 3: Perspectives on tourism and the climb

This chapter first reviews relevant literature concerning tourism and the cultural significance of place, and then critiques previous research on tourism to Uluru and on the climb.

3.1 Motivations for travel

Tourism emerged worldwide as a mass phenomenon after World War II, facilitated by the improved transport and increased leisure time of the post-war period (Cohen 1984). Since the 1970s, anthropologists and sociologists have studied tourism, tourist motivations, and the modern practice of 'sight-seeing' (Stronza 2001). Many have noted the parallels between tourism and religious pilgrimages (MacCannell 1976, Graburn 1983). Tourism itself is theorised as, to varying degrees, a modern version of religious journey with tourist sights becoming objects of pilgrimage (Sharpley and Sundaram 2005). Both promise an opportunity for self-transformation (Bruner 1991), a personal rite of passage (Graburn 1983), and an experience of the extraordinary that, because it is temporary and non-ordinary, ritually marks the passage of time and makes life worth living (Graburn 1989). Turner and Turner's (1978) work on Christian pilgrimage as a transitional ritual process has been applied to tourism studies in ways that highlight how tourism is perceived and promoted as a means of transforming the self (Bruner 1991).

The tourist's attraction to certain famous 'sights' has also been the subject of study. MacCannell (1976) focuses on the social function of collectively identifying the sites of sightseeing, experiencing them, and sharing them through photographs, in bringing order and meaning to modern life (MacCannell 1976; Stronza 2001). MacCannell (1976) and Urry (1990) both argue view the practice of sightseeing as laden with significance and meaning. To MacCannell it 'possesses its own moral structure, a collective sense that certain sights must be seen' (MacCannell 1976: 42) and to Urry, it 'entail(s) a kind of pilgrimage to a sacred centre' (Urry 1990:11).

Tourism has been understood as a means by which travellers produce social relationships (Bruner 1991; MacCannell 1976; Shaw et al. 2000; Graburn 1983; Rojek and Urry 1997). In this view, travellers live out and affirm sets of views and social meanings about the world, and about their position in relation to others. Thus, travel can be involved in 'building and maintaining a collective consciousness', strengthening ties to one another and to wider society (Stronza 2001:266 after Graburn 1989). Shared experiences of space allow visitors to connect with an imagined community of prior and future generations of visitors (Tuan 1996). Bruner points out that travel, often imagined and marketed as involving the transformation of the self,

in fact more often ‘confirms [the tourist’s] view of the world and validates his or her social position in it’ (Bruner 1991: 246).

3.2 Producing sights

Understandings of place and space can be considered as ‘imagined geographies’ - ‘symbolic or ideological meanings that reflect back and help produce social practices, lived relationships, and social identities’ (Morin 2003: 332). From this perspective, the significance of place resides more in the relationships and struggles over meaning that a place mediates, than in the place itself (Daniels and Cosgrove 1993). In this view, landscapes are not just objects to be viewed by tourists, but are ‘intertextual media through which competing authority, interpretations, discourse and knowledges interact’ (Morin 2003:332, see also Daniels 1993). Culture itself is seen as the processes by which material places are transformed into meaning and value-laden places (Jackson 1989). Tourists’ interactions with a range of texts, including television, film, written materials and the mass media, provide a set of symbols through which a holiday will be understood, to produce what Urry describes as the ‘tourist gaze’ (Urry 1995: 132). The meaningful ‘signs’ found in tourism marketing and travel writing reveal much about social values and beliefs, but also provide an incentive for travellers to follow prescribed way of seeing that provide these signs (Shaw et al. 2000). Tourism marketing participates in producing places for consumption, producing a geography of the imagination that, while shaped by desires for profit, has real implications for the making of places (Hughes 1992).

3.3 Uluru the outback myth

Part of Uluru’s tourism appeal originates in its geographic position as a mountain in the desert, in the centre of the continent, and in the ‘outback’. Tourists internationally often anticipate that experiences of mountains and deserts may be spiritual, transcendental, and enlightening (Park 1994; Digance 2003; Brereton 1995). More particularly, climbing sacred mountains is an established way of consummating pilgrimage around the world (Marcus 1991; Digance 2003). By visiting Uluru, the national icon, tourists can physically experience the abstract idea of nation (Cerwonka 2004).

Marcus and McGrath, amongst others, have argued that the outback is central to colonial Australian nationalist mythology, and that travellers to the outback are making a pilgrimage to nationalist ideals (Marcus 1991; McGrath 1991). The tracks left by late nineteenth century explorers in Central Australia have gained great significance in nationalist outback mythology, and are often sought and followed by visitors to the Centre (McGrath 1991; Du Cros and Johnston 2002; Morris 1982). Marcus has shown that Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park shares many of the ritual aspects of pilgrimage sites, including the way use of the space within the park

is controlled, and the way that tourists carry out ritual behaviour characteristic of pilgrims at other sacred sites, including circumambulating or climbing the rock (Marcus 1991).

Geographers have drawn attention to the way that ancient landscapes and natural monuments are often embraced by settler nations as a way of creating national heritage and a sense of historical connectedness to the land (Lowenthal 1976; Pretes 2003), and of representing the ‘imagined community’⁶ of the nation as authentic and original (Zimmer 1998; Larsen 2005; Anderson 1983). Brereton has made a definitive and comprehensive study of the visual imagery of Uluru and its use in advertising. His work illustrates vividly how Uluru’s geological ancientness provides national mythology with deep historical roots (Brereton 1995)⁷. Australian tourism campaigns of the 1990s focussed heavily on the outback, depicting it as a place for tourists to experience personal challenge and spiritual growth (while Indigenous people - ‘noble savages’ - were portrayed as living in a ‘primordial, timeless world’) (Waitt 1997: 50). Waitt argues that these tourism fantasies of the outback have played a significant role in producing the ‘imagined community’ of the nation (Waitt 1997).

3.4 Tourist performances

The way that social meanings are expressed and embodied through bodily practices, actions, and people’s movements through space, has been conceptualised as ‘performance’ (Nash 2000; Jacobs 1999). Considering the performance involved in touristic practices complements an often visually-dominated approach in tourism studies (Larsen 2005). Crang and Coleman (2003: 1) argue that ‘we need to see [places] as fluid and created through performance’, while Jacobs describes performance as a way of presenting or changing identity (Jacobs 1999). Lorimer and Lund (2003: 134) have used the concept of performance to analyse ‘the social conditions of identity formation that emerge through particular sets of relations with landscape’ in Scotland. They explain that the Scottish tradition of climbing (referred to as ‘bagging’, as in a hunter’s bag) Munros (Scottish mountains over 3000 feet high) gives walkers ‘the sense of presence within a national space’, and empowers them to ‘claim knowledge of Scotland’s geography, while affording a grounded point of connection to historical events’ through continuing a national tradition (Lorimer and Lund 2003: 134).

The focus of this study is on a physical and embodied act (the climb), which may be usefully analysed as a type of performance. We can apply Appadurai’s theory about how local places can be produced, despite globalizing, homogenizing forces, to understand how visitors embody and experience contested meanings of place at Uluru (Appadurai 1995). Appadurai

⁶ It is ‘imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion’ (Anderson 1983:15).

⁷ Aboriginal culture is also perceived as ancient, and as lending Australian history greater time depth, see for example Rees, C. & Rees, L. (1970) *People of the big sky country*, North Sydney, Ure Smith..

argues that the differentiation of place (into what he calls ‘localities’) is produced by cultural practices such as rituals and traditions that socialise space (Appadurai 1995). This understanding complements MacCannell’s analysis of how the actions and behaviour of people constitute a process of ‘sight sacralisation’ that creates a tourist ‘sight’ (MacCannell 1976: 42).

3.5 Overview of previous studies on the climb

It is useful to examine previous Uluru climb research not only for its academic contribution, but also for what the changing focus of the studies reveals about shifting perspectives on the climb. Table 1 outlines previous studies, which are discussed further below.

Table 1: Previous studies on the Uluru climb

Author and year	Discipline	Method	Research field
Marcus (1991)	Cultural studies	Interpretive	Significance of Uluru in national mythology
Fielding et al (1992)	Psychology	Structured surveys	Influence of tourist motivation for climbing on subsequent enjoyment
Brown (2001; Brown 1999)	Tourism studies, socio-psychology	Structured surveys	Achieving ‘culture compatibility’ at Indigenous heritage sites
Du Cros and Johnston (2002)	Cultural heritage management	Interpretive	Managing tourism and intangible values at sacred sites
James (2005)	Cultural geography	Various	The climb as a contested space
Waitt and Figueros (2006)	Geography and philosophy	In-depth interviews	Role of interpretation in jointly managed national parks in reconciliation

Using a cultural studies approach, Marcus related the climb to the Australian quest for national identity. She interpreted the Uluru climb as the fulfilment of desires to ‘struggle against the rigours of a harsh land and to conquer’ (Marcus 1991: 262). In contrast, Fielding et al chose the climb as a suitable site for a psychological study relating tourist motivation and enjoyment (Fielding et al. 1992). Brown’s socio-psychological research into tourist motivations to climb or not reflected a shift towards increased consideration of the importance of protecting cultural heritage and effectively interpreting cross-cultural meanings. He aimed to better understand how ‘culture compatibility’ between tourists and hosts could be achieved at Indigenous heritage sites (Brown 1999). His results identified where management could focus its efforts on the climb most effectively, identifying the provision and promotion of alternative experiences to climbing, and the reduction of positive marketing of the climb by the tourism industry, as two important steps (1999:692). Brown also noted a need for a qualitative study to explore the symbolic meanings of climbing that his study had suggested.

Du Cros and Johnston (2002) also approached the climb from a cultural heritage interpretation perspective. They examined tourism marketing and the history and political context of the national park, noting the difficulty of changing the patterns of movement and expectations of tourists that were entrenched in the period before Anangu became management partners. James' (2005) thesis examined the climb as an example of a contested space in which different meanings are contested. She also focussed on how Uluru is constructed by the tourism industry.

The most recent academic perspective on the climb is an ongoing transdisciplinary geographical and philosophical study by Waitt and Figueros (2006). They focus on park interpretation as the 'pedagogical arm of reconciliation'. Conceptualising place as a moral terrain, they consider how tourist practices at Uluru, involving bodily experiences of pride and shame, can act to either open moral gateways (for example by providing experiences of Indigenous knowledge of country), or to affirm colonial, nationalist constructions of the place (by climbing) (2006).

3.6 Summary

This chapter has outlined relevant theory on tourist motivations and experiences generally, and located the current study in the context of previous research on Uluru and the climb. This study complements and extends previous research on the climb. It focuses on visitors' own expressions of their motivations for climbing or not climbing, and on their responses to the Anangu no-climb message, and combines these with participant observation in the park.

Chapter 4: Whose history? Placing the climb in context

‘I can’t understand why the aboriginal (sic) allowed the white men to climb Uluru at all. They should have just refused!’⁸

This chapter traces two distinct histories at Uluru that come together in the contemporary climb situation. The first is the origins and changing cultural significance of the Uluru climb. The second is the evolving representations of Anangu and their relationships with and interests in the rock. These are made first exclusively by non-Anangu, and then, increasingly, by Anangu themselves. More comprehensive cultural and political histories of the rock have been provided elsewhere (Brereton 1995; Breeden 1994; Hill 1994; Layton 1986; Enticknap 1991; Cathcart 2002; Haynes 1999). General context can be found in the timeline of key events at Uluru over the last 125 years (see Figure 4).

4.1 *The climb*

4.1.1 Early climbers

William Gosse arrived at the rock on July 19th 1873. The next day, accompanied by his Afghan cameleer, and ‘after walking and scrambling two miles barefooted, over sharp rocks’, he ‘succeeded in reaching the summit, and had a view that repaid me for my trouble’. His ascent (on the world’s flattest continent) is a rarity in early Central Australian exploration – a success, a view across the space he was putting on the map, and a worthy return for his troubles (Hill 1994: 66).

In the early days, climbing was not universally irresistible. The surveyor Charles Tietkins did not climb when he visited in 1889 (Hill 1994), and nor did the naturalist H.H. Finlayson in 1931. However, it was soon established as a site of physical challenge and conquest, and an exclusive achievement, as Finlayson describes:

⁸ F, Australia, 8/3/01. Visitor comments book, UKTNP.

‘During our first day there Mackinnon (sic) decided to attempt to scale it. It is a difficult climb and only four white men before him have succeeded...[the rest of the party had other business and] were forced to leave him, with his boy⁹, to win his alpine laurels...But we learned subsequently that he had triumphed, and, the day being very calm, had reached the top in forty minutes’ (Finlayson 1935).

McKinnon¹⁰ made something of a habit of climbing – he is recorded as having climbed once in 1931, twice in 1932 then again in 1933 and 1935. McKinnon’s timing, repeating, and recording (see Plate 1) of his ascent are early examples of climbing as competition and achievement.

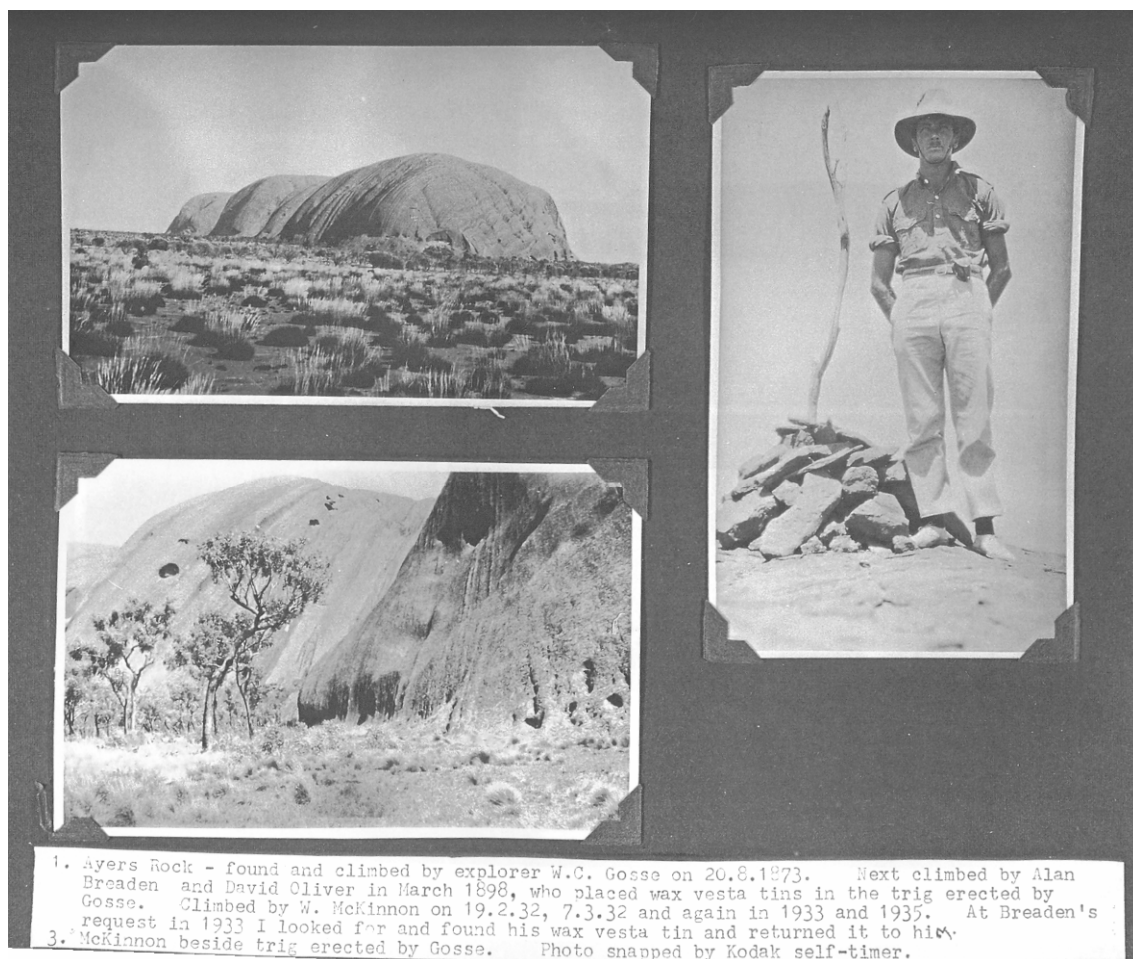


Plate 1: An early ascent of Ayers Rock

These photos are from an album published in (Healy 1995). On the right is Constable McKinnon (self-portrait) on the summit of Ayers Rock around 1935.

⁹ ‘Boy’ is a term that was used to refer to Aboriginal men in this area, that reflects racist and paternalistic attitudes of the era.

¹⁰ Constable William McKinnon was the local policeman, known amongst Aboriginal people for his brutality, who in 1934 pursued an Aboriginal man to Uluru and shot and killed him. Hill, B. (1994) *The rock: travelling to Uluru*, St Leonards, Allen & Unwin.

4.1.2 The ‘Brotherhood of the Rock’

After a few expeditions in the late nineteenth century, in the first four decades of the twentieth century only a trickle of doggers¹¹, mineral prospectors, surveyors, scientists, and patrol officers passed through this part of Anangu homeland (see Figure 4 Timeline of events). The gazetting of the Petermann Aboriginal Reserve in 1920 (officially at least) excluded non-Aboriginal people from the area. In addition, the 1930s depression and World War II made travelling difficult. However, transport improvements during and after the war facilitated increased travel into the region, and the expansion of commercial tourism in the Centre.

While mass tourism did not really begin until 1958 when the national park was declared, climbing was established as a tradition in the period between 1939 and 1955. At the beginning of this period, Ayers Rock was still well below the tourism radar, receiving no mention in the standard tourist guide of the time (Cathcart 2002). However, during this time more travellers began to reach Ayers Rock, bringing back photographs, films, and written accounts. These early travellers prepared the terrain that tourists travelled for the next thirty years, and their writings about the climb shaped the emerging tradition.

Early visitors were acutely aware of the distinguished climbers that had preceded them, and often experienced the landscape through their accounts. Frank Clune writes of climbing in 1939:

‘Like Explorer Gosse, who climbed to the summit on 20th July, 1873, I “had a view which repaid me for my trouble”; and, like him also, my feet “were all in blisters, and it was as much as I could do to stand” (Clune 1941: 15).

Climbing satisfies structured desires of engaging with the landscape - his group descends, ‘with our mountain-climbing ambitions satisfied’ (Clune 1941: 15). Like Clune, the writer Arthur Groom also mentions Gosse’s ascent and the timed ‘race’ to the top. He even transcribes all the names written on the ‘parched and frayed’ pieces of paper in the summit cairn for publication. The list is a precious affirmation of the existence of fellow Europeans in the landscape:

‘I have been on many a mountain summit, and seen many a cairn of stones and bottle filled with names; but none excited me more than those accounts of the past few who have travelled hundreds and in some instances, thousands of miles, to ascend Ayers Rock. In this lonely land it seemed to give the names written in ink and pencil definite reality and personal presence’ (Groom 1950: 166).

By 1953, Rex Ingamells describes those on this list as ‘The Brotherhood of the Rock’ (Ingamells 1953), and another intrepid traveller, Beryl Miles, imagines it as a sort of lost scroll;

¹¹ Doggers collected or traded for dingo scalps which at the time could be exchanged for a bounty.

‘We knew that on the very top there was a cairn of stones containing a jar with the names of those who had climbed The Rock... It was a proud moment when I added my name to those in the bottle’ (Miles 1954).

Miles’ account provides one particularly vivid illustration of how visitors experience the place through the lens provided by their predecessors. Having read Groom’s account describing the sound of hanging pieces of rock, upon being gently tapped, ringing out ‘like rich china’ (Groom 1950: 164), Miles traipses through caves trying in vain to reproduce it (Miles 1954). Her blithe descriptions of examining cave paintings, swimming in Maggie Springs (Mutitjulu Waterhole), setting off for the climb with appropriate shoes, cameras and water-bottles, and returning: ‘Hot and weary, but triumphant at having achieved our objective’, represent the beginnings of the tourist tradition at Uluru (Miles 1954: 72).

