

TODD, AMANDA J. Ph.D. *Spiritual Landscapes in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Geography of Power Mountains and Healing Waters of the Southern Appalachian Region.* (2010)  
Directed By Dr. Susan Walcott. 192 pp.

This research focuses on the non-secular uses and perceptions of selected topographically prominent natural landscape features in the Southern Appalachian Region. The research assesses if people continue to use natural landscapes for non-secular activities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and also explores place perception. Cultural groups throughout the world consider particular mountains and water features as sacred or culturally meaningful, as evidenced in creation myths, folklore, and/or use as ceremonial grounds. Mountains are often associated as powerful spots providing inspiration; water features are often known for their healing abilities. This research compiles local folklore and historical documents about uses of five different landscape features within the region. These sites are assessed if they can be classified as spiritual landscapes based upon non-secular use, experiences, and perceptions of people at the sites today. This research aims to better understand the idea of a spiritual landscape which is defined by the experiences of the numinous, cosmic, and aesthetic dimensions. This knowledge also helps in furthering the study of topophilia. Multiple sources and methods were used in this research, and included archival research, in-depth unstructured interviews of knowledgeable experts and structured questionnaires of visitors to the target locations, as well as observation of and participation in non-secular events at each site. Today individuals and groups choose to use these locations for non-secular activities such as weddings, memorial services, private meditation areas, and spiritual group events which is researched for understanding the cosmic dimension of a spiritual landscape. Many people visit these sites for personal experiences they have had or hope to have while there and thus perceive these sites as somehow special and/or different from places in their everyday lives.

SPIRITUAL LANDSCAPES IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY: THE GEOGRAPHY OF  
POWER MOUNTAINS AND HEALING WATERS OF THE  
SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN REGION.

by

Amanda J. Todd

A Dissertation Submitted to  
the Faculty of The Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro  
2010

Approved by

---

Committee Chair

To those that love the Appalachian Mountains.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of  
The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Members: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Acceptance by Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Final Oral Examination

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my parents David and Brenda and my brother Matthew for their support over the past few years and in encouraging me throughout my life. I must thank my parents as well for their financial support over the years while in school and in collecting my data. I would also like to thank a special group of friends in Greensboro who spiritually encouraged me to pursue my dreams and interest over the past four years as I was growing in so many new ways. Thanks to Dale and Jeanne Stacy, Vikki Melvin, Lynn Hawks, and many others who were part of my growth while in Greensboro and helping me to clarify why and what I was doing and their spiritual insights. I must thank Dr. Susan Walcott for her support and believing in my research topic from the beginning and helping me through the process of learning a different style of geographic thought. Thanks to my committee members Dr. Michael Lewis, Dr. Corey Johnson and Dr. Gregory Grieve for giving me great advice and additional insights on this topic and their interest in my research. Also I would like to acknowledge the Geography Department for their support of my research ideas even though it was outside of their normal departments activities. I would like to thank fellow graduate students Carly Hertz and Bill Tyminski for listening to my ideas and their encouragement in the process. I must also thank the many people along the way that I interviewed and talked with at the parks for their insight and willingness to share their personal experiences with a stranger. A big thanks also goes to the geography faculty as well at Appalachian State University. I received my master's degree as a physical geographer interested in fluvial processes from the department eight years ago and have always felt supported by the department. Upon moving back to the mountains to teach at ASU, I found much inspiration between the Appalachian Mountains I love and the amazing support of the faculty here to finish writing the dissertation with ease and confidence. Thanks to all the wonderful souls I met over the years who encouraged me to pursue and to finish this part on my life's journey.

## PREFACE

I pursued this topic for both academic and personal reasons. Firstly for my love and respect of the Appalachian Mountains and secondly because of my spiritual interest in nature and what people are doing today in the world to honor places. I am especially interested in this topic after hearing a Peruvian Elder say at Mount Mitchell that the Appalachian Mountains were crying out for ceremonies and ways to honor the land. I hope that this research sparks others in the future to pursue different avenues of geographic thought and research as well as encourages people to celebrate the mountains through ceremonies as well as through personal journeys with the help of nature.

## Table of Contents

	Page
LIST OF TABLES .....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 Statement of the Problem.....	1
1.2 Terminology .....	4
1.3 Study Area: Spiritual Landscapes .....	6
1.4 Research Questions .....	8
1.5 Objectives and Methodology .....	9
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	11
2.1 Geography of Religion and Spirituality.....	11
2.2 The Human-Environment Relationship and Religion in Geography .....	12
2.3 New Geographies of Religion in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century .....	16
2.4 Defining and Understanding Sacred Places .....	18
Power Mountains .....	26
Healing Waters .....	29
2.5 Spirituality, Spiritual Experiences, and Spiritual Landscapes .....	31
Numinous.....	34
Cosmic .....	35
Aesthetic .....	40
2.6 Perceptions of Landscapes .....	41
2.7 Wilderness Areas in America as Spiritual Landscapes.....	43
2.8 Transcendentalism and Views on Nature in America.....	44
2.9 The Importance of Scale in Spiritual Landscapes.....	45
2.10 The Importance of Studying a Mountain Region .....	46
III. STUDY AREA .....	48
3.1 Defining Appalachia and the Southern Appalachian Region .....	48
3.2 The Geography of the Southern Appalachian Region .....	52
Physical Geography .....	53
Cultural Geography .....	57
3.3 Southern Appalachian Region Study Sites .....	63

IV.	METHODS.....	66
	4.1 Overview.....	66
	4.2 Textual Analysis .....	68
	4.3 Expert Interviews.....	69
	4.4 Questionnaire for Tourists .....	72
	4.5 Observation and Participation.....	73
V.	SPIRITUAL LANDSCAPES IN THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN REGION.....	77
	5.1 Research Sites in the Region .....	77
	Mountain Features .....	78
	Water Features .....	110
	5.2 Sacred Place verses Spiritual Landscape results.....	150
	5.3 Spiritual Landscapes of the Southern Appalachian Region.....	156
VI.	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS .....	158
	6.1 Spiritual Landscapes in the Region .....	158
	6.2 Research Questions, Conclusions, and Discussions .....	161
	6.3 Future Research Questions and Considerations.....	170
	REFERENCES .....	174
	APPENDIX A: EXPERT INTERVIEW SAMPLE QUESTIONS.....	186
	APPENDIX B: VISITOR QUESTIONNAIRE .....	189
	APPENDIX C: PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS .....	191

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Summary of Sites, Methodology, Dates, and Events.....	71
Table 2. Percentages of Yes Responses to Spiritual Dimension Questions for Grandfather Mountain.....	89
Table 3. Percentages of Yes Responses to Spiritual Dimension Questions for Mount Mitchell .....	103
Table 4. Percentages of Yes Responses to Spiritual Dimension Questions for Amicalola Falls .....	115
Table 5. Percentages of Yes Responses to Spiritual Dimension Questions for Blue Hole Spring .....	131
Table 6. Percentages of Yes Responses to Spiritual Dimension Questions for Cumberland Falls.....	142
Table 7. Summary of all Sites Percentages of Yes Responses to Questions .....	150
Table 8. Summary of Myths at Each Study Site and Percentage of Responses for designating the landscape as sacred .....	154
Table 9. Comparison of known types of non-secular activities including Rituals/Ceremonies for each site and percentages of yes responses from visitors to cosmic dimension.....	155
Table 10. Summary of Physical Landscape Features.....	166

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. Fords 1962-Southern Appalachian Region “Heartland of Appalachia” . . . . .	7
Figure 2. Appalachian Mountain Region . . . . .	50
Figure 3. Physiographic Provinces and Valley’s of the Appalachian Region 2009. . . . .	55
Figure 4. Study Sites with County Locations in the Southern Appalachian Region. . . . .	65
Figure 5. Southern Appalachian Region Study Sites, nearby cities, and interstates. . . . .	79
Figure 6. One view of the Grandfathers’ profile . . . . .	80
Figure 7. Rocky Outcroppings along Grandfather Mountain. . . . .	81
Figure 8. Mount Mitchell Highest peak east of the Mississippi River. . . . .	97
Figure 9. Mount Mitchell forest . . . . .	97
Figure 10. View from Mount Mitchell observation deck of forest and surrounding mountains. . . . .	98
Figure 11. Photograph taken in 1894 from the top of Mount Mitchell . . . . .	101
Figure 12. Despacho. . . . .	107
Figure 13. Amicalola Falls . . . . .	111
Figure 14. View from top of the waterfall looking out towards Dahlonega Uplands. . . . .	113
Figure 15. View from top of the waterfall, surrounding mountain vistas . . . . .	116
Figure 16. View of Waterfall from below standing on bridge . . . . .	118
Figure 17. Visitors viewing the waterfall. . . . .	119
Figure 18. Memorial at Amicalola Falls . . . . .	121
Figure 19. Pool downstream of bridge at start of waterfall . . . . .	123
Figure 20. Pennies and other coins in the pool at top of waterfall . . . . .	123
Figure 21. Blue Hole Spring/Council Spring photograph taken from bridge. . . . .	129

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 22. Cumberland Falls view from downstream .....	137
Figure 23. Rainbow taken at 10:13 AM .....	141
Figure 24. Rainbow taken by author at 10:11 AM July 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2009.....	144
Figure 25. Moonbow photograph at 12:42 AM. ....	146

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

This research explores place perceptions and non-secular uses of major highland and water landscapes throughout the Southern Appalachian Region. Previous research in this field has been limited partially due to the resistance in geography to studies about religion, and to some degree the manner in which such topics could be studied and researched.

Extensive research on sacred places exists for Europe, Asia, and the American Southwest (Parks 1994; McPherson 1995; Ivakhiv 1997; Blake 2001; Gray 2008). Martin Gray traveled extensively over several decades visiting, photographing, and studying sacred sites and compiled a book of his travels documenting the places of man-made and natural religious importance around the world however, with little in the American Southeast. Chris Parks wrote one of the few books about geography and religion and discusses sacred places of the world and the relationship between geography and religion through sacred places worshiped as well as pilgrimages. Parks also focused more on other places in the world and not the American Southeast. McPherson and Blake both researched the sacred mountains in the American Southwest of the Dine'. They related the sacred mountains to the orientation and "home area" of the Dine' and the cosmos, as well as noting the importance of sacred mountains for medicinal purposes.

Ivakhiv conducted his dissertation research on Sedona, Arizona, and Glastonbury, England, and has continued to write and study focusing on those two sacred landscapes.

Very limited literature is available on sacred places in the American Southeast. Many gaps remain concerning place perception of certain landscapes that may be considered sacred or culturally significant to different people in the Southeast and on a smaller scale in the Appalachian Mountains. There have been few studies around the world, which examined the non-secular uses associated with spiritual and/or religious activities at various natural landscapes. Pilot Mountain in North Carolina is included on lists with Mt. Shasta in northern California and Mt. Fuji in Japan as well-known sacred mountains and New Age pilgrim sites (Guiley 1995; Olson 2003). However, little else has been written on the landscapes of the American South or the Appalachian region regarding spiritual connections to the land and human experiences with these landscapes more broadly. Information about *sacred places* and how landscapes are used religiously or spiritually in the Southern Appalachian Region is important for preservation of cultural beliefs and popular public landscapes, and to understand the meaning of landscapes related to spirituality.

Numerous cultures throughout the world consider particular landscapes as sacred or culturally meaningful (Evola 1998; Lane 1998; Ball 2000; Blake 2001). Many indigenous groups revere mountains with monolithic structures through creation myths or stories of gods inhabiting them (Eliade 1959; Tuan 1974; Pennick 1996; Ball 2000). Numerous monolithic sites emanate from the landscape within the Southern Appalachian Region. Creation myths and stories revere mountaintops as powerful ceremonial

grounds. The Dine (Navajo) and the Mescalero Apache, both Athabascan groups, have four sacred mountains linked to the four directions within their homeland's landscape. Each mountain is associated with stories, colors, directions, crystals, and plant medicines (Ball 2000).

Indigenous groups, as well as Christians and Catholics, have stories associated with water features, such as springs and rivers as healing centers and waterfalls as ceremonial sites. Water features such as springs are often known in folklore as healing centers, and rivers are often used for special ceremonies. Examples of this include "cross-overs" for the Cherokee or baptisms for Christians (Choudbury 1994; Garrett and Garrett 1996; Pennick 1996; Narayan 2004). Cross-overs are based on the idea that as one crosses over a body of water, such as a creek or river, his/her perceptions change in order to help bring the person into balance and harmony with themselves and their surrounding environment (Garrett and Garrett 1996).

In his dissertation, Mills (1992: 218) raises the question "Do We, Can We, or Should We Have Spiritual Landscapes in Contemporary North America?" This study picks up where Mills left off in hoping to answer this question in particular as it applies to the Southern Appalachian Region. This research is not interested in only the place as being sacred but the human experiences that occur at the place in question. Mills named three qualities for what he termed a "spiritual landscape": a site with numinous, cosmic, and aesthetic qualities. These qualities create experiences for people at places as defined in more detail in Chapter II.

This study also expands upon Tuan's (1974) ideas of topophilia which involves the bonds between people and place. The concern of this study is in the present, examining how we as a society use and view landscapes for non-secular purposes in the twenty first century. Few studies have researched the interaction between the land and the ways in which people use areas outside of traditional outdoor recreation activities and their spiritual experiences and perceptions of the place. What can be demonstrated, and is the main question for this research, is if people have spiritual experiences with their natural surroundings. In another example, natural landscapes that are respected and venerated, where non-secular activities take place, often produce feelings, attitudes, and a certain spiritual frame of mind. This research seeks to bring a greater understanding and awareness of natural landscapes that evoke spiritual experiences and non-secular activities by looking at the interactions people have at various natural landscapes in the Southern Appalachian Region.

## **1.2 Terminology**

A few key words for this study are defined in the beginning of this work in order to simplify and clarify the research questions proposed later. Because this research deals with sacred and spiritual landscapes and spiritual experiences, the difference between the two terms *sacred* and *spiritual* needs to be discussed and defined for the purposes of this research.

What is sacred, and how the term is defined for this research, begins with understanding the difference between sacred and profane as well as secular and non-secular. Sacred and profane are opposite by definition. According to The American

Heritage Dictionary (AHD) sacred may relate to an aspect of religion as something holy, or worthy of veneration and entitled to reverence and respect, while profane refers to “nonreligious in subject matter” (AHD 2006: 1400). Sacred may also be referred to as non-secular. Secular refers to “worldly rather than spiritual or not relating to religion or to a religious body (AHD 2006: 1574) whereas the term non-secular is popularly used to describe activities and events that are more spiritual in nature (Eliade 1959). *Profane* and *secular* both imply that that they are not concerned with religion or religious purposes and not regarded as holy. This research focuses on the use of the terms sacred and non-secular in order to identify and discuss spiritual landscapes. Throughout this work, sacred landscapes imply landscapes that are set apart as something holy or respected by an individual or by a group. Non-secular uses, referring to activities associated with religious purposes, will be of great interest for identifying spiritual landscapes and understanding people’s spiritual experiences and motivations for visiting these sites.

In addition to understanding the terms sacred and non-secular for purposes of identifying spiritual landscapes, spirituality and spiritual experiences are defined here to help clarify the research topic. One definition of spirituality is “of, relating to, consisting of, or having the nature of spirit; not tangible or material” also referring to “relating, consisting of, or affecting the spirit” (AHD 2006: 1676). Another definition of spirituality in the Encyclopedia of Religion in the South (ERS) is that it is the “experiential, emotional, psychological side of religion, in contrast to the organized, institutionalized aspect...spirituality is an individualized and internal sense of the Divine or Transcendent” (Hardesty 2005). Spirit can imply ghostly apparitions but for this

research spirit refers to the “the vital principle or animating force within living beings...the soul....the part of the human associated with the mind, will, and feelings” (ERS 2005: 1676).

J.E. Mills (1992) further elaborated on *spiritual experiences* to include numinous, cosmic, and aesthetic qualities. When these experiences occur within nature, at a particular place, a *spiritual landscape* can be identified. Feelings and beliefs that influence a person’s attitude and psyche may vary from one individual to another; at other times and places peoples’ experiences may be the same. Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan coined the term *topophilia* which will be used extensively in this research. Topophilia includes the study of personal experiences, emotions, and sentiment one has with a place (Tuan 1974). This research ties into topophilia in looking at the bond between people and place in regards to spiritual experiences people have at specific natural locations. This research will be looking at the bond between people and place in regards to religion/spiritual experiences and identifying spiritual landscapes in the Southern Appalachian Region.

### **1.3 Study Area: Spiritual Landscapes**

The geographic region for this work is the Southern Appalachian Region within the states of Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. This research focuses only on the Southern Appalachian Region, therefore, Ford’s 1962 delineation is used as shown in Figure 1. Many researchers view Ford’s delineation as the “heartland of Appalachia” (Raitz and Ulack 1984). In order to provide focus for this research, this smaller concentrated geographic area of the

Appalachian region is useful. The sites in this research within this region are chosen because of their known utilization for non-secular purposes historically and/or at present and the physical features within the landscape.

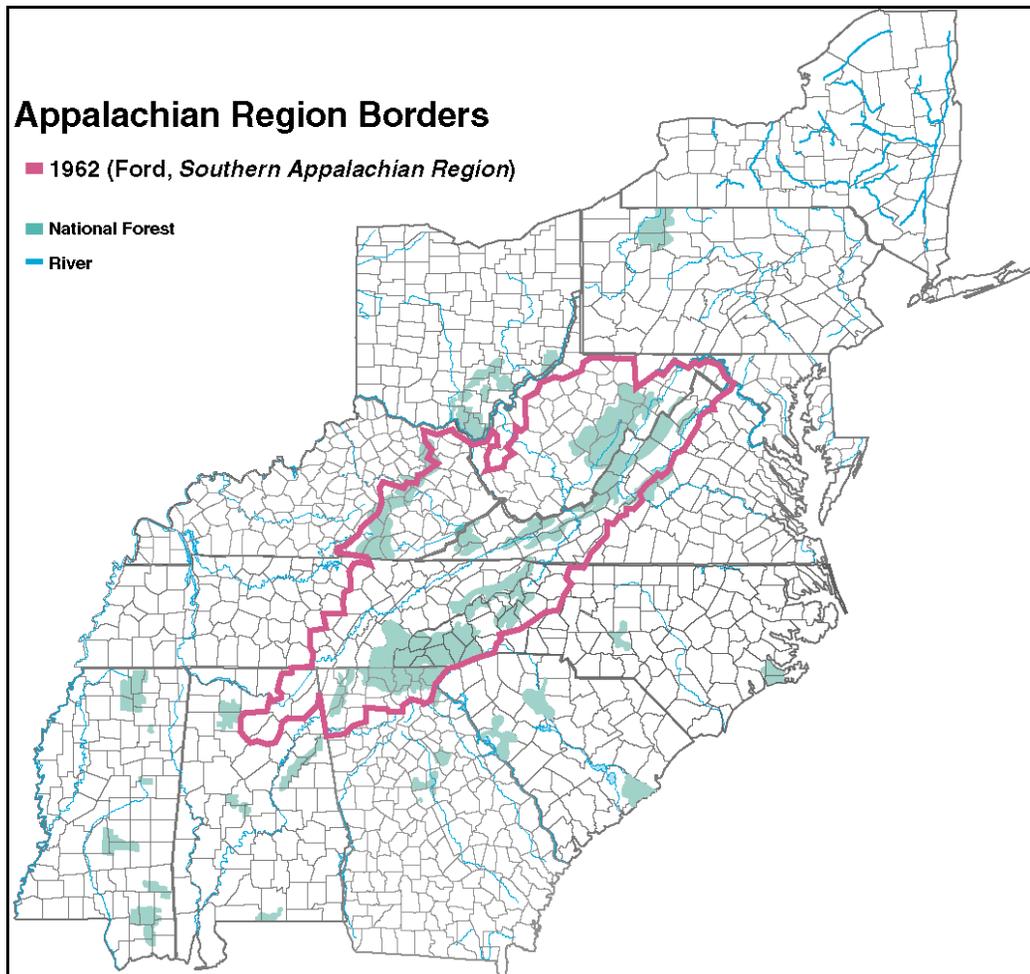


Figure 1: Fords 1962-Southern Appalachian Region “Heartland of Appalachia”. Source: Ford 1962; The Center for Teaching and Learning at Chapel Hill 1997 accessed 2009. <http://www.unc.edu/~whisnant/appal/maps/Ford-1962.gif>

The Southern Appalachian Region was selected as the study site for two main reasons. First, there is a lack of published material regarding natural landscapes and cultural belief systems, especially pertaining to mountain environments such as the Appalachian Region. Second, the human-environment connections, and the ties between the physical landscape and spirituality, have not been the focus of geographical studies in this region. However, it is an important topic that could bring new insights into the tourism industry through preservation efforts in the region and also into the geography of religion and belief systems in understanding another facet of the human-environment relationship especially in a mountain environment and culture.

