

## KEY ISSUE 3

## Why Do Religions Organize Space in Distinctive Patterns?

- Sacred Space
- The Calendar
- Administration of Space

### Learning Outcome 6.3.1

Compare the role of places of worship in various religions.

Geographers study the major impact on the landscape made by all religions, regardless of whether they are universalizing or ethnic. In large cities and small villages around the world, regardless of the region's prevailing religion, the tallest, most elaborate buildings are often religious structures.

### Sacred Space

The distribution of religious elements on the landscape reflects the importance of religion in people's values. The impact of religion on the landscape is particularly profound, for many religious people believe that their life on Earth ought to be spent in service to God.

The impact of religion is clearly seen in the arrangement of human activities on the landscape at several scales, from relatively small parcels of land to entire communities. How each religion distributes its elements on the landscape depends on its beliefs. Important religious land uses include burial of the dead and religious settlements.

### PLACES OF WORSHIP IN UNIVERSALIZING RELIGIONS

Church, basilica, mosque, temple, pagoda, and synagogue are familiar names that identify places of worship in various religions. Sacred structures are physical "anchors" of religion. All major religions have structures, but the functions of the buildings influence the arrangement of the structures across the landscape. They may house shrines or be places where people assemble for worship. Some religions require a relatively large number of elaborate structures, whereas others have more modest needs.

**CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.** The Christian landscape is dominated by a high density of churches. The word *church* derives from a Greek term meaning "lord," "master," and

"power." *Church* also refers to a gathering of believers, as well as the building at which the gathering occurs.

The church plays a more critical role in Christianity than do buildings in other religions, in part because the structure is an expression of religious principles, an environment in the image of God. The church is also more prominent in Christianity because attendance at a collective service of worship is considered extremely important.

The prominence of churches on the landscape also stems from their style of construction and location. In some communities, the church was traditionally the largest and tallest building and was placed at an important square or other prominent location. Although such characteristics may no longer apply in large cities, they are frequently still true for small towns and neighborhoods within cities.

Since Christianity split into many denominations, no single style of church construction has dominated. Churches reflect both the cultural values of the denomination and the region's architectural heritage. Orthodox churches follow an architectural style that developed in the Byzantine Empire during the fifth century. Byzantine-style Orthodox churches tend to be highly ornate, topped by prominent domes. Many Protestant churches in North America, on the other hand, are simple, with little ornamentation. This austerity is a reflection of the Protestant conception of a church as an assembly hall for the congregation.

Availability of building materials also influences church appearance. In the United States, early churches were most frequently built of wood in the Northeast, brick in the Southeast, and adobe in the Southwest. Stucco and stone predominated in Latin America. This diversity reflected differences in the most common building materials found by early settlers.

**MUSLIM MOSQUES.** Religious buildings are highly visible and important features of the landscapes in regions dominated by religions other than Christianity. But unlike Christianity, other major religions do not consider their important buildings sanctified places of worship.

Muslims consider a mosque to be a space for community assembly. Unlike a church, a mosque is not viewed as a sanctified place but rather as a location for the community to gather together for worship. Mosques are found primarily in larger cities of the Muslim world; simple structures may serve as places of prayer in rural villages.

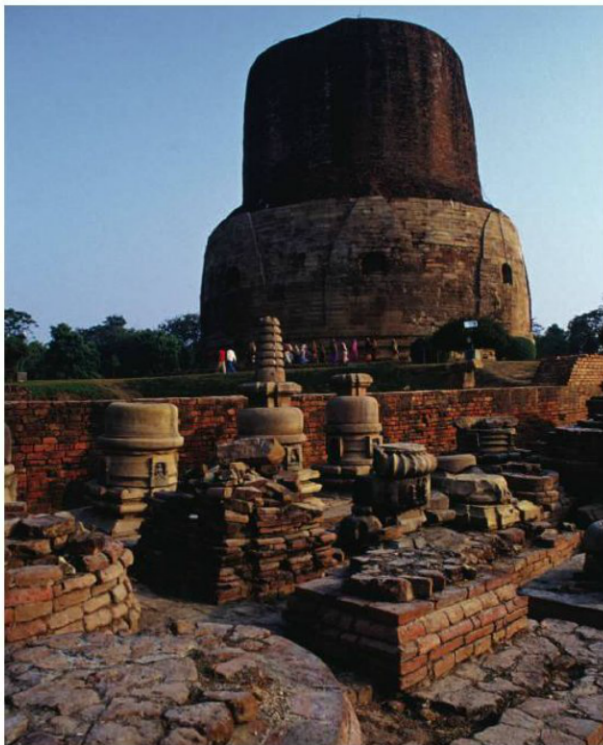
A mosque is organized around a central courtyard—traditionally open-air, although it may be enclosed in harsher climates. The pulpit is placed at the end of the courtyard facing Makkah, the direction toward which all Muslims pray. Surrounding the courtyard is a cloister used for schools and nonreligious activities. A distinctive feature of the mosque is the *minaret*, a tower where a man known as a *muezzin* summons people to worship.