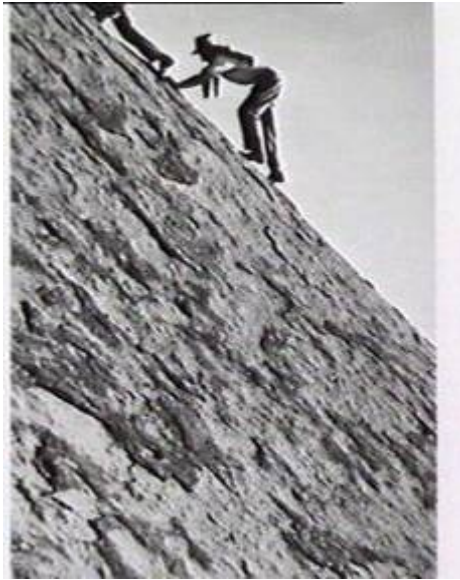


Plate 2: Climbing Ayers Rock before the installation of the chain

Left: Photo: (Bechervaise 1949: 26)

Right: Photo (Walton 195? exact year unknown)

4.1.3 ‘The sacred deed’: Sanctifying and cementing the tradition

By the late 1950s, the climb tradition was rapidly becoming a sort of pilgrimage. The first ranger, W.E.H. (Bill) Harney (appointed in 1958), remembers ‘the holy expressions in white people’s eyes as they came down after going to the top of the mountain’ (Harney 1963: 92). The writer Frank Flynn records a ritual conducted on the summit by members of a 1959 school expedition. After building an altar from slabs of rock, the ceremony began;

‘with the magnificent view all around – the Olgas¹² standing up like a medieval castle ... all Australia stretching away on every side – the Sacrifice of Praise, of Gratitude, of Apology, of Petition, began. Father Brown was the first to raise the Host over Australia and over the men and boys kneeling on the Rock...They were offered, these Masses, for the ‘complete Australia’, both the living and the dead of our nation, all of white skin and all of black.’ (Flynn and Willey 1964: 101).

The boys each pocketed a piece of rock chipped off the slab that had formed the altar, but more than that, they took away ‘a remembrance that will never fade, of the expedition’s glorious climax; the sacred deed done at Australia’s mighty heart for God and for Australia’ (Flynn and Willey 1964: 102). Here, Ayers Rock is sanctified, but it is also a site at which the nation itself can be sanctified, and made ‘complete’, through the imaginations and actions of climbers.

In 1966 the practice of climbing was cemented into the rock in the form of a chain strung between a series of posts affixed up the steepest sections of the climb. Two deaths in 1964, six weeks apart, had led to a decision to install some sort of safety railing, and the chain was chosen over a metal staircase for reasons of costs. At the same time, contractors painted the white line that still leads climbers across the summit to the cairn today (Rive 1998). By 1970, the Pioneer bus company was rewarding those who triumphed up the route with badges stating ‘I climbed Ayers Rock’ (Simpson 1971).

¹² ‘The Olgas’ refers to the collection of domes known as Kata Tjuta (see glossary for further explanation).



Plate 3: Posing at the summit cairn.

‘The challenge to climb is almost irresistible...The experience can provide a moment of self-growth and a new awareness; it is one often recalled with awe and reverence’ (Kirke 1981: 67).

Photo: (Carter 1968: 108)

4.2 Representations of Anangu

Early explorers and expeditioners wrote little of the rock’s cultural or religious significance to local people. As early as 1947, local pastoralists and Northern Territory government representatives confidently assured the federal government that the area around the rock was no longer used by or of religious significance to Aboriginal people (Rowse 1991). Tourism operators began to pressure the federal government to remove access restrictions. In 1958, they acquiesced, and excised the area around Uluru and Kata Tjuta from the Aboriginal Reserve declaring it a national park (Rowse 1991). These events must be understood, Rowse reminds us, in the context of the official policy of assimilation of the time that assumed that Indigenous culture was in rapid irreversible decline (1991). In this era, the position of Indigenous people in the Australian nation was widely overlooked or ‘forgotten’ (Stanner 1968).

4.2.1 Discovering Uluru (and a pre-emptive farewell)

In the 1940s and early 1950s a series of articles about Ayers Rock was published in the popular travel magazine *Walkabout*, some of which emphasised its ‘deep Aboriginality’ (Cathcart 2002: 216). Soon after, the popular works of Charles Percy Mountford (from 1948) and Harney (from 1958) brought ‘Uluru’ – the place significant to Anangu – into the popular

consciousness (Cathcart 2002). Mountford was an amateur anthropologist who made repeated visits to Uluru from 1935 onwards. His popular films and books raised awareness about the living Indigenous mythology of the rock, and no doubt informed the romanticised descriptions of visitors such as the photographer Frank Hurley, who wrote in 1955:

‘the Rock is of the utmost significance in the life of the tribe. Its every feature – cave, chasm, watermark, boulder, and tree – has been invested with the magic of legend and ritual, and in caves at the base of the great soaring mass, initiation ceremonies of incalculable age and mystery have been performed since the dawn-time of this unique people’ (Hurley 1955).

Harney wrote lively, respectful, and admiring accounts of his Anangu friends and their mythology. His work played a key role in the construction of Ayers Rock as ‘Aboriginal’, and the deepening of its public associations with history, mystique and supernatural power. In the 1960s, the first colour images of Central Australia appeared in the mainstream press, and tourism advertising began promoting the Centre as a ‘world of colour’ (Cathcart 2002: 218).

At the same time, Anangu cultural relationships with the area were represented as rapidly fading and transforming into historical artefacts. For example, Flynn writes:

‘Once the Loritjas (sic)¹³ venerated it as Oolera, a sacred Dreaming Place. Now the ragged remnants of this tribe ... usually give the Rock a wide berth. It is Oolera no more. The white man has taken over’ (Flynn and Willey 1964).

Even Harney predicted the inevitable decline of Indigenous significance (Harney 1963: 187). Between the 1940s and the 1970s, Anangu continued to move across their lands but often avoided Uluru, partly due to the shooting of an Aboriginal man there in 1934, and also because the welfare authorities attempted to confine them to stations and missions away from the tourist attraction (Brereton 1995). Many early visitors wrote of experiencing a palpably Aboriginal landscape at Uluru. This ranged from a sense of intrusion into a place to which Anangu might at any moment return (Hill 1994), a vivid imagining of past tribes of colourful warriors (Hurley 1955: 215), an appreciation of a historical sacredness (see Box 1), or a disturbing sense of the supernatural. Groom describes his nocturnal approach into a cave at the base of the rock, and his hasty retreat when ‘its uncanny depth and a soft moaning of wind drove (him) quickly back into the moonlight’ (1950: 169). Some years later, the historian Ray Ericksen, passing through Uluru in 1968, is discomfited by the profane behaviour of tourists:

‘I was ... too recently exposed to suburban chit-chat in the camping ground at Ayers Rock, and to the unawareness of those who sight-see the cathedral home of the Pitjandjara as they might a sterile modern building. We descend on these sacred places like illiterate vandals rampaging through a great library, without respect for what we cannot share and with brash impatience. Later, just a little later, when the untended spirits have gone and the grief of the old men locked in the towns has been stilled, it will matter less if we

¹³ Luritja is the name of another Aboriginal language group to the north of the Pitjantjatjara. While boundaries between groups are fluid, Flynn’s misunderstanding reflects non-Indigenous ignorance of Indigenous matters.

subject inorganic rock and sand to our quite different scrutiny and use. But not yet. It is still too soon' (Ericksen 1972: 179).

The loss of Indigenous significance was assuaged by the space it left for newcomers:

'As the story-tellers die, taking their dreams with them, the magic cloak on the mountain's shoulder seems thinner, and its significance is changing. But though Uluru may become less and less the catechism of known truths for its Aboriginal tribes, it may still strike responses from tribeless modern men who come to it, and find in facing it the nagging questions of their own identity' (Mack 1976: 26).

The landscape of Uluru is envisioned as recently emptied, but still haunted. The ghosts of Anangu are vivid, but their living reality is experienced as spatially and temporally distant. This colonial vision was challenged somewhat in the 1960s by Anangu's continuing presence around Uluru (Layton 1986), in part facilitated by the tourism industry, and more firmly in the 1970s when Anangu began to campaign for land rights.

Box 1: Producing historical colour for tourist consumption

The rapidity with which Anangu cultural associations were relegated to the hazily distant, historical past is exemplified by a comparison of the captions of two photographs, taken in the same cave at the base of Uluru, within thirty years of each other. The first, taken by the amateur anthropologist Mountford in 1940, shows an Aboriginal man touching up two paintings above a wide dark band of bloodstains from initiation ceremonies along the cave wall. It was originally published with the caption 'Matinya (1940) in initiation cave' (Mountford 1965: 98). Mountford subsequently republished this photograph under the caption 'Bloodstains in initiation cave' (Mountford 1976).¹⁴ The second photograph by travel writer and photographer Jeff Carter, shows the two paintings, and the now partly worn away horizontal band, and was captioned: 'Tourists on a guided tour of the caves around the base of Ayers Rock. Some were once sacred places to the Aborigines, who have kept away since the coming of the white man' (Carter 1968: 107).

In the 1970s Anangu began the slow and halting process of asserting and having recognised their ownership of the land around Uluru (Rowse 1991; Layton 1986). They lodged their first formal claim in 1979, but after numerous legal setbacks it required legislative changes made by Hawke's federal Labor government (elected in 1983) to enable the 1985 'handback'¹⁵ of the park to Anangu under the leaseback conditions. It was during the crucial period of

¹⁴ The Pitjantjatjara successfully contested the publication of *Nomads of the Australian Desert* (Mountford 1976) because it contained images which should not be viewed by women, children, and uninitiated men. Mountford's publication of these images reflected views of the time that Aboriginal culture was swiftly dying out and that documenting and recording it could preserve it for future generations. Due to potential sacred significance I have chosen not to republish these photographs here, however, they are publicly available.

¹⁵ At the time, the transfer of title was described as 'handover day', while today it is almost exclusively referred to as 'handback'. This lexical shift reflects increasing certainty about the rightfulness of Anangu ownership, and a shift towards viewing Uluru from an Anangu perspective.

negotiation, before Anangu interests were recognised, that the land for a tourist town located 20 km from the rock was gazetted and developed. Yulara opened in 1983, two years before handback. Rowse argues that although Anangu control of the national park attracted most attention, ‘control of Yulara is of greater long term significance’ (Rowse 1991: 36).




Plate 4: Yulara/Ayers Rock Resort

Yulara: ‘European society’s most radical and confident intervention into a region that has been notoriously refractory to European settlement’ (Rowse 1991: 36).
Photo: (Kirke 1981: 19)

4.2.2 Handover/Handback

The land claims and eventual handback were controversial and elicited a fierce national debate about the legal and cultural legitimacy of Anangu ownership versus national ownership. The conservative Northern Territory government bankrolled an extensive national campaign that opposed handback and accused the federal Labor government of giving away ‘our heritage’ (see Plate 6). Claims were aired that the rock was being handed back to the wrong Aborigines (Simper 1985), or had little symbolic significance to them (Shipton 1985). In a foreshadowing of later responses to Anangu management, some claimed that ‘the integrity of [the Anangu] claim of prior right on a spiritual basis’ was ‘shattered’ by the financial benefits they stood to incur (Anon. 1985a). In contrast, ‘the great affinity that all Australians feel towards this special feature of our landscape’ was said to justify the rights of all Australians to claim the rock as their rightful heritage and property (Anon. 1985a).

THE ROCK BELONGS TO ALL AUSTRALIANS!



(AND ALWAYS HAS)

On October 26 without consultation or mandate, the Federal Labor Government will hand over Ayers Rock and the whole of the Uluru National Park to fewer than 100 Australians. They will then pay these special Australians \$75,000 a year to see it back together. All Australians visiting Ayers Rock will pay to see it, and the new owners will get 20% of that fee as well.

The Northern Territory Government is adamantly opposed to this action:


- It is contrary to accepted procedures under which land claims have been made — until now.
- It shows an arrogant disregard by the Hawke Labor Government of the interests of the Northern Territory and of all Australians.
- It is another misuse of Commonwealth power in an area which has always been regarded as a State responsibility.
- It places in the hands of just a few that which belongs to all Australians: Ayers Rock, the heart of this country.

The Northern Territory Government seeks support from the Australian community to prevent this act of gross irresponsibility. The Hawke Labor Government must be reminded that it is elected to respect the wishes of the majority of Australians, not to serve the narrow factional interests of its own left wing.

Will Katherine Gorge (already under claim) be next? Perhaps the Great Barrier Reef will follow.

Australians did not give the Hawke Government a mandate to divide this country.

They were given custody of our heritage, not the right to give it away.




NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVT.

Write to your Federal Member and tell him what you think about giving Ayers Rock away.

Plate 5: ‘The rock belongs to all Australians!’
 The Northern Territory government published full-page advertisements in newspapers in all state capitals before and after handback. The Sydney Morning Herald, October 22 1985, p. 6.


TODAY THE ROCK NO LONGER BELONGS TO ALL AUSTRALIANS!



Today the Hawke Labor Government will give Ayers Rock away to fewer than 100 Australians.

They will also get \$75,000 a year and 20% of all fees you will have to pay to visit the Rock in future.

Australians did not give the Hawke Labor Government a mandate to divide this country. They were given the custody of our heritage, not the right to give it away.



NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVT.

Write to your Federal Member and tell him what you think about giving Ayers Rock away.

Plate 6: ‘Today the rock no longer belongs to all Australians!’
 The Sydney Morning Herald, October 26 1985, p. 27

Ironically, Uluru became a focus point for both pro- and anti-land rights sentiment. The handback was viewed as highly symbolic by supporters and critics alike. Some reported hopes that handback would ‘help to heal the growing breach between black and white Australia’ (Buckley 1985), while others described it as dangerously divisive (Mellor 1985), and a denial of the legitimacy of settler claims to land across Australia (Anon. 1985a). Some took solace in predictions that the handover would place virtually no restrictions on visitors (Anon. 1985b). As Brereton recalls, ‘(t)he question that kept cropping up was: who owned the Rock and therefore, who owned Australia?’ (Brereton 1995: 58). National opinion on the handback was very divided. The federal Labor government at the time was backing down on a proposed nationwide land rights package, and some viewed the Uluru handback as a symbolic surrogate for wider-reaching changes. A public opinion study released in January 1985 advised the Hawke government that:

‘Ayers Rock has emerged as one of the most powerful symbols against land rights. It is seen as an important part of Australia which should belong to all Australians. The granting of Ayers Rock to the Aboriginal people symbolises all the fears – “sacred sites everywhere”; refusal of public entry; “land grabs”; giving away “precious” land’ (Australian National Opinion Polls 1985: 41).¹⁶

The handback of Uluru catalysed an intensification of claims of its national sacredness and significance (Whittaker 1994). The rhetoric of these claims drew directly from the language of the Indigenous land claims that challenged settler ownership, and can be seen as a type of mimetic response, with political implications (Whittaker 1994; Maddock 1991). Locating a quasi-spiritual national significance in the landscape ‘both spiritualizes and domesticates the environment... It enables possession to be consummated’ (Maddock 1991:231).

¹⁶ It is important to note that these concerns were raised in ‘focus groups’, and contrast somewhat with the survey results that the study obtained, in which more than half of those polled agreed that ‘Land rights will help Aborigines keep their culture and help the survival of the race’ (56%), and that ‘Aborigines should get land rights because it’s important for their traditional way of life’ (52%) Australian National Opinion Polls (1985) Land rights: winning middle Australia. Canberra, Department of Aboriginal Affairs..



Figure 2: Cartoonist's interpretation of claims of non-Indigenous sacredness at Uluru

(Geoff Pryor, *The Canberra Times*, 17/10/85, from National Library of Australia collection)

4.2.3 Anangu self-representation and climb management

The legal recognition of Indigenous ownership provided Anangu with greater opportunities to represent themselves and management. Their voices emerged as strong, reasonable, and compelling (Anon. 1985c). Anangu opinion on the climb first emerged publicly around the time of handback. Traditional owner Tony Tjamiwa was asked at a press conference the day before handback if climbing would still be allowed, and Yami Lester translated his reply:

‘It is a sacred place for the Aboriginal people, but the Europeans have already climbed it. This has upset us and spoilt our feelings. But now it is already done, we will allow it, but we are not happy about it’ (Anon. 1985d).

The 1986 film *Uluru: an Anangu story*, addressed the national community:

‘Yes, we have had to make compromises to get our land back. But we will have a majority on the Board of Management of the national park. For the first time since the arrival of white people here, we, who know about this place, will have the real control over how it is run. We welcome you to our land. We are not greedy, we simply ask you to respect our sacred places and to allow us to continue to look after the Tjukurpa’ (Mutitjulu Community and Roberts 1986).

The first joint Plan of Management was released in 1986, and flagged management changes in which Anangu input would shape all future interpretation strategies (Commonwealth of Australia 1986). Anangu views on the climb initially received a mixed response. As Whittaker points out, a discourse in which climbing Uluru was portrayed as not only a spiritual quest, but also a moral right of white Australians existed at this time (Whittaker 1994). But Tjamiwa’s statement created space for criticism of climbers, as this letter to the editor a week after the handback shows:

‘(T)he constant stream of achievers headed for the summit of the Rock, assisted by the chains linked by stanchions grouted into the Rock, are adding nothing to the aesthetics of the area and would appear to have small respect for any sacred values’ (Deacock 1985).

The 1988 film *Minga*¹⁷: *a primitive culture* scrutinised the cultural practice of tourism at Uluru, and of the climb, portraying climbing as incomprehensible, shallow, and profane (Taylor 1988).

These criticisms remained on the outer periphery of the popular consciousness for a while longer. In a 1991 survey, 71% of visitors gave climbing as a reason for visiting the park (Uluru-Kata Tjuta Board of Management and Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service 1991: 50), and newspaper travel articles advised travellers what to wear and carry on the climb (Anon. 1990). In 1991 an ABC journalist declared that ‘climbing the rock is part of the Australian psyche’ (Derek Taylor, quoted in (Brereton 1995)). The same year, the park began planning for interpretation of the ‘we don’t climb’ message in brochures, on guided tours, and on signs, and for shifting the focus away from the climb (Uluru-Kata Tjuta Board of Management and Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service 1991: 58-61). By 1992 the Anangu preference was clearly stated in the park’s interpretive literature, with an explanation of the cultural significance of the climb route and of Anangu concern for climbers’ safety (Australian Nature Conservation Agency and Mutitjulu Community 1992).

¹⁷ ‘Minga’ is Pitjantjatjara for ‘ant’ and is often used to refer to tourists (see Glossary).

Box 2: ‘Who nicked the coke machine?’¹⁸ Messages from the summit.

Comments written in visitors’ books placed at the ranger station and at the summit cairn in the late 1980s and 1990s offer valuable insight into the way the climb and the summit have been experienced in the past. They articulate pride in achievement: ‘I kicked arse’¹⁹, ‘Dear Mum I beat you’.²⁰ They also express elation, wonderment, and a view of the rock as a piece of God’s creation, a sort of portal to a greater spirit. Climbers used the visitors’ books to express political opinions, make racist remarks, argue for changed park management, and, after the death of baby Azaria Chamberlain at the rock in 1980, to pass on dingo jokes. A belief in self-transformation through suffering is clearly evident in detailed descriptions of climbers’ sufferings which conclude with ‘awesome’. The books also record a wry sense of self-awareness about the tradition of climbing – one party poked fun at the momentousness of the climb, recording for posterity (with a calligraphy pen):

‘Here Landeth [names of four men], at Ayers Rock – a magnificent Moment
in the History of Australia’.²¹

One man deplored the ease of modern tourism, arguing that it ‘should require an effort to get here’, reflecting a desire to preserve the outback as a place for white man-making. One Australian man overcame his fears half way up the climb ‘for the sake of [his] crippled daughter ... who will never walk up here’.²² In the early 1990s, some entries exhorted other tourists to look around them, slow down, and think about the Anangu significance of the place: ‘Listen to the land, listen to the people, they’ve been here longer than whitefella and they’ll always be here.’²³

Travel writing on Uluru responded to the Anangu request by shifting towards promoting cultural heritage tourism opportunities (Kurosawa 1992), and even ridiculing ‘this obsession with the climb’ (Smith 1992: 22). The opening of the cultural centre in 1995 vastly improved the scope for and quality of Anangu representations of themselves and their views to tourists. The 1994 Lonely Planet Outback Australia guide included a photograph of the climb and no mention of the request (Moon et al. 1994), but by 1996 Lonely Planet was prominently advertising the request and the reasons for it (Finlay 1996). The 2000 Plan of Management affirmed the parks’ intention to continue to discourage climbing, and flagged the possibility of introducing stronger measures to discourage climbing, including compulsory pre-climb cultural and safety briefings (though these have not eventuated). Around this time, a masterplan for the park shifted the location of the Uluru ring road away from the base of the climb. New facilities

¹⁸ F, Australia, 28/2/89, Summit visitors’ book, UKTNP.