#### 1.4 Research Questions

The major proposed questions in this research are:

1. *What types of **spiritual experiences** are associated with different natural sites?*
2. *What types of **non-secular activities** are associated with different natural sites?*
3. *At the selected five study sites, what types of **features within the landscape** are people having spiritual experiences at within the Southern Appalachian Region?*
4. *Is Mills' definition of a **spiritual landscape** appropriate and useful in helping to identify if we can and if we do have spiritual landscapes in America; in particular in the Southern Appalachian Region.*
5. *Does the study of spiritual landscapes further Tuan's ideas of **topophilia** as it incorporates the spiritual bond and connections with people and place?*

This research does not question the reality or authenticity of spiritual experiences. The overall objective is to understand the relationships between place and spirituality through peoples' words about their experiences at places. In another example, natural landscapes that are respected and venerated where non-secular activities occur often produce feelings, attitudes, and a certain frame of mind, thus the bond of people to place is affected such as is with studying topophilia. This research seeks to bring a greater understanding and awareness of natural landscapes that evoke spiritual experiences in the Southern Appalachian region (SAR), identify where they are, the features involved, why some places are respected more than others, the types of experiences that people report having there and the non-secular activities that occur at the sites.

### **1.5 Objectives and Methodology**

This research aims to better understand spiritual landscapes which are defined by the dimensions of the numinous, cosmic, and aesthetic experiences people have at a place. The numinous and aesthetic dimensions of a spiritual landscape can be understood through people's experiences, emotions, and perceptions. Knowledge of non-secular activities that occurred helped to defend the cosmic dimension defining a spiritual landscape. Multiple sources and methods are used in this research, including archival research, in-depth unstructured interviews of knowledgeable experts and structured questionnaires of visitors to the target locations, as well as observation of and participation in non-secular events at each site. Today individuals and groups choose to use these locations for non-secular activities such as weddings, memorial services, private meditation areas, and spiritual group events.

Information about non-secular use, experiences, and perceptions of landscapes is important for cultural preservation of myths and folklore attached to particular physical settings. This information is also useful in understanding people's perceptions of landscapes today. It is also important for promoting the continued preservation of such landscapes which are currently under threat in several areas of the United States due to resource extraction and/or limited access and use by those who regard the area as sacred.

The following research sheds light on the natural places that people identify as being associated with spiritual experiences in the target region today. Historical uses of natural landscapes for religious or spiritual purposes, as well as perceptions and non-secular uses of these places within the contemporary Southern Appalachian Region deserve attention from academics as well as the popular media.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Geography of Religion and Spirituality

Since ancient Greek times, geographers have been interested in studying and teaching about religion as part of cultural studies (Kong 1990). In many ways, religion is also important for understanding the human-environment relationship. The shrine built for the Oracle of Delphi to honor the earth Goddess Gaia was selected because of the spirit of the place or *genus loci*. The spirit of the place was believed to provide the Oracle with a powerful mysterious connection to the spirit world and to issue prophesies. Tourists flock today in sheer fascination of the historical events while spiritual pilgrims go there to feel the spirit and power of the place (Swan 1991). In his keynote address to the First World Congress on Cultural Parks in 1984, Lester Borley (Director of the National Trust of Scotland and an authority on tourism) stated, “perhaps the most powerful of all world tourism motives is the desire to visit special places with a spiritual quality” (Swan 1991: 4).

Today there is a renewed interest in this relationship within popular media as well as among planners and politicians dealing with the interface between humans and the environment and the religious characteristics of people and places. The human-environment dimension of geography is one of the classic “Five Themes of Geography” (Natoli 1994). The five themes that were introduced for Geographic Education by the

Association of American Geographers include: location, place, relationships within places (human-land/environment), relationships between places (movement), and regions. This research will look at the human-environment relationships of places from a religious perspective which is an important topic in the twenty-first century and a topic within the academic field of geography that should be explored.

This research topic is diverse, covering both cultural and physical geography. By looking at how the spiritual element manifests itself to people in the physical world at particular landscapes, this research will show if people have spiritual experiences in nature and how spiritual landscapes can be identified and understood through toponophilia and non-secular uses as defined in Chapter I. Although research on how religion and spirituality link humans and nature has been rare within geography in the last few decades, this topic could provide much insight and another avenue for understanding the human-environment relationship that is an important topic in the twenty-first century.

## **2.2 The Human-Environment Relationship and Religion in Geography**

Carl Sauer was one of the first geographers in the United States to analyze landscapes and cultural perceptions (Sauer 1963). Other geographers since Sauer have gone in different directions, from looking at landscapes from a purely physical position to looking at how landscapes impact cultures through settlement patterns and migrations. In the 1970's, Yi-Fu Tuan (1974), a former PhD student of Sauer's, started researching people's feelings including the bond between people and place through their love of the land, perceptions, and attachments to landscapes known as *topophilia*.

Within geography, there has been a fragmented body of scholarly work devoted to religion and spirituality (Sopher 1981). Studies within geography about religion can primarily be included in one of the following areas according to Stump (1986: 2) and Raivo (1997: 27): “denominational geography, study of pilgrimages, study of religion and nature, or the study of the spatial use of areas and landscapes by different religious groups”. Religions were historically mapped to indicate boundaries and spatial diffusion, such as in Africa with the Islamic Front/African Transition Zone (De Blij 2009).

According to Tuan (1976), in the 1970’s the Geography of Religion and Belief Systems specialty group of the Association of American Geographers was in disarray primarily because geographers did not know how to define the Geography of Religion or Religious Geography. Geographers now differentiate the two by considering that the geography of religion is less concerned with religion and more concerned with the effects of religions on cultural and place. Geography of Religion research studies global patterns, spatial diffusion, and boundaries (Raivo 1997; Buttner 2006). Religious Geography is interested in how religion affects people’s perceptions and place within humanity (Raivo 1997). The sub-discipline of the Geography of Religion and Belief Systems according to Raivo (1997) also has problems with fitting into the general area of human geography. This groups problem with fitting into human geography may be due to the groups *lack of coherence* according to Sopher (1981: 510) or as according to Tuan it is a *field of disarray* (1976). Geographers within the specialty group thirty years later still question what research is being conducted and what research is being ignored. More research related to religion still remains to be conducted within the discipline of geography, which

could shed light and help our society understand current issues and concerns of the twenty-first century.

Adrian Ivankiv (2006), although not a geographer, researched pilgrim sites (Sedona, Arizona and Glastonbury, England) and has written several articles on religion and geographical studies. Ivankiv believes that there is much to be learned from the modern era, tying geography with religion. Ivankiv (2006) uses Jonathon Z. Smith's definition of religion as "a second order classification system used to define a discipline" (Smith 1998: 282). He discusses the confusion of the discipline's use of the terms *religion* and *sacred* as did Tuan in 1976. Many researchers are hesitant to use these terms since the meanings are not clearly defined and based more on individual research interest.

Often geographers discuss the role religion played on the cultural landscapes of regions. Richard Jackson and Roger Henrie's research in the early 1980's focused on the Mormon culture in relation to perceptions of natural landscapes and man-made structures (1983). Only a few contemporary geographers such as Yi-Fu Tuan, James Mills, and Richard Francaviglia have been concerned with understanding spirituality and its relationship to place. These geographers have coined certain phrases that are relevant to this study. Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) focuses on *topophilia*, Mills (1992) focuses on *spiritual landscapes*, and Richard Francaviglia (2003) focuses on *spiritual geography*.

Space is another area of interest for geographers, especially how it is used for various rituals, buildings (*i.e.*, temples, mosques, churches, and cemeteries), and as well as space occupied within a town. Kong (1992 and 1993) and Singh (1994) research

focuses in India on the orientation of Hindu temples representing the cosmos on a small scale. Kong (1992) also did research on personal and familial ties to churches and Hindu temples, looking into personal attachments and senses of place in India. Similar beliefs hold true for Fengshui practitioners in Asia where houses and cemeteries are built in certain orientations to the landscape and either on or not near certain physical landscape features (Teather and Chow 2000). The follower of fengshui finds numerous symbolic meanings within landscape features.

Many indigenous groups around the world may not want their sacred spaces known by their exact coordinates, and it is often hard within their own culture to identify an exact spot. In some groups one person may know the location, while another person knows the purpose and use of the location, and another one knows what ceremonies to do there or the myths associated with it. There are several limitations to geographical studies about religion, including the lack of a cohesive understanding within the discipline on what should or needs to be studied, what information is obtainable from various groups, and what research can be done without feeling rejected by the discipline for researching superstitions and magico-religious practices (Buttimer 2006).

Geographers tend to emphasize the secular, often ignoring the role of spiritual perceptions in shaping attitudes towards particular places. People's relationship with religion through secularization of everyday life and religious fundamentalism in the twenty first century, is a direct result and mirror of the dualities seen within religion today throughout the world. Kong (1990) and others argue that religion is mentioned

within courses on cultural geography, but little research has been done. Anne Buttimer in her *Afterword: Reflections on Geography, Religion, and Belief Systems*, explains:

Geographers today might well reflect more carefully on global evidence of ways in which religion is today influencing the merging patterns of human behavior on the surface of the earth. To seek better understanding of indigenous modes of understanding nature...does not in any way imply a celebration of pseudoscience of superstition. On the contrary, it amounts to admitting that contemporary humanity needs to remember more harmonious ways of dwelling on Planet Earth (2006: 201).

Kong (2001) also feels that religion has been forgotten and needs to be included in geographical analysis along with race, class, and gender. In her article *Mapping 'new' geographies of religion: politics and poetics in modernity*, Kong researched articles within geography on religion in the 1990's. According to Kong's findings in 2001, Chris Park (1994) is the only one during this time that researched religion. Kong also feels that no "new directions" were taken within the sub-discipline during the 1990's (2001: 212). Kong (2001: 212) refers to these 'new' directions that could be good research topics within geography as looking into "spirituality, cultural politics, personal experience, and symbolism".

### **2.3 New Geographies of Religion in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Studying and researching new directions within the sub-discipline of geography associated with spirituality and religion is an area that geographers could significantly influence. By the discipline's natural approach of having a holistic understanding of both physical and human geographic factors and employing mixed techniques to answer tough humanistic questions, geographers could greatly contribute knowledge to help with

current issues and trends dealing with spirituality in western society. Human geographers studying spirituality might be able to give insights into current perceptions and beliefs in the twenty-first century, as well as trends and patterns that are emerging in religion and with spiritual growth.

As globalization spreads religious beliefs and people migrate to new areas, taking their current religious beliefs with them, the dynamics of the religious character of places changes around the world. In a 1998 Gallup poll, James Redfield (2000: 78-79) wrote that “82% of those surveyed reported that spiritual growth was a very important part of their lives.”

The interest in spirituality has become increasingly apparent in America with the growing number of TV shows, talk radio shows, spiritual books, and movies dealing with aspects of spirituality. Since TV shows such as *Touched by an Angel* first aired in 1994, and movies such as *The Celestine Prophecy* (2006) and *The DaVinci Code* (2006) became hits, more and more media outlets feature a spiritual dimension. Even media-star Oprah Winfrey added a spiritual dimension to her talk show, magazine, and website to promote spiritual conversations, books, courses, and workshops. Recently, there has also been the islamophobic reaction to the New York City proposed mosque location where the twin towers fell September 11, 2001. Geographer, Francaviglia (2003) predicts that spirituality will be among the most significant trends in human behavior in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Geographers should be aware of this subject, especially as it relates to other growing trends in historic preservation and environmental protection, which both may be

influenced by a spiritual interest in the human-environment relationship (Francaviglia 2003).

#### **2.4 Defining and Understanding Sacred Places**

Scholars from various academic disciplines have attempted to define the phrase “sacred place” (Tuan 1974; Mills 1992; Pennick 1996; Lane 2002). The definition often depends upon the researcher’s background and interest or the purpose of the research and study (*i.e.*, religious, cultural, and/or political, such as legal issues over American Indian sites, and economical such as for tourism, or historical interest). Sacred places involve cultural perception revealed through myths *and* religious history applied to the physical setting (Eliade 1959). To fully appreciate and understand a sacred place, the documented approach should include both more quantitative scientific and qualitative humanistic methods (Lane 2002). Herein lies the problem. It is much easier to explain a sacred place from a humanistic interpretation; however, it is much more difficult to scientifically explain what makes a place have more of a sense of sacred than another spot on the earth’s surface. However, as Lane (2002: 58) notes, “Place (*physical*), culture (*human*), and sacredness are interconnected”.

Anthropologists and religious scholars who study folk religions have explored the animistic belief that the earth is alive with energy (Vastokas 1990; Lane 2002). Some areas, accordingly, have more or different energy emanating outward that is not found in the surrounding terrain. This ability to recognize different energy vibrations coming from within the earth requires sensitivity to subtle energy channels often believed to be associated with Shamanic awareness (Ivakhiv 1997; Evola 1998; Lane 2002). Shamanic

awareness is belief in the connectedness of everything on earth and in realms outside of everyday perception. Another feature of sacred places within the landscape is the idea that the light is different at sacred places, both in regard to human structures and within the natural landscape (Weightman 1996).

It appears that there is no universally agreed upon definition of religion, much less a common definition of a sacred place. Religion, according to Jonathon Z. Smith (1998: 282), is a “second order classification system used to define a discipline”. Smith believes that scholars define what religion is for their studies and for their use in research. Within the academic discipline of geography, there has been a fragmented, usage of the terms “religion” and “sacred” since the 1970’s according to Yi-Fu Tuan and David Sopher. Ivakhiv thirty years later still agrees with Tuan and Sopher that it is a problem within geographic studies (Ivakhiv 2006). The meaning of the words religion, sacred, sacred place, and spiritual landscape is often derived from the individual researcher and includes what, who, and where the study takes place. The meanings of these key words and how they will be used for this research were previously described in Chapter I.

Swan (1991), an anthropologist, discusses the categories of sacred places and sacred sites and how to define sacred places. Most importantly, a sacred place is perceived as energizing the individual with feelings related to spirituality. The three sacred place categories defined by Swan (1991) include: religious buildings and architecture; sacred design; and finally, but equal in importance, nature itself.

Nature is difficult to defend as a place that promotes distinct feelings due to individual perceptions in our western society. Western culture throughout America is detached from living with, respecting, and living in harmony with nature. Communication explaining why places are special is also hard for many individuals to express and in turn harder for researchers to summarize in publications. When indigenous people are asked how they identify areas as sacred or more meaningful they are often confused by the question (Francavigilia 2003). For them, nature is all sacred and or places are known as sacred thru stories, known associations, and/or part of everyday life. In general for a majority of cultural groups around the world, sacred places tend to be places where people find peace and balance, heal, help with transformation, and help find meaning to life usually in nature and natural settings. Places of historical significance both natural and/or constructed at known natural power spots such as Delphi in Greece and the Western/Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, Israel which is sacred for Muslims, Judaism, and Christians are also places where people have spiritual experiences.

The sacred natural landscape is noted as being different from the surrounding terrain, such as a sudden rock outcropping or the intersection of two waterways. Natural places for many cultural groups are the most important and basic of sacred places (Boord 1994). Examples within Celtic societies throughout Europe of natural places being sacred places include groves, wells, springs, mountain tops, and rock formations (Pennick 1996). The same natural landscapes are also sacred to groups in Asia and the American Southwest. The cultural or religious influence of such places is seen in the active work of

monotheist religions in attempts to destroy or erase them from the cultural landscape. The ancient Hebrews destruction and replanting of the groves of Baal and the Catholic and Protestant attacks on Celtic and Norse religious sites in Europe throughout history are just two examples of how sacred natural places around the world have been attempted to be erased from the cultural landscape of regions.

The field of environmental psychology avoids issues related to sacred places and how people identify them. Instead, studies in this rather new field generally measure visitor satisfaction with views and wilderness areas or parks (Swan 1991). Within various academic disciplines there seems to be hesitation in studying something that cannot be quantified easily such as human perception towards landscapes, perhaps because it involves both the human and physical worlds. The lack of both policymaker interest and resources invested in a topic that is hard to define and describe, such as spiritual connections to landscapes, may be a major factor in why there are so few studies on this topic in a number of academic disciplines.

Swan (1991) also elaborated on 14 types of sacred “sites”. These included burial locations and purification sites. Healing sites include places associated with water such as springs for drinking water and baths as well as places of mosses. Ceremonial locations were chosen due to particular landforms, and meditational sites chosen due to isolation. Some sites had special flora and fauna. Quarries were endowed with specific stones and crystals. Vision questioning and dreaming sites are places of cultural significance. Mythic and legendary locations have stories attached to them as being culturally sacred to a group. Temples and shrine locations are important in many religions. Other sacred sites

are known for spiritual renewal sites for modern recreational users to major world religious sites. Astronomical observatories are also sacred sites found throughout the eastern and western hemisphere. Historic sites such as cliff dwellings are important especially in the American Southwest. Other sites may be known as fertility sites such as mountains in Asia while other sites are baptismal sites for various religious groups.

In many ancient societies, sacred places were set aside as special, preserved through community efforts, and highly protected from destructive forces and people. In Greece, areas were walled off to divide the holy from the ordinary, the sacred from profane, *hiero temenos*. Temene could be therapeutic sanctuaries known for healings or spiritual renewal and were most often natural features such as groves, springs, and mountain tops (Hughes 1991 and 1993). For much of the modern and western industrialized societies, the spirit of places has been forgotten and overlooked in exchange for a focus on the economic value. Some people such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Aldo Leopold become voices for promoting and preserving natural places. The transcendentalist movement discussed in greater detail in Section 2.8 included authors such as Emerson and Thoreau who became literary voices for places. Thoreau became the voice for Walden Pond (2004). Emerson who inspired Thoreau and others during the late 1800's in general wrote poetically about nature with a spiritual connection (Emerson 2010). John Muir (1992) became a voice for Yosemite and the Sierra Mountains for preservationist efforts and non-secular uses in the early 1900's. Aldo Leopold became a voice for conservation ethics with a more secular approach than Muir in the 1940's with *A Sand County Almanac* (1973). In the

industrialized nations land often equals money and spirit is only part of the human imagination (Hughes 1991). However, there are people that believe a natural place has a physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual energy that is more valuable than the dollar (Lake 1991). Many of the transcendentalist authors and others since them have wrote and lectured on the importance of nature over economic gain. This may also be seen in people removing themselves from modernity.

Although this research does not focus on using the term “sacred places”, a relationship exists in understanding people’s perceptions of different natural landscapes both within religious text and through oral tradition. An understanding of how cultural groups around the world view their physical surrounding and natural environment through already defined sacred places needs to be a starting point in understanding perceptions today of natural settings. This background on how groups define sacred places, spiritual landscapes, or culturally significant natural settings involves understanding the importance of myths, stories, and folklore that may be attached to a particular setting. Often places are named for events, animals, and/or people and relate to some spiritual story or creation myth.

Sacred places tend to be associated with stories of the origins of the landscape feature or origins of a particular cultural group. Many cultural groups have passed down, through generations, stories that give meaning and significance to a place as sacred or culturally significant. These places are often associated with the underlying myth or symbolism of living in harmony with the earth, as noted within the Cherokee belief

system (Garrett and Garrett 1996). Francaviglia believes that the “spirit of a place” is revealed through inspirational stories that people tell about their experiences. He writes:

Stories are always about places, what happens to people as they are exposed to that place...Can you imagine the Odyssey without the rugged coast of Greece? A River Runs Through It without the Rockies? The Wizard of Oz without Kansas-or Oz? The Bible without the holy land? (203: xv)

Some story traditions concerning geological sites in Europe have been documented as far back as 6,000 years ago (Vastokas 1990).

Many different earth-based religions around the world believe that the landscape is alive and that different features of the earth are sacred within their world-view. Several of these sites have *genius loci* (spirit of a place), which serves some benefit or purpose for a group. From the animistic belief systems found around the world, to the three monotheist world religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islamic), landscapes have stories attached to them as being sacred or culturally significant in various historical contexts within religious texts and stories (Eliade 1959).

Only a small number of natural areas within the landscape have received attention through biblical stories in the Old Testament. These tales relate to prophecy at some site, deeming the location therefore holy or sacred (Parks 1994; Lane 2002). In other instances, a negative feeling towards sacred natural locations among some Hebrews grew over time due to practices within nature that were believed to be sinful such as the fertility rites and human sacrifices in the religion of Baal. These rituals often took place within groves and springs and negative feelings developed towards these natural settings.

In other instances, sanctified structures such as temples were built at holy sites to set the areas apart from the carnal (natural) world. Sacred Judeo-Christian landscapes might include mountains, islands, caves, and wells or springs where someone had a mystical experience with God (Pennick 1996; Lane 2002). Most of these sites are in Southwest Asia.

In contrast to the sacred places held in high regard in biblical texts, other sacred places in various parts of the world were wiped out during colonial times. Many North Americans came from European backgrounds with a predominant Christian faith. These European influences, as well as the Christian religion, tend not to designate particular spaces within the natural landscape as sacred, especially in America. As the Americas were settled, colonial powers and missionaries disregarded sacred places within the landscape of the indigenous people (Lane 2002). However, knowledge about sites still survives in some places through myths and folklore stories passed down from generations. Some information has been lost because stories were never recorded. Another reason for lost information is the failure of the younger generations to remember the oral stories told to them by the elders, as information transmission becomes more codified and less oral.

Many sites that are neither well known nor documented are not and cannot be reduced to grid coordinates or names imposed by outsiders or mapmakers; they are just known to exist through stories and myths for various groups. Often sites within different cultural groups are kept as secrets from outsiders to prevent abuse or misuse of the area. Other common concerns today regarding sacred or culturally significant places include

development issues, environmental deterioration, and the growing tourism industry, all of which could alter or change the site. The impact of tourism on sacred places, such as Stonehenge, has altered how people visit the site. Many American Indian groups are also affected. As their land has become public or government-owned, they no longer have access to it for performing their ceremonies or collecting their medicines.