**BUDDHIST PAGODAS.** The pagoda is a prominent and visually attractive element of the Buddhist landscape. Frequently elaborate and delicate in appearance, pagodas typically include tall, many-sided towers arranged in a series of tiers, balconies, and slanting roofs. Pagodas contain relics

that Buddhists believe to be a portion of Buddha's body or clothing (Figure 6-23). After Buddha's death, his followers scrambled to obtain these relics. As part of the process of diffusing the religion, Buddhists carried these relics to other countries and built pagodas for them. Pagodas are not designed for congregational worship. Individual prayer or meditation is more likely to be undertaken at an adjacent temple, at a remote monastery, or in a home.

**BAHÁ'Í HOUSES OF WORSHIP.** Bahá'ís have built Houses of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois, in 1953; Sydney, Australia, and Kampala, Uganda, both in 1961; Lagenhain, near Frankfurt, Germany, in 1964; Panama City, Panama, in 1972; Tiapapata, near Apia, Samoa, in 1984; and New Delhi, India, in 1986 (Figure 6-24). The first Bahá'í House of Worship, built in 1908 in Ashgabat, Russia, now the capital of Turkmenistan, was turned into a museum by the Soviet Union and demolished in 1962 after a severe earthquake. Additional Houses of Worship are planned in Tehran, Iran; Santiago, Chile; and Haifa, Israel.

The locations have not been selected because of proximity to clusters of Bahá'ís. Instead, the Houses of Worship have been dispersed to different continents to dramatize Bahá'í as a universalizing religion with adherents all over the world. The Houses of Worship are open to adherents of all religions, and services include reciting the scriptures of various religions.



▲ **FIGURE 6-23 BUDDHIST PAGODA, SARNATH, INDIA** The Dhamek pagoda, in Deer Park, Sarnath, was built in the third century B.C., and is probably the oldest surviving Buddhist structure in the world.

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▲ **FIGURE 6-24 BAHÁ'Í HOUSES OF WORSHIP** Shrine of the Báb, Haifa, Israel.

**SIKHISM'S GOLDEN TEMPLE OF AMRITSAR.** Sikhism's most holy structure, the Darbar Sahib, or Golden Temple, was built at Amritsar, in the Punjab, by Arjan, the fifth guru, during the sixteenth century (Figure 6-25). The holiest book in Sikhism, the Guru Granth Sahib, is kept there.

Militant Sikhs used the Golden Temple at Amritsar as a base for launching attacks in support of greater autonomy for the Punjab during the 1980s. In 1984, the Indian army attacked the Golden Temple at Amritsar and killed between 500 and 1,500 Sikhs defending the temple. In retaliation later that year, India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two of her guards, who were Sikhs.

#### Pause and Reflect 6.3.1

What is the purpose of the main religious structure in Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Bahá'í, and Sikhism?

▼ **FIGURE 6-25 SIKH GOLDEN TEMPLE OF AMRITSAR, INDIA**

The Darbar Sahib, or Gold Temple, at Amritsar, is the most holy structure for Sikhs, most of whom live in northwestern India.





## SACRED PLACES IN UNIVERSALIZING RELIGIONS

### Learning Outcome 6.3.2

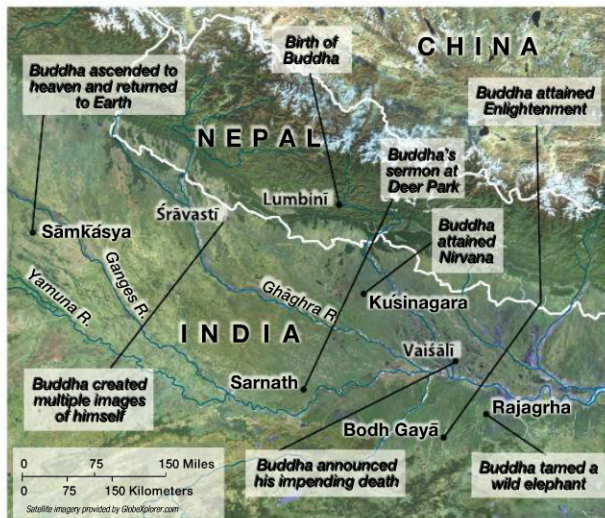
Explain why places are sacred in universalizing religions.

Religions may elevate particular places to holy positions. Universalizing and ethnic religions differ on the types of places that are considered holy:

- An ethnic religion typically has a less widespread distribution than a universalizing one in part because its holy places derive from the distinctive physical environment of its hearth, such as mountains, rivers, or rock formations.
- A universalizing religion endows with holiness cities and other places associated with the founder's life. Its holy places do not necessarily have to be near each other, and they do not need to be related to any particular physical environment.