¹⁹ Summit visitors’ book, 21.9.92

²⁰ M, Summit visitors’ book, 1.7.91

²¹ M, Summit visitors’ book, 29/6/91.

²² M, Australia, Summit visitors’ book, 2/10/91.

²³ Anon, Visitors’ comments book, 20/8/91

have been built back from the Mala car park where this road is planned to go, however the road has not yet been moved.

In May 2001 public awareness of the climb issue reached a new height when, for the first time, the Uluru climb was closed for cultural reasons to respect the death of a senior traditional owner. Widely reported in the media, the three week closure was publicly condemned by the Northern Territory government. Publicly at least, parts of the tourism industry supported the Anangu decision, telling reporters that tourists saw it as ‘an opportunity to personally contribute to preserving the cultural heritage’ (Stevenson 2001)²⁴. The closure was also promoted as ‘a chance for all Australians to demonstrate ‘practical reconciliation’ (Central Land Council 2001).

4.3 Summary

This chapter has shown that the foundations of contemporary mass tourism at Uluru, both in terms of the images and ideas that became Ayers Rock/ Uluru, the tourist object, and in terms of the immense infrastructural foothold that is Yulara, were laid and consolidated before Anangu regained control over the land. It has outlined how, since handback, Anangu have begun to assert their opinion on the climb, and how this has been both contested and accepted.

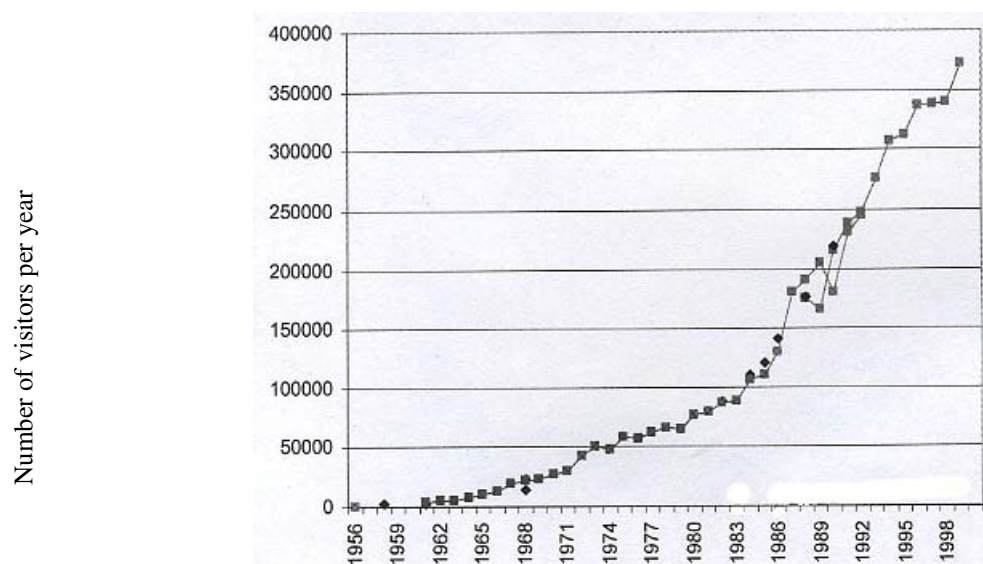


Figure 3 Tourist numbers at Uluru between 1950-2005

Adapted from (Buckley 2002).

Year

²⁴ The tourism industry is reported elsewhere as having been at this time adamantly opposed to permanent closure Du Cros, H. & Johnston, C. (2002) Tourism tracks and sacred places, Pashupatinath and Uluru. *Historic Environment*, 16, 38-42..

Figure 4 Timeline of events at Uluru 1872-2005

1872	E. Giles (explorer) sighted Kata Tjuṯa, but turned back because rain had made the normally dry salt Lake Amadeus impassable
1873	W.C. Gosse (explorer) visited and climbed, rested there two weeks with expedition party. Named Uluru Ayers Rock.
1889	W.H. Tietkins (surveyor) visited and took first photographs of Uluru.
1894	Three members of Horn scientific expedition, including W.B. Spencer (zoologist and anthropologist) visit.
1897	A. Breaden (pastoralist) and Billy Oliver climb and construct stone cairn on the summit with two tin boxes for names and dates.
1920	Petermann Aboriginal Reserve gazetted under NT Crown Lands Ordinance.
1929	First train arrives in Alice Springs
1931	H.H. Finlayson (naturalist) visits, with W. H. Liddle (pastoralist) and W. McKinnon (policeman). Finlayson declares McKinnon only the fifth white man to succeed.
1930	H. Lasseter (goldseeker) perishes in the Petermann Ranges. First plane arrives at the rock with Mackay Aerial Survey Expedition
1934	Anangu man Jokanana shot by McKinnon in cave at base of Uluru
1935	McKinnon returns to Uluru with T.G.H. Strehlow (anthropologist) and C.P. Mountford (amateur anthropologist) as part of Committee of Inquiry into Jokanana's death.
1936	An expedition led by Sydney businessman H.V. Foy, to trace Lasseter's failed prospecting journey, arrive and climb.
1939	F. Clune (writer) visits and climbs.
1944	S. Stanes (pastoralist) takes the first organized party of tourists out to Uluru by car.
1945	Graded track extended from Curtin Springs station to Uluru, by L. Tuit (tourism pioneer).
1958	Uluru and Kata Tjuṯa excised from South West Reserve. Ayers Rock-Mount Olga National Park declared. W.E.H. Harney begins service as Government Ranger.
1959	Airstrip built alongside Uluru.
1960s	First colour images of Uluru appear in mainstream press.
1966	First sections of chain (to assist climbers) built.
1967	Referendum confers citizenships for Indigenous Australians.
1973	Commonwealth government recommended management rights be awarded to Anangu owners.
1974	First fencing of a sacred site at Uluru.
1976	Safety chain extended.
1978-1979	National park included in Amadeus/Luritja Land Claim, lodged by CLC on behalf on Anangu, but ruled unavailable for claim due to being alienated Crown land
1980	Building of Yulara begins.

	Azaria Chamberlain taken by dingo, intense media speculation about case.
	Safety chain made continuous.
1982	Connellan airport (with sealed runway) officially opened.
1984	Most accommodation moved to Yulara, Yulara Tourist Village officially opened.
1985	26 October: Handback - title deeds to park handed back to traditional Anangu owners by Governor General.
1987	National park listed as World Heritage for natural values.
	'Harmonic Convergence' refused permission to hold mystic gathering in park.
1988	Advertisement for Bicentennial celebrations features celebrities at Uluru.
1992	Variety Club Bash refused permission to hold Heart to Heart rally inside park, part of rally forces entry.
1994	National park listed as World Heritage for cultural values.
1995	Anangu start up Anangu Tours Pty Ltd
2000	Sydney Olympics Torch Relay begins at Uluru carried by Indigenous athlete Nova Peris-Kneebone.
2001	May: Climb closed for twenty days cultural reasons to mark the passing of respected Anangu elder, controversy in media. September: Climb closed for two days as mark of respect for death of another senior man.
2004	November: Climb closed for one day as mark of respect for death of another senior man.
2005	National Australia Day celebrations launched at Uluru
Sources: (Groom 1950; Layton 1986; Altman 1988; Mulvaney 1989; Digance 2003; Cathcart 2002; Rive 1998; Australian Broadcasting Commission 2005; Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage 2006b; Marcus 1991; Haines 1993; Hill 1994)	

Chapter 5: Results

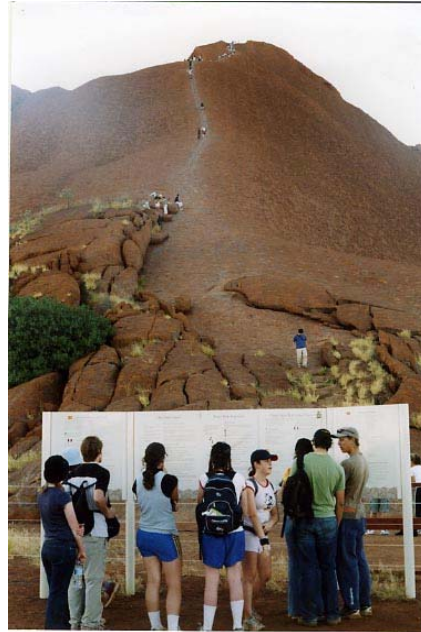


Plate 7: Dressed ready to climb, tourists contemplate the sign at the base.

(Photo: K. Hueneke 2004)

This chapter presents the results of surveys, participant observation and archival research at the national park, including:

- Visitor characteristics
- Climbing behaviour
- Outline of visitor encounters with and responses to the ‘Please don’t climb’ request
- Analysis of discourses about climbing and the request.

5.1 Characteristics of the visitor population

The visitor population that arrives at the national park is diverse. It includes Australian families, Japanese honeymooners, large bus tour groups, dread-locked cyclists, young international backpackers in small mini-buses driven by their over-worked guides, ‘grey-nomads’ on a circuit of Australia by campervan, well-heeled globe-trotters, and dusty four-wheel-drive convoys.

5.1.1 Length of stay

The mean length of stay was 2.5 days.²⁵ Bus tours regularly make the 900km round trip from Alice Springs in one day.

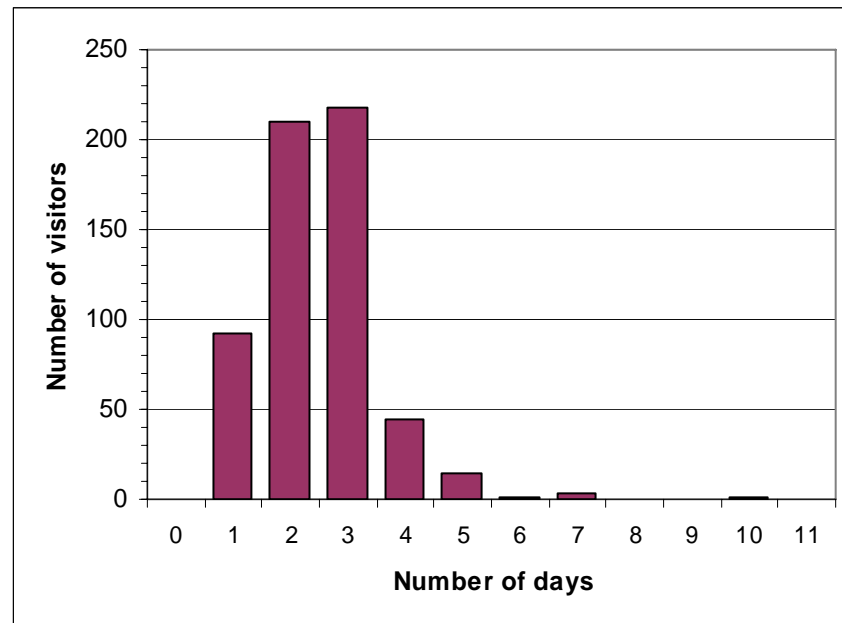


Figure 5: Histogram illustrating visitors' length of stay

²⁵ We asked visitors to give their length of stay closest to the nearest half day. For the histogram, half days were rounded up to the nearest full day.

5.1.2 Nationality profile

Australians represent the large majority of the sample (comprising 67% of the total). The next five largest nationality groups were the USA (7%), Germany (4%), England (3%), and Japan (3%). Together these five major nationalities comprise 86% of visitors (see Figure 6). The visitor numbers from other nations are listed in Table 2.

Figure 6: Number of visitors in each major nationality group

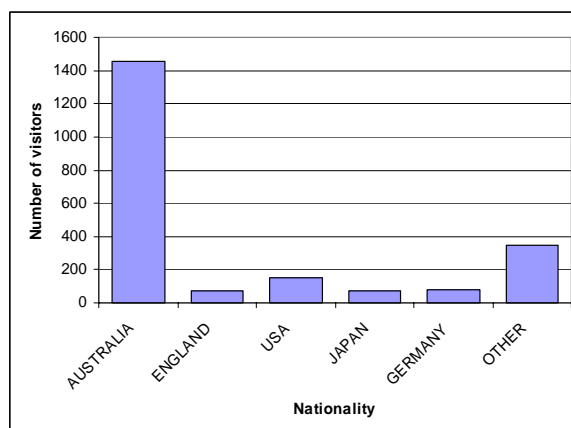


Table 2: Number of visitors from other nationalities

Country	No. of visitors	Country	No. of visitors
France	43	Slovenia	5
New Zealand	36	Spain	5
Ireland	34	Israel	4
Italy	26	Austria	4
Canada	18	Hungary	4
Malaysia	18	India	4
Sweden	13	Scotland	3
The Netherlands	10	Norway	3
Denmark	10	Singapore	2
Belgium	7	Sri Lanka	2
Switzerland	7	Iran	1
Korea	6	Mexico	1
China	6	South Africa	1
Poland	5	Mixed	46 ²⁶

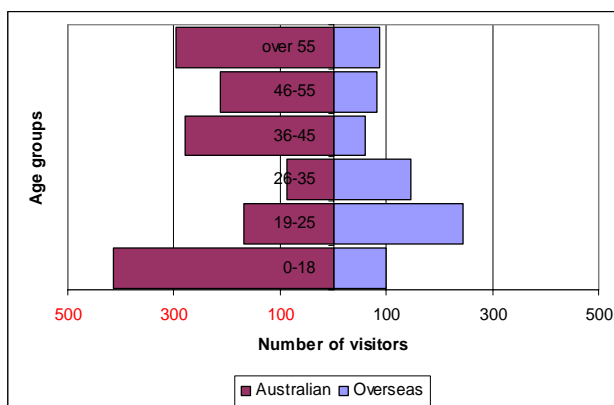
²⁶ I interviewed members of one large (43 person) group of exchange students from a range of nationalities.

5.1.3 Age profile

As shown in Figure 7, the age distribution of Australian and overseas visitors is quite different.

Figure 7: Comparing the age profile of Australian visitors and overseas visitors

The predominance of children amongst Australian visitors, and young backpackers from overseas, is clearly evident in the age profile of visitors to Uluru.



The Australian age profile is markedly dominated by school-aged children, reflecting Uluru's popularity with young families and with large school groups. People over 55 comprised the next largest group. The overseas age profile is dominated by younger, backpacker-age travellers, with a fairly even spread of children and older people.

5.1.4 Gender profile

The gender distribution of the sample was fairly even. However, significantly more women than men were surveyed from the USA and Japan (as shown in Table 3).

Table 3: Comparing the ratio of men to women in different nationality groups

Nationality	No. of men	No. of women	Sex ratio
Australia	700	755	0.927
England	36	38	0.947
USA	65	85	0.765
Japan	30	41	0.732
Germany	37	41	0.902
Other	182	165	1.103

5.2 Climbing behaviour

Climbers²⁷ comprised 38% of the total 2006 sample. This result can be compared with a previous study by Brown in 1995, and Baker's two previous surveys in 2003 and 2004 (Table 4), indicating that while there does seem to have been a significant reduction in climbing rates over the eleven year period 1995-2006, the trend over the last three years is unclear. This could indicate that a plateau has been reached using current strategies to discourage climbing.

Table 4: Comparison of climbing rates over time

Year	1995 ²⁸	2003	2004	2006
Percentage climbing	52%	43%	35.5%	38%

5.2.1 Differences in climbing behaviour according to nationality

Climbing behaviour amongst different nationalities varied greatly (see Table 5 and Figure 8).

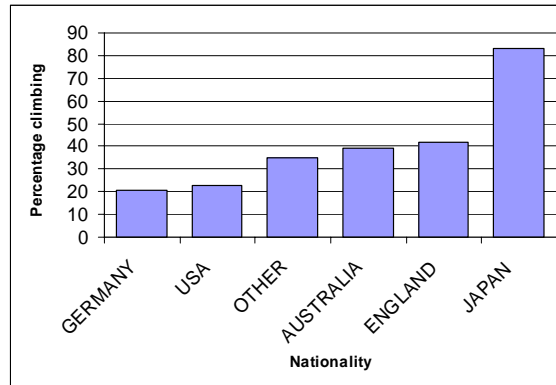
Table 5: Showing sample size and percentage climbing from each major nationality

Nationality	No. of interviewees	No. of climbers	Percentage climbing
Germany	78	16	20.5%
USA	150	34	22.6%
Other	347	121	34.8%
Australia	1455	574	39.4%
England	74	31	41.8%
Japan	71	59	83.1%

²⁷ Climbers were identified as people who had already climbed, or who said they were most likely to climb. People who were completely undecided were identified as non-climbers. We defined climbing as going any distance up the climb route. This included people who had climbed or were planning to climb to 'Chicken Rock' (located about half way between the ground and where the chain begins), although they sometimes identified themselves as non-climbers.

²⁸ This figure is from Brown, T. (1999) Antecedents of culturally significant tourist behaviour. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26, 676-700.. Brown used a rigorous two-part written survey method that obtained a systematic random sample of 433 visitors to Uluru in July 1995. He notes that potential bias may exist towards English-speaking visitors as the survey was only available in English.

Figure 8: Graph illustrating percentage of visitors climbing from each major nationality

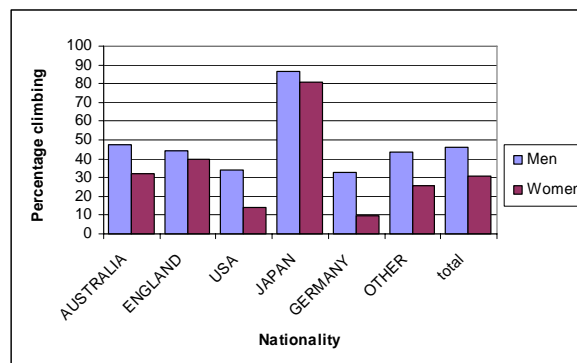


Different nationalities also have different age profiles and travelling styles that may influence their understanding of the message. International backpackers and other independent travellers are heavily influenced by travel guides such as Lonely Planet (Alneng 2002), which communicate the message prominently. Those on package tours are more likely to hear the climb message as it is interpreted by their bus driver or guide. In contrast, independent Australian travellers, considering themselves to be ‘at home’, are more likely to rely on word of mouth and the media.

5.2.2 Climbing by gender

Of the total sample, 46% of men climbed compared to only 31% of women. In each major nationality group, men were more likely to climb than women, although the biggest gender difference occurred amongst visitors from the USA (34% of men climbed compared with 14% of women) and Germany (32% of men climbed compared to 10% of women). Observation at the base of the climb often revealed women waiting for their male partners to return from the climb. In interviews with couples, women often responded to the message more sympathetically than men. The higher rate of climbing amongst males might be interpreted as reflecting traditional masculine associations between the outdoors and competition, conquering, and challenge (Brown 1999).

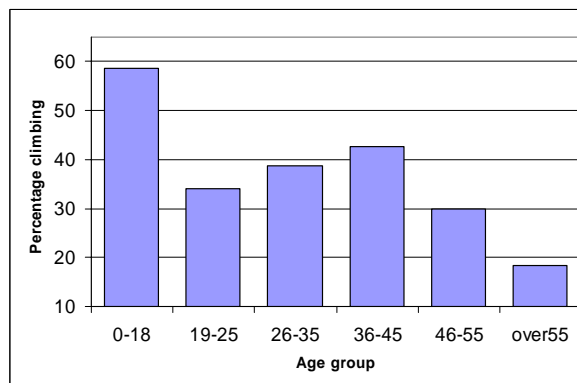
Figure 9: Differences in climbing rate according to gender and nationality



5.2.3 Climbing by age

Different age groups also had markedly different rates of climbing (Figure 10). Children were most likely to climb, whilst people over 55 years were least likely. Gale and Jacobs also noted that while children can pose unique cultural heritage management problems, when given an opportunity to learn and understand appropriate behaviour (for example through well-prepared guided school excursions), children often passed on these messages to their families (Jacobs and Gale 1994). Currently, site interpretation at Uluru is not targeted towards children.