There are similarities as to how the different belief systems of the world regard mountains as spiritual or sacred landscape features. Many people throughout the world visit mountains for spiritual reasons in order to gain insight into their lives or to connect to the gods. People visit rivers for spiritual cleansings, as in India along the Ganges, to participate in baptisms in the many rivers of the Appalachian Mountains, or make pilgrimages to springs throughout the world, such as in Lourdes, France, which is known for miraculous healings (Nolan 1983; Parks 1994; Narayanan 2004).

### **Power Mountains**

Mountains are worshipped by people as diverse as the American Indians in the Western hemisphere to the Chinese in the Eastern hemisphere. In many belief systems, mountains are seen to connect the physical world or Earth with the sky world or god. Cultural groups, such as the Australian Aborigines and Native American tribes such as the Iroquois, Ojibwa, Cherokees, Dine', and Hopi believe that the mountains are of significance because of the connection to the skyworld or upperworld (Garrett and Garrett 1996; Vastokas 1990). Mountains are often seen as the dwelling places of gods, spirits, and ancestors and many within different cultures go to mountaintops to seek

visions, also known as vision-questing. Mountains have also been revered throughout history as symbols of strength and freedom.

Mountains have been of central importance to many Native American cultures, including the Dine' and Apache in the Southwest, as well as the Cherokee in North Carolina. Native religions are religions "of place in that their traditions are intimately connected to the land and local geographies" (Ball 2000: 264). McPherson's (1947) book on the sacred geography of the Navajo (Dine') defined and described the four sacred mountains that form the boundary of their home in the American Southwest: Sisnaajinii (Blanca Peak in Colorado), Tsoodzit (Mount Taylor in Arizona), Dook'o'oostidd (San Francisco Peaks in Arizona), and Hesperus Peak in Colorado (McPherson 1995; Blake 2001). These mountains are associated with creation myths, colors, directions, stones, and gender. Other mountains within the Dine' homelands are also held in high regard as sacred places for vision-questing and also as locations for sacred plants used for healing remedies (Ball 2000; Blake 2001).

The Mescalero Apache, closely related linguistically and spatially to the Dine, also venerate sacred mountains that are important in their culture and traditions (Ball 2000). Ball's research significantly documents Apache traditions, which many of the younger generations are not learning – a common situation with other cultures around the world. Similar to their relatives the Dine, the Mescalero Apache also have four sacred mountains linked to the four directions within their homeland's landscape. All mountains are sacred, according to many Native Americans. Mountains with greater biological diversity, however, may be Medicine Mountains, which garner even greater respect.

According to Mescalero Apache tradition, “medicines are on the mountains because that is where all the power is” (Ball 2000: 268).

In parts of Asia where Confucianism features in daily life practices, mountains are held sacred along with schools, academics, and the family home (Oldstone-Moore 2002). In Korea and China, for example, secular Confucianism is intertwined with aspects of Buddhism and Shamanism. All three regard nature as important and believe that links exists among humans, heaven, and the earth. In the folk tradition of Confucianism and Taoism, rituals are performed on mountaintops. Mountaintops are seen as symbols of stability, also providing fertility and preventing natural disasters or health problems when venerated. Mount Tai (*Taishan*) in China is the most important mountain for Confucians because of the link it provides with heaven (Oldstone-Moore 2002). Mountains, groves, rivers, temples, towns, cities, and forests are considered sacred within the Hindu religion. Most research in this area focuses extensively on temples and town settlement patterns and how they were built within a cosmological view of earth (Kong 1990). Temples or shrines are seen as economic hubs with a great amount of cultural activity surrounding them, and they often replicate holy places within their architecture (cosmic dimension). Many holy temples are built on mountains that were believed to be holy sites emanating greater energy. Mount Kailash in the Himalayas, for instance, is revered as the mountain in which the god Shiva resides (Narayanan 2004).

In Chinese landscapes, the word *shenshui* is based on the two elements of mountains and water, which harmoniously complement each other (Fracaviglia 2003). Water gives life, and land is for human activity. Many cultural groups in Asia value the

connection between water and land. Taoism believes that the perfect place is complete when the combination of mountain, water, and solitude are present (Eliade 1959; Oldstone-Moore 2003). Taoism believes that *ch'i* (energy) emanates from the earth, especially at certain geographical features such as rivers, mountains, and caves, and that an energy grid runs throughout the world. Temples, shrines, and other religious or ceremonial buildings are built on or near the highly regarded geographic features to make the most “use of” the energy present at the site whereas Shinto avoids construction on mountains due to the power and use of energy (Oldstone-Moore 2003). In Taoism, there are five sacred peaks (Tai, Heng, Heng (another Heng), Hua, and a mythical Sung) that are highly regarded and thought to have much *chi*, enabling one to visit another dimension or world (Reader 1994). Other prominently worshipped mountains in the world include the Himalayas for the Hindus in India, Mount Fujiyama for Japanese (Shinto and Buddhist beliefs), Mount Helgafell in Iceland, Mount Olympus in Greece, Mount Shasta in California, and Mount Tecate for the Cuchama in California.

### *Healing Waters*

Rivers are the primary natural landscape features deemed as sacred and most often associated with a goddess or female divinity (Gadon 1991). Rivers in India that are regarded as sacred include the Ganga (Ganges), Yamuna, Kaveri, and Narmada. The confluence of two rivers or one river with the sea is a very sacred place within the landscape. For Hindus, bathing in a river or visiting a sacred place liberates one’s soul from karma or sin in this lifetime. Rivers are often *Tirtha*, in Hindi literally meaning “crossing over”. *Tirthas*, are believed to be portals crossing from the profane space to

sacred space or from the human to the divine (Gadon 1991). People can cross the Ganges by bridge or boat but this crossing more represents something not physically done but as with death, it represents starting a new life (Gesler and Pierce 2000). Many holy temples are built or located near a lake, river, spring, or the sea (Oldstone-Moore 2003). Power at the sacred sites in India is believed to come from the natural landscape or place and not from the deity associated with the place (Gadon 1991).

Water is one of the most common significant sources of “religious inspiration” found in many different cultural groups (Tuan 1968). Water symbolism universally according to Buttimer, equals “wholeness, health, and holiness” (1984). In Islamic cosmology, water coming down from the heavens to earth is the source of all life (Hanafi 1999).

Healing springs have been a common feature of certain geographic regions of the world throughout time. Many people take pilgrimages to springs throughout the world, such as in Lourdes, France, which is known for miraculous healings (Lane 2002). In ancient Greek and Roman times people believed in the healing abilities of waters and established shrines, drinking wells, and baths (Pennick 1996). Many people around the world in various cultural groups, from various religions, and numerous places believe in the healing powers of hot springs, mineral springs, and other springs either for bathing in or drinking waters from for various ailments (Rossman 1936; Fishwick 1978; Cohen 1981; Kearns and Gesler 1998).

Cherokees in the Appalachian Mountains often used water sources for various ceremonies and rituals. Water was the essence of life for the Cherokee as for many other

cultural groups. Ancient Cherokees ceremonies focused on the spiritual power of running water. Rivers historically were used for cleansing and purification ceremonies such as “going to water” a ceremony in which Cherokees went to the river and splashed water over their shoulder seven times every morning. Some Cherokees still practice this ritual (National Park Service display 2009). Waterfalls were also used as purification places (Ellison 2005). Cross-overs are based on the idea that as one crosses over a body of water, such as a creek or river, his/her perceptions change in order to help bring the person into balance and harmony (Garrett and Garrett 1996).

According to a brochure by the Great Smoky Mountain National Historical Association on Waterfalls (Kemp 1998) waterfalls “generate negative ions which make people feel good. Negatively charged air molecules created by number of natural and electronic processes, include ocean surf and waterfalls. Negative ion levels at large waterfalls are estimated to be fifty times higher than at other rural sites.” According to information on negative ions and waterfalls, people often have brighter moods, increased energy, improved physical performance, and better health after being near the ions/spray from the waterfalls (Thayer 1989). Waterfalls encourage contemplation and the “white noise” created by the waterfalls helps humans relax and improve sleep behavior which is what sound engineers try to mimic a natural sound (Ellison 2005).

## **2.5 Spirituality, Spiritual Experiences, and Spiritual Landscapes**

Spirituality may be a way of life, an aspect of personality, an experience, or simply a way of being for many. Religion may include those spiritual aspects but is more organized with hierarchy, history, and rules. The spiritual aspects of a person, place, or

thing cannot be seen, touched, or heard in many instances but exist as a realm, primarily outside scientific knowledge. Spirituality is impacted by how humans interact with and perceive their physical environment, as well as how the physical environment affects human lives, as seen from examples concerning the importance and worship of rain. Kong (2001), describes the importance of rain for groups living in drier environments and how the physical geography plays a role in the people's spiritual lives. The drier environment contributes to the worship of rain. As Mills (1992: 28) states:

People began traveling not only down rivers and wooded pathways, but through invisible realms. Humans began to delight in a sense of beauty, they felt the unseen powers, and they cultivated a sense of the holy. From that distant point until now, humans have found themselves existing not only in the bio-physical and social worlds, but also in the worlds of the spirit and imagination.

Spirituality is more about how humans as individuals and within groups see themselves fitting into this world. The numinous, cosmic, and aesthetic dimensions of spirituality are important in understanding spiritual experiences we have in the physical world around us, especially at certain natural places.

According to Mills (1992), *numinous*, *cosmic*, and *aesthetic* dimensions of spiritual experiences, define a spiritual landscape. A spiritual landscape is when these experiences or events are tied into a particular landscape for an individual or group. The definition of a spiritual landscape, according to Mills, closely follows three of the axioms Lane (2002) derived for sacred landscapes, which includes the following: the place “chooses” to be revealed (**numinous and aesthetic**); it is an ordinary place made “sacred” through ritual (**cosmic**); and it has a center that is local and universal (**cosmic**).

The focus of this work is on the relationship between a person's spiritual experience and the particular landscape in question. Spiritual landscapes lie within the physical and material world, often part of everyday life. What makes a landscape spiritual however, are the perceptions, beliefs, and experiences that individuals and groups have at that particular landscape. Understanding these human responses and awareness to places requires a humanistic (qualitative) approach. Geographers want to be able to explain and understand the human-environmental interaction through various qualitative and sometimes quantitative approaches. Geographers choose diverse topics; but more importantly, they must decide how they will approach the topic of their study and find answers to their often multi-faceted holistic questions. Topics dealing with personal beliefs can be hard to study in a traditional scientific way since there are no formulas for predicting people's attitudes, perceptions, and ideas while they are within natural landscapes.

The definition of spiritual landscape for this research follows the basic ideas of a "sacred place" and focuses only on natural landscapes in combination with the human element of perceptions, experiences, and feelings. After reviewing much of the literature on this topic, it seems that sacred places often are connected to some historical or religious documentation by a cultural group as a site that is sacred just for that cultural group. The use of the term spiritual landscape allows for a more encompassing association of different natural landscapes for many who visit, although no historic or religious documentation may have previously regarded the site as sacred. *Spiritual*

*landscapes are more personal and relate to people's personal spiritual experiences at that site.*

This research is primarily interested in what Mills termed a *spiritual landscape* using the three dimensions of a spiritual experience: numinous, cosmic, and aesthetic (Mills 1992). The term “sacred” as already discussed has so many different associations with it that for the broader scope of this research, the term *spiritual landscape* seems more appropriate since the research focuses on historical myths and folklore attached to sites, as well as non-secular use of these landscapes today *and* the spiritual experience. A religious or spiritual activity defines non-secular use such as a wedding, baptism, memorial service, or more personal meditation places and contemplation sites to name a few. The three dimensions of the spiritual experiences as well as what defines a spiritual landscape are defined below.

### **Numinous**

The word “numinous,” originally derived from the work of Otto and Eliade in the most basic form, implies that the area is full of awe and fear at the same time. The numinous religious experience, according to Otto, was non-rational and “...unique original feeling-response which can be in itself ethically neutral.” (Otto 1925: 6). A numinous experience is a feeling-response or in Otto's words composed of a “creature-feeling”, a “*mysterium tremendum*”. This creature-feeling is a sense of something greater than oneself. This may be an awareness of a particular deity, the spirit world, or a feeling of how small and insignificant the individual is. *Myseterium tremendum* relates to the mystical aspect of spirituality and the power present. The individual may feel

overwhelmed and fearful because of the energy around the experience. As much as there is fear with this powerful energy present, there is also a fascination which draws people to want the experience. Perhaps this is the difference between “fear” and “reverence” as in “the fear of the Lord” for Christians. The concept of fear will be interesting to discern from public perception of natural areas. Both sacred and spirituality include the dimension of numinous. There is often a numinous feeling at a particular landscape. This feeling may be for an entire group or may be just for one individual while another individual may not have the same feelings and experiences at the site. The type of landscape that may evoke these feelings depends on the individual since the numinous is a personal experience. Some people may have more of an emotional experience in a desert over a waterfall setting while someone else may have intense feelings at a waterfall and have no reaction to a desert environment. Water movements (waterfalls, rapids, and tidal waves), atmospheric phenomena (thunderstorms and tornadoes), and geologic events (volcanoes and earthquakes) all produce fear, awe, and fascination for individuals and/or groups. Responses depend on cultural experiences and background, historical time period, and personal experiences and beliefs

### *Cosmic*

Cosmic generally refers to some sort of order, as well as a distinction between the sacred and profane through ritual or ceremony performed or from some focus point or center. The numinous experience derives from a sub-conscious level of the human mind, whereas the cosmological experience is based on ideas and imagination (Mills 1992). People want to live in order and meaningful worlds. Individuals throughout time have

wanted to have roles within society. The cosmological dimension is formal and gives meaning and order to places and experiences that can be communicated through words, symbols, architectural designs, and/or city layouts. Cosmic is more often associated with communication and is group oriented (Mills 1992).

Sacred places often involve organizing areas into meaningful places. The three ways places are organized into meaningful and ordered places are as follows: (1) an *axis mundi* or center of the world-topographic feature, such as a mountain, (2) a distinction between the sacred and profane, which provides order, harmony, and peace, such as through a ritual or ceremony, and (3) geometric qualities as seen in building designs and orientation of cities (Mills 1992; Lane 2002).

### Rituals and Ceremonies

Rituals give many people some form and meaning for their life by establishing relationships between themselves and one or many deities. Rituals and ceremonies are a way to contact the divine or to order space. Rituals help to teach people how to organize space and how to conduct themselves within that space (Kuhlke 2008). According to Kuhlke (2008: 25), “all sacred space is qualitatively different from the profane, and this qualitative difference has to be established by human acts”. These human acts, such as rituals and ceremonies help to distinguish profane space from sacred space. Just as religion helps to explain how humans and the world came to be, rituals, symbols, and myths are means of expressing the emotional powers and explaining and/or validating our experiences and beliefs. A recent geographical study dealing with rituals and the creation of sacred space of the freemasons by the geographer Olaf Kuhlke looked into how space

is organized into meaningful environments through rituals and symbolism in order to bridge the above world and below world representing the cosmos on the physical plane (2008). Rituals within the freemasons include what many people may consider everyday acts such as washing hands and bowing to others but when done with another intention and awareness they enter into sacred space (2008). According to Farmer (2002), ceremonies remind us of our connection with God and nature and also help us to find peace with life changes. Rituals tend to be something that is repeated again and again either by the individual or throughout history by people for a desired outcome. Farmer (2002) warns that rituals can become like habits without the heartfelt intentions and spiritual experience present. Ceremonies are more elaborate and may include several ritual acts combined but also may be more flowing and open.

Rituals and ceremonies are important in understanding and learning what people do at these natural landscapes and why they choose to do them when looking at non-secular use and spiritual experiences at specific landscapes. As stated previously, the dimension of cosmic under spiritual experiences generally refers to order and/or a distinction between the sacred and profane often through ritual or ceremony. Rituals and ceremonies are an important aspect of this study both for individuals and groups at identifying spiritual landscapes. Rituals and ceremonies can be very simple individual expressions of trying to connect with a higher power and/or simple acts in helping to create order, harmony, peace, and balance in one's life. Examples of rituals for religious communities include prayers, sacrifices, singing, dancing, music, and even fasting during certain times. Rituals for individual religious connections may include the above on a

personal level but also other activities that give meaning to their life including physical activity such as yoga and walking. Rituals can be seen as doing the same thing in the same order every day at the same time, from something as simple as brushing teeth to, although many do not associate everyday activities with ritual behavior. Eliade (1959) believed the “religious man” sees everyday life as sacred and the most basic acts are sacred and ritual in nature. Ceremonies of interest for this research include baptisms, marriage, memorial services, and blessing ceremonies. Some may also include homecomings, graveyard decorations, and family reunions/”gatherings” as rituals within certain regions of the world such as the Appalachians (Wagner 2000).

### Pilgrimages

Mountains and rivers tend to be the location of pilgrimages to be taken in one’s life in many Asian religions (Oldstone-Moore 2003). A significant area of interest within religion for geographers deals with pilgrimages (Rinschede 1992; Nolan 1983; Huntsinger and Fernandez-Gimenez 2000). For many today, as migration and movement of people around the world is occurring at a faster pace, sacred sites, such as religious shrines or homelands, act as anchors or centers for a larger and geographically dispersed community of members. These centers are worshiped, praised, and visited often through a pilgrimage or trek. Pilgrimages are a way of travel often motivated by religious experiences and in some parts of the world are very ancient traditions. Today there are numerous tourist agencies and others offering packages to pilgrimage sites that are known for spiritual healing and sacred sites. A question posed by some geographers but not yet answered is what is the difference between a pilgrimage and just a visit?

Researchers document a growth in the number of pilgrims and pilgrimage sites throughout the world in the last thirty years, including natural landscape sites that are regarded as sacred or culturally significant (Nolan 1983; Rinschede 1990; Rinschede 1992; Parks 1994; Ivakhiv 1996; Reader 2007). Nolan (1983), researched the use of Christian pilgrimages and sites within Europe, relating pilgrimage sites with worship experiences.

The Pilgrimage-Journey in India to sacred sites trying to distinguish between tourist and pilgrims and those with ancient or family ties to the area and those from other countries wanting to take in the beauty and power of the place has been extensively researched within geography (Poudel and Singh 1994; Singh 1994; Sinha 1994). Gesler and Pierce (2000) research on Hindu Varanasi looked into the sacred geography of the places along the pilgrims travels within the city, and the act of dying and rituals of cremation along the Ganges. Numerous geographers have focuses on Hindu holy places and pilgrimages in India (Sopher 1967; Stoddard 1968; Malville and Fritz 1993).

Pilgrimages constitute an important part of several different “religions,” and the sites are also seen as tourist attractions. This tourism industry based on religion could help local economies, such as those in Bhutan and Nepal, if strains are not placed on the local infrastructure. Understanding religion and religious/spiritual practices could help geographers recognize the impacts of such cultural events and places on the local economy. One major problem of mixing the tourism industry with sacred places is the possible degradation of such sites by visitors and the destruction sometimes due to the

massive number of visitors alone. Stonehenge is a prime example of a sacred place that has to be protected from tourists by being fenced off from the public.

Other researchers in geography have focused on New Age pilgrim sites. Ivakhiv (2003: 113) wrote about the New Age pilgrimage sites in Sedona, Arizona, and that with the “New Age pilgrimage, place and landscape became an important focus for spiritual practices”. Huntsinger and Fernandex-Gimenez (2000) looked into the non-secular uses of public lands at Mount Shasta, comparing pilgrims to non-pilgrims as to how they viewed the area, used it, and how much they knew about the area. This study also looked into the New Age pilgrims in order to ascertain from a quantitative perspective, how they used Mount Shasta as a sacred place. Researchers are beginning to look at more modern religious experiences and journeys for pilgrimages today. A popular modern day pilgrimage in the Southeast is the Appalachian Trail (Rubin 2000). Pilgrimages need to be considered when investigating sacred places due to the frequency of visits by some people as well as the reasons for their visits and pilgrimages can be form of ritual for some visitors.

### **Aesthetic**

The aesthetic dimension is much easier for people to understand and perceive through beauty and appreciation. According to Tuan (1989: 234), “The aesthetic experience is largely a matter of the pleasure of the senses”. Aspects of the aesthetic dimension include emotions, perceptions, and feelings, as well as other avenues of expression. Aesthetics is most often associated with art forms and a heightened perception or awareness. Plato believed that sensing beauty led to something higher

(Tuan 1989). The old adage, “beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” suggests that individuals, different cultures, as well as different periods of time, have their own sense as to which landscapes are perceived as beautiful. Throughout history in both Europe and North America, people have altered their aesthetic appreciation of mountains between fearing and loving as well as thinking mountains were ugly and the home of the devil to being inspirational backdrops for artwork. A spiritual landscape will always be an aesthetic landscape, but not all aesthetic landscapes would be seen as spiritual.