Buddhism and Islam are the universalizing religions that place the most emphasis on identifying shrines. Places are holy because they are the locations of important events in the life of Buddha or Muhammad. Making a pilgrimage to these holy places—a journey for religious purposes to a place considered sacred—is incorporated into the rituals of some religions. Hindus and Muslims are especially encouraged to make pilgrimages to visit holy places in accordance with recommended itineraries.

**BUDDHIST SHRINES.** Eight places are holy to Buddhists because they were the locations of important events in Buddha's life (Figure 6-26). The four most important



▲ **FIGURE 6-26 HOLY PLACES IN BUDDHISM** Most are clustered in northeastern India and southern Nepal because they were the locations of important events in Buddha's life.

of the eight places are concentrated in a small area of northeastern India and southern Nepal:

- Lumbinī in southern Nepal, where Buddha was born around 563 B.C., is most important. Many sanctuaries and monuments were built there, but all are in ruins today.
- Bodh Gayā, 250 kilometers (150 miles) southeast of Buddha's birthplace, is the site of the second great event in his life, where he reached perfect wisdom. A temple has stood near the site since the third century B.C., and part of the surrounding railing built in the first century A.D. still stands. Because Buddha reached perfect Enlightenment while sitting under a bo tree, that tree has become a holy object as well (Figure 6-27). To honor Buddha, the bo tree has been diffused to other Buddhist countries, such as China and Japan.
- Deer Park in Sarnath, where Buddha gave his first sermon, is the third important location. The Dhamek pagoda at Sarnath, built in the third century B.C., is probably the oldest surviving structure in India (refer to Figure 6-23). Nearby is an important library of Buddhist literature, including many works removed from Tibet when Tibet's Buddhist leader, the Dalai Lama, went into exile.
- Kusunagara, the fourth holy place, is where Buddha died at age 80 and passed into Nirvana, a state of peaceful extinction (Figure 6-28). Temples built at the site are currently in ruins.

Four other sites in northeastern India are particularly sacred because they were the locations of Buddha's principal miracles:

- Srāvastī is where Buddha performed his greatest miracle. Before an assembled audience of competing religious leaders, Buddha created multiple images of himself and



▲ **FIGURE 6-27 BO TREE, BODH GAYĀ, INDIA** A Buddhist monk sits under a Bo tree at Bodh Gayā, the place where Buddha reached perfect wisdom.



▲ **FIGURE 6-28 SLEEPING BUDDHA, KUŚINAGARA** The statue of Buddha asleep marks the location where Buddha is thought to have attained nirvana.

visited heaven. Srāvastī became an active center of Buddhism, and one of the most important monasteries was established there.

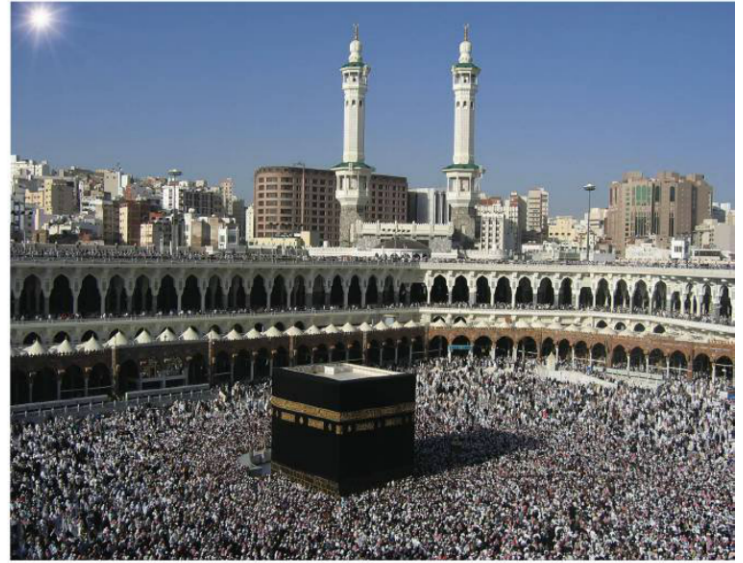
- Sāmkāśya, the second miracle site, is where Buddha is said to have ascended to heaven, preached to his mother, and returned to Earth.
- Rajagrha, the third site, is holy because Buddha tamed a wild elephant there, and shortly after Buddha's death, it became the site of the first Buddhist Council.
- Vaisālā, the fourth location, is the site of Buddha's announcement of his impending death and the second Buddhist Council.

All four miracle sites are in ruins today, although excavation activity is under way.

**HOLY PLACES IN ISLAM.** The holiest locations in Islam are in cities associated with the life of Muhammad. The holiest city for Muslims is Makkah (Mecca), the birthplace of Muhammad. The word *mecca* now has a general meaning in the English language as a goal sought or a center of activity.