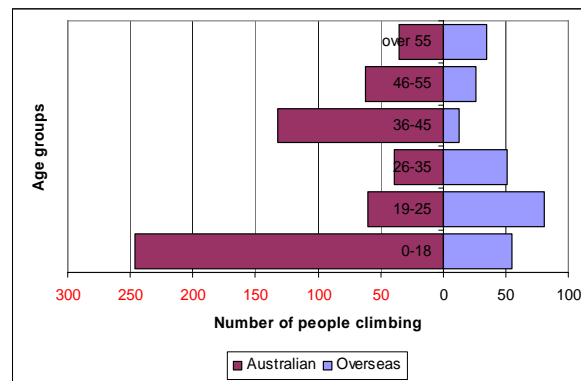
Figure 10: Percentage of visitors climbing in each age group



5.2.4 Summary

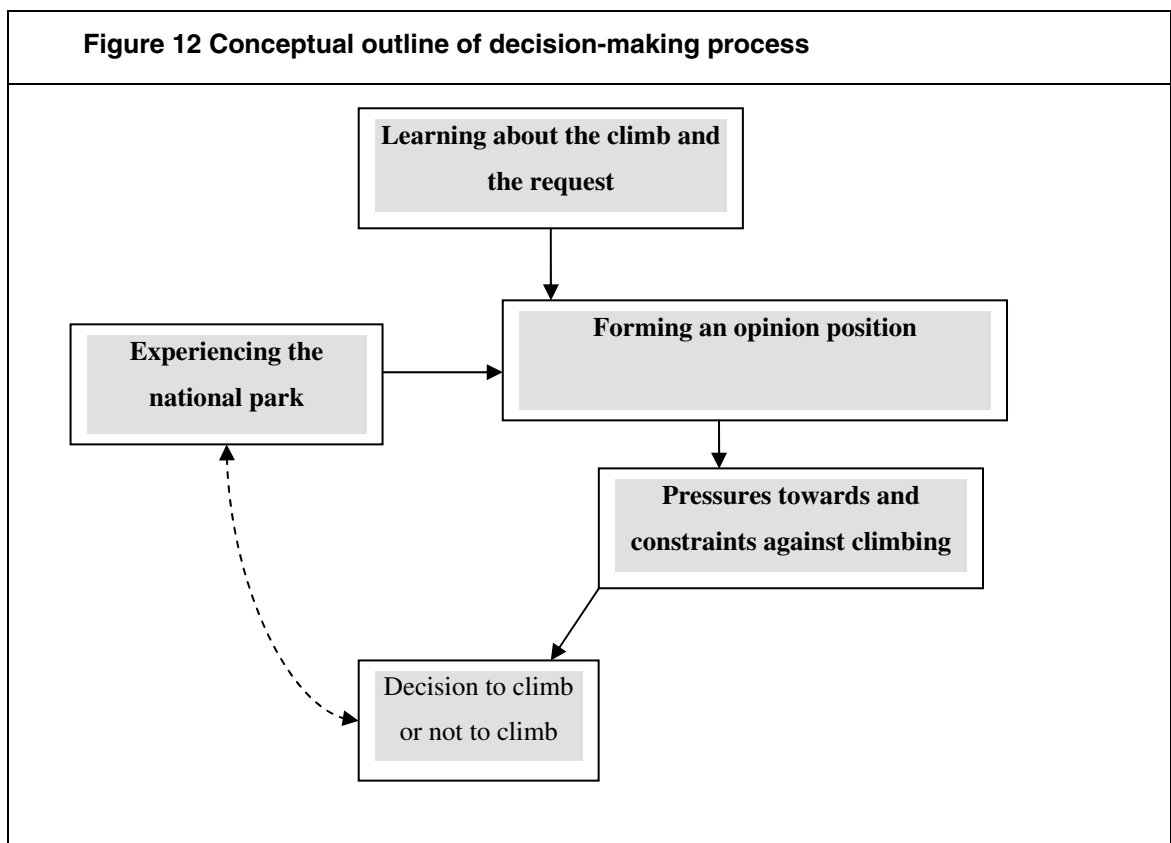
These results clearly indicate that climbing behaviour varies greatly according to nationality, age, and gender. They also show that although Australians do not have the highest rate of climbing, they form the majority of the climbing population. In fact, as represented graphically in Figure 11, almost half (45%) of the total climbing sample comprised Australian children under 18 and Australian adults aged 36-45.

Figure 11: Age profile of climbers according to whether Australian or overseas



5.3 Journey to the base of the climb

This section presents the findings of the qualitative aspects of the research. Four key arenas in the decision to climb or not climb emerged: learning about the request, forming an opinion position, experiencing the park, and experiencing incentives for and constraints against climbing. These arenas are represented conceptually in Figure 12. It is important to note that these arenas often co-exist in space and time, for example visitors may continue to learn about the Anangu request and form an opinion about it up to and after they make the decision to climb or not. These four arenas are discussed below.



5.3.1 Learning about the climb and the request

'Please don't climb Uluru: What visitors call the 'climb' is the traditional route taken by ancestral Mala men upon their arrival at Uluru. The climb is not prohibited, but it has great spiritual significance for us and we prefer that, as a guest on Anangu land, you will choose to respect our law and culture by not climbing.

Traditionally we have a responsibility to teach and safeguard visitors to our land. The climb can be dangerous and over 35 people have died while attempting to climb Uluru; many others have been injured. We feel great sadness when a person dies or is hurt on our land.'

(Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park 2006: 6).

Almost all visitors interviewed were aware that Anangu asked tourists not to climb. However, their knowledge of the request varied greatly.

The Anangu request is communicated by UKTNP in several ways:

- on the UKTNP website²⁹
- prominently in the high quality visitor guide each visitor receives upon entry
- at the Cultural Centre on signs and displays, by Anangu during occasional interpretive tours (see Box 4), and by staff at the information desk
- on the daily ranger-guided walk
- on a sign at the base of the climb (see Plate 14)

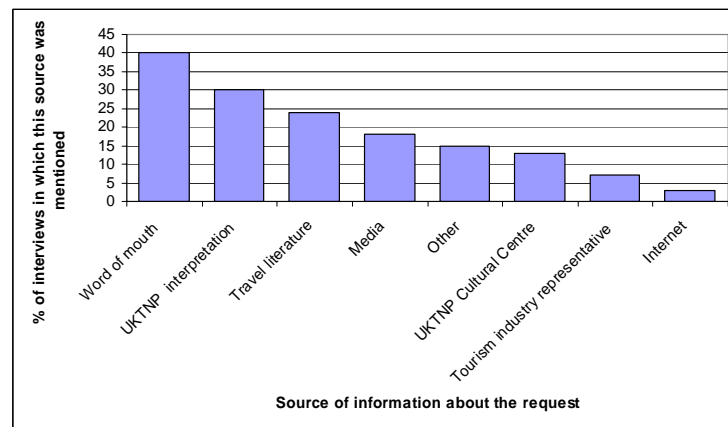
The request is also explained in some detail at the Yulara Visitor Information Centre, and in popular travel guides such as Lonely Planet. It is briefly noted in tourism promotional literature including that of Voyages Ayers Rock Resort and of AAT Kings, the largest bus company at the rock. Few tour companies advertise 'climb' tours, although souvenir outlets at the resort still sell 'I climbed Ayers Rock' T-shirts. The no-climb request is also actively promoted by Anangu Tours, an Anangu -owned company that runs regular and popular tours.

Figure 13 illustrates visitors' sources of information about the request.³⁰

²⁹ <http://www.deh.gov.au/parks/uluru/no-climb.html>

³⁰ We asked visitors where they first found out about the message, although many mentioned more than one source. This result is similar to that found in Baker and Robinson's 2003-2004 surveys (using a slightly different method in which respondents were asked to nominate only one primary source), in which 49% of tourists nominated word of mouth, 25% travel literature, cultural centre 13% Tour guide 7%, Sign at Base 1%, Media 1%, Park Entry Brochure 0.2%.

Figure 13: Percentage of interviews in which different sources of information about the climb request were mentioned



In surveys, visitors often mentioned advice on the climb received from bus drivers, friends, acquaintances, tour guides, and rangers. Information conveyed personally, and from people perceived as having ‘local’ insight or knowledge, was often privileged, but the nature of this advice varied greatly. Five different interviewees said they were asked not to climb by an Indigenous man giving talks at the Alice Springs Desert Park. International travellers may perceive all Australians as ‘locals’, and value their advice:

‘Before I came to Australia, I didn't want to climb [because of the request], but I talked to lots of Australians here and they said, ‘Oh, you're only here the one time, just do it.’ The white Australians say, ‘It doesn't matter, go on up.’³¹

While the survey did not directly test visitors’ knowledge of the message content, it revealed that many people had a limited or inaccurate understanding of it. The safety aspect of the request in particular was very rarely mentioned, and received a very mixed response.

Some common misconceptions include:

- Climbing is banned
- Only Indigenous people should climb.
- Only local Indigenous men are allowed to climb for certain ceremonial purposes (eg Mala men, young initiates).
- Anangu people are afraid that spirits in the rock will become angry if people climb.

³¹ M, Dutch, aged 18-25. References to 2006 survey comments are annotated in the following manner: M/F (indicating gender), nationality or city/region of origin if Australian, and age bracket of interviewee. References to surveys from previous years are distinguished as such, e.g. (2004 surveys).

Box 3: Effective cross-cultural communication

Interpretation in the national park receives extremely positive responses from some visitors:

‘I wouldn't climb, having seen the cultural centre. I'm not sentimental, I'm not an Aboriginal activist, but I think they should stop people. I wouldn't worry if they closed it. I thought "I'd love to climb it", but after finding out how it's more than just a rock, out of respect I won't. I just feel that it would be wrong.’³²

‘In 1965 it was a wonderful rock. In 1993 it has been an unforgettable experience with the input from Aboriginal culture – thank you.’³³

‘This morning I made the mistake of going straight to Uluru and climbing most of the way. When I saw the number of tourists I felt instinctively uncomfortable and descended without going to the top. Having now taken in everything the visitors centre offers I am sorry I even started the journey... Thankyou to the Anangu for their effort to share with those of us who do not understand and for their desire to educate us just a little bit.’³⁴

‘I was excited I can climb Ayers Rock, but I don't feel like climbing as I learned the Aboriginal culture here... I want to learn the Aboriginal culture more and help the Japanese and the Aboriginal people to understand each other's culture.’³⁵

The park's interpretation of the request can be highly effective (see Box 3), but even visitors that read interpretive materials may not comprehend the message accurately. This highlights the difficulty of cross-cultural communication and the tenacity of visitors' preconceptions about Aboriginal culture. For example, one man was unconvinced by:

‘urban myths that Aboriginal people believed that the spirits of people who die on top haunt the place, but after reading the brochure it looks like it's a rite of passage for Aboriginal males, and I don't fall into the category.’³⁶

³² F, Sydney, aged over 55.

³³ F, visitors' comments book, 25/7/93.

³⁴ M, England, visitors' comments book, 26/4/95.

³⁵ Visitors' comments book, Japan (translated) 18/9/99.

³⁶ M, English, aged 26-35.

Box 4: Personal communication of the message

Only two kilometres from the busy climb car park, in the cool shadowed interior of the cultural centre, Hezekiel, a tall Anangu man, is speaking to a growing group of visitors. He holds two kali (long wooden throwing sticks/musical instruments) which he claps together sharply for emphasis. The visitors are spellbound as the charismatic elder tells of an encounter between Kuniya (the woma python) and Liru (the poisonous snake). His Pitjantjatjara is haltingly translated into English by a trainee ranger, and then by the cultural centre manager when the trainee's language skills reach their limit. In front of an information board about the climb, Hezekiel speaks and the manager translates. He says that the climb is dangerous and exposed, explaining that Anangu are strong with culture and strong with family too. He tells the visitors: 'We hope you came here to learn, and you will go home and tell people what you learnt. If you fall off your family will be sad, and Anangu will be sad too. Hezekiel has been here a long time, since he was a little child, and he is not allowed to climb.' Hezekiel has been talking for about fifteen minutes, when a few visitors check their watches and look around for the exit. Their buses are about to leave and they reluctantly leave the group. Someone asks why people are allowed to climb if it is so important. Michael translates Hezekiel's answer: 'It's a spiritual belief, they are not forcing that on you. Anangu understand you come a long way, and pay a lot to get here'.

5.3.2 Forming an opinion position

Visitors' explanations of their motivations to climb or not, as well as their understanding of and response to the Anangu message, often reflected personal moral positions, political attitudes, and cultural beliefs. In other words, their understanding of the climb was socially constructed. A discourse analysis approach was therefore applied (as explained above in Section 2.3: Data analysis). This approach identified six key issues, around which various discourses construct climbing as 'okay' and natural, or 'not okay' and aberrant. These can be summarised (in no particular order) as debates about:

1. The sincerity and authenticity of the Anangu request
2. The appeal of climbing
3. The true or rightful ownership of the rock
4. The legitimacy of restricting access to land in a national park
5. The sacredness of Uluru to different groups
6. The disrespectfulness and negative impact of climbing.

These debates are summarised as spectra of opinions in Table 6 below, and analysed in Section 5.4 below.

5.3.3 Incentives and constraints

Visitors also described various ‘practical’ pressures for and constraints against climbing. Pressures or incentives included a desire for views and photographs from the summit as well as overt peer pressure from fellow travellers. Australians felt this most acutely, for example,

‘Everyone else was doing it...we felt it was an expectation. Everyone asks you if you’ve done it. [Their belief] should be respected, but there’s lots of peer pressure. They’re doing it, why should I miss out? We want to participate and be part of it’.³⁷

Another significant pressure was children’s desire to climb. A minority of parents tried to dissuade their children – some educated them about the request and allowed them to choose, while others banned the climb. One couple with young children took a more strategic approach, deliberately parking at the Kuniya car park and walking anti-clockwise around the rock, so that by the time they reached the base of the climb the children had covered 9km and expressed no desire to climb!³⁸ Some also experienced social pressure against climbing – as one man reported, ‘we wouldn’t be able to talk to our daughter if we did it!’.³⁹ Visitors commonly cited constraints against climbing including lack of fitness or time, fear of heights, and group policies against climbing. For example, a group of American school children was not allowed to climb for safety reasons, while two employees of the Australian Defence Force Academy accompanying a group of international students reported that although they would both like to climb, the group was not allowed to because of ‘defence policy’:

‘In defence you have to respect. As government employees it would be a bit naughty to climb. If I was on my own I would climb’.⁴⁰

5.3.4 Experiencing the national park

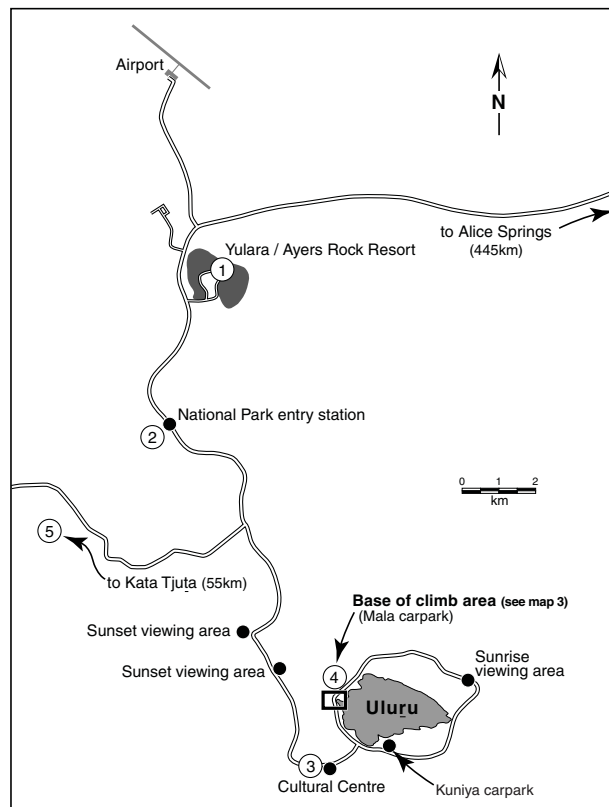
The visitor’s decision to climb or not is finalised and acted upon within the park. Visitors’ encounters with interpretive information about the message are discussed separately in Section 5.3.1: (above). This section focuses on non-interpretive aspects of the park, including facilities, signs, roads, car parks, and the behaviour of other visitors, as well as aspects of the resort. These tangible aspects of the landscape emerged in surveys as highly influential on decisions about the climb.

³⁷ F, Mornington Peninsula, aged 26-35.

³⁸ F, regional Victoria, aged 36-45.

³⁹ M, Australia, aged over 55, (2004 surveys)

⁴⁰ M, Wales, aged 36-45 and F, Canberra, aged 46-55.



Map 2: Locations of key 'signs' about the request in the national park and surrounds

This map illustrates the locations of different places that influence visitors' perceptions of the message. Tourist flows often bypass the cultural centre on the way to the base of the climb.

Key:

1. Yulara/Ayers Rock Resort: The Yulara Visitors Information Centre conveys the climb request comprehensively and prominently, however souvenir shops sell 'I climbed Ayers Rock' T-shirts.
2. The entry station where park fees are collected displays a conspicuous sign (see Plate 8). It is also where visitors receive a high quality brochure explaining the park and the climb message.
3. The cultural centre displays the no-climb message prominently.
4. Base of climb area (see Plate 10 and Map 3).
5. At Kata Tjuta, climbing of the domes is expressly prohibited. Several visitors interpreted the lack of such prohibition at Uluru as evidence that climbing Uluru was okay.

(Map: Clive Hilliker, SRES cartographer, 2006)

Many visitors perceive a contradiction between the stated message and wider infrastructure.

'The sign says climb open and there is only a small sign saying 'please don't climb'. It is all built up to climb'.⁴¹

⁴¹ F. Ireland, aged 26-35.



Plate 8: 'Climb open' sign at park entry and fee station

Several visitors referred to this sign (location shown on Map 2) as evidence that the park management condones, even 'advertises' the climb. The sign is replaced when the climb is closed due weather, or for cultural reasons.⁴² Some interpret the entry fee as a climbing fee. (Photo: Adam Leavesley 2006)

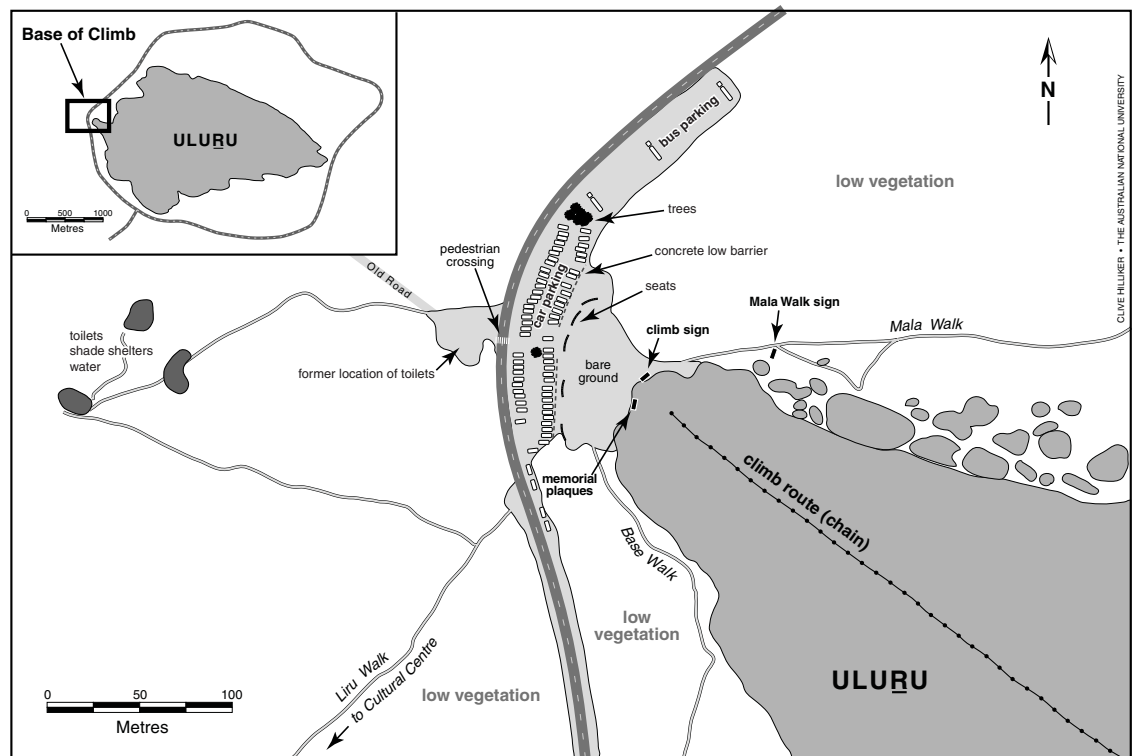


Plate 9: 'We don't climb': interpretive signage at the base of the climb

This is the second climb sign that visitors encounter, and although located prominently at the base of the climb, it is only legible when closely approached. (Photo: Hueneke 2006)

Infrastructure at the base of the climb directs the focus of the tourist gaze squarely on the climb (see Map 3). Of the two points at which visitors can access the base of the rock on foot, the base of climb car park is the largest and by far the most frequented. Alternative activities to the climb are, by contrast, less visible to visitors. They are also facilitated less, for example, the only toilets around the rock's 9km circumference are located at the base of the climb, as is the most generous array of seating. Similarly, little shade is provided. The daily ranger-guided walk starts here, and is very popular (even though it is not prominently advertised, it is often overcrowded to the point that people turn themselves away because they cannot hear the ranger). Interestingly, Brown cites a 1986 observation of enormous crowds attracted to the daily ranger walk, and himself observed that the daily Mala walk often had 'in excess of 50 participants', some of whom progressively abandoned the activity, 'probably because of the crowding and difficulty to see and hear' (Brown 1993: 12). There is no overview map or distance markers of the base walk, and the Mala and Kuniya walk interpretive signs around the base are badly weathered and often unreadable.