## **2.6 Perceptions of Landscapes**

For this research, landscapes are defined by human perceptions of the surroundings. Landscapes can be defined in physical and biological terms but can also be understood and perceived in the human mind. How individuals perceive their environment and surrounding landscapes is often determined by personality, culture and spiritual aspects of the observer (Mills 1992). Perceptions of rural and urban areas or man-made and natural places vary according to demographic attributes (age and gender) and attitudes (beliefs) towards the landscape (Tuan 1974). There is a difference in how the Western or industrialized areas of the world understand and perceive the landscape compared to Native American religions and/or other indigenous groups.

The Judeo-Christian perspective of the Western world believes that God, who is sacred, created the Earth and that the Earth was made for humans to use to their benefit and to some this refers in addition to abuse for material gain (Vastokas 1990). Some Judeo-Christians use this premise and turn the meaning of it into an abuse of the Earth for

material gain. Other Judeo-Christians believe that everything God created is sacred. Therefore, to those individuals, natural places are sacred because God created them.

Contemporary responses to sacred sites in Canada, according to Vastokas (1990), range from visitors stating that when they left a site they felt a greater sense of harmony, more knowledge and connectedness to the earth, and/or personal enrichment. Visitors to sacred places often report about returning home carrying new levels of consciousness (Vastokas 1990; Pennick 1996). Some visitors to sacred places may go as the usual tourist, to either see the site for entertainment and/or for purchasing or taking photographs; but they may never actually experience or feel the place the way that the area was experienced by natives or others today who experience the place in a spiritual way.

There are numerous reports that document the common attitudes and perceptions of cultural groups, such as the Aborigines, Dine', Algonkians, and pre-Celtic people in having an intimate relationship with nature (Vastakoas 1990). Native Americans and other animistic belief cultures believe that everything, including the landscapes of Earth, *is* sacred. Perspectives regarding landscapes may change slightly over time for different cultural groups, or the myths and rituals once performed at the sacred areas may be forgotten as cultural groups become extinct. This is evident throughout the world, and a prime example in North Carolina is the lack of documented information of any kind regarding the Saura, who once inhabited the area near Pilot Mountain. This lack of information often makes archival work difficult in parts of North America.

Perspectives on landscapes may also converge over time or as cultural groups begin to disperse from their native areas. Globalization and diffusion of varying belief systems may actually re-ignite the belief in sacred landscapes in other parts of the world where those living within that area may have forgotten.

## **2.7 Wilderness Areas in America as Spiritual Landscapes**

In his work on spiritual landscapes in America, Mills (1992) concludes that *wilderness areas* are associated with particular perceptions, and could be a type of spiritual landscape that is preserved well into the twenty-first century. Wilderness usually assumes that a large area is involved and is more of an ecologically-based ideal rather than just a land classification category for planners, not a particular place in the landscape.

Ross-Bryant (2005) believes that National Parks play a religious function within the United States culture. Ross-Bryant's (2005) article focuses on how national parks act as sacred sites for Americans who enjoy solitude in wilderness areas within national parks. The therapeutic value of certain landscapes such as wilderness areas also inspires research (Wilson 2003).

Theodore Roosevelt signed into law The Antiquities Act of 1906. The original intent was to preserve and protect American Indian artifacts on public lands, as well as to allow the President to set aside natural areas as public parks and conservation lands. Since Americans did not have deep cultural roots from which to draw from as did Europeans, officials looked to nature as part of the American cultural legacy. National Parks and National Forests were established throughout America for this reason. The

mission of the National Parks is to *preserve* natural, cultural, and historic areas. Many of the first National Parks established are considered geologic wonders, such as Yosemite and Yellowstone. The National Park Service, which is part of the Department of the Interior, also includes national monuments (established by The Antiquities Act of 1906), recreational areas, national seashores, and national preserves. The first National Parks in the eastern United States established in 1935 include: the Shenandoah Valley, the Blue-Ridge Parkway, and the Great Smoky Mountains (National Park Service 2009). State Parks tend to follow a similar mission as National Parks in preserving and protecting representative natural features throughout each state on a smaller scale.

## **2.8 Transcendentalism and Views on Nature in America**

Views on nature and landscapes became a strong focus during the Romantic Period in the late 18<sup>th</sup> to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Romanticism was a reaction against the scientific rationalization of nature or industrialization that had been occurring throughout most of Europe and North America and sought for more aesthetic experiences in life through art. Intuition and emotions were also valued over rational thinking. Following in the footsteps of Romanticism ideas, Transcendentalists believed in a strong connection between nature and humans along with a divinity that surrounded the two. Famous Transcendentalists such as Henry David Thoreau (1993) and Ralph Waldo Emerson (2010) wrote extensively on the subject of nature and religion. Transcendentalism was a literary, religious, and philosophical movement that believed in the divinity of both man and nature.

This idea of the divinity of man and nature was also seen in some of John Muir's writings in the early 1900's regarding the proposed Hetch-Hetchy Dam in Yosemite National Park. Muir believed that wilderness areas should be preserved and he wrote in one news article, "These temple destroyers, devotees of ravaging commercialism, seem to have a perfect contempt for Nature, and, instead of lifting their eyes to the God of the mountains, lift them to the Almighty Dollar" (1912: 261-2). In his efforts to preserve Yosemite and the Hetch Hetchy River, he also made this statement, "Dam Hetch Hetchy! As well dam for water-tanks the people's cathedrals and churches, for no holier temple has ever been consecrated by the heart of man" (Muir 1912: 261-2).

This preservation effort was also the mission of the National Parks, set up to counter forces seeking to profit from resource extraction. Preservationists such as Muir tried using several media tactics to prevent the dam from being built. In many articles to the American public, Muir and other preservationists emphasized the spiritual significance of wild places and the divinity of nature (Nash 1973). After much controversy, the dam was built because of the materialistic endeavors of the nation at that time and the split sympathies of President Theodore Roosevelt – on the one hand trying to preserve nature (especially in the West), and on the other eager to see the U.S. rise to world power status. Since then greater effort and more concern has been exerted over the non-commodity use of scenic landscapes and places.

## **2.9 The Importance of Scale in Spiritual Landscapes**

This work will be conducted at many different scales. This research focuses on both the Southern Appalachian Region (regions) and the individual sites (local). This

research of identifying spiritual landscapes from a larger perspective is focused on the Southern Appalachian Region. However, data will be first collected on a county level to see what similarities show up regarding the types of natural landscapes that are identified as meaningful for each county. Patterns may arise as one particular feature is more commonly identified as a spiritual landscape within the county or in different sub-regions of the Southern Appalachians. These patterns may arise because of the different cultural groups within the region or as a result of American Indian influences. This research will look at the county level as what sites are being identified as sacred and provoking spiritual experiences to the broader interest in spiritual landscapes in the entire region. Identification of spiritual landscapes within the region can be applied to other regions within the United States, as well as to other regions of the world.

## **2.10 The Importance of Studying a Mountain Region**

Mountains constitute one-fifth of the world's land area and are home to approximately 500 million people. Thus, they constitute "an important world landscape" (Smethurst 2000). Mountain environments are unique for their biodiversity, and many sacred plants (medicines) may be found within different altitudinal vegetation zones as believed with the Dine' in the American Southwest. Mountains are not only meeting places of the gods or homes of deities, but they also provide minerals and herbs used in traditional folk healing remedies (Oldstone-Moore 2003).

According to Smethurst (2000), after an analysis of 263 articles published between 1988 and 1998 on mountain research, only 5% of the articles were studies of mountains within the United States. He notes that the Appalachians of the eastern United

States were left “off the radar.” He also states that the interaction between humans and mountains is poorly studied, with only 9% of the articles being about local mountain people and cultural identities associated with mountains.

Mills (1992) discusses the lack of well-defined spiritual places in North America today, with the exception of the sacred places of Native American groups. He believes that identifying, creating, and acknowledging spiritual landscapes begins with people and researchers interested in understanding how landscapes play into lives today (1992).

According to Kong (1990: 367), “insufficient attention has been paid to folk regions...and the personal religious experience” where “the personal religious experience with place is at least one avenue that can and should be explored.” Awareness needs to be made of other traditions (belief systems) that look at the landscape in different ways from the traditional Western man.

Extensive research as previously noted as been conducted about sacred places within mountain environments in Asia and the American Southwest. This research focuses on the Southern Appalachian Mountain Region, a folk region to some, a small region to identify and understand spiritual landscapes, and a mountain environment which has not been the focus on many geographical studies. The Appalachian Mountains are considered a mountain environment and within this region there are numerous natural landscapes that can be researched to understand spiritual experiences people have at them and what types of non-secular activities people are actively engaged in, within nature.

## CHAPTER III

### STUDY AREA

Appalachia is a place, a people, an idea, a culture, and it exists as much in the mind and imagination as on the map. Richard Straw (2004: 1)

#### **3.1 Defining Appalachia and the Southern Appalachian Region**

The Appalachian Region, like many regions of the world, is hard to define. Much depends on the researcher's interest and the questions being asked. For many people, Appalachia is known as a place with a common history, similar cultural traits, and geography (Straw 2006). The Appalachian Mountains stretch from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to central Alabama. The region is known for having a smaller population in comparison to other areas of the eastern United States, as well as some of the highest poverty rates (Gade 2002).

Previous researchers delimited the Southern Appalachian region based primarily on various physiographic characteristics such as topography and/or elevation and later some included economic conditions, religion, and folk life as measures for defining the region. Figure 2 shows the region delineated by economic measures by the Appalachian Resource Commission. There is no one correct definition for the region. The first geographer to study the region and delimit a boundary was Arnold Guyot in 1861. He based his regional boundary of the Appalachians on physical geography and thus divided

the region into three sub-regions (Raitz and Ulack 1984). John Wesley Powell delimited the region in 1895 based on its physiography. He arrived at three sub-regions known as the Piedmont Plateaus, the Appalachian Ranges, and the Alleghany Plateaus (Raitz and Ulack 1984).

In 1913, Nevin Fenneman further sub-divided the region based on topography and elevation into six provinces, four of which lie in the southern Appalachian region; Appalachian Plateau, Ridge and Valley, Blue Ridge, and the Piedmont (Raitz and Ulack, 1984). In his work *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland*, John C. Campbell (1921) based his regional boundary on the history, politics, and physical geography of the region. His region included 254 counties in nine states (Campbell 1921). Most of these previous regional delineations covered the entire Appalachian mountain system from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to central Alabama.

Eventually the region was delimited based on factors other than just the physiographic region and included the cultural of the region. A sociologist with funding from the Ford Foundation, Thomas R. Ford delimited a boundary of the Southern Appalachians based on population, economics, politics, education, *religion, and folk life* which covered only 190 counties in seven states (Raitz and Ulack 1984). Ford's work was published as *The Southern Appalachian Region: A Survey* (Ford 1962). Ford's region was obviously a smaller region since it encompassed only the southern states within the Appalachians. Within this Southern Appalachian Region there are eight major metropolitan areas including: Huntington and Charleston, West Virginia; Roanoke, Virginia; Asheville, North Carolina; and Knoxville and Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Researchers from various disciplines regarded Ford's delineation as *the heartland of Appalachia* (Raitz and Ulack 1984).



Figure 2: Appalachian Mountain Region. Source: Appalachian Regional Commission 2009. [http://www.arc.gov/appalachian\\_region/MapofAppalachia.asp](http://www.arc.gov/appalachian_region/MapofAppalachia.asp)

In 1963, President Kennedy initiated a federal-state committee known as the President's Appalachian Resource Commission (PARC) to develop an economic program in the region. Eventually this became the Appalachian Resource Commission (ARC) which is still involved in promoting economic growth in the region today. In 1967, the ARC also delineated a region for their work which included 360 counties and 11 states (Appalachian Resource Commission 2009). ARC originally divided the region into northern, central, southern, and highland subregions. However, the southern and highlands areas were eventually combined into one subregion in 1974 (Raitz and Ulack 1984). The southern subregion included portions of northeast Mississippi, north Alabama, north Georgia, northwest South Carolina, portions of east Tennessee, western North Carolina and a narrow band of southwestern Virginia (Raitz and Ulack 1984). The southern subregion, which closely relates to Ford's boundary, is characterized by being historically agrarian-based but transitioning into urban and industrial sectors.

Geographers Raitz and Ulack (1984) delineated the region based on physiographic, political (county), cultural and social conditions which included 445 counties and followed closely the Fenneman boundary delineated in 1913. From this researcher's perspective, some of the counties included within what Raitz and Ulack defined as the Appalachian Region do not fit in with the majority of the Appalachian culture and physical geographic landscape of Appalachia today. Portions of the North Carolina Piedmont including Charlotte and Greensboro, North Carolina as well as Atlanta, Georgia are within the Raitz-Ulack's Appalachian Region, for example.

For the purposes of this study investigating natural landscapes in the Southern Appalachian Region (SAR), Ford's 1962 delineation of the *heartland of Appalachia* will be the boundary and regional focus because of the smaller area covered, proximity to researcher, and familiarity with the region. Ford's boundary was delimited based on many cultural factors including religion which is important in this research work. Figure 1 in Chapter I shows Ford's *heartland of Appalachia*.

### **3.2 The Geography of the Southern Appalachian Region**

The physical geography including the topography, climate, vegetation, and geologic resources may help in understanding people's fascination with, experiences, and non-secular choices of activities at the sites. As geographers, in order to study spiritual landscapes the connection between people and place; we must have a foundational understanding of the physical aspects of a place in order to help understand the attitudes and values people may have towards areas. Cultural geography influences, including ethnic groups, settlement patterns, religions/belief systems, and economic factors especially regarding tourism, may also help in understanding people's fascination with, experiences, and non-secular choices of activities at the sites. For each site, the physical geography and the cultural history of the area are included in the archival research phase in order to understand how the sites were used, why they may be viewed in a particular light, and how the physical setting and human interactions play into the dimensions of defining a spiritual landscape.

## *Physical Geography*

### Topography

Many scientists believe that the Blue Ridge Mountains were once connected to the Scottish Highlands and to the Andes due to geologic and botanical similarities (Raitz and Ulack 1984). The Appalachians are geologically very old, and much older than the mountain ranges in the western United States. The Appalachian Mountains are quite stable and do not experience the tectonic activity that other mountain systems in the western United States experience. The Appalachians have been wearing away slowly over time due to heavy precipitation and anthropogenic influences. The Appalachian Region contains a few rugged mountains but mostly more rounded mountain peaks and many deep valleys and hills. The chain runs northeast to the southwest 2,000 miles and contains many distinct physiographic regions and smaller mountain systems over that distance (Figure 3). The Appalachian Mountains range from 1,000 to 6,684 feet in elevation and vary in width (east to west) from 50 to 100 miles. According to many physical geographers, the Appalachian Mountains contain six provinces identified as: New England, Adirondacks, Appalachian Plateau, Ridge and Valley, Blue Ridge, and the Piedmont. The physiographic divisions of Appalachia that are within Ford's delineation of the region include the: Blue Ridge, Ridge, and Valley, Appalachian Plateau (Cumberland Section), and Alleghany Plateau (Kanawha Section).

There are 20 mountains over 5,000 feet in elevation throughout the Appalachians. Six out of ten of the highest peaks are in the Black Mountains of North Carolina. The Black Mountains contain Mt. Mitchell which reaches 6,684 feet, the tallest peak in the

eastern United States. Some of the oldest rocks in North Carolina have been dated to 1.8 billion years before the present. The heights of the mountains are due to the hardness of the materials and erosional forces and processes on igneous and metamorphic rocks over time (*i.e.*, shists, gneisses, slates, and granite) (Gade 2002). The rock types found in the Blue Ridge are the oldest and therefore the Blue Ridge Mountains within the Appalachian Mountain system are known as the oldest mountains in the region (Raitz and Ulack 1984). Some of the areas in Tennessee near the Ridge and Valley Province and Cumberland Plateau are composed of sedimentary rocks (Raitz and Ulack 1984). The landscape variations in the SAR contributed greatly to the various rock types and mountain forming activities that have occurred in the region.

### Climate

The Southern Appalachian Mountains are the wettest region in the country outside of Washington's Olympic Peninsula (Gade 2002). Due to orographic lifting, Canadian air masses moving west to east leave the eastern slopes in the northern Appalachian Region drier. Air masses moving from the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf Coast leave the southern Appalachian Region wetter on the eastern slopes. There is usually a 10 degree temperature difference between the mountains and lower piedmont elevations. It is usually much cooler in the mountains, which contributes to why many people in the piedmont visit the mountains to escape the heat. High winds have also been reported at Grandfather Mountain, Mt. Mitchell and other high peaks (Gade 2002). Cold temperatures and high winds dominate many of the high peaks in the region throughout the year. Over 85 inches of rain are reported on average for the region and October and

November, peak leaf season is usually much drier. On average for the region 55 inches of snow falls in winter, although this is much higher at higher peaks.

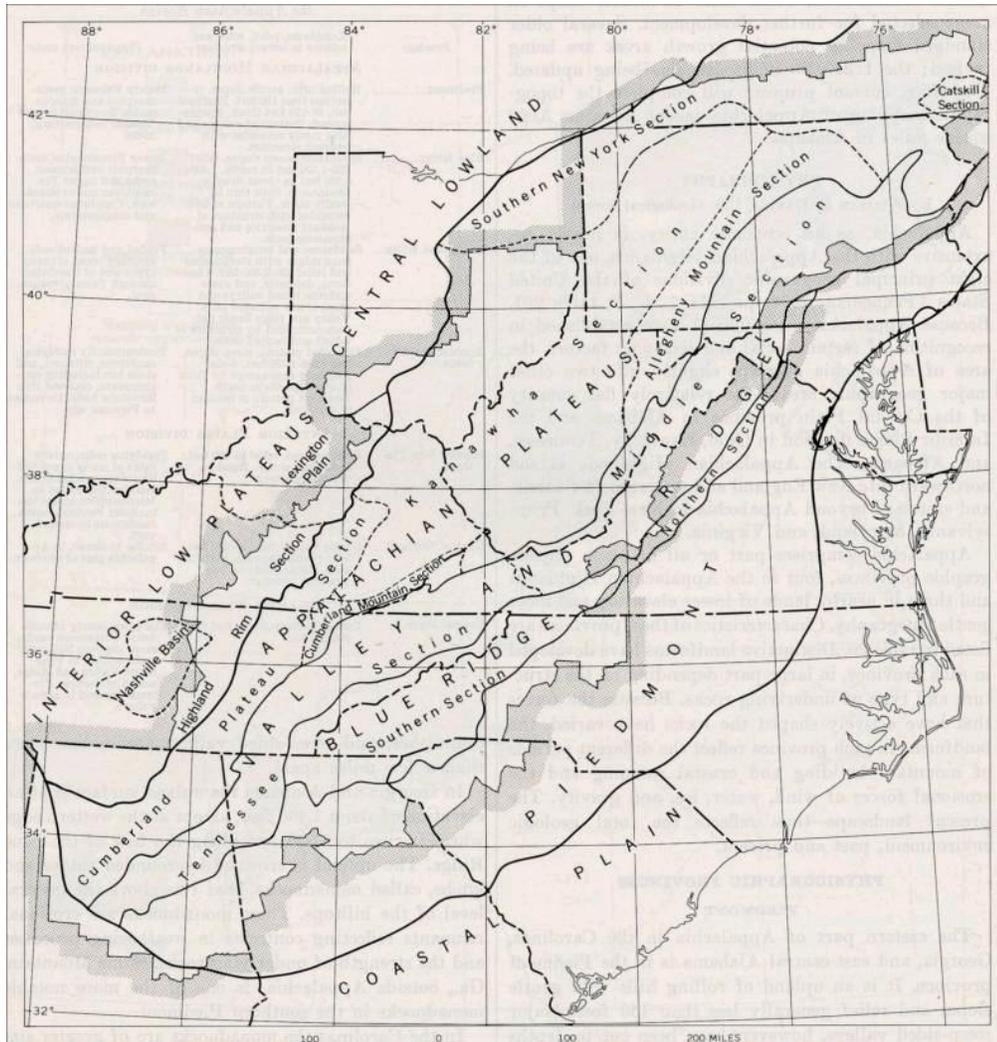


Figure 3: Physiographic Provinces and Valley's of the Appalachian Region 2009.

Source:

[http://quarriesandbeyond.org/articles\\_and\\_books/min\\_res\\_appalachian\\_region/images/fig\\_6a.jpg](http://quarriesandbeyond.org/articles_and_books/min_res_appalachian_region/images/fig_6a.jpg)

The name of the Great Smoky Mountains that lie in western North Carolina and southeastern Tennessee derives from the haze, moisture, and evapotranspiration from vegetation which gives off a smoky look in the area throughout the year. Also in this region there is a high amount of smog and air pollution that contributes to the haze seen and the tree damage at higher elevations (Mount Mitchell State Park 2009).

### Vegetation

The region was primarily in virgin forest prior to European settlement. Today it is a mix of deciduous hardwoods, pines, mixed forest and at higher elevations, spruce-fir forest. Vegetation varies greatly with elevation which is noticeable when driving up some of the higher peaks in the region. The spruce-fir forest begins to mix with deciduous hardwoods at elevations greater than 4,800 feet. At elevations greater than 5,500 feet there are much greater amounts of needle leaved evergreen trees, firs-spruces, mosses, and lichens (Gade 2002). The region was primarily explored by botanists and naturalist early in the 18<sup>th</sup> century due to the rich diversity of species and rare species that seemed to be closer related to northern species.