Now a city of 1.3 million inhabitants, Makkah contains the holiest object in the Islamic landscape, namely al-Ka'ba, a cubelike structure encased in silk, which stands at the center of the Great Mosque, Masjid al-Haram, Islam's largest mosque (Figure 6-29). The Ka'ba, thought by Muslims to have been built by Abraham and Ishmael, contains a black stone that Muslims believe was given to Abraham by Gabriel as a sign of a covenant with Ishmael and the Muslim people.

The Ka'ba had been a religious shrine in Makkah for centuries before the origin of Islam. After Muhammad defeated the local people, he captured the Ka'ba, cleared it of idols, and rededicated it to the all-powerful Allah (God). The Masjid al-Haram mosque also contains the well of Zamzam, considered to have the same water source as that given to Hagar by the Angel Gabriel to quench the thirst of her infant, Ishmael.



▲ **FIGURE 6-29 MASJID AL-HARAM, MAKKAH, SAUDI ARABIA** The black cube-like Ka'ba at the center of Masjid al-Haram (Great Mosque) in Makkah is Islam's holiest object.

The second-most-holy geographic location in Islam is Madinah (Medina), a city of 1.3 million inhabitants, 350 kilometers (220 miles) north of Makkah. Muhammad received his first support from the people of Madinah and became the city's chief administrator. Muhammad's tomb is at Madinah, inside Islam's second-largest mosque (refer to Figure 6-15).

Every healthy Muslim who has adequate financial resources is expected to undertake a pilgrimage, called a *hajj*, to Makkah (Mecca). Regardless of nationality and economic background, all pilgrims dress alike, in plain white robes, to emphasize common loyalty to Islam and the equality of people in the eyes of Allah. A precise set of rituals is practiced, culminating in a visit to the Ka'ba. The *hajj* attracts millions of Muslims annually to Makkah. *Hajj* visas are issued by the government of Saudi Arabia according to a formula of 1 per 1,000 Muslims in a country. Roughly 80 percent come from Southwest Asia & North Africa and 20 percent from elsewhere in Asia. Although Indonesia is the country with the most Muslims, it has not sent the largest number of pilgrims to Makkah because of the relatively long travel distance.

### Pause and Reflect 6.3.2

Based on the lives of the Buddha and the prophet Muhammad, what types of sites are likely to be goals of pilgrimage for the followers of a universalizing religion?



## THE LANDSCAPE IN ETHNIC RELIGIONS

### Learning Outcome 6.3.3

Analyze the importance of the physical geography in ethnic religions.

One of the principal reasons that ethnic religions are highly clustered is that they are closely tied to the physical geography of a particular place. Pilgrimages are undertaken to view these physical features.

**HINDU LANDSCAPE.** As an ethnic religion of India, Hinduism is closely tied to the physical geography of India. According to a survey conducted by the geographer Surinder Bhardwaj, the natural features most likely to rank among the holiest shrines in India are riverbanks and coastlines. Hindus consider a pilgrimage, known as a *tirtha*, to be an act of purification. Although not a substitute for meditation, the pilgrimage is an important act in achieving redemption.

Hindu holy places are organized into a hierarchy. Particularly sacred places attract Hindus from all over India, despite the relatively remote locations of some; less important shrines attract primarily local pilgrims. Because Hinduism has no central authority, the relative importance of shrines is established by tradition, not by doctrine. For example, many Hindus make long-distance pilgrimages to Mt. Kailās, located at the source of the Ganges in the Himalayas, which is holy because Siva lives there (refer to Figure 6-17). Other mountains may attract only local pilgrims: Local residents may consider a nearby mountain to be holy if Siva is thought to have visited it at one time.

Hindus believe that they achieve purification by bathing in holy rivers. The Ganges is the holiest river in India because it is supposed to spring forth from the hair of Siva, one of the main deities. Indians come from all over the country to Hardwār, the most popular location for bathing in the Ganges (Figure 6-30).

The remoteness of holy places from population clusters once meant that making a pilgrimage required major

▼ **FIGURE 6-30 BATHING IN THE GANGES, HARDWĀR, INDIA** Hindus bathe in the Ganges River to wash away their sins.



commitments of time and money as well as undergoing considerable physical hardship. Recent improvements in transportation have increased the accessibility of shrines. Hindus can now reach holy places in the Himalaya Mountains by bus or car, and Muslims from all over the world can reach Makkah by airplane.

**HINDU TEMPLES.** Sacred structures for collective worship are relatively unimportant in Asian ethnic and universalizing religions. Instead, important religious functions are more likely to take place at home within the family. Temples are built to house shrines for particular gods rather than for congregational worship. The Hindu temple serves as a home to one or more gods, although a particular god may have more than one temple.