⁴² The visitor guide advises that the climb is closed 'from 8 am if the forecast temperature is over 36°; when rain or storms may occur within three hours, or a significant part of Uluru is wet after rain; wind speed at the summit is more than 25 knots; cloud descends below the summit. The climb is closed when rescue operations are in progress. It may also be closed at short notice if the Traditional Owners request it for cultural reasons, for example during a period of mourning' (UKTNP 2006).



Map 3: Base of climb area

The large cleared area at the base of the climb is furnished with a wide semi-circle of tilted seats, where people sit, gazing up at the beginning of the chain, creating the effect of a stadium or open-air theatre. There are clear lines of sight from the road to the climbers heading up the chain. The toilets were shifted back from the rock in 2005, in anticipation of the road being moved further away from the base as per the master plan (although there are no immediate plans for its implementation).

Traces of the old road to the rock, that arrived directly at the base of the climb from the north-west, are visible from the air.

(Map: Clive Hilliker, SRES cartographer 2006)

Box 5: Around the base of Uluru

The climb has been closed this morning due to strong winds at the summit. Two rangers arrive at 10am to open the gate and change the signs over, and someone applauds. Two older couples are the first through, heading quite nimbly up to ‘Chicken Rock’ (I later interviewed one of these men, who somewhat abashedly said ‘We wouldn’t want to offend anyone, we should respect the request. But when they opened the climb, the sign said open and we just went up. We’ll do better next time’⁴³). A group of Japanese tourists rushes over from where they have been waiting at their bus, pulling on white gloves before disappearing up the impossibly steep slope. An hour or so later, the car park is full and buses and camper-vans roar and raise dust as they pull in and out. A steady line of climbers is heading up along the chain. On the ground, people are putting on sun-cream, filling up water-bottles, and glancing up at the rock. A man ties a rope around his young son’s waist as his wife watches on. A few people are reading the sign carrying the Anangu message and safety warnings, but many seem to studiously avoid looking at it, and stride confidently towards the climb.

Some walkers returning from the Mala walk pause to observe the climbers, some incredulous, others admiring. Others completing the base circuit rush past, looking desperately for the signs to the toilets. The seats are occupied by people peering upwards waiting for family members (often husbands and older children) to descend. Climbers return to flat ground to the applause, cheers, hugs, and congratulations, and often, visible relief, of their families and friends.

A little way around the rock, a few cars are pulling in at Kuliya carpark. Their occupants stop to read a sign explaining the Tjukurpa of markings visible on the walls of Uluru half a kilometre away. The path leads through low grasses and stands of bloodwoods, and past small art caves. Guides pull their groups aside to discuss bush tucker, the paintings, and Tjukurpa events. Visitors eventually congregate in the cool shadows and quiet reflections of Muṯitjulu waterhole.

⁴³ M, New Zealand, aged over 55.

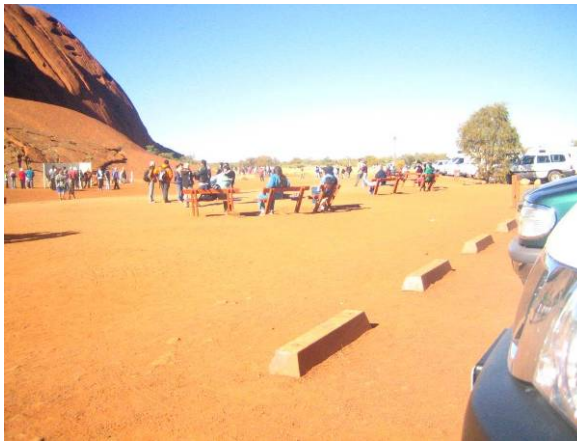


Plate 10: View from the Mala car park (base of climb)

This photo illustrates how the current set-up at the base directs the visitors' gaze up at the climb route (just visible in the top-left corner). The large signs marking the beginning of the climb route explain the Anangu request. (Photo: H. Hueneke 2006)



Plate 11: View from Kuniya car park

Visitors must walk about 500m from the car park to the base of the rock, passing interpretive signage on their way (see Box 5).

(Photo: E. Teranishi 2006)

The park's interpretive materials, and in particular, the cultural centre, emphasise the Aboriginal ownership of the park, joint management, and the cultural significance of the landscape. In contrast, at the resort, Anangu are represented as objects of tourist's charity (see Plate 12).

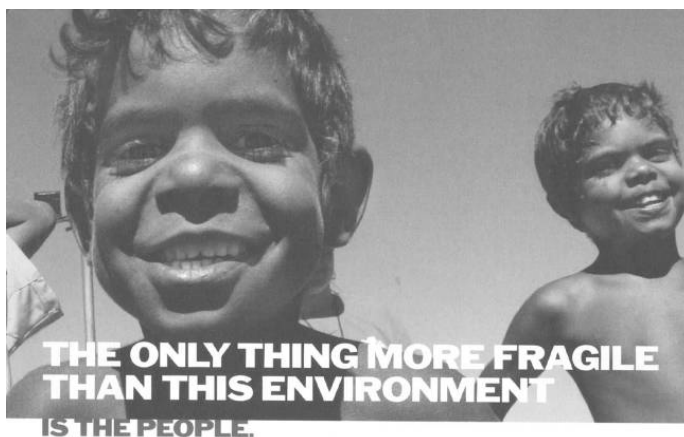


Plate 12: Advertising the Muṯitjulu Foundation

The Muṯitjulu Foundation is a partnership between Voyages Ayers Rock Resort and the Muṯitjulu community. The resort automatically charges guests' accounts an extra \$2, and matches all contributions. The Foundation is advertised on 2mx1m banners at the reception desks of all resort accommodation.

Above left: Card placed in resort accommodation. Above right: Coin-collection tin at the Yulara supermarket check-out. (Photo: H. Hueneke 2006)

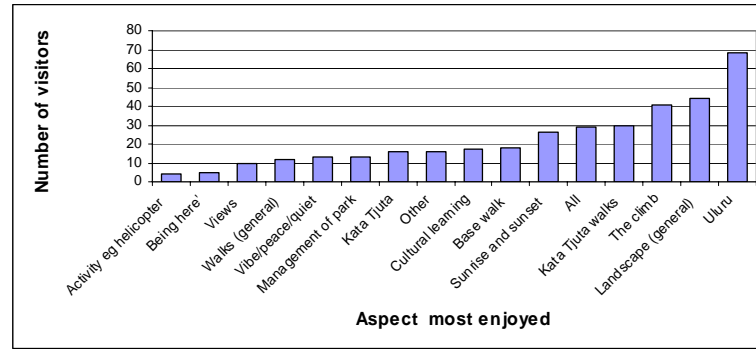


Figure 14: Aspects of the park visitors most enjoyed.⁴⁴

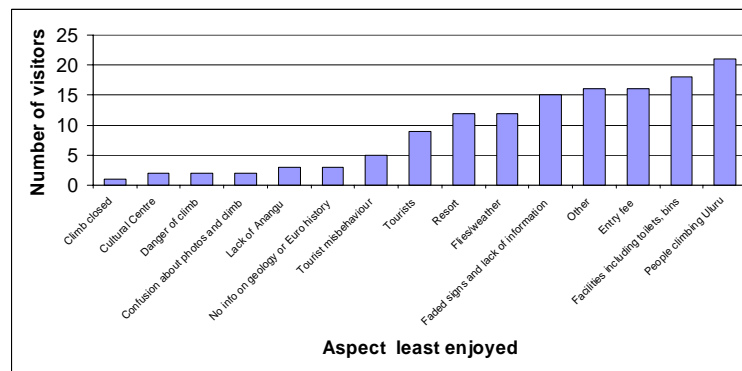


Figure 15: Aspects of the park visitors least enjoyed⁴⁵

Comparison of Figure 14 and Figure 15 indicates that while climbing remains a popular activity, that many visitors also experience it as a negative aspect of their visit.

5.4 Discourse analysis: opinion positions on the climb



The climb issues outlined above are shown as columns in Table 6. Each column represents the spectrum of opinions on the issue, from opinions likely to lead to climbing (along the bottom), to opinions likely to lead to not climbing (along the top). The following sections describe and analyse the discourses that operate in each of these issues in turn. It is important to note that while I have presented these issues as ‘opinion’ or belief spectrums and positions, these should not be considered as necessarily fixed or rigid, but rather as responsive to context and new perspectives. Typically, a single interviewee raised only one or two of these issues, and often their position on different issues varied.

⁴⁴ We received 362 responses to the question ‘What aspect of the park have you most enjoyed?’ (many visitors had just arrived). Some visitors nominated more than one aspect, and I counted their first nomination. These responses were coded into a manageable number of categories.

⁴⁵ We received 137 responses to the question ‘What aspect of the park have you least enjoyed?’ Again I counted visitors’ first nomination.

Table 6: Issues about the climb and the Anangu request

5.4.1 Issue 1. The sincerity and authenticity of the request

Issues	1. The sincerity and authenticity of the Anangu request	2. The appeal of climbing	3. The true or rightful ownership of the rock	4. The legitimacy of restricting access to land in a national park	5. The sacredness of Uluru to different groups	6. The disrespect - fulness and negative impact of climbing
Quote	<i>Even the traditional law-makers don't climb, it's only a place for ceremony.⁴⁶</i>	<i>I don't see the point of racing to the top.⁴⁷</i>	<i>It's their land, we're guests here actually.⁴⁸</i>	<i>If they ask you in a national park not to cross a fence, you wouldn't.⁴⁹</i>	<i>The ancestral link is so strong, we want to respect the wishes'.⁵⁰</i>	<i>Climbing is absolutely bad form, outrageous, incredibly disrespectful.⁵¹</i>
Position associated with not climbing  Spectrum of opinion  Position associated with climbing	Climbing is totally against Anangu wishes and religion	Climbing has no appeal	The UKTNP is owned by and the home of Anangu	Restricting access to 'natural' features is always acceptable	Uluru is sacred	Climbing is harmful and wrong
	Climbing is acceptable to Anangu in some circumstances	Climbing has some appeal	The park is shared	Restricting access is acceptable in some circumstances	Uluru is sacred only to some groups	Climbing is okay under some circumstances
	Anangu don't mind people climbing at all	Climbing is the most appealing activity in the park	The UKTNP is Australia and belongs to the state	Restricting public access to 'natural' features is never acceptable	Uluru is not sacred at all	Climbing is okay and is actually beneficial to Anangu
Quote	<i>If it was really against their culture, we wouldn't be climbing it.⁵²</i>	<i>We just really wanted to climb, it's a once in a lifetime thing.⁵³</i>	<i>It belongs to all of us, we're Australian too.⁵⁴</i>	<i>I don't know another place in Australia where you are restricted, it's a national park.⁵⁵</i>	<i>The message is bullshit, it's a lot of crap, I believe that the Aboriginal people who claim the rock didn't live here.⁵⁶</i>	<i>Just climbing it didn't seem too harmful.⁵⁷</i>

⁴⁶ M, Australia, aged 26-35.⁴⁷ F, regional NSW, aged over 55.⁴⁸ F, Sydney, aged 36-45.⁴⁹ M, England, aged 26-35.⁵⁰ M, Melbourne, aged 36-45.⁵¹ F, Sydney, aged 36-45.⁵² M, Perth, 46-55.⁵³ F, Sydney, aged 36-45⁵⁴ F, rural WA, aged over 55.⁵⁵ F, Victoria, aged 46-55.⁵⁶ M, regional Queensland, aged 36-45.⁵⁷ F, rural Queensland, aged 36-45.

There is a wide spectrum of discourses in which the sincerity and authenticity of the Anangu request are constructed. These are often premised on underlying ideas about the degree of control that Anangu have over park management. Some consider Anangu control total, and take the fact that climbing is allowed, and facilitated by the chain, as evidence that the request is not genuine or serious: ‘if they really didn’t want you to climb, they’d close it’⁵⁸. In contrast, some believed that Anangu had no control and would prefer to ban climbing:

‘The federal handback was a back-door deal, they only got the free-hold title because they signed the 99-year lease, so by climbing, you’re being disrespectful and collaborating with the government’.⁵⁹

‘These are holy places yet the government lets people climb. [Anangu] have no power whatsoever, they were forced to lease it, everyone knows that’.⁶⁰

Several tourists expressed a view, or referred to advice they had received from bus drivers and fellow tourists, that Anangu did not close the climb because they do not want to risk reducing tourist numbers and financial loss:

‘If we weren’t allowed they’d shut it, but they’re worried about losing people, and losing money’.⁶¹

Interestingly, three interviewees reported receiving this information from a ranger.⁶² It is possible that interviewees misinterpreted the ranger’s comments, or the ranger’s statement may reflect his or her own beliefs. In the case of the latter, these reports vividly illustrate the difficulties of cross-cultural interpretation in a highly ambiguous political context. It also reflects the difficulty many people (including tour operators) have in communicating a message that may disappoint tourists or induce feelings of guilt. Some rejected the request as inauthentic based on misguided or racist constructions of authentic and inauthentic Aboriginality (see Box 6).

⁵⁸ F, Australia, aged 46-55.

⁵⁹ M, Australia, aged 26-35. Tour guide.

⁶⁰ F, Melbourne, aged 26-35.

⁶¹ F, Alice Springs, aged 26-35.

⁶² One interviewee reported that the ranger on the daily Mala walk told them that Anangu could ban the climb, but will not because they receive 25% of the gate fees and could lose revenue (M, Adelaide, aged 46-55). Another reported a ranger telling them that Anangu were afraid that if they closed the climb, revenue would go down (M, Adelaide, aged 25-35). A third interviewee reported a ranger saying that when Anangu closed the climb Japanese people cancelled bookings, so they reopened it (M, Brisbane, aged 36-45).

Box 6: Misunderstanding Indigenous culture

Responses to the climb request often reflected inaccurate colonial conceptions of Anangu society and culture.

‘If you asked them they’d say ‘give me ten dollars boss, and it’ll be ok’.⁶³

‘I doubt how many Aboriginal people are still wrapped up in that stuff’.⁶⁴

‘It’s good to explain the message, but they’ve taken on a lot of our cultures, they eat our food, they use our money’.⁶⁵

‘We’ve just been to Palm Valley, and there’s a lot of rubbish there. Aboriginal people don’t have respect for their land. I saw a couple of Aboriginal guys just chuck a tinny straight out the window’.⁶⁶

‘Is it WRITTEN anywhere in indigenous history that climbing the rock is not allowed or is it only word of mouth? Ayers Rock is just a ROCK ... Again show us where they have it in writing in their history that they would rather people didn’t climb the rock? Word of mouth doesn’t cut it with me.’⁶⁷

‘I respect them, they're a beautiful people in their pure form, but they've been corrupted by western culture’.⁶⁸

5.4.2 Issue 2. The appeal of climbing

The discourse about the appeal of climbing as an activity reflects the diversity of tourists’ cultural values and expectations of their visit. To some, climbing offers a more comprehensive experience of the place, giving views, a closer sense of the rock itself, and a unique physical experience. It is also seen as an opportunity to overcome fears, challenge oneself physically, and gain a sense of achievement. A surprisingly large number of visitors said they were climbing so that they could say they’d done it. Almost 8% of interviewees nominated without prompting climbing Uluru as the aspect of the park they had most enjoyed (see Figure 14). For a few, the climb has strong personal meanings. Some explained that they had had a powerful experience of climbing in the past, and wanted to share that with their children:

‘I want to give the kids the same experience I had when I came as a schoolgirl. We camped at the base, and climbed, that’s what you did. We loved the climb, the view is magnificent, and that’s what’s in my heart’.⁶⁹

‘I climbed in 1974 and it made a deep impression, and I wanted to bring my family’.⁷⁰

⁶³ M, Adelaide, aged over 55.

⁶⁴ M, regional SA, aged over 55.

⁶⁵ M, Sydney, aged over 55.

⁶⁶ M, regional Victoria, aged 36-45.

⁶⁷ Internet discussion see References Uluru (Ayers Rock) [Archive] – Aussie Phorums (2006) *Aussie Phorums*>USENET/NewsGroup gateway>aus.*>aus.photo>Uluru(Ayers Rock). <http://phorums.com.au/archive/index.php/t-175920.html>. Accessed October 8 2006..

⁶⁸ M, Adelaide, aged 36-45.

⁶⁹ F, regional Victoria, aged 36-45.

⁷⁰ M, Melbourne, aged 46-55.

‘It is a metaphor for life climbing the rock, and great to share with my son. It was a really emotional time with he and I sitting up in a cave on top. He may bring his son or daughter up here and talk about his life with them as I did.’⁷¹

For others climbing the rock was a life-long goal or dream. Several women commented on a male preoccupation with climbing: ‘it’s a man thing’.⁷²

In contrast, a large proportion of visitors chose not to climb out of respect for see climbing Anangu and their spiritual and cultural values. The sight of others climbing was nominated without prompting by 4% of interviewees as the aspect of the park that they had least enjoyed (see Figure 15). One commented that the worn track made Uluru look ‘like Luna Park’.⁷³ Some mocked climbers for being blinded to the cultural significance of the place by their desires to conquer, and others described climbing as foolish and dangerous. Alternative activities, including helicopter and plane flights, and learning about Anangu culture, were considered more appealing than climbing by some. In particular, the base walk was cited as offering an alternative challenge to the climb, with potentially a deeper and more spiritual experience of Uluru:

‘Before coming I had been disappointed when I heard that they sometimes closed the climb. Now I think the walk to the top is just a challenge, but the walk around the bottom is magic’.⁷⁴

Many visitors were surprised by how much they enjoyed aspects of the park they had not heard much about before their visit (in particular Kata Tjuta).

While around 40% of visitor climbed, almost 98% answered positively to the last question on the survey, ‘Would you still have visited the park if the climb were closed?’. Some said that if this were the case they would be even more inclined to come, although others said they would be disappointed. But even interviewees who had greatly enjoyed or were looking forward keenly to the climb, and who expressed a strong view that there was nothing wrong with climbing in the current situation, often answered this last question with a resounding ‘absolutely’, and a comment about how impressive the whole park and just the sight of Uluru had been. Many climbers, rather than having a strong desire specifically to climb, seemed reluctant to eschew any of the available activities or experiences.

⁷¹ M, WA, aged 36-45 (2004 surveys).

⁷² F, rural Queensland, aged over 55.

⁷³ M, Melbourne, aged 26-35.

⁷⁴ M, Sydney, aged 46-55.

Box 7: National space rubbing off

The rock is experienced by some as a tangible manifestation of the nation:

‘I have recently become an Australian citizen but I wasn’t an Aussie until I came here.’⁷⁵

‘It is something special and very Australian. Overseas tourists don’t want to just come and look at it. They want to be a part of it. It’s like touching Australia.’⁷⁶

5.4.3 Issue 3. The true or rightful ownership of the rock

Visitors invoke widely varying understandings of who ‘really’ owns Uluru in discussing their response to the Anangu message. Some consider Indigenous ownership unequivocal and obvious, describing the rock as ‘their (Anangu) land’, and themselves (tourists) as ‘guests’, likening themselves to visitors to someone else’s backyard or place of worship, and commenting, ‘it’s a privilege to get this far’.⁷⁷

Others reject Indigenous ownership and view it as illegitimate and threatening:

‘I don’t believe it belongs to them. It belongs to all of us. We’re Australian too’.⁷⁸

‘I resent the fact that people are trying to stop [the climb], because it’s Australian. We all own it.’⁷⁹

‘As we are Australians we should not have to pay to see our own rock’⁸⁰.