### Natural Resources

Minerals and forestry operations have contributed to the economic wealth throughout much of the history of the region. Sandstone, limestone, and coal have brought in sometimes the only income to some towns in the region. Much of the forest areas in the Southern Appalachian Region are managed by the federal government and forestry operations have had a great impact on the region.

## *Cultural Geography*

### Ethnic Groups and Settlement Patterns

Native Americans dominated the landscape until the seventeenth century. Iroquoian descendents migrated south over 3,500 years ago, a full 1-2,000 years before the white settlers moved into the area. Cherokees are believed to descend from a group of Iroquoians who moved into what is now western Tennessee and North Carolina as well as upstate South Carolina and Georgia. The Cherokees were hunters and gatherers with farmland as well for their maize and squash. The Cherokees lived in small separated independent villages. An estimated 22,000 Cherokees lived in the Southern Appalachian Region which many experts believe is a low estimate (Straw 2006).

Contact between Europeans and Cherokees accelerated between 1700 and 1761. De Soto first entered the region from Georgia although his trail is not well known; however, no Spanish settlements were established in the region. During the first half of eighteenth century, the Great Valley of Virginia (Shenandoah Valley) was settled by whites. In 1720, most people migrated from Philadelphia through central Pennsylvania and into the south through the Shenandoah Valley. Most of these settlers were of German, of Scots-Irish descent, or English from the rural northern districts of England. Many crossed over the New River and turned to the southeast entering the piedmont of the Carolinas, few crossed over the mountains. In 1761, the British defeated the French and started encouraging settlement into the interior of North America. In 1763, settlers were still moving into western NC and southwestern Virginia. After the Revolutionary

War, a larger white western migration began which followed the Cherokee Trails and the major rivers west into Tennessee and Kentucky (Straw 2006).

The whites pushed into the mountains and from this migration westward the greatest conflict between the two cultures began. One of the primary conflicts between Cherokees and white settlers was over land holdings and the perception of the place that people should occupy in relation to nature began between the Cherokee and white settlers. The Cherokees, like most American Indian tribes, believe that humans are not superior to nature but rather they are part of it as caretakers, and dependent on nature. Many of the names of places within the region given to certain landscapes are based upon the belief that there is a special relationship between people and the environment (Straw 2006). The first white people in the region were hunters and trappers and many of these depleted some of the game that the Cherokees depended on, so this act began the conflict. Traders, cattlemen, merchants, and agriculturalists also began moving into the area. The Appalachian people initially opposed the constitution fearing a strong central government. However, after the election of Thomas Jefferson the Appalachian region supported the central government and even supported the government more after the election of Andrew Jackson in 1800. Jackson gained the support of residents in the Appalachian region because of his push to remove the Cherokees from the region. An estimated 20,000 Cherokees were removed with only a few thousands hiding out in the Great Smoky Mountains region which today is known as the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation (2006).

The early Scots-Irish and German settlers evolved their own unique mixed culture through their language, music (dulcimer and flute), religion, and politics. The people in this region have a strong sense of community, shared identity, shared values, shared work ethic, and strong church ties. Although many of the people living in the region outside of urban areas live scattered apart from neighbors there is a sense of belonging to a larger family for many. Appalachian people have a unique love of their land, and value the place where they live. Many Scots and Cherokee intermarried; this may be due to a shared love and perception of the land. The Scots-Irish and German settlers also are known for their folktales and traditions which became stronger in the Appalachian Mountains than in either motherland (Jackson 2006).

The coal industry was growing in the late 1800's in the Appalachian Region. Mines became prevalent throughout the Alleghany Plateau region, including areas of West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, and western Virginia and workers were needed for labor. Coal mining managers often recruited workers for the coal camps and railroad lines at Ellis Island. Italians, Polish, Hungarians, Albanians, and Greeks came in high numbers into the Appalachian Mountains for work. The various ethnic groups kept to themselves around the camp towns. In 1909, the West Virginia Department of Mines in four counties counted 18 different ethnic groups. There is a "sprinkling of Catholic Churches and missions with Slavic and Italian Names" as relic of the influence of these ethnic groups (Jackson 2006: 40). Approximately 10% of the population in the region and this number remains low still today. There were not many slave holders in the region and few African-Americans moved in due to discrimination and poor conditions. In the

1980's, Asians accounted for 0.3% of the regional population total and two-thirds lived in urban areas (Raitz and Ulack 1984). In the 1980's a growth of Latinos began primarily due to the increasing Christmas tree industry and other agricultural farming operations. This trend is still growing, adding to the cultural mixture in the twenty-first century in the Appalachian Mountains. (Thompson and Moser 2006)

### Religions and Beliefs

Although many may initially see the Appalachians as religiously homogenous, there is a great diversity and varying degrees of religion in the mountains, as with the ethnic groups that settled into the region's metropolitan areas. The greatest numbers of churches in the region are affiliated with the Baptists, with a wide array of denominational differences. Baptist denominations include: Old Time Baptist, Regular Baptist, Primitive Baptist, Missionary Baptist, and Free-will Baptist. Baptist churches dominate in the region followed behind by Catholic churches and Methodist churches. As in other parts of the United States, other religions found in the Appalachian region include Judaism, Eastern Orthodox, Holiness Churches, Pentecostals, Free-Church, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Reformed Presbyterian, Adventist, New Thought, Unitarian, Psychic, Magical, Islam, Hindu, and Buddhist (Wagner 2006).

One common feature of churches in Appalachia is that there are many small congregations throughout the countryside and outside of urban areas, with no formal leadership. The various Baptist denominations usually do immersions for baptism in pool sections of rivers and some do "foot-washings" in local creeks or rivers. Baptists are also known in the region for their revival meetings. A common character of many of the

various churches within Appalachia is that they are fundamentalist, believe in a more personal relationship with God, believe in experiential and emotional experiences of faith (speaking in tongues and laying on of hands), and participate in rituals which include homecomings, memorials, and graveyard decorations (Thompson and Moser 2006; Wagner 2006).

For many following the traditional religion in Appalachian, the sacred is found everywhere (Geertz 1973). There are still “granny women” or herb doctors in the region who may quote bible verses to rid people of ailments or use herbs to heal. Many old timers follow the moon for planting times and predict the weather through folktales and superstitions which are common throughout the region. The diversity of immigrants gave the region a rich complex of religions as well as folklife through storytelling and use of native plants (Thompson and Moser 2006).

#### Economic Development and Tourism in the Region

Throughout history and continuing into the present, the Appalachian Mountains present a duality as picturesque and romantic or backwards and poor. The “image” of the region was brought to the national scene by Eleanor Roosevelt during the New Deal Era and after. Between 1960 and 1970 there was a strong trend to have pride in a regional identity. The Appalachian Resource Commission (ARC) was established in 1963 to promote economic growth in the area. The ARC wanted to improve quality of life, preserve culture, and develop the region. Out of this interest, the Appalachian culture became a commodity like coal. There are numerous Appalachian Culture Museums scattered throughout the region that attract urbanites and outsiders who view the culture

as unique and/or still backwards. The beauty found within the natural landscape attracts many to the region as well as the plentiful resources of mineral, water, and forest. The region is rich in these resources but still poor and lags behind the other regions economically in the United States (Straw 2006).

Farming was the primary economic activity in the nineteenth century. Logging became important in the twentieth century as well as coal and other minerals. In the 1940's the region was still isolated for the eastern United States. Industries began to move in after World War II as well as higher education institutions and tourist attractions such as golf courses and ski resorts. Second homes were common in this region before the Civil War but the number of second homes really began to increase in the late twentieth century as land prices soared. Christmas tree farming also became a huge economic sector of the southern Appalachian region in the late twentieth century (Gade 2002). The economic activity in this region in the twenty first century is similar to that in coastal areas, including tourism, retirement, and development ventures (Bennett 2008).

Several geographic factors contributed to the region's development or lack thereof. Transportation remained difficult for many decades and jobs and industries still are not as prevalent in the region as many desire. Many counties are losing their youth as out-migration is occurring for those seeking employment and opportunities. At the same time, there is an influx of people migrating into the region perhaps seasonally related to tourism but many are settling or re-settling into the region for a peaceful way of life. These "shuttle migrants" who have an urban residence outside of the region but have vacation homes or originally grew up in the region greatly impact the economic

development and land in the twenty-first century (Obermiller, Maloney, and Hansen 2006).

Reasons for visiting the region include scenery, escape from urban areas, escape from the high summer temperatures, golf clubs, ski resorts and spas. The area has a long history as a “pleasuring” place attracting writers, artists, wealthy elite, and politicians. Today the region is dotted with summer homes and retirement communities from many who once called the region home and had to move for economic reasons outside of the region for jobs and/or for those seeking solace and spellbinding scenery. The topography of the region varies greatly and contains mountain, rocky outcroppings, natural bridges, ridges, waterfalls, healing springs, hot springs, rivers, and caves. Beautiful sunsets and sunrises and unusual plants and animals also attract people to the region. There are several National parks in the region, numerous State Parks, National Forest Lands, and Wilderness Areas which offer recreational enjoyment for many. The largest private mansion in the United States, the Cherokee Reservation, and other tourist attractions such as gem mining help local economies in the region (Summerlin and Summerlin 1997).

### **3.3 Southern Appalachian Region Study Sites**

The Southern Appalachian Region’s physical and cultural geographic factors may influence what type of activities people engage in within nature as well as their perceptions of various natural landscapes and experiences. The physical geography of each site including the climate, the geologic features, and the resources present may lead some to have numinous experiences and may trigger a greater appreciation of the beauty of the landscape. The cultural geography of the region, especially the various religions

and the mixture of Native American Indian Culture and European Scots-Irish descendants, may also play into how the landscapes are used and viewed throughout history and today. The SAR was selected as a small region to focus on the idea of spiritual landscapes. People's non-secular activities and experiences may help us to identify spiritual landscapes, their importance and role in twenty-first century lives. .

The sites selected for in-depth study included two mountain sites and three water sites which include two waterfalls/rivers and one spring (Figure 4). Grandfather Mountain and Mt. Mitchell, both located in North Carolina, are two prominent mountains in the region where non-secular activities are known to occur. Grandfather Mountain is famous for its abrupt geologic formations within the surrounding terrain and the folk tales associated with the mountain (discussed in more detail in Chapter V). Amicalola Falls in Georgia is a prime destination for residents in the Atlanta metropolitan region to use for weddings. It is also a historic site for the Cherokee as well as a battle site during the Civil War. Cumberland Falls in Kentucky is known to produce a moonbow at night during a full moon as well as rainbows most days, and sometimes even double rainbows. Many visitors make monthly or annual trips to catch a glimpse of the moonbow. Blue Hole Spring in Tennessee is a famous historic site once used by the Cherokee. The research methods employed to explore spiritual associations generally were the same for each site as outlined in the following chapter. However, the final methods used sometimes varied as explained in Chapter V due to the unique conditions and situations at each site during the study.

Figure 4: Study Sites with County Locations in the Southern Appalachian Region

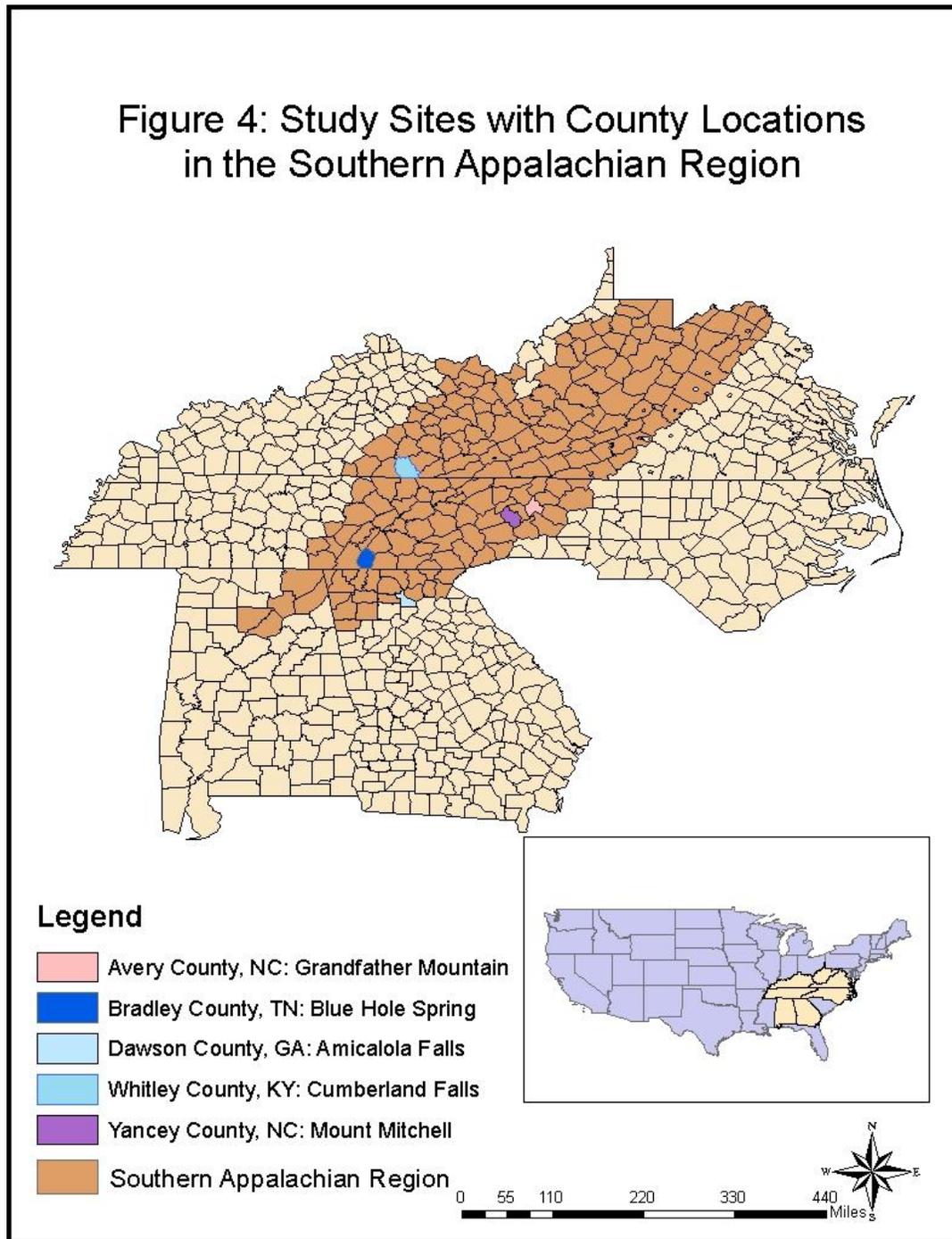


Figure 4: Study Sites with County Locations in the Southern Appalachian Region

## CHAPTER IV

### METHODS

#### 4.1 Overview

Multiple sources and methods will be used in this research, including in-depth unstructured interviews of knowledgeable experts, archival research, and structured questionnaires of visitors to the target locations, as well as observation of and participation in events at each site. Previous research within geography and related disciplines used similar methods combining questionnaires and interviews.

The major proposed questions in this research and the method for answering each question are as follows:

1. What types of **spiritual experiences** are associated with different natural sites?

Archival Research, Visitor Questionnaires, in-depth interviews, observation, and participation in non-secular activities.

2. What types of **non-secular activities** are associated with different natural sites?

Archival Research, Visitor Questionnaires, In-depth interviews, observation, and participation in non-secular activities.

3. At the selected five study sites, what **types of features within the landscape** are people having spiritual experiences at within the Southern Appalachian Region?

Assessment of sites selected through archival research and the natural features present as well as places visitors state as being spiritual for them in the region.

4. Is Mills' definition of a **spiritual landscape (numinous, cosmic, and aesthetic)** appropriate and useful in helping to identify if we can and if we do have spiritual landscapes in America; in particular in the Southern Appalachian Region.

Numinous Dimension: Visitor Questionnaire

Cosmic dimension: visitor Questionnaire, rituals, ceremonies, and pilgrimages

Aesthetic dimension: Visitor Questionnaire and observation

5. Does the study of spiritual landscapes further Tuan's ideas of **topophilia** as it incorporates the spiritual bond and connections with people and place?

Comparison of the spiritual landscapes

This research follows Mills' (1992) research on comparing two spiritual landscapes and answering if we can, if we do, and if we should have spiritual landscapes in North America in the twenty-first century. This research is approached in a humanistic perspective following work done by Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) describing the human emotional attachment to places through a phenomenological and grounded theory approach (Creswell 1998). Entrikin (1976) discusses in his article on the humanist approach to geographic studies, the importance of studying places through phenomenology including empathy, intuition, introspection and other nonempirical methods. In addition to Mills' definition and understanding of a spiritual landscape and Tuan's humanistic approach to describing people's attachment to place, this research also incorporated aspects and ideas from two previous empirical geographic studies. Richard Jackson, Gisber Rimschede, and Jill Knapp (1990) conducted research on pilgrimages within the American Mormon landscape by using a questionnaire handed out to visitors at Temple Square in Salt Lake

City, Utah. Huntsinger and Fernandez-Gimenez (2000) conducted research on non-secular activities and environmental perceptions between pilgrims versus non-pilgrims at Mt. Shasta, California through visitor questionnaires of pilgrims and non-pilgrims and the non-secular activities they participated in while on the mountain.

Methods used were designed to answer the research questions in understanding and describing the non-secular uses, contemporary perceptions, spiritual experiences, and historical information about each site. This information will also help to determine if spiritual landscapes exist in the SAR, what type of natural features considered to be of spiritual significance are found within the landscape area, and where each feature is located (in general terms, in order to maintain confidentiality).

#### **4.2 Textual Analysis**

Textual analyses of archival records in local public library sources, state archives, county archives, and historical societies for any historic information regarding each site will give valuable insights for each location. From this information key words and phrases such as spiritual, sacred, beautiful (aesthetic), god's gift, weddings, memorials, engagements, and church service may describe non-secular uses, perceptions, and experiences at each site. Textual analyses were conducted to deconstruct any archival information for common themes or alternative meanings especially regarding recorded stories associated with the sites. Park records when available, including guest logs and comments, are reviewed for common phrases and key words. Only one of the parks in the study had a guest log book with recorded comments from visitors. Since this data source was limited and not available for each site, social networking sites such as

Facebook were accessed to observe what “fans of” the parks/sites are saying on the parks page and if key words/themes are commonly used in referring to the sites as sacred landscapes or visitors having spiritual experiences at them.

### **4.3 Expert Interviews**

In-depth interviews were conducted with knowledgeable local experts, locals who know folklore stories about the sites, historical society members, and others who were recommended to talk to through the snow-ball process (Creswell 1998). Examples of these experts include Park rangers, volunteers, historical local site experts, and frequent park visitors. According to Morse (1998), in a qualitative study approximately six in-depth interviews are needed and according to Creswell (1998) five to 25 long interviews are needed to adequately describe relevant experiences. Interviews were also conducted of known group leaders who participated in or led non-secular activities at the sites. The number of expert interviews is shown for each site in Table 1. Non-secular uses were also of interest in the longer interviews involving the park rangers concerning what they observed of the visitors on a daily basis.

The length of in-depth interviews varied depending on each informant. A majority of them were structured but some became unstructured interviews depending on the level of knowledge that the informant wanted to share about the site(s) in general. Information collected concerning events, opinions, and experiences associated with the different sites throughout history to the present from each knowledgeable informant were recorded in a journal. The interviews were conducted face to face through verbal interchange and were semi-structured, to allow flexibility near the end with more open-ended questions and

follow-up discussion of points mentioned by the interviewee. The interviews serve to discover relevant information from informants regarding non-secular use and their perceptions of the site today. A sample of some of the in-depth interview questions is located in Appendix I. Each informant was not asked all of the questions shown in the sample. The questions depended upon their role and knowledge of the landscape and non-secular activities and/or group involvement.

Table 1. Summary of Sites, Methodology, Dates, and Events

Method	Amicalola Falls	Blue Hole Spring	Cumberland Falls	Grandfather Mountain	Mt. Mitchell
Visitor Questionnaires N=	16	16	16	17	17
In-Depth Interviews N=	5	2	3	4	3
Observation Date	July 25 <sup>th</sup> , 2009	July 31 <sup>st</sup> – August 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2009	July 8-9 <sup>th</sup> , 2009	July 10 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup> , 2009	August 7 <sup>th</sup> - 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2009
Observation Location	Top and Lower points of Waterfall	At the Spring	Various observation decks along waterfall trail and on top of the waterfall at designated park viewing area.	At Highland Games in the meadow, visitor center, and top of the mountain near swinging bridge.	Observation Deck at top of the mountain, restaurant, and parking lot at top of mountain.
Participation Event (occurrence)	Wedding (several throughout year)	Cherokee Heritage Days (annually)	Moonbow (monthly on night of full moon)	Grandfather Mt. Highland Games (annually)	Despacho Ceremony (first and only known event of this nature on the mountain)
Participation Dates	July 25 <sup>th</sup> , 2009	August 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2009	July 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2009	July 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2009	August 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2009
Guest Log Books	No	Yes	No	No	No

#### 4.4 Questionnaire for Tourists

Perceptions of visitors concerning each site and non-secular uses were assessed through a short (five minute) questionnaire of visitors to each site, and provided insight into a few points important to specific issues analyzed by this research. Particular focus falls on the short answer question regarding their thoughts of the landscape site in question. Questions concerning whether they visited the site for religious/spiritual purposes, how they felt at the site, and if they knew of any myths/stories associated with each site were the primary focus. In order to understand if each of the three dimensions of a spiritual landscape were experienced, a question for each dimension was asked with a “yes” or “no” response expected. In some cases the respondents elaborated in more detail. In order to ascertain if the site was *numinous*, the question asked was “Does the site evoke a feeling of awe and/or fear to you”? The *cosmic* dimension could be experienced by the visitor by the site being set apart from other areas as special. The question asked in order to understand this dimension was “Is this site set apart from other areas as special for you through ritual and/or ceremony?” Finally, for the *aesthetic* dimension of a spiritual experience, the question asked was “Is this site considered beautiful to you?”