A typical Hindu temple contains a small, dimly lit interior room where a symbolic artifact or some other image of the god rests. Because congregational worship is not part of Hinduism, the temple does not need a large closed interior space filled with seats. The site of the temple, usually demarcated by a wall, may also contain a structure for a caretaker and a pool for ritual baths. Space may be devoted to ritual processions.

Wealthy individuals or groups usually maintain local temples. Size and number of temples are determined by local preferences and commitment of resources rather than standards imposed by religious doctrine.

## COSMOGONY

Ethnic religions differ from universalizing religions in their understanding of relationships between human beings and nature. These differences derive from distinctive concepts of **cosmogony**, which is a set of religious beliefs concerning the origin of the universe. A variety of events in the physical environment are more likely to be incorporated into the principles of an ethnic religion. These events range from the familiar and predictable to unexpected disasters.

**COSMOGONY IN ETHNIC RELIGIONS.** Chinese ethnic religions, such as Confucianism and Taoism, believe that the universe is made up of two forces, yin and yang, which exist in everything. The yin force is associated with earth, darkness, female, cold, depth, passivity, and death. The yang force is associated with heaven, light, male, heat, height, activity, and life. Yin and yang forces interact with each other to achieve balance and harmony, but they are in a constant state of change. An imbalance results in disorder and chaos. The principle of yin and yang applies to the creation and transformation of all natural features.

**COSMOGONY IN UNIVERSALIZING RELIGIONS.** The universalizing religions that originated in Southwest Asia, notably Christianity and Islam, consider that God created the universe, including Earth's physical environment and human beings. A religious person can serve God by cultivating the land, draining wetlands, clearing forests, building new settlements, and otherwise making



▲ **FIGURE 6-31 STONEHENGE** Stonehenge, in southwestern England, was constructed between 4,000 and 5,000 years ago.

productive use of natural features that God created. As the very creator of Earth itself, God is more powerful than any force of nature, and if in conflict, the laws of God take precedence over laws of nature.

Christian and Islamic cosmogony differ in some respects. For example, Roman Catholic catechism states that Earth was given by God to humanity to finish the task of creation. Obeying the all-supreme power of God means independence from the tyranny of natural forces. Muslims regard humans as representatives of God on Earth, capable of reflecting the attributes of God in their deeds, such as growing food or doing other hard work to improve the land. But they believe that humans are not partners with God, who alone was responsible for Earth's creation.

In the name of God, some people have sought mastery over nature, not merely independence from it. Large-scale development of remaining wilderness is advocated by some religious people as a way to serve God. To those who follow this approach, failure to make full and complete use of Earth's natural resources is considered a violation of biblical teachings. Christians are more likely to consider floods, droughts, and other natural disasters to be preventable and may take steps to overcome the problem by modifying the environment. Some Christians regard natural disasters as punishment for human sins.

Adherents of ethnic religions do not attempt to transform the environment to the same extent. To animists, for example, God's powers are mystical, and only a few people on Earth can harness these powers for medical or other purposes. God can be placated, however, through prayer and sacrifice. Environmental hazards may be accepted as normal and unavoidable.

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**THE SOLSTICE.** The **solstice** has special significance in some ethnic religions. A major holiday in some pagan religions is the winter solstice, December 21 or 22 in the Northern Hemisphere. The winter solstice is the shortest day and longest night of the year, when the Sun appears lowest in the sky, and the apparent movement of the Sun's path north or south comes to a stop before reversing direction (*solstice* comes from the Latin to "stand still"). Stonehenge, a collection of stones erected in southwestern England some 3,500 years ago (Figure 6-31), is a prominent remnant of a pagan structure apparently aligned so the Sun rises between two stones on the summer and winter solstices (Figure 6-32).

If you stand at the western facade of the U.S. Capitol in Washington at sunset on the summer solstice (June 21 or 22 in the Northern Hemisphere) and look down Pennsylvania Avenue, the Sun is directly over the center of the avenue. Similarly, at the winter solstice, sunset is directly aligned with the view from the Capitol down Maryland Avenue. Will archaeologists of the distant future think we erected the Capitol Building and aligned the streets as a religious ritual? Did the planner of Washington, Pierre L'Enfant, create the pattern accidentally or deliberately, and if so, why?

### Pause and Reflect 6.3.3

**How do adherents of universalizing religions such as Christianity and Islam and adherents of ethnic religions tend to differ in their attitudes toward Earth's physical environment?**

▼ **FIGURE 6-32 SUNRISE ON THE SOLSTICE AT STONEHENGE** Stones were apparently aligned with regard for the solstice.





## DISPOSING OF THE DEAD

### Learning Outcome 6.3.4

Describe ways in which the landscape is used in religiously significant ways.

A prominent example of religiously inspired arrangement of land at a smaller scale is burial practices. Climate, topography, and religious doctrine combine to create differences in practices to shelter the dead.