Many Australians, while not denying Indigenous ownership outright, referred to their nationality as conferring a special right and relationship:

‘I was a bit hesitant, but we’re Australian’.⁸¹

‘I appreciate that it is a sacred site and it is their land, but we’ve been born here too, and it is each person’s right, as they choose, to climb it’.⁸²

‘I think this is my country too, I was born here, it’s my country and history too’.⁸³

Even where conceded to exist, Indigenous ownership is considered by some not to confer property rights such as the right to charge fees or to control visitor behaviour. Overseas visitors rarely denied Anangu ownership, although a few invoked understandings of ‘natural’ features as a universal or ‘god-given’ inheritance, and thus rightfully belonging to all.

⁷⁵ F, Australian with Irish heritage, age 36-45 (2004 surveys).

⁷⁶ F, Australia, age 46-55 (2004 surveys).

⁷⁷ F, central NSW, aged over 55.

⁷⁸ F, rural WA, aged over 55.

⁷⁹ F, regional NSW, aged over 55.

⁸⁰ NTTC Travel Monitor Surveys September Quarter 2004: See Appendix 1: Additional primary sources.

⁸¹ M, Gold Coast, aged 36-45.

⁸² M, regional NSW, aged over 55.

⁸³ F, Melbourne, aged 18-25.

5.4.4 Issue 4. Rights to (restrict) access

Different discourses exist on the relative rights of visitors to have free access, and of Anangu to restrict access. In one, the request is viewed as a valid attempt to prevent culturally offensive and sacrilegious behaviour. In another, it is seen as an illegitimate attempt to impose the cultural values of one group onto another. This is related to Western conceptions of nature, and national parks in particular, as public, secular landscapes (Byrne et al. 2006):

‘If you build something you can say who comes in and out of it, but not natural wonders. It’s a key experience when you come out here. We all have to respect other cultures, but don’t have to follow them – for example you don’t have to wear a burqa when in a Muslim country’.⁸⁴

‘I don’t think one race has a monopoly over one of the wonders of the world’.⁸⁵

In a neat inversion of coloniser-colonised relationships, climbing is naturalised as a traditional cultural practice:

‘It’s white people’s culture to climb’.⁸⁶

‘It’s a white person’s thing, you’ve just got to do it.’⁸⁷

Some considered that paying a fee gave them unrestricted access (for example suggesting that if the climb were closed, park management might not be able to charge for entry).

These ownership and access issues reflect how many Australians experienced difficulty in coming to terms with the implications of Anangu ownership, including their own resultant status as guests. For example, one woman I interviewed was making significant effort to educate her two young sons about the Indigenous values of the place, but commented that the boys had ‘felt held back by fences around the base, which is a shame. When I came as a schoolgirl we explored all the caves’.⁸⁸ Similarly, another visitor commented that ‘so many prohibition signs are erected to the extent that one feels almost an intruder’.⁸⁹

5.4.5 Issue 5. Uluru’s sacredness and significance to different groups

Many visitors view Uluru as an Anangu sacred landscape. Some liken it to a place of worship such as a temple or church (examples of the analogies visitors used are provided in Table 7 below). However, a well-developed discourse also constructs Anangu sacred values as ‘fading away’, historical, or somehow compromised by the commercial side of tourism (see also Box 6). Some seem to view the park and the resort as a single entity, and see the contrast between the resort’s glitz and commerciality, and the park’s management for sacred values as

⁸⁴ M, Melbourne, aged 36-45.

⁸⁵ NTTC Travel Monitor Surveys June Quarter 2005.

⁸⁶ M, Adelaide, aged 36-45.

⁸⁷ M, Brisbane, aged 36-45.

⁸⁸ M, regional Victoria, aged 36-45.

⁸⁹ NTTC Travel Monitor Surveys September Quarter 2004.

hypocritical. The financial benefit Anangu receive from tourists through lease and gate fees is viewed as undermining Anangu claims to sacred significance.

‘I think they’re leasing it out for money, and therefore it can’t be that spiritual, they’re making money out of it.’⁹⁰

‘They need to decide if it is holy or commercial’.⁹¹

Some felt Anangu were trying to ‘have it both ways’, but that the rock could not be sacred and at the same time open for climbing:

‘If you're gonna make it a sacred site, and try to discourage it [rather than outright ban it], that's not a true message. It should be yes or no’.⁹²

As well as acknowledging or rejecting sacredness to Anangu, visitors may or may not experience a sense of sacredness in the landscape for themselves. For some, the climb and the summit itself are sacred:

‘It’s an Australian thing. It’s our own sacred journey, it’s part of our discovery of our identity.’⁹³

‘It’s very spiritual for me being up on top. I feel I’m connected to my mother and son who have passed away... The message made me think twice but I have very personal reasons for climbing ...I get a great spiritual feeling when on top and it would be sad to lose that.’⁹⁴

For others, climbing is a debasement of sacred values, an unsettlingly profane experience, as one man who began the climb described:

‘I stopped half way because I felt a bit weird. There's a plateau, and people were peeing off the side, and it bothered me so I came down... I think they should close it right off’.⁹⁵

Here, utilitarian ideas about the secularity of nature come into play - to some it is ‘just a rock’, and therefore okay to climb:

‘If you were at all sympathetic to the local natives’ religions and superstitions you wouldn’t climb, but I’m not a religious person so I don’t care’.⁹⁶

‘I have no religion. I don’t think there’s any spiritual thing about it’.⁹⁷

⁹⁰ M, Brisbane, aged 26-35.

⁹¹ M, Israel, aged 26-35 (2004 surveys).

⁹² M, regional Victoria, aged 46-55.

⁹³ M, Melbourne, aged 46-55.

⁹⁴ F, Australia, aged 46-55.

⁹⁵ M, USA, aged 18-25.

⁹⁶ M, Brisbane, aged 46-55.

⁹⁷ M, Adelaide, aged 36-45.

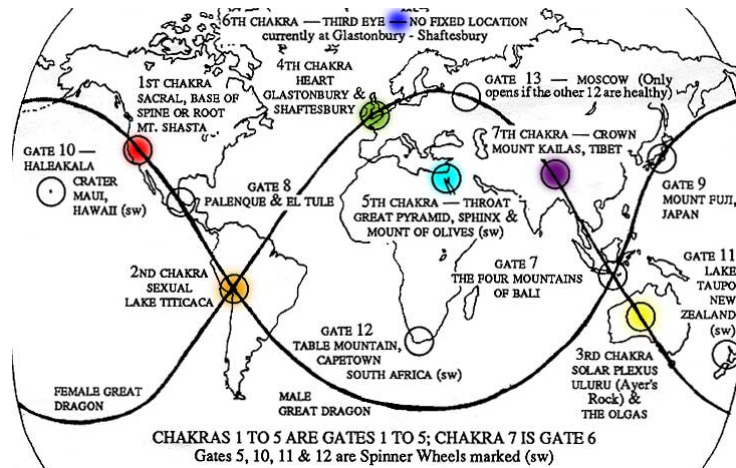


Figure 16: Uluru in a global network of sacred sites

Uluru is imagined by many in the New Age movement as one point on a global network of sacred sites. Source: (Webster and Kirwan 2006 attributed to Robert Coon)

Table 7: Translating Anangu sacred values: religious analogies about Uluru and the climb	
'I'm not climbing as a matter of principle. <i>It's like St Peter's altar</i> . Actually I thought it might have been banned.' ¹⁰²	'It's a sacred place, we need to pay respect to the history of the land. <i>The same as if overseas, going into a temple</i> , you abide by that culture's rules.' ¹⁰³
'It's an Aboriginal sacred site, I wouldn't want to <i>stomp on anyone's altar</i> .' ¹⁰⁴	'People would be up in arms if they wanted to climb our <i>cathedrals</i> .' ¹⁰⁵
'It's the cultural thing. <i>It's like you wouldn't go into a mosque with shoes on</i> , it'd be a bit rude, it's like saying 'go blow' to you guys.' ¹⁰⁶	'I tell people, <i>how would they feel if a naked Aboriginal person climbed on their religious icon?</i> ' ¹⁰⁷
'I can understand their point of view, as it <i>reminds me of the American Indian's explanation for their landscape</i> .' ¹⁰⁸	

Box 8: Free-to-air sacredness

As well as attempting to interpret for Anangu sacred values at Uluru, the national park must also deal with visitors who imagine a very different sacred rock. Uluru has been incorporated into global networks of sacred sites through the New Age spiritual movement (see Figure 16). Although this emerged very little in surveys, it was illustrated vividly in visitors' comments books. Here, as well as announcing a sense of being closer to God⁹⁸, and declaring 'I will magnify the Lord!',⁹⁹ climbers also expressed more mystical experiences of the rock: 'Cannot see, it is dark, made my offering to the Great Spirit ¾ moon winter solstice. At night the rock will tell you its secrets if you listen.'¹⁰⁰ These New Age values often draw opportunistically on Anangu beliefs and practices, but are also often totally antithetical to Anangu values. For example, in 1987 park management refused permission for New Age pilgrims to hold a major gathering inside the park (Marcus 1991). Park staff regularly refuses permission, in accordance with Anangu wishes, for followers of various religions to conduct rites, bury objects, hang crystals, or take rocks from the park.¹⁰¹

5.4.6 Disrespectfulness and impact of climbing

All of the issues discussed above can be seen as ways of constructing the climb as 'okay' or 'not okay' – placing it within a moral or social framework of acceptable behaviour. Here I provide examples of other ways in which climbers see their behaviour as acceptable or unacceptable. Many see climbing as 'absolutely bad form, outrageous, incredibly

⁹⁸ Couple, Canada, Summit visitors' book, 22/6/91.

⁹⁹ F, Australia, Summit visitors' book, 2/7/89.

¹⁰⁰ F, Summit visitors' book, 21/6/91.

¹⁰¹ Informal interview with Traceylee Forrester, Board Secretariat, UKTNP, July 2006.

¹⁰² F, Brisbane, aged over 55.

¹⁰³ F, Perth, aged 46-55.

¹⁰⁴ F, Australian living overseas, aged over 55.

¹⁰⁵ F, regional Victoria, aged over 55.

¹⁰⁶ M, regional NSW, aged 46-55.

¹⁰⁷ M, Alice Springs, aged 36-45. Tour guide.

¹⁰⁸ F, USA, aged over 55.

disrespectful'¹⁰⁹, and associate it with certain values they perceived as abhorrent (such as conquest, imperialism, disrespect for sacred values, and cultural insensitivity).

‘Please more signs saying ‘Sacred land and rock – please respect and please don’t climb’ – I didn’t know. I’m very upset. I wanted to see and respect it not do something so sacrilegious – now I’m just another tourist’.¹¹⁰

To some, the act of not climbing was an act of atonement for wrongdoings of the past:

‘We’ve done enough bad things, we can respect this’.¹¹¹

Some attempt to mitigate or compensate for disrespect by climbing ‘with respect’, or making compensatory gestures such as picking up rubbish from the summit, making a special effort to learn about the Anangu cultural landscape, or being careful to respect other cultural values, for example by following restrictions on photography. Some even saw climbing as having a positive impact on Anangu, by bringing in tourists and therefore financial benefit. Others constructed climbing as relatively morally benign in terms of respectfulness and cultural appropriateness, by using racist comparisons:

‘They get drunk and fight in our cities and we don’t like it’.¹¹²

‘My theory is that unfortunately there are a lot of Aboriginal people who don’t respect property in Adelaide, I know two wrongs don’t make a right but I thought, we’re not doing so much harm.’¹¹³

Many perceive the law as reflecting the ultimate authority on what is acceptable behaviour, for example, some advocated closing the climb but felt that climbing was okay while it was allowed.

5.5 Focus on Japanese visitors

As noted above, a Japanese survey assistant worked with us focussing on Japanese visitors. In 2006, Japanese people comprised 3% of the survey sample, and 7% of the climbers surveyed. 14% of Japanese interviewees said they would not come if they could not climb. Even without the language barrier, interviewing Japanese visitors remained surprisingly difficult. At sunset, they were the last to arrive and the first to be shepherded back onto the buses, leaving just enough time for a quick champagne toast and a few photographs – and no time for a ten minute survey. At the base of the climb the task of our assistant remained extremely difficult. She reported that Japanese interviewees were so exhausted, and had so little time at each place, that even a short survey seemed an imposition. Many had finished work the day before, flown overnight to Cairns, and boarded the morning flight to Uluru. These extremely tight schedules are likely to limit opportunities for engagement with interpretive materials.

¹⁰⁹ F, Sydney, aged 36-45.

¹¹⁰ F, Ireland, in visitors’ comments book 11/8/93.

¹¹¹ M, Sydney, aged 18-25.

¹¹² M, Adelaide, aged 36-45.

¹¹³ M, Adelaide, aged 36-45.



Plate 13: Japanese advertising for tours to Uluru 2006-2007.

Unlike most Uluru advertising in Australia today, this advertisement focuses on the climb, including how the visitor can prepare themselves for it (eg what to wear: white gloves, hat, sunglasses etc), and the end goal: the summit cairn.

Source: 'Look JTB' travel brochure, 10/2006-3/2007, p. 59, Japan.

In addition, Japanese came with greater expectations of climbing. In Japanese advertising, the climb remains the feature (see Plate 13). One young Japanese woman travelling with her colleagues reported that her company expected all the staff to attempt the climb.¹¹⁴ A Japanese man who had been unable to climb in the morning because the climb was closed due to strong winds, was disappointed because he had not known that this might happen.¹¹⁵ Japanese interviewees often said they were 'sorry' that climbing might upset Anangu, but that if it was allowed they would climb. The Japanese responses suggested a low level of understanding of the joint management context.

5.6 Summary

This chapter has shown the variation in climbing behaviour amongst visitors of different age, nationality, and gender. It has outlined visitors' motivations to climb or not to climb and their responses to the climb request as manifested in four key stages along the journey to the base of the climb, and analysed the discourses operating within six key issues within which visitors construct climbing as 'okay' or 'not okay'.

¹¹⁴ F, Japan, aged 26-35.

¹¹⁵ M, Japan, aged over 55.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

'We learnt from our grandmothers and grandfathers and their generation. We learnt well and we have not forgotten. We've learnt from the old people of this place, and we'll always keep the Tjukurpa in our hearts and minds. We know this place – we are ninti, knowledgeable' (Barbara Tjikatu in (Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park 2006)).

'You have been wary of your preconceptions about the place – the accumulation of iconography and clichés, photographs seen and descriptions read. You don't want to feel exactly what you know you are supposed to feel. You want a raw connection with the thing. You want to wipe your brain clean, approach the rock like the first human ever to take it in' (George 2001).

This concluding chapter applies theoretical concepts of cultural geography to the historical research and fieldwork data in order to answer the question, 'why do people climb or not climb Uluru?'. Practical suggestions for improvements in climb interpretation and management are made, and potential barriers are identified.

6.1 *Imagining Uluru*

This study has explored the ways in which Uluru/Ayers Rock, and the practice of climbing, are experienced, imagined, and sanctified. Visitors' readings of the landscape are informed by their imagined geographies, which encompass the Anangu landscape shaped by Tjukuritja (creation ancestors), as well as national constructions of the rock as 'belonging' to all Australians as part of the 'greatest backyard in the world'¹¹⁶. The two quotes at the top of the page illustrate the stark disjunction between Anangu and tourists' aspirations for relating to the landscape. The interactions between imagined geographies, and visitors' experiences and observations within the park, are complex and reflexive. As Rojek and Urry (1997: 53) point out, the 'travel experience involves mobility through an internal landscape which is sculptured by personal experience and cultural influences as well as a journey through space'. For example, while some visitors were confused about the request, to others it was obvious, a 'dirty great big sign says 'Keep Off''.¹¹⁷

Visitors weigh the offence of climbing (which is unquantified and disputed, and felt by others) against its rewards (which are personal, highly visible, and socially recognised). Tourists have invested heavily in viewing the landscape in certain ways, and their journeys are often structured around facilitating these views. This is particularly evident in the case of many

¹¹⁶ F, Australia, Visitors' comments book 8/6/05.

¹¹⁷ F, Sydney, aged 36-45.

Japanese visitors, but is also manifest in the rigid schedules of bus tour groups. For example, while bus companies advertise travel to Uluru as allowing the experience of ‘a unique culture evolved by the Aboriginal people over thousands of years’,¹¹⁸ their timetable imperative drags their customers away from a personal encounter with an Anangu elder (see Box 4).

6.2 Contesting the climb

Imagined geographies of Uluru and the climb are deeply situated in colonial and post-colonial constructions of the relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia. In discussing their decision to climb or not to climb, visitors employ well-established discursive practices of determining the nature and origins of Indigenous and non-Indigenous claims to land, appraising their relative legitimacy, and positioning them in a perceived rightful hierarchy of competing claims. These discourses draw heavily on established historical narratives; including one in which Uluru’s national significance replaces a fading mythological Indigenous significance, and, more recently, one in which Uluru becomes the place where the nation can be reconciled, and colonial wrongs righted. Uluru is widely viewed as a site through which claims to relationship, control, and social position are made (Harrison 2002, Ranger 1996, Digance 2003, Carruthers 2003). The rock is intensely symbolic of the nation, such that the diverse ways in which it is represented and imagined offer insight into different imaginings of the nation itself.

Some climb discourses present Anangu control and management of Uluru as strong and rightful, founded in stronger, deeper spiritual relationships, compared to which non-Indigenous claims are trivial. In other discourses, the Anangu claim (manifest in the climb request) is represented as rightfully subordinate to national and economic claims, and legitimate only where based in traditional, pre-colonial cultural practices and spiritual relationships. In this discourse, the request is constructed as a greedy fabrication, and also an attempt to exclude ‘Australians’ from accessing their own ‘backyard’. This construction of settler-Australians as rightfully belonging, but vulnerable to exile and dispossession, has become a part of national mythology (Curthoys 1999), and is one of several strategic inversions of the settler-Indigenous relationship that are invoked at Uluru. In another, the rights of all visitors to access the sacredness of the rock as they choose is constructed as paramount. In such discourses, Indigenous sacredness is carefully delimited, in order to mitigate its effect of turning ‘what seems like ‘home’ into something else, something less familiar and less settled’ (Gelder and Jacobs 1998: xiv).

¹¹⁸ AAT Kings Uluru Sightseeing Tours brochure, 2006/2007, p.1.

These discourses are not colonial fantasies, but are also explicitly built on ongoing political and legal realities, both at the national and the local scale. For example, one man invoked a judgement from the Yorta Yorta native title claim to support his right to climb: '(t)he tide of time has washed away [Aboriginal] people's rights, nothing is set in concrete, regardless of Wik and Mabo'.¹¹⁹ The legal ownership and practical control of tourism and the national park is also ambiguous. Anangu freehold title is compromised by the lease agreement. Anangu also have no stake in the resort, where the vast majority of tourist dollars are spent. A report released in 2001 described joint management as highly dysfunctional (Powers 2002). It pointed to inadequacies in structure, process and personal relationships, and found that 'Nguraritja do not see themselves as equal partners in the joint management of the Park's management and describe a great gulf that exists between them and their Piranpa partners' (Powers 2002: 294). Ironically, joint management facilitates the promotion of the park's Indigenous ownership, allowing visitors to justify their inappropriate behaviour, while limiting and the scope for Anangu decision-making about the climb.

6.3 Performance: producing local people and local spaces

The continuing and very public practice of climbing also works reflexively to produce the meanings of place that visitors experience at Uluru. While the discussion above has focussed on how visitors' imagined geographies structure their understanding of the climb, we can also consider the way in which visitors, through their behaviour, give meaning to place. Appadurai argues that rituals such as rites of passage can be read as ways to produce local spaces (localities), and 'to locate bodies in socially and spatially defined communities' – to produce 'natives' (Appadurai 1995: 205). Climbing Uluru has many characteristics of a type of ritual or 'rite of passage' (Whittaker 1994; Marcus 1991). The national park can be seen as a stage for performances that create place meanings and local identities. The range of tourist behaviours reflects the plethora of ways in which local people and places are imagined at Uluru. For example, climbing was variously described as an Australian sacred journey, or at the other extreme, as antithetical to national values: 'I can't believe that you could be Australian and climb'.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ M, Australia, aged 46-55 (2004 surveys). This comment is a near direct quote of a court judgement that found against Indigenous native title claimants in 1998. Justice Olney rejected the Yorta Yorta's native title claim to an area of land in Victoria, stating that "...the tide of history has indeed washed away any real acknowledgement of their traditional laws and any real observance of their traditional customs." Atkinson, W., Atmore, C., Anderson, B. & Rule, R. (2004) Yorta Yorta. <http://www.antarvictoria.org.au/yortayorta.html>. Accessed October 6 2006.