A total of 82 questionnaires were filled in, with 15 to 20 taken at each of the five sites (Table 1). According to a comparison of qualitative strategies by Morse (1998), in grounded theory research the sample size is usually 30-50 interviews. The questions for the visitors include general inquiries about uses of the site, the number of visits they

make to the site, their feelings at the sites, if they have participated in any non-secular activities at the site, and if they know of any myths or stories associated with the site.

A trial run of the visitor questionnaire was conducted at Hanging Rock State Park, close to the researcher. Questions were changed or deleted based on the responses from the trial run. The original visitor questionnaire included questions that followed previous work in this area, in particular questions similar to a study of non-secular activities of pilgrims vs. non-pilgrims at Mt. Shasta were initially followed (Huntsinger and Fernandez-Gimenez 2000). Some of these questions were not as relevant to aiding in answering the research questions and were taken out in order to also simplify the visitor questionnaire and make it less time consuming. The questionnaires for the tourist serve to discover relevant information regarding non-secular use and their perceptions and experiences of the site while visiting. A sample of questions for the interviews with locals and experts is in Appendix II.

#### 4.5 **Observation and Participation**

As with many qualitative studies that are approached in humanistic terms, an important aspect of studying the people and places is through observation and participation at the place and with the people there. This is a useful data collection method within grounded theory qualitative studies (Morse 1998). For this research, general observations of people's behaviors, what they are doing, and where they are spending most of their time within the landscape are of importance in helping to understand perceptions and non-secular use of each site they may not be ascertained through the tourist questionnaires.

Creswell (1998) suggests certain steps in the observation process which include site selection (location to observe from), who, what, and when's of observing time periods, and determining the role of observer. At each site, permission was obtained in order to observe visitors and their interactions and behaviors. Each site is different so the selection of exact observation locations varies but focuses around the natural feature at each site or at visitor centers to listen and record comments being made about the sites and activities people are there to do or participant in.

At each site, the visitors were observed for approximately two hours throughout the period of time the researcher was there. This two hour window of time was broken up according to the number of visitors present at varying times of the day. Following Creswell's suggestion, this step involved the researcher observing the sites and interactions of people with the sites first as an outsider and later observing as an insider and actual participant to one of the events occurring at each site (1998). A journal will be used to record descriptive notes during the observation period of time as well as notes while participating. The extent to which the researcher became an insider and acted as a participant varied in time but involved recording what ritual or gathering was participated in, the number of people participating, how long it lasted, and words or phrases that the participants used during the activity to describe their experiences as well as the researcher's own reactions and experiences.

Several of the sites have rituals, gatherings, and ceremonies that occur on a regular basis, while others occur on rare occasions (Table 1). The researcher's participation was intended to gain an insider's perspective as to what the groups are doing

and why. At *Cumberland Falls*, during the full moon of every month people gather to catch a glimpse of the rare moonbow that appears at the fall, which for some people is a ritual event they attend regularly. At *Grandfather Mountain*, the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games - the largest in the country - is another event which contains numerous rituals and ceremonies throughout the weekend that is an important event and attributed to the location because of the landscape itself, the mountain and the meadow. At *Mount Mitchell*, the researcher joined a group from Atlanta, Georgia, and Asheville, North Carolina, as they welcomed a Peruvian elder for a *despacho* ceremony and pilgrimage to the mountain top. The *Blue Hole Spring* area is a well-known historic site for the Cherokees and the researcher was at the spring one weekend during the annual Cherokee Gathering of Days event. To the researcher's knowledge, no scheduled rituals, ceremonies, or gatherings were to occur at *Amicalola Falls* during her time there, although it is a very popular wedding venue and interviews did involve people there attending a wedding.

From the various methods mentioned and information compiled, a conclusion can be made as to whether spiritual landscapes exist in the region today, based on experiences people have at the sites as reported or observed. From the information collected, it was possible to determine if certain topographic features were more prominently used for specific non-secular uses or religious/spiritual ceremonies. Also, this information may advance understanding as to whether certain natural landscapes are more predominantly used in the region as special (secular or spiritual) landscapes, and why there is more of an attraction and perhaps more documented spiritual experiences at that site than at others in

the region. The next chapter organizes, displays, and describes the findings individually for each site as well as the variations in methods that were necessary. After the archival background information is discussed for each site including the physical and cultural geographic factors that are important, the three dimensions of what produces a spiritual experience are explored for each site with the various methods all combining to answer the questions in various ways.

**CHAPTER V**  
**SPIRITUAL LANDSCAPES**  
**IN THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN REGION**

**5.1 Research Sites in the Region**

Each research site is discussed in detail in the following sections divided between mountain and water features, although some locations ended up having both physical aspects. In the beginning of each section, archival information including historical accounts of early visits and uses paves the way to understanding the sites and non-secular activities occurring there in the early twenty-first century. The physical and cultural geographic factors of each site are important for understanding contemporary perceptions of the sites and their uses. The link between the physical, cultural, and spiritual experiences will be noted for each site and summarized in general in Chapter VI.

Following the background information, each site is assessed as to how it falls into the definition of spiritual landscape using the three dimensions of a spiritual experience. The **numinous** experience is discussed in terms of how visitors answered a question on the questionnaire, responses from in-depth interviews, and on-site observations during time there. The **cosmic** dimension is defined based upon non-secular activities including rituals and ceremonies observed, participation in events, and activities discussed by visitors and knowledgeable experts. The **aesthetic** dimension is assessed on personal

experience similar to the numinous experience and can be accessed through the visitor questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and observations.

### **Mountain Features**

Two prominent mountain features were selected in the SAR for in-depth study in order to understand people's experiences and non-secular activities at the sites. *Grandfather Mountain* and Mount Mitchell were selected because of their striking natural mountain landscape. *Grandfather Mountain* is a prominent geologic formation within the landscape and Mount Mitchell is the highest mountain in the region. Both sites were explored and visited by Native Americans and early European settlers. Myths and stories surround both mountains, and early explorers reported various spiritual experiences at each site mentioned in each subsection. The physical environment and the myths contribute to the sites being known as sacred places but the experiences today tell us whether each site could be considered a spiritual landscape.

### **Grandfather Mountain**

Locals refer to this landscape site "as a grand old man: a great mountain" (Tagger 1999: xiii). Located in Avery County, North Carolina (Figure 5, map), *Grandfather Mountain* is 19 miles from Boone, North Carolina and 70 miles from Asheville, North Carolina. Grandfather lies in what is known as the North Carolina High Country, which contains some of the highest and oldest peaks in the Blue Ridge province. *Grandfather Mountain* is 5,946 feet in elevation (Grandfather Mountain, Inc 2009).

## Study Site Locations, Nearby Cities and Interstates in the SAR

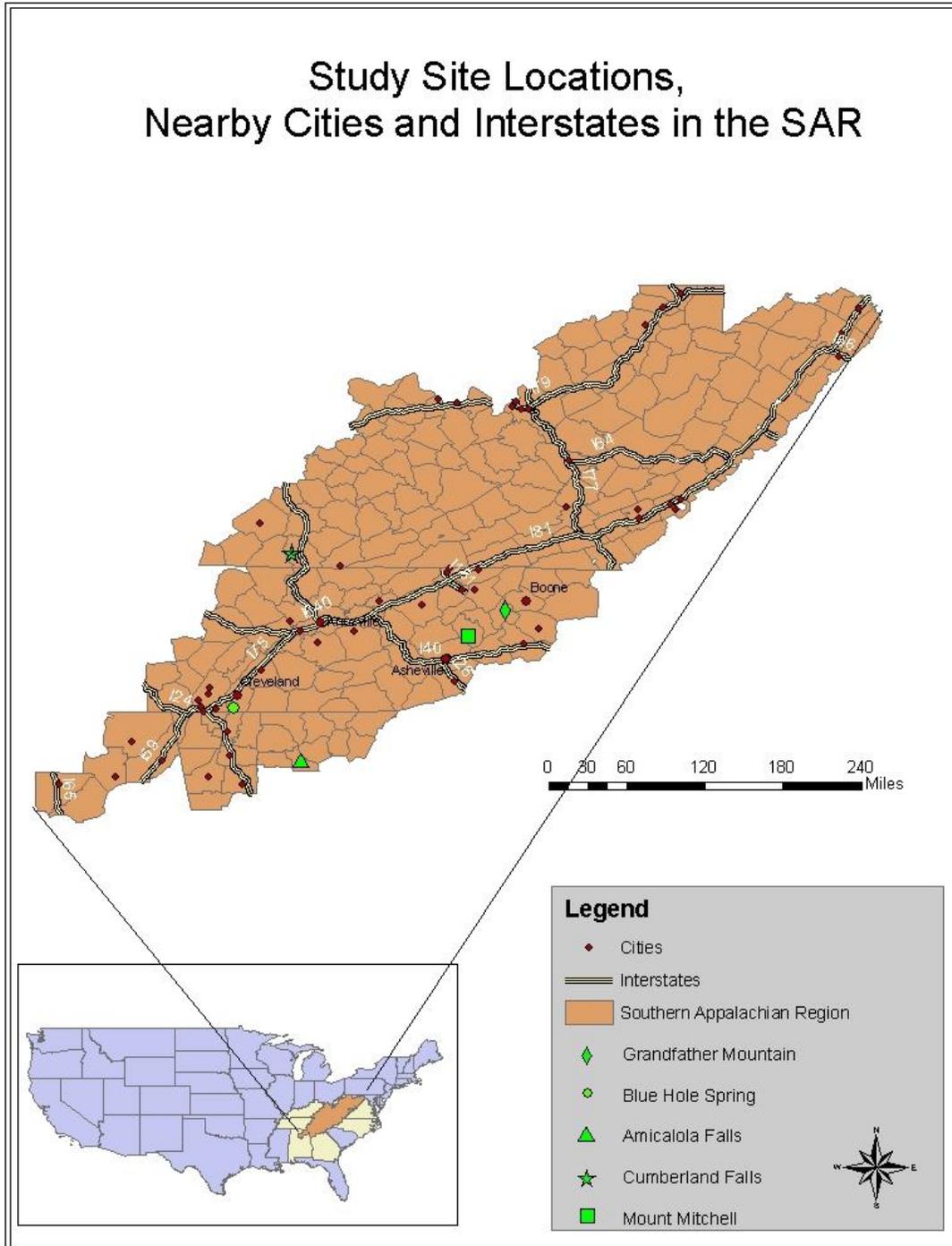


Figure 5: Southern Appalachian Region Study Sites, nearby cities, and interstates.

The name *Grandfather Mountain* originated with early settlers who saw an old man's face in a rock cliff on the mountain. From various vantage points, different faces are visible within the rock formations (Figure 6). The rocky outcroppings shown in Figure 7 on *Grandfather Mountain* are upthrust through a ring of faults known as the Grandfather Mountain window. Their present topographic expression is attributed to the slower erosive qualities of the bedrock found in this region such as quartz, granite, and gneiss. Geologists estimate the rocks to be 750 million years old (Stewart and Roberson 2007).



Figure 6: One view of the Grandfathers' profile (Author 2009)



Figure 7: Rocky Outcroppings along Grandfather Mountain. (Author 2009)

The mountain is located in a temperate climate with woodlands that house over 100 flowering trees and over 200 hardwood species (Tagger 1999). On higher slopes within the Appalachian Region, such as those found at *Grandfather Mountain*, an unusual forest biome containing Red Spruce and Fraser Fir dominates the landscape. Such sub-alpine and Canadian tundra species are at many of the higher peaks in the Southern Appalachian Region. These species are found at *Grandfather Mountain* due to the elevations, soils, historical and present climate, and geologic history created by glacial retreat. After the Wisconsin glaciation, flora and fauna normally found at higher and colder elevations remained in the area, which is why a spruce-fir forest still exists in the SAR.

*Grandfather Mountain* has reported some of the highest winds speeds in the SAR, of up to 195 miles per hour (mph). Precipitation varies from 40 to 80 inches a year and the lowest mean temperature recorded is -34 degrees Fahrenheit. Other than spruce and fir trees, the landscape is covered in mosses and lichens due to the exposed bedrock and thin soils (Gade 2002).

The secular and non-secular uses of places throughout history often contribute to stories and myths associated with particular places and landscapes. These stories sometimes help in understanding current perceptions of the landscapes. The physical landscape itself is occasionally tied into the human use of the place and this integration of both elements attributes to the perceptions and uses in the past and today. Anthropologists speculate that the Cherokee may have visited the mountain and passed through the area, although no permanent settlements, nor pottery shards or formal burials have been found on the mountain itself (Tagger 1999). However, with the acidic soils often found in spruce-fir forest such as at *Grandfather Mountain*, artifacts would not have been well preserved. An extended rock shelter on the mountain may have provided shelter for wanderers along trade routes between Mount Rogers in Virginia and the Carolina Piedmont region (Tagger 1999; personal communication 2009). Because of the distinctive landmark shape of the mountain, the abundant forest and wild game present, as well as free flowing sources of water, it would be natural to assume that traveling bands may have passed through the area for various purposes. The high elevation forest would have provided medicinal herbs and plants used to treat sickness and diseases within the Cherokee population, as mentioned in Section 2.4 under Power Mountains.

The physical elements of a site often contribute to current perceptions and uses of the landscape historically and today. Certain physical attributes produce distinctive feelings for some individuals, as Yi-Fu Tuan found in his toponymia work. Climates may produce certain responses for some people due to temperatures or precipitation, affecting their perception of the beauty of a place due to the type of vegetation grown within that climate zone. The vegetation present and/or type of geology within particular landscapes may also contribute to perceptions and feeling responses for individuals. Particular powers have been attributed to certain stones throughout history such as turquoise and shells for the Dine. The Dine and other groups additionally associate particular stones to particular mountains as mentioned in Section 2.4. The quartz, quartzite and gneiss stones present at *Grandfather Mountain* may have been a source used in making tools and weapons as well as for ceremonial magic also mentioned in Section 2.4. One myth associated with *Grandfather Mountain* is that a crystal cave lies beneath the mountain, perhaps due to the abundant quartz seen on the surface (Tagger 1999). According to Cherokee myths, the mountain was known in the Cherokee language as *Tanawha*, which translates to “Fabulous Eagle” (Tagger 1999; GM, Inc. 2009). The eagle is a messenger spirit for the Cherokee and the name implies that the eagle resided on the mountain. Messages could be gained through vision quest to the tops of mountains by young warriors and medicine men. Within many American Indian tribes, mountains higher in elevation often represent mountains with greater power and medicine (plants gathered for uses in medicine are believed to be stronger from a higher mountain). Just as in other

areas within the Appalachian Mountains, the bark of the Fraser Fir and Red Spruce found at higher elevations could have been used for special purposes.

French botanist Andre Michaux was one of the first to study the flora at *Grandfather Mountain* (Tagger 1999). Michaux was known as a very calm man, but apparently he reported in his writings that he broke into song when he was on top of Grandfather because he was so moved by the experience of being there (Tagger 1999). In his journal in 1794, Michaux wrote: "Reached the summit of the highest mountain in all of North America, and with my companion and guide, sang the Marseillaise and shouted 'Long live America and the Republic of France, long live liberty!' "(GM, Inc. website 2009).

*Grandfather Mountain* rises up very abruptly from the surrounding terrain, which makes many visitors, think the mountain is higher than it actually is in elevation. Michaux was also mistaken by this assumption. Mount Mitchell is actually the highest mountain east of the Mississippi River, a fact which is discussed in more detail in the following section. Michaux reported that Grandfather had the richest biologically temperate forest in the world (Tagger 1999). Because of the high number of rare species found at *Grandfather Mountain*, it is designated as an International Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations, and is one of only 553 that are privately owned (Janiskee 2008; GM, Inc. 2009). Approximately 1,460 acres along the ridgeline and “backcountry” of *Grandfather Mountain* lie within a protected easement in an agreement with the Nature Conservancy. The Nature Conservancy is an organization that protects rare species and communities through preservation of various land areas in the world (Nature

Conservancy 2009). The Nature Conservancy considers *Grandfather Mountain* a place of significance in the world because of the rare species and habitat it provides in the eastern United States (GM, Inc. website 2009).

Visitors to the mountain over the years have reported interesting experiences. John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club and preservationist for wilderness areas visited *Grandfather Mountain* in 1898 while suffering from respiratory ailments and wrote to his wife that the “air had healed him” (GM, Inc. website 2009).

There have been several owners of the mountain, including William Waighstill Lenior, Samuel T. Kelsey, and Donald MacRae. Hugh MacRae Morton became the sole owner of *Grandfather Mountain* in 1952, and turned it into a regional tourist attraction and travel destination. In 2006, his son Crae Morton took over the responsibilities of managing the travel attraction. Today the travel attraction at *Grandfather Mountain* is owned by Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation. The “backcountry” or undeveloped portions of *Grandfather Mountain*, in 2009 became Grandfather Mountain State Park. Attractions and uses of *Grandfather Mountain* include alpine hiking, nature walks, wildlife habitat preserves, the mile high swinging bridge, the second largest Highland Games and Scottish Gathering in the United States, and other festivals such as Singing on the Mountain. These activities, events and gatherings indicate the mix of non-secular and secular uses of this landscape.

The Grandfather Mountain Highland Games occur every July in MacRae Meadows at the base of *Grandfather Mountain* and could be classified as a secular or non-secular event depending on the participant. The non-secular portion of the games for

some would be the yearly ritual of attending the gathering and the various ceremonies that take place during the weekend. The weekend gathering attracts locals and visitors from other countries as well as those who come ritually every year and those coming for their first time. During the weekend various typical Highland Games and competitions occur as well as other events including rituals, memorials, and weddings. Every year one lighthearted fun ritual occurs involving a marshmallow war on Saturday after midnight, between the “McRowdy Side” and the “Quiet Side”. There is also an annual “sacrifice” of a watermelon (Ray 2001). The participants in the weekend’s events are able to camp out, creating a microcosmic community. A memorial cairn was erected at McRae meadow which pays respect to ancestral immigrants as well as community members of the Highland Games who passed away during the year. In 2009, according to one Highland Games employee, Thomas Taylor (personal communication 2009) there were 20-30 memorials constructed at the Games, signifying their ceremonial significance. The Highland landscape at *Grandfather Mountain* represents Scotland to many visitors.

Major sites of ritual gatherings in America are often selected for their similarity to the Highland image of the homeland. Hence, the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games...are not in the original Highlander settlement (Cape Fear Basin in NC), but in the uplands more similar to the Scottish Highlands (Ray 2001:150)

MacRae Meadows is as close as Americans can get to the Scottish landscape. With the rugged rocky outcropping mountain as the backdrop, visitors “feel transported to their spiritual home” (Ray 2001: 135). This setting evokes a collective ancestral sense of place to many of Scots-Irish descent. Just like a pilgrimage to Scotland is less for

finding oneself (like many world pilgrimages) but for finding one's people and one's place, the Highland Games serve a similar function in celebrating kinship and place along with religion (Ray 2001). Many people met, married, or renewed their vows at the Games.

Singing on the Mountain started in 1924 as an informal gathering of local churches plus a supper. Eventually the annual event grew into what locals refer to as “a big deal” according to one anonymous expert during an in-depth interview (personal communication 2009). In 1963, Billy Graham attended; others such as Johnny Cash and Roy Clark have also made an appearance at the event.

#### *Is Grandfather Mountain a Spiritual Landscape?*

I visited *Grandfather Mountain* on July 10<sup>th</sup> and July 11<sup>th</sup> in 2009 (Table 1, Chapter IV). Seventeen visitors were given the questionnaires to fill out while at the visitor center. The questions for the visitors included: whether they considered the site a sacred landscape, if they knew of any historical/cultural uses and myths associated with the site, and how they felt while there. In order to assess the spiritual dimensions of the site one “yes or no” question was asked for each dimension. For the numinous, the “yes or no” question was “Do these sites evoke awe and/or fear to you”. In the questionnaire there were several attempts to understand non-secular activity from various questions in addition to the one “yes or no” question for the cosmic dimension. They were asked if they know of any cultural uses and myths of the site and why they were there or what activity they came there to do, with a more open answer format. In addition to these questions for understanding the cosmic dimension and non-secular use, they were also

asked the “yes or no” question whether the site set apart from other areas was special for them through ritual and/or ceremony. For the aesthetic dimension, they were asked if the site was considered beautiful by them, with a “yes or no” response.