**BURIAL.** Christians, Muslims, and Jews usually bury their dead in a specially designated area called a cemetery (Figure 6-33). The Christian burial practice can be traced to the early years of the religion. In ancient Rome, underground passages known as *catacombs* were used to bury early Christians (and to protect the faithful when the religion was still illegal).

After Christianity became legal, Christians buried their dead in the yard around the church. As these burial places became overcrowded, separate burial grounds had to be established outside the city walls. Public health and sanitation considerations in the nineteenth century led to public management of many cemeteries. Some cemeteries are still operated by religious organizations. The remains of the dead are customarily aligned in some traditional direction. Some Christians bury the dead with the feet toward Jerusalem so that they may meet Christ there on the Day of Judgment.

Cemeteries may consume significant space in a community, increasing the competition for scarce space. In congested urban areas, Christians and Muslims have traditionally used cemeteries as public open space. Before the widespread development of public parks in the nineteenth century, cemeteries were frequently the only green space in rapidly growing cities. Cemeteries are still used as parks in Muslim countries, where the idea faces less opposition than in Christian societies.

▼ **FIGURE 6-33 MUSLIM CEMETERY** Fatimid cemetery, in Aswan, Egypt, is approximately 1,000 years old.



Traditional burial practices in China have put pressure on agricultural land. By burying dead relatives, rural residents have removed as much as 10 percent of the land from productive agriculture. The government in China has ordered the practice discontinued, even urging farmers to plow over old burial mounds. Cremation is encouraged instead.

**OTHER METHODS OF DISPOSING OF BODIES.** Not all faiths bury their dead. Hindus generally practice cremation rather than burial (Figure 6-34). The body is washed with water from the Ganges River and then burned with a slow fire on a funeral pyre. Burial is reserved for children, ascetics, and people with certain diseases. Cremation is considered an act of purification, although it tends to strain India's wood supply.

Motivation for cremation may have originated from unwillingness on the part of nomads to leave their dead behind, possibly because of fear that the body could be attacked by wild beasts or evil spirits, or even return to life. Cremation could also free the soul from the body for departure to the afterworld and provide warmth and comfort for the soul as it embarked on the journey to the afterworld. Cremation was the principal form of disposing of bodies in Europe before Christianity. It is still practiced in parts of Southeast Asia, possibly because of Hindu influence.

To strip away unclean portions of the body, Zoroastrians (Parsis) traditionally exposed the dead to scavenging birds and animals. The ancient Zoroastrians did not want the body to contaminate the sacred elements of fire, earth, or water. The dead were exposed in a circular structure called a *dakhma*, or tower of silence (Figure 6-35). Tibetan Buddhists also practiced exposure for some dead, with cremation reserved for the most exalted priests.

Disposal of bodies at sea is used in some parts of Micronesia, but the practice is much less common than in the past. The bodies of lower-class people would be flung into the sea; elites could be set adrift on a raft or boat. Water burial was regarded as a safeguard against being contaminated by the dead.

▼ **FIGURE 6-34 HINDU CREMATION** Family members cover a body with wood for cremation, Agra, India.





▲ **FIGURE 6-35 ZOROASTRIAN TOWER OF SILENCE, YAZD, IRAN**  
Zoroastrians placed bodies in the pit in the center of the tower. The practice has been discontinued.

#### Pause and Reflect 6.3.4

What are some of the cultural or religious factors that influence methods of disposing of bodies other than burial?

## RELIGIOUS SETTLEMENTS AND PLACE NAMES

Buildings for worship and burial places are smaller-scale manifestations of religion on the landscape, but there are larger-scale examples—entire settlements. Most human settlements serve an economic purpose (see Chapter 12), but some are established primarily for religious reasons.

**UTOPIAN SETTLEMENTS.** A *utopian settlement* is an ideal community built around a religious way of life. Buildings are sited and economic activities organized to integrate religious principles into all aspects of daily life. An early utopian settlement in the United States was Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, founded in 1741 by Moravians, Christians who had emigrated from the present-day Czech Republic. By 1858, some 130 different utopian settlements had begun in the United States, in conformance with a group's distinctive religious beliefs. Examples include Oneida, New York; Ephrata, Pennsylvania; Nauvoo, Illinois; and New Harmony, Indiana.

The culmination of the utopian movement in the United States was the construction of Salt Lake City by the Mormons, beginning in 1848. The layout of Salt Lake City is based on a plan of the city of Zion given to the church elders in 1833 by the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith. The city has a regular grid pattern, unusually broad boulevards, and church-related buildings situated at strategic points.

Most utopian communities declined in importance or disappeared altogether. Some disappeared because the inhabitants were celibate and could not attract immigrants; in other cases, residents moved away in search of better economic conditions. The utopian communities that have not been demolished are now inhabited by people who are not members of the original religious sect, although a few have been preserved as museums.