¹²⁰ M, Sydney, aged 46-55.



Plate 14: The very base of the climb

Two young male climbers return safely and proudly to the ground, while a woman and child gaze upward with a mixture of fear and admiration. (Photo: H. Hueneke 2006).

Key stages of the climb experience parallel the stages identified by Turner and Turner (1978) as integral to transitional ritual processes and pilgrimages (see Table 8). As a rite of passage, the climb need only be done once, as one elderly woman explained; ‘I’ve done it before, I wouldn’t do it again. I’ve been right up on top, signed my name, and got my certificate’.¹²¹ Ivakhiv argues that the demarcation of space as sacred is an example of people producing space, of ‘engaging with spaces, places, landscapes, in ways that distinguish and demarcate, describe and redescribe, deterritorialize and reterritorialize’ (Ivakhiv 2006: 172). The Catholic mass performed on the summit of Ayers Rock in 1958, and the performance of the climb ritual, as well as other New Age rites, can be seen as ways of bringing Uluru into wider networks of significance, primarily that of the nation.

¹²¹ F, regional NSW, aged over 55.

Table 8: The climb as a transitional ritual

Ritual stage	Key features of this stage	Interpreting the Uluru climb as a transitional ritual
Separation	Departure from the ordinary and the profane	Visitors make the long journey to Uluru, leaving everyday and familiar landscapes and occupations behind. At the base of the rock, they literally leave the ground behind as they step onto the rock to begin the climb.
Liminality	Entry into a sacred state devoid of usual structures and status differences of everyday life. A state of <i>communitas</i> engendering excitement, bonding, and out-of-the-ordinary experiences.	The climb itself involves challenging physical effort and a sense of danger. The rock is extraordinarily steep and sheer. As they ascend, climbers literally disappear from view, entering another realm. Differences between people become less important, and climbers experience a sense of <i>communitas</i> with family and group members and other climbers. The highpoint of the experience is the summit (and in the past, signing the visitors book there).
Re-integration	Re-entry into the ordinary, with new status	Descending climbers re-enter the field of view, and step back onto solid, horizontal ground. They return to their cars and resort accommodation. The personal transition is recorded, broadcast and recognised – visitors (in the past) signed the summit book, can at last say ‘I’ve climbed Ayers Rock’, and may purchase certificates, stickers and T-shirts commemorating the feat.

6.3.1 ‘It’s Australia, I’m Australian’

Climbing, by connecting the climber with a shared community of fellow climbers, and with the landscape, produces locals that ‘belong’. This community is both real (consisting of family, friends, or explorers) and imagined (encompassing for example the wider national community, or other well-travelled adventurers). Climbers can re-enact Gosse’s historic ‘discovery’ and climbing of Ayers Rock (thereby participating in what Mulvaney sees as an act of colonial conquest and claim - the ‘symbolic flag of possession planted in Australia’s heart’ (Mulvaney 1989: 225). We can recall how Clune, by climbing, felt himself standing in the blistered feet of an explorer, sharing his spoils (the panoptic, surveying view), and joining his illustrious ranks. Crucially, this national practice is site-specific. The summit is a geographically precise and identifiable spot - by signing their name and taking their photograph at the cairn, the visitor inscribes and documents their presence on the map of Australia with confidence. The climb naturalises the national identity of the space and the climber; ‘it’s Australia, I’m

Australian'.¹²² Engaging in other 'national' practices or performances at the national site intensifies this experience (see Plate 15). The view from the summit allows the climber to *see* and *feel* a mythological, supposedly quintessentially Australian place, the 'the outback'. It also furnishes the tourist journey with structure and purpose, representing a metaphorical (and probably literal) 'highpoint'. The position of Anangu in this national community is ambiguous: 'We're all one people and the quicker they learn that the better'.¹²³



Plate 15: Australian rituals on national territory

Playing Australian rules football (sometimes dubbed 'the other religion') on the summit of Uluru is another way of performing national identities and producing national space in the centre of the continent. We often observed children bouncing Australian footballs in the car park at the base of the climb. Photo: (Main and Main 2004)

Alternative activities to the climb are also cultural practices that may participate in producing meaningful space, and locals that belong. In this sense, non-climbers consider themselves to belong as guests, through demonstration of respect for Indigenous culture and values. An Indigenous rather than national space is produced, or perhaps more accurately, a reconciled nation with an Aboriginal heart, rather than a secular colonial nation. By not climbing, visitors express and reinforce their sense of membership of a nation that includes Anangu and other Indigenous Australians as part of the same moral community. These discourses have historical roots in early imaginings of Uluru as a uniquely Aboriginal place. The symbolism of the not climbing decision is expressed through the purchase of stickers and certificates now widely available that state 'I walked around Uluru', or 'I didn't climb the rock'.

6.4 Reading 'signs' but not the signs

Surveys and participant observation in the park highlighted the way that the national park, through interpretive materials, facilities, and planning, also participates in the production of

¹²² F, Victoria, aged 46-55.

¹²³ F, rural WA, aged over 55.

space at Uluru. Visitors read the tangible elements of the landscape (including roads, paths, and the chain) for ‘signs’ about the climb. Ironically, they often fail to read or accurately comprehend interpretive signage. Visitors are also directed along certain paths through the park by the provision of parks facilities (in particular, those essentials for travellers; roads, car parks and toilets). These ‘signs’ are largely the legacy of pre-handback era infrastructure, but they perpetuate the recent colonial uses of the site, continuing to produce the space as a stage for the performance of the climb.

Ivakhiv argues that sacred spaces ‘are those spaces *rendered* sacred through practices of sacralisation (involving selection, demarcation, design, orientation, ritualization, etc.)’ (Ivakhiv 2006: 171). Tourism at Uluru historically has rendered the park a sacred site to mass tourism, national identity, and conquering of or communing with nature through climbing. Tourists’ travels today involve, in a sense, travel through time, not to the ‘ancient timeless land’ of travel brochures, but to the recent colonial past, where the legacy of uncontrolled tourism is still written onto the landscape. The park today faces unique challenges of translating Anangu sacred values into management strategies, and interpreting Uluru as a place of appreciation and learning, in accordance with Anangu wishes and obligations under Tjukurpa (Parks Australia and Uluru-Kata Tjuta Board of Management 2000). The significant proportion of visitors that continues to climb suggests inadequacies in current climb management approaches.

This study has highlighted the need for development of improved methods for interpreting Indigenous cultural values, but it also points to limitations to site interpretation’s impacts on visitor behaviour. The research revealed the overwhelming influences of deeply held constructions of settler-Indigenous relationships, non-interpretive site management, and the behaviour of other visitors. Site interpretation is challenged by Western conceptions of national parks as public, secular places (Byrne et al. 2006), as well as by deeply held suspicions about Indigenous claims to sacredness amongst Australians. Other studies have shown that visitors’ perceptions and knowledge of and attitudes towards natural sites may be unaffected by even quite intensive interpretive signage, but rather are largely shaped by the type of visitors, and crucially, the nature of the activities that are available at the site (Hughes and Morrison-Saunders 2005). Nevertheless such interpretation does give visitors an impression of the educative value of the site (Hughes and Morrison-Saunders 2002), suggesting that poor quality or lack of signage may be read as signifying a lack of educative value. Improved understanding of different visitor groups can also facilitate targeting of the content and media of interpretation towards problem groups (Ballantyne et al. 1998).

This thesis makes several suggestions concerning facilities and site planning. Jacobs and Gale (1994) have noted the effectiveness of physical mechanisms such as roads, paths and car

parks as tools for the management and control of visitor numbers and movements at Indigenous cultural heritage sites. These can be located strategically to encourage or deter walkers, and to direct visitors past associated sites that broaden their experience of the place. Park management might learn from the strategy one couple employed to deter their young children from climbing (see Section 5.3.3), of making them walk almost all the way around the rock before they encountered the base of the climb.

However, there are also limitations to the park's capacity to implement site improvements that need to be acknowledged. For example, new interpretive signage is currently being developed for the base of Uluru, but has progressed slowly (Commonwealth of Australia 2006). Although the relocation of the Uluru ring road away from the base of the climb has been planned for some time, it has not yet been implemented. Similarly, the relatively low level of face-to-face interpretation at Uluru¹²⁴ has been previously noted (Brown 1993) but not addressed. The park faces the challenges of operating in a very remote location including high operating costs and problems retaining staff. It is also in the unique, and financially draining position of providing essential services to the community of Mutitjulu (Commonwealth of Australia 2006). These and other factors, as well as more general uncertainty about the objectives of joint management, place intense pressure on park management and resources (Commonwealth of Australia 2002).

6.4.1 Parks interpretation

The study has identified specific areas in which interpretation could be targeted:

- The amount and quality of on-site interpretation of Anangu cultural values could be increased, preferably in locations that most visitors pass. This would complement the highly effective cultural centre displays.
- The opportunities for face-to-face interpretation and communication of the message could be increased. The surveys suggested that information conveyed personally is more influential than written or sign-posted information. However, this communication must provide visitors with a consistent message.
- Interpretative media and content could be tailored towards groups that the research identified (in Section 5.2) as having high rates of climbing, including for example, large school groups, children, young families, men, and certain nationalities.

¹²⁴ In Kakadu NP, which receives around half the number of tourists of Uluru, more than twenty ranger talks and cultural activities are run each day in different locations (Kakadu National Park brochure 2006).

6.4.2 Park planning and facilities

The study also suggests some fairly straightforward non-interpretive management steps that might reduce the number of people climbing.

- The base of climb area could be made less visible and accessible, by removing cars, signage, and evidence of crowds, both to discourage access to this area, and to produce an appropriate 'sense of place'. Facilities such as seating in this area could be progressively relocated.
- Pathways and car parks could be sited in order to direct tourist flows away from the climb and through areas that offer alternative readings of the site.
- The 'climb open' sign at the park entry could be removed. Only using the 'climb closed' sign when this is the case would just as effectively inform tour operators of climb status.
- The quality, visibility, and infrastructural support for alternative activities, that Anangu consider more appropriate, could be increased. These could be targeted to cater for the travel motivations and styles of groups with high rates of climbing, mentioned above.
- Importantly, a strategic and planned approach towards implementing the management goal of reducing the number of people climbing could be taken. Planning should anticipate and accommodate increases in visitor pressure at other sites in the park. Alternative activities could be actively monitored and managed. Climbing currently satisfies the desire of many visitors for views of the surrounding area. Helicopter and plane flights provide an alternative, but also have impacts on the aesthetics of the site. Innovative alternatives could be considered, for example a tethered hot air balloon might provide a similar view point with less aesthetic impact than helicopters.

6.5 Conclusions

The park landscape carries palimpsest-like signs of the past, and visitors' imaginings of it are also diverse and reflect the shifting ways it has been experienced and represented over time. Wider understandings of the social meanings of the landscape shape the way visitors experience the park, and the climb request. Just as early non-Indigenous visitors to Uluru viewed and experienced the rock through the lenses and bodily practices provided by the writings of their predecessors, so do many visitors to the park today still follow in the narrow, well trodden path of other visitors who have gone before, and still see through the same colonial lens. At the same time, however, there is now also a widespread awareness of and respect for the Anangu climb request. Today, not climbing might just as well be imagined as the 'sacred deed at Australia's mighty heart'.¹²⁵

This study provides a historical perspective and rich empirical research and analysis that highlights that visitors' decisions to climb or not to climb are deeply situated in wider political contexts and discursive practices that recognise or deny Indigenous claims. The thesis has also turned the spotlight on how the practice of climbing continues to produce the rock as a place for climbing. It has identified key infrastructural aspects of the park that perpetuate the tourist flows that were established in the pre-handback era. The thesis has used these results to identify areas where site interpretation and planning could be targeted to reduce the number of people climbing Uluru.

The settler-Australian historical narrative has often represented settler people and values at Ayers Rock/Uluru as gradually replacing a declining Indigenous presence and significance. The climb has played a role in this historical narrative, providing space in which visitors can recognise, claim, nationalise and resacralise the rock and landscape, joining the 'Brotherhood of the Rock' by conquering it. However, as Tim Rowse has argued, it is also possible to view the history of this area as one in which the avenues and capacity for Indigenous self-representation within the nation have slowly begun to emerge (Rowse 2006). In such a narrative, the issue of the climb is an example of the way in which Anangu have, since the early 1970s, asserted their continuing interests in and relationships with land. Joint management is the contemporary structure within which these interests are expressed.

The climbing of Uluru is a highly visible manifestation of the divergence between Anangu interests and tourist behaviour and management. It may appear to illustrate the complete disempowerment of traditional owners within joint management. Significant barriers to Anangu

¹²⁵(Flynn and Willey 1964:102).

empowerment within joint management have been shown elsewhere to exist (Powers 2002; Commonwealth of Australia 2002). However, we should consider it likely that Anangu are at least to some degree directing their limited political and economic resources towards achieving the aims they consider most pressing, and most achievable. The positive achievements of joint management may be less visible. In addition, tourism may have more insidious impacts than the climb. For example, Anangu have significant concerns about the impact of the resort's water usage on aquifer levels, and thus on their long term ability to live on and travel across their lands (Commonwealth of Australia 2006). Contemporary climb management clearly illustrates the underlying fraught relationships between Anangu, the federal government, and mass tourism.

The two contrasting diagrams representing joint management provided in the introduction (Figure 1) highlight a gap between the conceptual ideals of joint management, in terms of equal power-sharing and 'Tjukurpa above all else', and the quite rigid political structures in which it operates. This thesis has studied one manifestation of this gap. It has highlighted the challenges of incorporating Indigenous cultural values into joint management in the context of mass tourism. It suggests that further research is needed into how traditional owners can gain a greater voice in joint management. In addition, the study points to opportunities for tourism and heritage researchers to work more closely with Indigenous park managers, so that they can make informed decisions towards achieving their diverse aspirations for joint management.

Chapter 7: References

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Appendix 1: Additional primary sources

Informal interviews were conducted at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park with:

Sean Moran (Central Land Council and UKNTP)

Traceylee Forrester (UKTNP Board of Management Secretariat)

UKTNP visitors' books consulted include:

These books are stored at Park Headquarters at Uluru, and are identified here by the date range of comments.

3/5/90-14/7/90

13/1/91-5/2/91

16/6/91-2/7/91

8/6/91-1/9/91

8/1/89-1/9/89

13/7/87-27/7/87

23/2/00-16/4/00

Translations of Japanese comments were taken from the following books:

28/9/95-13/10/95

8/2/03-14/5/03

5/2/05-11/05/05

13/11/04-5/2/05

25/11/95-25/2/96

3/12/01-9/2/02

25/12/96-2/4/97

3/12/99-23/2/00

Northern Territory Tourism Commission Travel Monitor Surveys

I accessed a summary of the comments on Parks Australia national parks compiled from the following surveys:

September Quarter 2004

December Quarter 2004

March Quarter 2005

June Quarter 2005

Appendix 2: 2004 Survey form

For Interviewer to fill out			
Date			
Time			
Interview Site	Interviewee	M	F

Introduction

Good morning / good afternoon. Are you a visitor to Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Park?

If no politely find out how they would classify themselves and if not a tourist/visitor terminate interview. If yes continue.

Go through the verbal consent form

Questions

Details about interviewee

1. Are you travelling
 - a) alone
 - b) with family
 - c) with friends
 in a group

2. What is your age and that of everyone in your group

under 25 26 – 35 36 – 45 46 – 55 over 55

Male

Female

3. What nationality are you/members of your group? If Australian go to 5 if not go to 4

4. How long is your visit to Australia?
5. What town / city / rural area do you live in?
6. How long is your visit to Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Park?
7. Have you/will you visit any other locations outside this park on this trip.

Details about the Rock / Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Park

Why did you come to visit Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Park?

What aspects about the Park have you most enjoyed?

What aspects about the Park have you least enjoyed?

Do you (and others in your party) intend to, or have you climbed the Rock, if so why? If not go to 5

Why did you decide not to climb the Rock?

If they say they did not have time to climb or that the climb was too difficulty ask them if they had had the time or were not too old, young or unfit enough to climb would they have climbed

The Anangu have a message to tourists '*Nganana Tatintja Wiya – We never climb [the Rock]*'.

Do you know anything about this message?

[If yes] How did you find out about this message?

Uluru Kata-Tjuta visitor centre

Tour guide

Travel literature

Other

Do you think that the source of this message presented the Anangu viewpoint in a positive or negative way?

How did you respond to this message?

Thank-you very much for your time

Appendix 3: 2006 Survey form

For Interviewer to fill out			Climb	open	closed
Date	Time	Interview Site	Interviewee	M	F

Introduction

Good morning / good afternoon. Are you a visitor to Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Park?

If no politely find out how they would classify themselves and if not a tourist/visitor terminate interview. If yes continue.

Go through the verbal consent form

Details about interviewee

1. Are you travelling:
- a) alone
 - b) with family
 - c) with friends
 - d) in a tour group
 - e) as a couple

What is your age and that of everyone in your group (circle interviewee)

Age group	#Men	# Women	#men climb	#men don't climb	#women climb	#women don't climb
0-17						
18-25						
26-35						
36-45						
46-55						
Over 55						

3. What nationality are you/members of your group?

If Austr. go to 5 if not go to 4

4. Where are you from in Australia?

5. How long is your visit to Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Park?

6. How are you traveling around the park?
 - a. Private vehicle
 - b. Tour bus
 - c. Shuttle bus
 - d. Other (bike/hitch)

Details about the Rock / Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Park

1. Why did you come to visit Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Park?

2. Have you participated in any of the following activities in the park? (circle)

a. Walking circuit of base	e. Ranger-guided walk
b. Anangu tours walk	f. Visit to Kata Tjuta
c. Sunset viewing	g. Sunrise viewing
d. Visit to cultural centre	h. other commercial activity

3. What aspects about the Park have you most enjoyed?

4. What aspects about the Park have you least enjoyed?

5. Do you (and others in your party) intend to, or have you climbed the Rock?
(fill in numbers of male and female climbers/non-climbers in table on previous page, circle interviewee if group nationality mixed note nationality of climbers/non-climbers clear)

6. Why did you decide to climb/not climb?

The Anangu have a message to tourists [*Nganana Tatintja Wiya*] – We don't climb [the Rock]. Please don't climb.'

Do you know anything about this message?

7. [If yes] How did you find out about this message?
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. Uluru Kata-Tjuta cultural centre | e. Parks Australia info on site |
| b. Tourism industry representative | f. Travel literature |
| c. Internet | g. Word of mouth |
| d. Media | h. Other..... |
8. Do you think that the source of this message presented the Anangu viewpoint in a positive or negative way?
9. How did you respond to this message?
10. I'd now like to ask a hypothetical question – do you think you would have still visited the park if you knew the climb were closed?

Thank-you very much for your time.

Appendix 4: Human ethics research

See following pages.



**THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
APPLICATION FORM**

Surname of Researcher: Hueneke
First name/s: Hannah
Title (e.g. Ms., Mr., Dr. etc.): Ms

Position Held (staff, postgraduate, undergraduate, etc.): Honours student

Student or Staff ID no. (if applicable): 3365703

Dept/School/Centre: SRES (School of Resources, Environment and Society)

Mailing address:

School of Resources, Environment and Society
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Telephone: 02 6125 3250, 0431 267 213
Fax: 02 6125 3770
Email: Hannah.Hueneke@anu.edu.au

For students:

Name of ANU supervisor: Dr Richard Baker
Email address of ANU supervisor: Richard.Baker@anu.edu.au

PROJECT TITLE: 'Tourism management at Uluru – attitudes towards climbing'

Date of this application: March 1 2006

Anticipated start date for project: June 1 2006
2006

Anticipated end date: June 21

1. The researcher/s

Who are the investigators (including assistants) who will conduct the research and what are their qualification and experience? Please include their Department/School/Centre (or external institution for external researchers). Students should not include supervisors at this point unless they are actually participating in the research project as partner researchers.

Hannah Hueneke

Honours student, SRES

I have completed a Bachelor of Arts (majoring in Anthropology and Indigenous Australian Studies) and Science (majoring in Geography). I will work under Dr Richard Baker's supervision.