The 2009 Grandfather Mountain Highland Games annual event took place the same weekend I was there to interview and gave me an opportunity to participate and observe a non-secular activity associated with the mountain. Some of the visitors to the visitor center were attending the games. However, a majority of them were there just to hike and/or visit the actual mountain. The respondents to the visitor questionnaire included a mixture of families, couples, or groups of three or more hikers. Table 2 shows the percentages as well as number of responses for each spiritual dimension question trying to answer if the site is a spiritual landscape. These responses are discussed in greater detail below. One of the questions asked visitors, “Is this a sacred landscape to you?” At *Grandfather Mountain*, 64.7 percent (%) of those interviewed said yes (Table 2). The difference between how people responded to the sacred landscape site question verses what was found through the spiritual landscape dimension questions will be discussed at the end of this chapter comparing all sites.

Five in-depth interviews were conducted during this time. Crae Morton, owner of Grandfather Mountain, Inc., and Diane Aldridge an employee who has worked there for several decades, were interviewed during that weekend. Both of them were very familiar with visitors to the mountains uses and behavior. Ms. Aldridge in particular having worked the entrance gate and various other places within the Visitor Center had extensive contact with visitors over her decade of working there. Thomas Taylor, an employee of

the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games and a local resident was also interviewed about the Highland Games and the local history of the mountain. A anonymous local elderly man who has spent eighty some years living near the mountain and working on and off for the Morton family was interviewed for his extensive knowledge of local folklore and history of the mountain. A second anonymous local man was also interviewed for his knowledge of the history of the mountain. During the in-depth interview with Crae Morton, he suggested I interview both of these gentleman for their knowledge of the mountain.

Table 2: Percentages of Yes Responses to Spiritual Dimension Questions for Grandfather Mountain.

SITE	NUMINOUS Does the site evoke feelings of awe and/or fear to you?	COSMIC Is the site set apart as special for you through ritual and/or ceremony?	AESTHETIC Is the site beautiful to you?	Is this site a sacred Landscape to you?
	Percentage of Yes Responses			
Grandfather Mountain N=17 (total responses)	64.7% (11)	29.4% (5)	94.1% (16)	64.7% (11)

*Grandfather Mountain* could be considered a sacred place simply due to its prominent geographic feature of being a rocky outcropping mountain top rising above the surrounding terrain. There are also myths associated with the mountain in regards to its naming by the Cherokee. But is *Grandfather Mountain* a spiritual landscape? In order to answer this question it is necessary to consider if the mountain produces a spiritual experience for visitors according to the dimensions of the numinous, cosmic, and

aesthetic. Using a combination of the methods listed in Chapter IV, we can begin to understand if the mountain is a spiritual landscape and if not, why it is not. For this study, a spiritual landscape fits all three of the dimensions for individuals or a collective group.

**Numinous** implies awe and fear. Fear entails a sense of reverence or humility for the site or a lack of comprehension of the grandness of the site and not fears of the mountain itself. *Grandfather Mountain*, according to the questionnaire responses, does produce awe. When asked “does it produce awe and/or fear”, 64.7% of the respondents said “yes”. This percentage matched the percentage as well when asked if the site was a sacred landscape which is discussed in Chapter VI. Many of them went on to say during the questionnaire that they felt awe but they hesitated with the “fear” aspect of the question (Table 2). Upon reflection, several visitors stated that if they walk across the swinging bridge at the top, the fear is there but this could be due to a fear of heights and not the actual mountain itself. Fear from the aspect of reverence of the mountain was observed during on-site observations of people at the top of the mountain and what appeared to be quiet moments of experiences for them of something grand and larger than themselves. The numinous is a personal experience and most respondents did report that feelings of awe were produced for them while visiting. Many of the employees interviewed said they often heard visitors on top of the mountain use the key words as defined in this research for numinous including: spiritual, closer to god, magical, and mystical. Several visitors were also seen sitting around alone or in couples observing quietly their surroundings. I witnessed during the observation period, several visitors

“catching their breath” and pausing as if they had entered a special place and were taking in the height of the mountain out of fascination and fear. I also witnessed three visitors sitting around on the rocks seemingly in private contemplation. I talked with one of the visitors later in the parking lot. He was from the area and likes to hike to the top occasionally to “experience god and the magic of the mountain”. One employee of *Grandfather Mountain* said that she has heard from several guests that they do not attend church; they would rather be alone in nature where they feel closer to the maker. From the information gathered, *Grandfather Mountain* fits the first dimension of a spiritual landscape. The mountain does produce awe and fear, a numinous experience for a majority of visitors.

**Cosmic** refers to order and a distinction between the sacred and profane through ritual or ceremony preformed. Under “cosmic”, words such as ritual, weddings, memorials, and gatherings are the focus. Only 29.4% of the respondents answered yes to the cosmic question (Table 2). The Annual Scottish Highland Games alone could be seen as a ritual for a collective group, although perhaps even though the questionnaires were handed out one weekend during the event, respondents did not see themselves as being there for a ritual/ceremony even if they did come to the event every year, which could imply a sort of ritual or if they came to the mountain yearly with family. Another event held annual at the mountain that has been going on for 80 years, is Singing on the Mountain. During this event, they do have between 5 and 10 guest preachers who give sermons throughout the event. As a collective group during the event they use the area for a ceremony, a church service.

Weddings, and in particular marriage proposals, do occur in the meadow below the mountain and on top of the mountain. According to Crae Morton (personal communication 2009), there are approximately five weddings a year that mostly occur in the meadows but he speculates that there are many more undocumented proposals on the swinging bridge at the top. A young African-American couple had their first date on the mountain, got engaged on the swinging bridge, and wanted to be married on top of the mountain in the early 1970's. Their minister was to join them the day of the event but did not show so a local Baptist preacher performed the ceremony. The wedding was heavily reported on and written up in several local newspapers as well as in several African-American magazines (personal communication 2009).

Several people reported wanting their ashes spread on the mountain, both locals and visitors. There were no numbers available for the number of ashes scattered on the mountain, but according to Crae Morton and other employees there are several a year that they know about and many others they do not know about. There is also a Cairn which is a memorial located at the base of the mountain in the meadow, generations visit to pay respect to their Scottish ancestry. Several reunions for families occur during the year, sometimes annually.

From the information gathered just from the visitor questionnaires, it is hard to assess if *Grandfather Mountain* is a spiritual landscape primarily due to the lack of understanding in the way the question was written. A majority of respondents did not check that they believed the site was set apart from other areas as sacred through ritual or ceremony. There were obvious rituals and ceremonies occurring at different times of the

year and I believe that *most of the respondents did not fully understand the question perhaps due to limited knowledge and experience.* I conducted a trial run of the questionnaire at a local site close by, at Hanging Rock State Park. However, it was not clear then that this question would cause confusion although other questions become obsolete and were removed from the questionnaire in order to simplify and make it easier for the responders as discussed in Chapter III. As a researcher I was aware that a number of non-secular activities that set the space apart from surrounding areas did occur throughout the year. From the other questions asked in the visitor interviews that were aimed at understanding non-secular activities, people did answer that they participated in various events including weddings, or they knew of people who became engaged at the site, or they were there for the Highland Games and/or attended “Singing on the Mountain”. While they may have answered the yes/no question ”Is this site set apart as special for you through ritual and or ceremony?” with a “no”, they often then elaborated in the open questions about non-secular activities or ceremonies they were there for. Upon further investigation, through my own observation and participation in events at *Grandfather Mountain* it seems that the mountain is set apart as special for many through various activities. Although they may be more personal in nature or the activity they are involved with may not seem to be to them a type of ritual or gathering, based on the definition of a ritual or ceremony these large gatherings are. When assessed through the various methods of collecting information, *Grandfather Mountain largely fits most aspects of the second dimension of producing a cosmic spiritual experience.* It fits most aspects due to what I observed and participated in as well as the open answer comments

from visitors during the interview and the in-depth interviews of non-secular activities that occur there.

The **aesthetic** dimension is much easier for people to understand and perceive through beauty and appreciation. Words such as beautiful, pretty, peaceful, breathtaking, and spectacular were noted during the observation period of visitors to the top of the mountain and in the parking lot. For the question asking visitors if the site was considered beautiful, 94.1% responded yes (Table 2). Other words used by the visitor respondents on the questionnaires included: awesome, majestic, beautiful, inspiring, breathtaking. When assessed if *Grandfather Mountain* does fit the third dimension of a spiritual landscape through aesthetics, it is obvious from each method that yes people experience the aesthetic dimension while here.

During an interview for *Grandfather Mountain*, Dianne Aldridge stated that many visitors she meets tell her they go to the mountain to be alone and consider it their church (personal communication, 2009). Crae Morton once met a visitor who was going through a separation and had come to the mountain because she and her husband had enjoyed visiting as a couple. She wanted to make “the trek” there and was going through a lot of extreme emotions in the hopes of finding spiritual solace and peace.

Many visitors filled out the questionnaire with additional comments included in the list below (once each):

- Feel closer to the maker here
- Spiritually-no doubt in the creator when I am here
- Special place that I visited often as a child with my great uncle

- This site is perfect for wedding/engagement pictures
- Righteous place (hang-glider once said to Hugh Morton according to Crae Morton 2009).

Social networking sites such as Facebook were also screened to note common themes. Most of “the fans of” frequently reported positive, religious, beautiful, and spiritual words and comments about the landscape. The social networking sites confirmed that a majority of visitors feel the place is special, culturally significant, and a spiritual landscape (a landscape that produces spiritual experiences for individuals). Most people on such sites as Facebook, if they are “fans of” or “like” will have positive views of the place and may not accurately capture other viewpoints. Tallies were not taken of the number of responses and phrases for key words due to the nature of networking sites and the realization that fans of such pages generally will have positive things to say, viewing the comments just confirmed that people do have spiritual experiences on the mountain, consider it beautiful, and often say it is a site that makes them feel closer or more connected to god, and spiritual.

### Mount Mitchell

At 6,684 feet, *Mount Mitchell* is the highest mountain in the Appalachian Mountains and the highest mountain in the Eastern United States. Located in Yancey County, North Carolina, *Mount Mitchell* is 20 miles from Asheville, North Carolina (Figure 5). *Mount Mitchell* lies within the Black Mountains and became the first state park in North Carolina in 1915 due to the work of Governor Locke Craig. According to park ranger Tyson, meteorological conditions are known to be “wild” at Mount Mitchell

with a one in three chance of getting precipitation in some form every day there (personal communication 2009). On average, the mountain receives 96 inches of snow a year. Most visitors to the park experience the howling winds and much cooler temperatures, mist and clouds that cover the mountain most days. The average temperature is 44.6 degrees Fahrenheit.

Most of the mountain is composed of kyanite and quartz which is an important aspect of the mountain discussed by visitors later. The elevation of the mountain primarily is due to faulting rather than erosional resistance. Gneiss, quartz, feldspar, and mica are found throughout many of the mountains in the region but the blue-gray kyanite crystals found dominating half of the rock composition in some places is unusual. The Black Mountains are shaped like a fish hook or “J” running from the north to the south, then curving to the west (Silver 2003; Mount Mitchell State Park 2009). The dark hue of the Black Mountains attributes to the Balsam Fir which grows at higher elevations (Figures 9 and 10). The Black Mountains contain six of the ten highest peaks in the eastern United States (Schwarzkopf 1985). Early in American history, Mount Washington was believed to be the highest peak in the east as well as Clingman’s dome in Tennessee. Elisa Mitchell fell to his death trying to prove his mountain was higher than Clingman’s dome. Visits later, by other scientists in the region, proved *Mount Mitchell* was the highest. In 1835 was officially identified the highest in the Black Mountains and the highest mountain east of the Mississippi River (Figure 8) (North Carolina State Parks 2009).



Figure 8: Mount Mitchell Highest peak east of the Mississippi River (Author 2009).



Figure 9: Mount Mitchell forest (Author 2009).



Figure 10: View from Mount Mitchell observation deck of forest and surrounding mountains (Author 2009).

Eastern woodland cultures might have been in the area 15,000 years ago. Evidence for human activity near *Mount Mitchell* dates back older than any known Cherokee settlements in the area. Anthropologists speculate that natives such as the Cherokee might have used the Black Mountains as hunting territory and to gather plants (Schwarzkopf 1985). There are roughly 500 plant species in the Black Mountains which could have been used for medicine, as food, and for dyes, especially the species found only at higher elevations such as Fraser fir, red spruce, and red raspberry. “Conjuring” (performing magical rites by medicine men within the tribe) was often done in high mountain gaps to harness the extra energy and power emanating from them. Some researchers speculated that the Black Mountains were used for such rites in combination with the medicinal and rare plants found at the higher elevations (Schwarzkopf 1985).

Science is an important part of the history of the mountain. In the 1840's, botanists and naturalists entered the mountains to study the unique flora and fauna for their beauty and economic value. Rhododendrons, azaleas, and magnolia species were harvested and shipped to Europe to be planted in some of the finest European gardens (Schwarzkopf 1985). French botanist and naturalist Andre Michaux was reportedly the first white man in the Black Mountains. John Fraser, for whom the Fraser Fir is named, spent much time in the mountains collecting species to send to his nursery in South Carolina before shipping them to Europe. Others such as Elisha Mitchell (for whom the mountain is named), Arnold Guyot, and Thomas Clingman (for whom Clingman's Dome is named) also entered the mountain to study the topography and elevation. In the mid 1800's Dr. Elisha Mitchell was the first to dispute the claim that *Grandfather Mountain* was the highest in North Carolina. In the 1850's, Arnold Guyot was the first to accurately calculate the elevations of the Black Mountains. He established a weather station at *Mount Mitchell* in 1873.

The 1700's saw a great change in the population of the Black Mountains with the influx of Scots-Irish and German settlers. In 1791, Buncombe County (Asheville, NC) was established as a county in the region. In the 1790's, 500 people were estimated to be in the Black Mountain Region (Schwarzkopf 1985). After the 1800's and still today, many wealthy families from the coastal areas in the Carolinas had second homes in the mountains near Asheville, NC. These families wanted to escape the heat, escape diseases, and enjoy the scenic beauty of the region which continues today. Hot springs and resorts were established in the region near the Black Mountains as early as the 1830's

but during this time few climbers actually ascended the high peaks. During the late 1800's wealthy lawyers and landowners out of Charleston, SC, who had summer homes in the region wanted to build a road to the Black Mountains. Several attempts were made and eventually a railroad line was built in 1915 mainly for the growing logging industry. For a short amount of time until 1922, tourists took the 19 mile road to Camp Alice and could hike to the top of Mount Mitchell. In 1915, Locke Craig (then the head of the North Carolina Forestry Association) stated,

It was on a place like this (Mt. Mitchell) that Moses communed with God, Who revealed Himself to man. He has given this sacred place to us, and we should do our best to preserve it. North Carolina should protect it, and own it for herself and for her citizens forever. (Schwarzkopf 1985: 86)

Logging heavily contributed to the destruction of the mountain as well as the Balsam woolly adelgid and acid rain. Figure 11 shows a view from the observation deck in 1894, compared to the change in forest cover in Figure 10 in 2009.



Figure 11: Photograph taken in 1894 from the top of Mt. Mitchell. USGS Photo ID hjk00182 (Hillers 1894 and USGS 2010).

### *Is Mount Mitchell a Spiritual Landscape?*

I visited *Mount Mitchell* on August 7<sup>th</sup> and August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009 (Table 1, Chapter IV). Seventeen visitors were given the questionnaires to fill out while at the parking lot for the observation deck and hiking trails on top of the mountain. At *Mount Mitchell* I was given the opportunity to survey visitors at any place within the park but I focused my efforts on those who had been to the top and observation deck. As with *Grandfather Mountain* those people interviewed with small children seemed distracted at times of keeping a watch on their small children. Table 3 shows the percentages as well as number of responses for each spiritual dimension question trying to answer if the site is a spiritual landscape. These responses are discussed in greater detail below. One of the questions in

the visitor questionnaire survey asked visitors, “Is this a sacred landscape to you?” At *Mount Mitchell*, 82.4 percent (%) of those interviewed said yes.

Three in-depth interviews were conducted during this time. Matt Mutel a ranger and Glenda Tyson the secretary for the park office were interviewed. Both of them were very familiar with visitors to the mountains comments, uses of the area, and behavior. An anonymous participant in the *despacho* ceremony from Black Mountain, North Carolina, was interviewed for her local knowledge of the mountain and experience from being involved with the group during the event and on other occasions at the mountain.

On August 8<sup>th</sup>, a group out of Atlanta, Georgia, and Asheville, North Carolina, hosted a Peruvian Elder who performed a *despacho* ceremony for the mountain within the restaurant and meeting room area. The day was rainy so much of the activities took place inside, although at the end of the day, the *despacho* was buried on the mountain (this was approved of by the Park officials). The respondents to the visitor questionnaire included a mixture of families, group hikers, and couples. None of the participants in the *despacho* event were selected for the visitor questionnaires; primarily due to the location of the event and time and my sampling hours spent in the parking lot did not garner those participants.

Table 3: Percentages of Yes Responses to Spiritual Dimension Questions for Mount Mitchell

SITE	NUMINOUS Does the site evoke feelings of awe and/or fear to you?	COSMIC Is the site set apart as special for you through ritual and/or ceremony?	AESTHETIC Is the site beautiful to you?	Is this site a Sacred Landscape to you?
	Percentage of Yes Responses			
Mount Mitchell N=17 (total responses)	76.4% (13)	17% (1)	100% (17)	82.4% (14)

Unlike *Grandfather Mountain*, Mount Mitchell is not a rocky outcropping or a significant geologic formation. From a distance and on hiking the area, Mount Mitchell appears as just like any other mountain in the area. *Mount Mitchell* is a peak within a range, while Grandfather is a singular peak surrounded by a geologic window. There are a few myths associated with an early settler who was a local bear hunter, and the naming of the mountain after Dr. Mitchell, but no other significant myths tie the area to the native cultural group of the Cherokee. Therefore, unlike *Grandfather Mountain* it might be harder for individuals and groups of various belief systems to see *Mount Mitchell* as a sacred place. So is *Mount Mitchell* a spiritual landscape? In order to answer this question it is necessary to explore if the mountain produces a spiritual experience for visitors according to the dimensions of numinous, cosmic, and aesthetic.

The site does produce an awed response from many visitors. The numinous is a personal experience and 76.4% of the respondents did report that they felt awe/fear while visiting (Table 3). Many of the employees interviewed said that they often heard visitors

on top of the mountain use the key words as defined in this research for numinous including: spiritual, closer to god, magical, and mystical. I also heard such words during the observation period. Several visitors were also seen sitting around alone or in couples, observing the view quietly or pointing out how grand the view was and how good the air felt. The physical geography including the forest biome type and the climate actually at this site seem to influence the numinous experience. During one interview, Matt Mutel, the park ranger said he has heard many people talk about the forest around *Mount Mitchell* and how the forest/trees felt scary and mysterious due to the different vegetation present that produced a feeling of enclosure and darkness. This feeling could also be related to the death of the larger trees in the area and the “ghost forest” appearance in some areas on the mountain. It is unclear at this time what actually produces that response to the forest. Glenda Tyson shared that the mountain changed her after she started working there. Ms. Tyson also shared that she had met a man camping on the mountain who comes often and that he told her that he likes camping and staying on the mountain because he does not take his medicine while there. While on the mountain, he does not believe he needs the medicine to help with his health problem; his ailments seem to disappear when he is there. The anonymous in-depth interview of a participant of the *despacho* ceremony and group said she had felt a calling to move near *Mount Mitchell* for several years and finally moved there from New York five years ago. The **numinous** is a very personal experience anywhere, including *Mount Mitchell*. From the information gathered, *Mount Mitchell* does fit the first dimension of a spiritual landscape through the numinous experience.

**Cosmic** refers to order and a distinction between the sacred and profane through ritual or ceremony performed or from some focus point or center. Under “cosmic”, words such as ritual, weddings, memorials, and gatherings are the focus. Only 17% of the respondents said that the site was set apart for them through rituals and/or ceremonies (Table 3). This low number could be due to the wording of the question, but since gatherings, weddings, and memorials do not seem as common here it could be that a majority of visitors would not see this place as set apart in a sacred way.

Unlike *Grandfather Mountain*, there are no annual gatherings on *Mount Mitchell*. No single event attracts thousands of people here although thousands do come for the view and cooler temperatures. Weddings are not as common on this mountain, perhaps due it being public land and/or the permit process one might have to go through. This could also be attributed to the climate of the mountain. Since it often rains there and is usually cold and windy it may not produce a romantic or logistically practical setting for a wedding. In 2009, they had six weddings as of the end of July which was more than usual according to park officials and more than at *Grandfather Mountain*. Engagements are known by employees of the park to occur, but they do not seem to occur as frequently as at Grandfather. Several people, both locals and visitors, reported wanting their ashes spread on the mountain. There were no numbers available for the frequency of ashes scattered on the mountain, according to the park personnel. During my visit, I did come across what seemed to be ashes spread near a spring along one of the trails circling the summit. No marker was observed but often such markers are not allowed in public parks.