Although most colonial settlements were not planned primarily for religious purposes, religious principles affected many of the designs. Most early New England settlers were members of a Puritan Protestant denomination. The Puritans generally migrated together from England and preferred to live near each other in clustered settlements rather than on dispersed, isolated farms. Reflecting the importance of religion in their lives, New England settlers placed the church at the most prominent location in the center of the settlement, usually adjacent to a public open space known as a *common*, because it was for common use by everyone.

**RELIGIOUS PLACE NAMES.** Roman Catholic immigrants have frequently given religious place names, or *toponyms*, to their settlements in the New World, particularly in Québec and the U.S. Southwest. Québec's boundaries with Ontario and the United States clearly illustrate the difference between toponyms selected by Roman Catholic and Protestant settlers. Religious place names are common in Québec but rare in the two neighbors (Figure 6-36).



▲ **FIGURE 6-36 RELIGIOUS TOPONYMS** Place names near Québec's boundaries with Ontario and the United States show the impact of religion on the landscape. In Québec, a province with a predominantly Roman Catholic population, a large number of settlements are named for saints, where relatively few religious toponyms are found in predominantly Protestant Ontario, New York, and Vermont.



## The Calendar

### Learning Outcome 6.3.5

Compare the calendars and holidays of ethnic and universalizing religions.

Universalizing and ethnic religions have different approaches to the calendar. An ethnic religion typically has a more clustered distribution than a universalizing religion, in part because its holidays are based on the distinctive physical geography of the homeland. In universalizing religions, major holidays relate to events in the life of the founder rather than to the changing seasons of one particular place.

A prominent feature of ethnic religions is celebration of the seasons—the calendar's annual cycle of variation in climatic conditions. Knowledge of the calendar is critical to successful agriculture, whether for sedentary crop farmers or nomadic animal herders. The seasonal variations of temperature and precipitation help farmers select the appropriate times for planting and harvesting and make the best choice of crops. Rituals are performed to pray for favorable environmental conditions or to give thanks for past success.

### THE CALENDAR IN JUDAISM

Judaism is classified as an ethnic, rather than a universalizing, religion in part because its major holidays are based on events in the agricultural calendar of the religion's homeland in present-day Israel. These agricultural holidays later gained importance because they also commemorated events in the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt, as recounted in the Bible. The reinterpretation of natural holidays in light of historical events has been especially important for Jews in North America, Europe, and other regions who are unfamiliar with the agricultural calendar of Southwest Asia. Major Jewish holidays include:

- *Pesach* (Passover) derives from traditional agricultural practices in which farmers offered God the first fruits of the new spring harvest and herders sacrificed a young animal at the time when cows began to calve. It also recalls the liberation of the Jews from slavery in Egypt and the miracle of their successful flight under the leadership of Moses.
- *Sukkot* celebrates the final gathering of fruits for the year, and prayers, especially for rain, are offered to bring success in the upcoming agricultural year (Figure 6-37). It derives from the Hebrew word for the booths, or temporary shelters, occupied by Jews during their wandering in the wilderness for 40 years after fleeing Egypt.
- *Shavuot* (Feast of Weeks) comes at the end of the grain harvest. It is also considered the date during the wandering when Moses received the Ten Commandments from God.

▼ **FIGURE 6-37 ETHNIC RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY** On the holiday of Sukkot, Jews carry a lulav (branches of date palm entwined with myrtle and willow) and an etrog (yellow citron) to symbolize gratitude for the many agricultural bounties offered by God.



- *Rosh Hashanah* (New Year) and *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement), the two most holy and solemn days in the Jewish calendar, come in the autumn, which is the season when grain crops are planted in the Mediterranean agricultural region and therefore a time of hope and worry over whether the upcoming winter's rainfall will be sufficient.

In daily business, North Americans use the solar calendar of 12 months, each containing 30 or 31 days, taking up the astronomical slack with 28 or 29 days in February. But Israel—the only country where Jews are in the majority—uses a lunar rather than a solar calendar.

### THE CALENDAR IN UNIVERSALIZING RELIGIONS

The principal purpose of the holidays in universalizing religions is to commemorate events in the founder's life. Examples can be found in the various universalizing religions:

- **Islam.** Like Judaism, Islam uses a lunar calendar (Figure 6-38). Whereas the Jewish calendar inserts an extra month every few years to match the agricultural and solar calendars, Islam as a universalizing religion retains a strict lunar calendar. In a 30-year cycle, the Islamic calendar has 19 years with 354 days and 11 years with 355 days.