Dr Richard Baker

SRES

Dr Baker has over 20 years research experience much of it with Indigenous communities in remote areas. Most of this work has been in Australia but he has also worked with Indigenous/Minority groups in the Philippines and Vietnam. He has worked on a number of previous tourist impact studies. This project is part of a larger research project investigating tourism at Uluru that Dr Baker is working on (HREC Application May 3, 2004 'Tourism management at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park'). Dr Baker will be participating in the research project as a supervising researcher.

Survey assistant.

We will also appoint one research assistant to assist in conducting the short surveys. The assistant will work under Baker's supervision.

2. *Understanding the national guidelines, the "National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans" (1999)*

Can the proposer certify that the persons listed in the answer to Question 1 above have been fully briefed on appropriate procedures and in particular that they have read and are familiar with the national guidelines issued by the National Health and Medical Research Council (the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans*) (cited below as the "National Statement")? If there are guidelines from any relevant professional body with which the researcher/s are familiar they should also be listed below.

Both Dr Baker and I am familiar with the "*National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans*" (1999). Dr Baker is also familiar with The Institute of Australian Geographers Code of Professional Conduct - see <http://www.iag.org.au/iagcpc.htm>, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Studies May 2000 guidelines for ethical research in Indigenous studies, and the ANU policies on Responsible Practice of Research and Code of Conduct. The appointed research assistant will be briefed on the National Statement, and we will ensure they are fully briefed on appropriate procedures before they conduct any research.

3. *Purpose and design of the proposed research*

Purpose

(a) Briefly describe the basic purposes of the research proposed (in plain language intelligible to a non-specialist).

This research addresses aims to obtain qualitative information on visitors' expectations and experiences of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park (the national park), and in particular, the nature of visitors' attitudes towards climbing Uluru. It also aims to obtain quantitative data on whether different groups are more likely or not to climb, for example according to nationality, gender, group size, or age.

The national park is owned and jointly managed by Anangu Indigenous people and receives more than 400, 000 Australian and international visitors each year. Senior traditional owners at Uluru and park management ask that visitors choose not to climb the rock, however large numbers of visitors continue to climb. A better understanding of why visitors choose to climb or not climb Uluru may contribute to better management of the park, and may have wider relevance to the management of other national parks with multiple values.

Design

(b) Outline the design of the project (in plain language intelligible to a non-specialist). (If interviewing people or administering a survey/questionnaire, please attach either a list of the broad questions you propose to ask, or a copy of the questionnaire.)

The proposed research consists of two parts: firstly, a series of short verbal surveys, and secondly, a small number of longer interviews.

The first part consists of the administration of a short verbal survey of park visitors at several popular tourism sites within the National Park regarding their attitudes and experiences of the national park and climbing or not climbing the Rock (see Appendix A for proposed survey questionnaire). This will involve Hueneke, Baker, and the research assistant.

Dr Baker has previously conducted research including a visit to the Park in 2003 during which he and Dr Cathy Robinson a) explained their research to the traditional owners, b) successfully negotiated a research permit through the Central Land Council that represents the traditional owners, and c) visited potential interview sites to devise appropriate interview methodologies at each. On a later visit in 2004 the researchers conducted surveys of tourists at major sites regarding their views of climbing the rock and of the Anangu request that they do not climb.

Following the same procedure as in 2004, I propose to interview tourists at four different sites 1) the Cultural Centre, 2) at the car park at the base of the rock climb (to target both climbers and those who have been the walking around the rock) 3) 'car sunset' and 4) 'bus sunset'. The last two sites are large car parks with an associated viewing area where nightly large numbers gather for about 30 minutes. Both quantitative data (eg place of origin) and qualitative data (eg motivation for climbing or not climbing the Rock) will be recorded on survey forms. Rather than attempting to be statistically rigorous in our sampling our methods in line with qualitative research methodologies will be deliberately targeted. For example tourist from the widest possible range of different nationalities will be targeted to test our hypothesis that there are different patterns in the attitudes and behaviour of various nationalities.

The survey will replicate as closely as possible that conducted by Dr Baker and Dr Robinson in 2004, with the addition of a two new questions; one concerning the importance of the climb in terms of planning their visit, and another concerning their participation in any alternative activities within the park (e.g. guided walks).

For the second part of the research, I propose to conduct approximately ten longer semi-structured, open-ended extended interviews with tourists, with the aim of obtaining more in-depth information about visitor attitudes to Uluru and to climbing. These would be taped, and would be based around the same questions as the survey, but allow more time and a more open-ended response (see Appendix F for an outline of the broad interview questions). Interview participants would be deliberately targeted by inviting survey participants with a wide range of views and backgrounds to participate in the longer interview. The extended interviews will be conducted only by myself (Hannah Hueneke), with Baker's supervision.

4. Sources of data involving humans

To ensure compliance with privacy legislation the committee needs to know your sources of information, i.e. where you are obtaining data involving humans. If you are using individual participants, tick at (a). If you are accessing personal records held by government departments or agencies, or by other bodies, e.g. private sector organisations, please tick and complete the relevant sections (b), (c) and/or (d) below.

- (a) Individual subjects (yes)
- (b) Commonwealth Department/s or agency (*specify*)* (yes)...Department of Environment and Heritage.....
- (c) State/Territory Department/s or agency (*specify*)* (no).....
- (d) Other sources (*specify*) (no).....

*Please include an estimate of how many records you expect to access:.....

The federal Department of Environment and Heritage that administers the park has kept a range of visitor comment books that they have indicated we can have access to. They have about 20 A4 160 page books that we wish to examine to examine for trends in visitors comments about why they do or do not climb the rock. Visitors have usually signed their comments and given very broad addresses (usually just nationality if they are foreign visitors and city if Australian visitors). Visitors have signed these books knowing others will read them (the books until they are full are kept in very public places – eg a prominent spot in the visitors centre). Neither names nor identifying details will be collected from these books.

5. Personal identifiable data for medical/health research

Are you obtaining personal identifiable data specifically for medical/health research that is held by a government or private sector agency? (The committee needs this information to determine whether it needs to comply with relevant National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines relating to privacy legislation.)

NO (*delete whichever is not applicable*)

6. Recruitment

Describe how participants will be recruited for this project. Indicate how many participants are likely to be involved, how initial contact will be made, and how participants will be invited to take part in this project. A copy of any relevant correspondence should be attached to this application. Does the recruitment process raise any privacy issues, e.g. does the researcher plan to access personal information to identify potential participants without their knowledge or consent? Describe the steps to be taken to ensure that participation or refusal to participate will not impair any existing relationship between participants and researcher or institution involved.

The short surveys will be obtained by approaching people at sites in the park including the base of the climb, the visitor’s centre, and the car and bus sunset viewing areas, and asking if they are happy to answer a few questions about their visit to Uluru. A verbal consent form will be used (see below). Only adults who identify as visitors to the national park will be surveyed. We aim to survey around 400 tourists over a two-week period.

The semi-structured interviewees will be recruited by asking selected survey participants if they would like to participate in a longer interview, at a time and public place within the park that is convenient to them. I aim to conduct extended interviews with around ten tourists.

7. *Arrangements for access to identifiable data held by another party*

In cases where participants are identified from information held by another party (e.g. government department, non-governmental organisation, private company, community association, doctor, hospital) describe the arrangement whereby you will gain access to this information. Attach any relevant correspondence.

N/A

8. *Vulnerable participants*

Will participants include students, children, the mentally ill or others in a dependent relationship? If so, provide details.

No, only participants over the age of 18 will be surveyed or interviewed.

9. *Payment*

Will payment be made to any participants? If so, give details of arrangements.

No.

10. Consent

Describe the consent issues involved in this proposal (see the National Statement, in particular Section 1.7-12, and other sections relevant to your research). **Describe the procedures to be followed in obtaining the informed consent of participants and/or others responsible. Attach any relevant documents such as a consent form, information sheet, letter of invitation etc. If you do not propose to obtain written consent (e.g. if working with non-literate people) give a detailed explanation of the reasons for seeking oral consent, describe the procedure you intend to adopt, and specify the information to be provided to participants. If you have answered YES to Question 8 above please address any issues of consent and the possibility of coercion.**

It is proposed that we get verbal consent from short survey participants by reading out the following text in conjunction with an information sheet on the research (see Appendices B and C, one for use by the researchers Hueneke and Baker, and one for the research assistant).

Verbal consent text for short (less than five minutes interviews)

Hello my name is Richard Baker/Hannah Hueneke. I'm a researcher from the Australian National University in Canberra. I am doing some research into the management of Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Park. Would you be prepared to answer a few questions that are part of a survey of visitors to the Park?

If answer is “yes” continue if “no” say “thanks for your time” and move on

OK thanks. The questions will take about five minutes and your contribution is anonymous, as the interview will not involve any identifiable personal details from you apart from what city or town you are from. The results of this study will be analysed and compiled in my Honours thesis. If you would like an electronic copy of this thesis you can contact me at the email address on this information sheet and I will send you a copy once it is completed.

Hand it to them and ask

Is there anything else about the study that you would like me to explain?

If they respond “no” then proceed to ask

“So are you happy for me to proceed with the questions on the understanding that you can of course stop the interview at any time you wish?”

If “Yes” say “Thanks” and proceed to questions.

A verbal rather than written consent process is proposed for a number of reasons including:

- 1) it increases the anonymity of interviewees as there is no need for them to give us any personal details;
- 2) it will allow us to take up less of the tourists time;
- 3) it allows us to be flexible and carry out a genuine consent process while tourist and researcher are walking together. This is particularly important at “bus sunset” and “car sunset”. A consent process at these key places involving reading and signing a written consent form would not be practical given the fading light and the rush that tourists are in.
- 4) Given our research hypothesis of different national behaviours in the Park it is crucial that we interview a wide range of different nationalities. English will therefore not be the first language of a high proportion of interviewees. It is anticipated that while many tourists would struggle to read a formal written consent form they will usually have good enough spoken English to make it clear whether they want to be interviewed or not.
- 5) To assist the main non-English speaking groups on the reverse side of the attached consent form we will have in large writing the following message: “Are you happy to answer some short questions about your visit to Uluru” plus this message translated into Japanese, French, German, and Dutch. This message will be shown first to all potential interviewees before going through the detailed consent process outlined above.

The extended interviews require more time and will be taped, and therefore participants will be asked if they are willing for this to occur, shown a separate information sheet (see Appendix D), and asked if they are happy to sign a written consent form (see Appendix E).

11. *Protection of privacy (confidentiality)*

Describe the confidentiality issues involving in this proposal. Give details of the measures that will be adopted to protect confidential information about participants, both in handling and storing raw research data and in any publications. Blanket guarantees of confidentiality are not helpful. If the term “confidential” is used in information provided to participants, a full description of what precisely confidentiality means in the context of this research should be given. You should be aware that, under Australian law, any data you collect can potentially be subpoenaed. Depending on the nature of your research, it may be helpful to qualify promises of confidentiality with terms such as “as far as possible” or “as far as the law allows”. [See the National Statement, in particular Sections 1.19, 18 and Appendix II]

No identifying data about the short survey participants will be collected. As mentioned above, this is an advantage of using a verbal consent process.

Extended interview notes, tapes and tape transcripts will be kept as confidential as the law allows. They will be stored in a locked drawer at ANU, and electronic data will be kept on password-protected computers. Access will be restricted to Dr Richard Baker and myself. Participants will not be identified in my Honours thesis or any subsequent publication.

12. *Cultural or social considerations*

Comment on any cultural or social considerations that may affect the design of the research. [See the National Statement, in particular Sections 1.2 and 1.19].

The research will only be contacting tourists/visitors to the national park. Many participants will be international tourists, and as such may not have English as a first language. Therefore we will use our discretion to minimise any possible embarrassment to tourists if they do not have the language ability to give informed consent and we have to pass over to the next tourist.

13. *How the research might impact on participants*

Describe and discuss any possible impact of the proposed research on the participants or their communities that you can foresee. This might include psychological, health, social, economic or political changes or ramifications. Discuss how you will try to minimise any impact. [See the National Statement, in particular Sections 1.3 to 1.6 and Section 1.14]

The proposed research is likely to impact on participants primarily through taking their time. Participation is entirely voluntary. To minimise this impact, the survey has been designed to be brief, requiring approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. It is anticipated that interviews would last less than 1 hour, and participants would be informed of this before they agreed to participate, and given the opportunity to nominate a convenient time for the interview to take place.

A further possible impact is that participants might think the interviewers are judgemental of them climbing Uluru. We will do everything possible to avoid giving them this impression as:

- 1) it is inappropriate for us to pass judgement on people carrying out an activity that they are entitled to do within in the park and

- 2) because giving tourists such an impression is likely to prejudice their responses.

If asked by tourists what we think about the issue we would explain that our research agenda is not to have a strong opinion ourselves but to listen to the views of others and to try and understand the basis of their opinions. If asked about Anangu opinions on the climb issue we would explain Anangu opinions in terms of the consistent message “we don’t climb” that is portrayed at both the base of climb and the visitors centre.

14. *Other ethical and any legal considerations*

Comment on any other ethical considerations that are involved in this proposal, including any potential for legal difficulties to arise for participants.

From previous similar research conducted by Dr Baker, I cannot foresee any other ethical considerations or any potential legal difficulties for participants.

15. *Benefits versus risks*

Describe the possible benefit/s to be gained from the proposed research. Explain why these benefits outweigh or justify any possible discomforts and risks to participants. In framing your explanation make explicit reference to the ethical considerations mentioned in your answers to previous questions on this form. [See the National Statement, in particular Sections 1.3-6 and 1.13-14]

We do not anticipate that participation in this research would incur any risks. The minor inconvenience to tourists of participating in the surveys and/or interviews is outweighed by the potential benefits of improved park management that increased cross-cultural understanding offers. Senior traditional owners ask that visitors to their land do not climb Uluru, and wish to better understand why people do. A potential benefit from this research would be improved strategies for park management and interpretation, based on a better understanding of visitor’s expectations and motivations. The successful joint management of the national park depends on improved communication between Anangu and tourists about the current conflicting expectations about visitor behaviour in the park. This research aims to make a positive contribution in this context by improving cross-cultural understanding on this important issue. Following previous research in 2004, Baker has reported back to the Board of Management, where traditional owners expressed a strong desire for the research to continue. This would also allow changes in attitudes to be tracked over the time of Baker’s longer research project. Improved understandings of visitor knowledge, attitudes and behaviour are essential if the Board of Management is to successfully carry out its task of managing the park in ways that respects Anangu wishes. Parks Australia has issued Baker with a permit for this research.

Anangu are not the subject of our research but are the key stakeholder whose concerns have initiated this research. The research is designed to document tourists’ attitudes and behaviour in a way that minimises any negative impact on the tourists. With this in mind we have designed a short survey without any identifiable information (apart from the very broad information of nationality and town/city of origin), in conjunction with a small number of extended interviews with tourists who are willing for this to occur. The decision to climb or not climb is often a difficult one for visitors, and from Baker’s previous research experience at Uluru, some visitors have a lot to say about it. The extended interviews are designed to allow the researchers to explore some of the broader, more complex motivations for tourist behaviour that are not easily broached in the five-minute surveys.

16. *Handling possible problems arising from the research*

Describe the arrangements you have made to handle concerns and complaints by participants, or emergencies involving participants or researchers.

Participants in surveys and interviews will be provided with the contact details of myself (Hannah Hueneke), Dr Richard Baker, and of the Secretary of the Human Research Ethics Committee at ANU in the case that they have any concerns or complaints.

It is not anticipated that researchers or participants will be exposed to any increased risks during the research. The surveys and interviews will be conducted in busy, public places, and researchers will be in mobile phone range. Any emergencies will be referred to the local police and emergency services at Yulara, the service town located approx. 20km away.

17. RESEARCH PROTOCOL CHECKLIST

There are some key ethical principles that need to be addressed in your protocol (as an ethics application is known). In particular the committee needs to see how you have addressed the issue of informed consent and the issue of confidentiality, i.e. how the identities of participants will be protected in the raw research data and in published material. The usual way to obtain informed consent is in writing, by use of a consent form that is signed by the participant and retained by you. Because you retain the consent form the same information needs to be included in an information sheet that participants retain. Both the consent form and the information sheet should include your name, contact details, title and brief description of the project, details on how the identities of participants will be protected (both when storing the raw research data and in its published form), a statement that participation is voluntary and participants can withdraw at any time, and contact details for the Human Research Ethics Committee in case of any ethical concerns. If you do not propose to seek written consent, you need to explain why oral consent will be sufficient and how you propose to obtain it.

Please tick the relevant boxes below to indicate what has been included in your protocol:

Outline of proposal and purpose Yes No
Measures to be taken to protect confidentiality Yes No
Explanation of how written informed consent will be obtained Yes No

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If written consent is not being sought, justification of a verbal consent procedure is included	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
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Full details on investigators (name, institution, etc.) Yes No
All researchers on this project are familiar with the national guidelines (*National Statement*) Yes No
Details re how participants will be recruited Yes No
Is personal data from a Commonwealth department/agency or private sector organisation being used? Yes No
Details on how cultural and social sensitivities will be addressed Yes No
Consideration of likely risk to participants (e.g. psychological stress; cultural, social, political or economic ramifications) Yes No

Do your research participants include:

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples Yes No
Children and young people (i.e. minors under the age of 18) Yes No
People with an intellectual or mental impairment Yes No
People highly dependent on medical case Yes No
People in dependent or unequal relationships Yes No

The research involves visitors to popular tourist sites in the national park. Indigenous tourists will be approached in the same way other tourists are.

Do you intend to pay participants? Yes No

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Description of method and amount is included	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
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Description of clinical facilities (for medical research) Yes No
Period of research Yes No

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION: *The committee requires copies of all relevant documents*

Consent form to be signed by participants Yes No
Information sheet for participants to retain Yes No

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Dot point list of the points that will be made when seeking verbal consent	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
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List of interview questions Yes No

Copy of questionnaire/s	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Invitation or introductory letter/s	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Publicity material (posters etc.)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (<i>specify</i>)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

Appendices:

- A: Proposed Short Survey Questions
- B: Information Sheet for Survey Participants, for use by Hueneke and Baker
- C: Information Sheet for Survey Participants, for use by assistant researcher.
- D: Information Sheet for Extended Interview Participants
- E: Consent Form for Extended Interview Participants
- F: Proposed Interview Topics

18. SIGNATURES AND UNDERTAKINGS

PROPOSER OF THE RESEARCH

I certify that the above is as accurate a description of my research proposal as possible and that the research will be conducted in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (version current at time of application). I also agree to adhere to the conditions of approval stipulated by the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) and will cooperate with HREC monitoring requirements. I agree to notify the Committee in writing immediately of any significant departures from this protocol and will not continue the research if ethical approval is withdrawn and will comply with any special conditions required by the HREC.

Name and title (please print):
(Proposer of research)

Signed:..... Date:.....

ANU SUPERVISOR

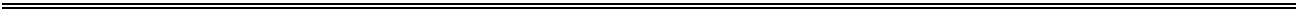
Where the proposal is from a student, the ANU Supervisor is asked to certify the accuracy of the above account.

I certify that I shall provide appropriate supervision to the student to ensure that the project is undertaken in accordance with the undertakings above:

Name and title (please print):
(ANU Supervisor)

ANU Department/School/Centre:

Signed:..... Date:.....



COMMENT ON PROJECT FROM HEAD OF ANU DEPARTMENT/GROUP/CENTRE:

The Head of ANU Department/School/Centre is asked to certify that this proposal has his/her support:

I certify that:

- **I am familiar with this project and endorse its undertakings;**
- **the resources required to undertake this project are available;**
and
- **the investigators have the skill and expertise to undertake this project appropriately.**

Any additional comments (optional):

Name and title (please print):.....

(Head of ANU Department/Group/Centre)

ANU Department/School/Centre:

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Applications should be submitted as follows:

(a) 15 hard copies (one master copy with original signatures + 14 photocopies) and all supporting documentation

PLUS

(b) an identical email version emailed to Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au.

Hard copies of the completed protocol form, together with all supporting documents, should be sent to:

The Secretary
Human Research Ethics Committee
Research Services Office
Chancery 10B

The Australian National University ACT 0200

Tel: 6125-7945

Fax: 6125-4807

Email: Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au

- **Please ensure that the application includes (a) your signature (b) signature of Head of ANU School, Department or Centre; and (c) signature of ANU supervisor (for students).**
- **All copies of your application must be secured. Do not send loose pages.**