As a result of using a lunar calendar, Muslim holidays arrive in different seasons from generation to generation. For example, during the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims fast during daylight every day and try to make a pilgrimage to the holy city of Makkah. At the moment, the start of Ramadan is occurring in the Northern Hemisphere summer—for example, June 18, 2015, on the western Gregorian calendar. In A.D. 1995, Ramadan fell on October 5, and in A.D. 2025 Ramadan will start



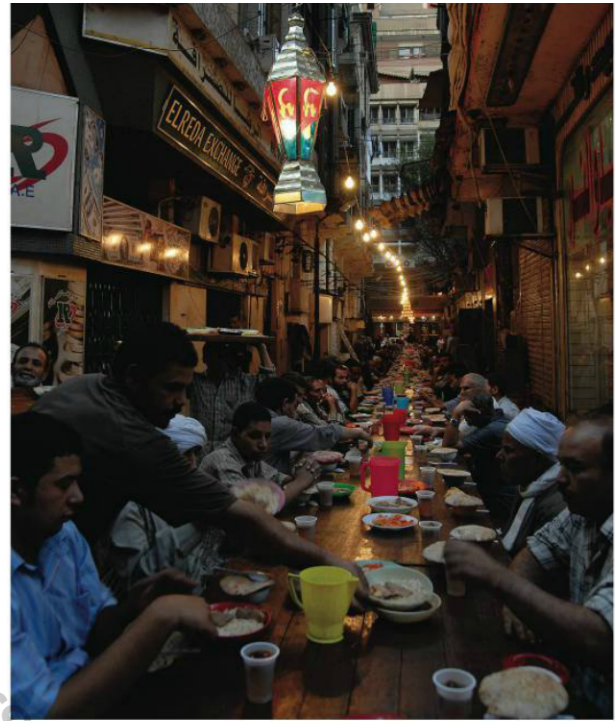
▲ **FIGURE 6-38 NEW MOON IN ISLAM** Islam and Judaism use a lunar calendars. The appearance of the new Moon, seen here over the Jumairah Mosque in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, marks the new month in Judaism and Islam and is a holiday for both religions.

February 28. Because Ramadan occurs at different times of the solar year in different generations, the number of hours of the daily fast varies widely because the amount of daylight varies by season and by location on Earth's surface (Figure 6-39).

Observance of Ramadan can be a hardship because it can interfere with critical agricultural activities, depending on the season. However, as a universalizing religion with 1.5 billion adherents worldwide, Islam is practiced in various climates and latitudes. If Ramadan were fixed at the same time of the Middle East's agricultural year, Muslims in various places of the world would need to make different adjustments to observe Ramadan.

- **Bahá'í.** The Bahá'ís use a calendar established by the Báb and confirmed by Bahá'u'lláh, in which the year is divided into 19 months of 19 days each, with the addition of 4 intercalary days (5 in leap years). The year begins on the first day of spring, March 21, which is one of several holy days in the Bahá'í calendar. Bahá'ís are supposed to attend the Nineteen Day Feast, held on the first day of each month of the Bahá'í calendar, to pray, read scriptures, and discuss community activities.
- **Christianity.** Christians commemorate the resurrection of Jesus on Easter, observed on the first Sunday after the first full Moon following the spring equinox in late March. But not all Christians observe Easter on the same day because Protestant and Roman Catholic branches calculate the date on the Gregorian calendar, but Orthodox churches use the Julian calendar.

Christians associate their holidays with seasonal variations in the calendar, but climate and the agricultural cycle are not central to the liturgy and rituals. Christians may relate Easter to the agricultural cycle, but that relationship differs depending on where they live. In Southern Europe, Easter is a joyous time of



▲ **FIGURE 6-39 RAMADAN** Eating food during a street celebration on the night before the start of fasting for Ramadan in Istanbul, Turkey.

harvest. Northern Europe and North America do not have a major Christian holiday at harvest time, which would be placed in the fall.

Most Northern Europeans and North Americans associate Christmas, the birthday of Jesus, with winter conditions, such as low temperatures, snow cover, and the absence of vegetation except for needle leaf evergreens. But for Christians in the Southern Hemisphere, December 25 is the height of the summer, with warm days and abundant sunlight.

- **Buddhism.** All Buddhists celebrate as major holidays Buddha's birth, Enlightenment, and death. However, not all Buddhists observe them on the same days. Japanese Buddhists celebrate Buddha's birth on April 8, his Enlightenment on December 8, and his death on February 15; Theravadin Buddhists observe all three events on the same day, usually in April.
- **Sikhism.** The major holidays in Sikhism are the births and deaths of the religion's 10 gurus. The tenth guru, Gobind Singh, declared that after his death, instead of an eleventh guru, Sikhism's highest spiritual authority would be the holy scriptures the Guru Granth Sahib. A major holiday in Sikhism is the day when the Holy Granth was installed as the religion's spiritual guide. Commemorating historical events distinguishes Sikhism as a universalizing religion, in contrast to India's major ethnic religion, Hinduism, which glorifies the physical geography of India.

#### Pause and Reflect 6.3.5

Why do some religions organize their annual calendars according to the lunar cycle?