The non-secular event, of a *despacho* ceremony was performed by a Peruvian elder while I was there and in which I observed and participated in, along with 50 other people mostly from Asheville and Atlanta. During the Peruvian elder's talk before the actual *despacho* ceremony, the elder and the attendees seemed to believe from the discussion that *Mount Mitchell* is sacred, along with other major mountains throughout the world including those in the Peruvian Andes. A majority of the attendees from Asheville visited *Mount Mitchell* often for ceremonies in addition to the *despacho* ceremony that occurred there that day. *Mount Mitchell* is closer to Asheville than is *Grandfather Mountain*, which would make it easier for them to assess. (Figure 5) Asheville, North Carolina, is often referred to as the "New-Age" capital of the South and attracts spiritual seekers of all faiths. The proximity of the mountain to Asheville and the spiritual groups in the area is an important piece of information when assessing whether *Mount Mitchell* is a spiritual landscape. This is useful information and a particular topic that should be included in the study of spiritual landscapes. Since the group did perform a *despacho* ceremony, the site was set apart as sacred and special for them. A *despacho* ceremony, is an offering to Pachamama, mother earth. The offering or package was filled with various natural items wrapped in paper with wishes and prayers for the earth and her people and was buried on the mountain by the group (Figure 12). The group also has other areas on the mountain where they have erected small monuments to channel the power of the earth there. The Peruvian elder (shaman) in his native language of Quechua, translated by a young man who spoke Quechua, Spanish, and English told the group that the elder had dreams of the mountain ranges of the world connecting. He went

on to state that he was connecting the Appalachian Mountains to the Andes as he played his flute for the group and sang a chant. He also said that the Appalachian Mountains had spoken to him in his dreams and were crying out for ceremonies, as indigenous people do in other parts of the world for mountains.



Figure 12: Despacho. Peruvian Ceremonial Offering Performed at Mount Mitchell (Author 2009)

From the low visitor responses to the cosmic dimension question and the lack of information available from the park about non-secular activities can we determine that *Mount Mitchell* is a spiritual landscape, that it produces a spiritual experience for individuals and/or groups? Because a group of 50 was involved in this ceremony, does that by itself answer the question that this site does fit the cosmic dimension of a spiritual

landscape? The 50 participants for the *despacho* ceremony came to the site, in particular *Mount Mitchell*, for this ceremony which does indicate that the cosmic dimension of a spiritual landscape exists for those that attended. *Mount Mitchell* does fit to some degree the *cosmic* dimension of a spiritual experience for some people.

The **aesthetic** dimension is always much easier for people to understand. Almost the same findings at *Grandfather Mountain* for this dimension were recorded at Mount Mitchell. Words such as “beautiful, pretty, peaceful, breathtaking, awesome, awe-inspiring, and gorgeous” were noted during the observation period of visitors to the top of the mountain and in the parking lot. All respondents on the questionnaire checked that the site was considered beautiful. When assessed whether *Mount Mitchell* fits the third dimension of a spiritual landscape through aesthetics, it is obvious from each method that it does indeed.

This research reveals that *Mount Mitchell*, according to a majority of the respondents, closely fits two of the dimensions of being a spiritual landscape however for those where the mountain is not set apart as special through some non-secular activity, the cosmic dimension is not experienced. However, for the group that were engaged in the Peruvian *despacho* ceremony it was obvious that their intentions were more spiritual in nature and that they as individuals and as a group believed the mountain to be special, sacred, and produced a spiritual experience for them. Many in the group also discussed the relevance of the kyanite found within the geology of the mountain and how for them, kyanite was a powerful, spiritual stone. Here again, the physical geography influences the idea of a spiritual landscape experience. If the stone occurs there, then one might

assume from their beliefs that the mountain is spiritual and produces spiritual experiences through the numinous, cosmic, and aesthetic dimensions. This group also erected, at an undisclosed location on the mountain, a small rock monument to signify the sacred qualities of that place. The location of the monument would not be disclosed by the group and the park rangers do not know of its existence or location.

*Mount Mitchell* at the time of this study did not have a “fans” of page on the social networking site Facebook. There was also no guest log book to review comments left by visitors. However, other comments overheard during the two days there included (once each):

- Very sacred place
- No better view in the Appalachian Mountains
- Feel wonderful here inside and out!
- I can breathe!
- It is amazing here
- Feels better here than Knoxville

### Water Features

The most appealing outcomes of topographic abruptness and large amounts of precipitation is the frequency of spectacular waterfalls in the region (Gade 2002: 521).

Three water features were selected for in-depth study in the SAR. Two waterfalls including one along a river and another along a creek as well as one natural spring were investigated for the spiritual experiences they produce and the non-secular activities associated at each site. All three sites have known historical uses by the Cherokee and the spring is a popular destination for Cherokee descendants to visit today because of its cultural history. Although the Cherokee are usually a secretive group about their sacred sites, the places were selected to determine if a heavily known sacred site would be a spiritual landscape.

#### Amicalola Falls

At 729 feet *Amicalola Falls* in Dawson County, Georgia, is one of the tallest cascading waterfalls east of the Mississippi (Figure 13). The waterfall drops off the southern end of the Blue Ridge Mountains. *Amicalola Falls* is 58 miles northeast of Atlanta, Georgia and 170 miles southwest of Asheville, North Carolina (Figure 5). The land around the falls lies within what was once part of the Cherokee Territory until they were forcibly removed from Georgia by federal orders from President Andrew Jackson in 1838. The name in Cherokee means “tumbling waters”. There are seven cascades according to park ranger and historian Laura Dean that represent the seven clans of the Cherokee Nation (personal communication 2009).

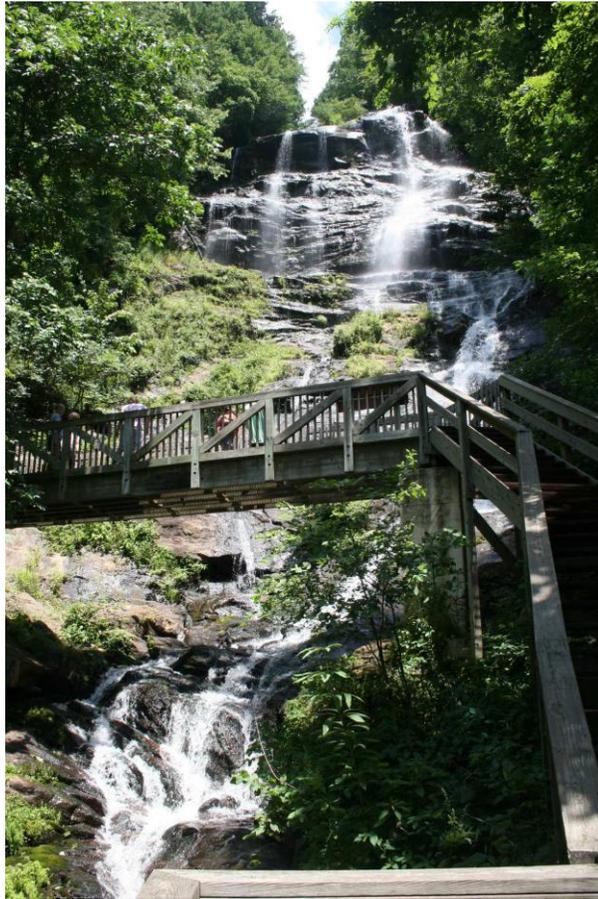


Figure 13: Amicalola Falls (Author 2009).

The first white man to see and describe the falls in 1832 was William Williamson, who wrote in his journal:

In the course of my route in the Mountains I discovered Water Fall perhaps the greatest in the World the most majestic Scene that I have ever witnessed or heard of the Creek passes over the mountain & the fall I think can't be less than Six hundred Yards. The Mountain is a least three fourths of a mile high. I made great exertions to get on the summit but the ascent was so great that I was completely exhausted by the time I reached half way. My position was such that I had a perfect view of the entire fall. The stream is called Um-ma-eolola from the Fall (Sliding Water) (Williamson 1832, 2).

Bartley Crane, the first white settler in the area in 1852, settled at the base of the falls. In the late 1800's other settlers moved into the area and Amicalola Campground was established at the base of the falls and often used for religious services. During the Civil War, the area was used by both Union and Confederate troops as a meeting place (personal communication 2009).

In 1940, *Amicalola Falls* became a State Park. The Appalachian Trail passed through the park until 1958. At that time the terminus was moved to Springer Mountain, which is eight miles from the park, and a connector trail was established from *Amicalola Falls* to Springer Mountain. The foothills of the Southern Appalachian Mountains referred to as the Dahlongega Uplands is seen from the top of the waterfall (Figure 14). At the base of the waterfall is a small pond where many people today fish, but it has also been used for baptisms in the past.



Figure 14: View from top of the waterfall looking out towards Dablonoga Uplands.  
(Author 2009)

*Is Amicalola Falls a Spiritual Landscape?*

I visited *Amicalola Falls* on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009 (Table 1, Chapter IV). Sixteen visitors were given the questionnaires to fill out while either at the top or the bottom of the waterfall. Here I found that distractions of watching children were not as much of a factor, partially due perhaps at the lower waterfall walkway due to the hike there and “dangerous” conditions for small children. Also of note, most of those sampled for the visitor questionnaires were from the Atlanta region or were from other countries such as

India and China, but spoke English well and could understand the questions. Those interviewed here seemed more responsive, talkative, and interested in the topic of spiritual and sacred landscapes. Table 4 shows the percentages as well as number of responses for each spiritual dimension question trying to answer if the site is a spiritual landscape. These responses are discussed in greater detail below. One of the questions asked visitors, “Is this a sacred landscape to you?” At *Amicalola Falls*, 93.8 percent (%) of those interviewed said yes.

Five in-depth interviews were conducted during this time. One was originally a visitor for the short questionnaire. After I finished administering the questionnaire to him, he started telling me about his life and the waterfall and agreed to be an in-depth interviewee. Mr. Bill Tanner the park superintendent, Ms. Ronna Horn in charge of wedding planning at the lodge, and Laretta Dean a park ranger were interviewed. Jim Burson, a friend of the park, volunteer, and one of the first men to hike the Appalachian Trail when it was finished was interviewed for his extensive knowledge of the park and local folklore.

Table 4: Percentages of Yes Responses to Spiritual Dimension Questions for Amicalola Falls

SITE	NUMINOUS Does the site evoke feelings of awe and/or fear to you?	COSMIC Is the site set apart as special for you through ritual and/or ceremony?	AESTHETIC Is the site beautiful to you?	Is this site a Sacred Landscape to you?
	Percentage of Yes Responses			
Amicalola Falls N=16	86.7% (13)	31.3% (5)	100% (16)	93.8% (15)

This waterfall in Georgia has myths associated with Cherokee lore and would be considered a sacred place based upon the waterfall features and associated Native American myths as mentioned previously with the seven cascades and seven Cherokee Clans. Many Atlanta residents visit the waterfall resort/state park for weddings and to escape the heat of the city. *Amicalola Falls* is promoted in Georgia as a wedding destination spot. Most of the weddings occur at the resort building on top of the mountain where the bride and groom elect to have photos taken viewing the surrounding mountains or at the waterfall. Some weddings do occur actually at the waterfall. Memorials although not documented by the park do occur in higher numbers at the waterfall according to the park rangers.

In order to answer this question if *Amicalola Falls* is a spiritual landscape we need to answer if the waterfall area itself produces a spiritual experience for visitors according to the dimensions of numinous, cosmic, and aesthetic. Because *Amicalola Falls* is located within a state park and has views of the surrounding mountainous landscape, the focus is only on experiences associated with the waterfall itself both at the top of the waterfall and at the base of the waterfall.

For the first dimension of the site providing a **numinous** experience, the terrain of the waterfall area and the height are considered. At the top of the waterfall the view is breathtaking, although from the viewing bridge across the creek the observer cannot adequately see or feel the height of the waterfall itself. The observer can get an overall picture of the area by the drop off into a space of nothing by the surrounding trees and far away mountain vistas (Figure 15). If the observer was standing directly at the last point before the waterfall descended I imagine the responses would be very different to as



Figure 15: View from top of the waterfall, surrounding mountain vistas.  
(Author 2009)

if the site produced fear. For the numinous question on the visitor questionnaire, 86.7% of the respondents said that they experienced awe and/or fear at the site. The numinous is always more of a personal experience and several respondents did report on the side that feelings of awe were produced for them while visiting, especially at the lower end of the waterfall where the observer can really experience how tall and large the waterfall appears from standing on the passenger bridge (Figure 16). Most of the comments heard at the top of the waterfall during the observation were focused on the mountains in the distance, since little of the actual waterfall can be seen from the top. However, while observing at the bottom of the waterfall most visitors stopped while crossing the bridge, took photographs with friends, or lingered out along the bridge or along either side of the bridge on the walkway as if taking in something beyond them (Figure 17). Some people hung out for half an hour just looking at the waterfall. No one passed by the waterfall without stopping to enjoy it during my observation period. From the information gathered, *Amicalola Falls* does fit the first dimension of a spiritual landscape through the numinous experience.

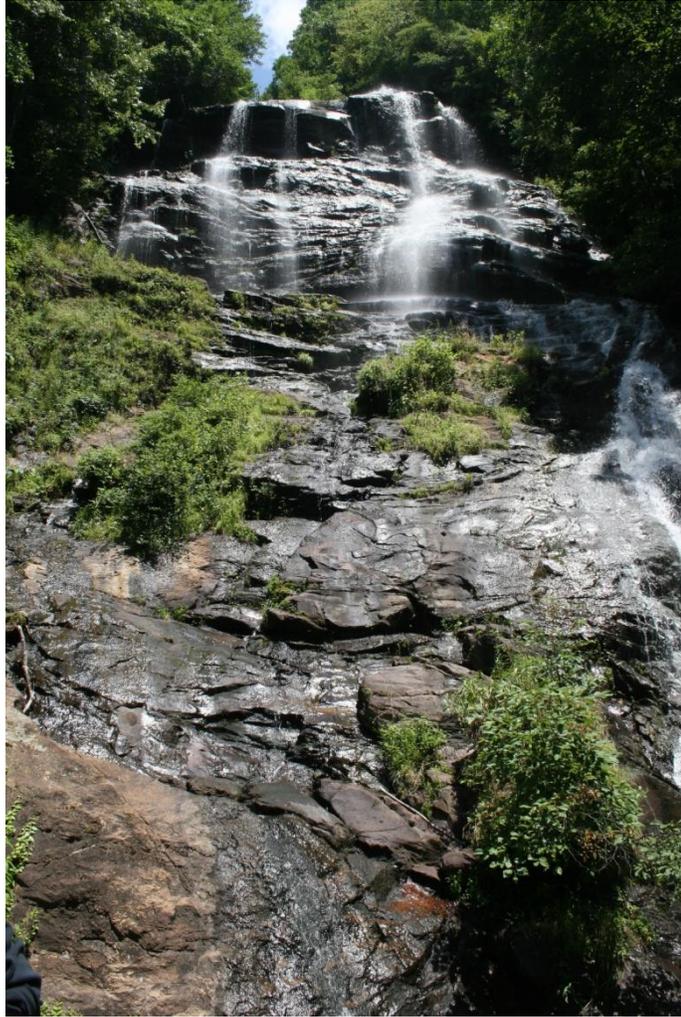


Figure 16: View of waterfall from below standing on bridge. (Author 2009)



Figure 17: Visitors viewing the waterfall (Author 2009)

**Cosmic** refers to order, and a distinction between the sacred and profane through ritual or ceremony performed or from some focal point or center. Under “cosmic”, words such as “ritual, weddings, memorials, and gatherings” are the focus. Thirty-one percent of the respondents said that the site was set apart for them as special through ritual and/or ceremony (Table 4). A wedding was occurring the day I was there and the other locals that I interviewed could have contributed to this higher than normal score compared to the other sites.

There are no reported public annual gatherings at the park. No single event attracts thousands of people here. Weddings are very common here. In fact, the park promotes the area as a wedding destination in various wedding magazines, government

websites, and through other sources, according to an employee in charge of weddings on site. On average there are between five and eight wedding ceremonies and receptions at the lodge and between five and eight small wedding ceremonies at the couples' chosen location, which is usually at the waterfall. Weddings are often significant ceremonial events especially when performed by a minister, pastor, or preacher. Because there is a religious component these events are often very spiritual and sacred in nature for the couple. If a couple chooses to wed in a court in front of a judge these types of weddings might be seen as secular. However, it seems that the weddings that do occur at these natural landscapes are more spiritual and non-secular. Many couples reported to the wedding venue coordinator that they choose to get married at *Amicalola Falls* because the place was special to them either having had a first date there or got engaged there (personal communication 2009). The couples often report that they want to get married there also because it is a beautiful setting. Beauty is part of the aesthetic dimension of a spiritual experience according to Mills (1992) and Tuan (1974) states that the aesthetic is often what contributes to peoples attachment to a place and not necessarily tied to a religious institution. Engagements are known by the employees of the park to occur at the waterfall. Park employees also report that perhaps due to the lodge and ease of having everything on site, people choose to get married here or celebrate honeymoons and anniversaries within the park.

Several people reported wanting their ashes spread in the area, both by locals and visitors. As with many waterfalls throughout the world, suicides have occurred. Since 1940, *Amicalola Falls* was the location for 13 suicides. Some of the family members of

those who fell off the waterfall return to the park annually. At the anniversary date of when a young man committed suicide, the family gathers at the waterfall to pay their respects (Tanner 2009). There was a memorial area set up away from the waterfall out of site by the park rangers and most visitors (Figure 18). The park rangers said that they knew of memorials and spreading of ashes at the waterfall but no records are kept of such activities. The park superintendent also once found a backpacker's bag with a box of ashes in it, hung in a tree by the waterfall.



Figure 18: Memorial at Amicalola Falls (Author 2009).

At the lower pool at the bottom of the waterfalls and cascades, local churches traditionally held camp meetings and conducted baptisms, although this is less frequent than it used to be according to rangers. In addition to weddings and memorials there is another peculiar event for some that occurs at the top pool of the waterfall, downstream of the foot bridge. One ranger reported that many visitors throw coins in and make wishes at the pool at the head of the waterfall downstream of the viewing deck and walkway (Figure 19). Figure 20 shows the amount of coins present in the pool the day I visited the site. While observing at the site, I witnessed several small children as well as adults throwing money in the pool. Many visitors threw in pennies and other coins off the bridge, for various reasons. One visitor said that she threw a penny in every time she came to the site for good luck, while another visitor said that he threw coins in just to amuse his children. Without consciously realizing what they are exactly doing, many people often throw coins into water as part of a prayer or wish, something often learned from childhood and simply repeated for amusement. If a prayer or wish is involved, without perhaps considering it on one level, the individual is petitioning a higher power which is a spiritual phenomenon (Jones 1964; Hole 1970). Often many of the more common wishing wells, where people leave offerings and make wishes, were sacred sites where people came in true devotion (Horne 1923). Many who visit places and make offerings such as throwing coins in are not actuated by religious motives, yet the action is an interesting “reversion to heathen beliefs, unrecognized though they may be by those who offer their pins or coins” (Hole 1970: 2687).



Figure 19: Pool downstream of bridge at start of waterfall (Author 2009).



Figure 20: Pennies and other coins in the pool at top of waterfall (Author 2009)

Other interesting ceremonies and rituals occur at this location, such as family reunions. In 2003 and 2004, an Easter Sunrise Service occurred with about 35 local people. Groups from the Atlanta area visit on certain occasions to play musical instruments at the falls according to the park superintendent Bill Tanner (2009). Other locals with Cherokee heritage reported that they visit the waterfalls to meditate and do private clearing ceremonies. One gentleman reported that he walks the stairs every morning as part of his daily ritual.

Only five of the respondents answered “yes” when asked if the site was set apart from other areas a special through ritual and/or ceremony. Again, this could have been due to the wording of the question, but it is known that there are several weddings here every month, although only a few occur at the waterfall.

From observation and an in-depth interview, one man in his late 50’s runs the steps near the waterfall every day. He informed me that five years ago his doctor told him that he had several health issues and needed to change his lifestyle. He was also going through a difficult end to a long marriage. While in his car after leaving the doctor’s office, he had what he called some “inner guidance” and was urged to visit *Amicalola Falls*. That day he set out to walk the stairs from the base and although he was in poor shape at the time he managed to walk the 500 some steps to the waterfall and runs the steps today. He explained to me that he lived nearby and had never visited the waterfall, but on that day after leaving the doctor’s office something, or as he laughingly said perhaps the waterfall, spoke to him to visit to heal his life. He calls himself a Christian and he believes God somehow spoke to him that day. He lost 100 pounds the

natural way and from looking at him I would never have thought that he was in poor health years before. He speaks to many of the visitors in his breaks during his run of the steps, which is stated is one of the best parts of being there, meeting interesting people. There are many daily and weekly “runners” of the stairs at the falls but none of them told me their story of how and why they run the stairs, so there could be others stories similar to his. *Amicalola Falls* does fit to some degree the *cosmic* dimension of a spiritual experience for some people that are involved in the various non-secular activities present here.

The **aesthetic** dimension is always much easier for people to understand. All respondents on the questionnaire checked that the site was considered beautiful. Visitors were overheard saying how beautiful the waterfall area was during the observation period at the waterfall and in the lodge during the in-depth interviews. When assessing whether *Amicalola Falls* fits the third dimension of a spiritual landscape through aesthetics, it is obvious from each method that it does indeed do so.

It seems from the various methods that *Amicalola Falls*, according to a majority of the respondents, it does fit the three dimensions of being a spiritual landscape. Other interesting responses on the visitor questionnaires and heard through observation include (once for each):

- Nature is easier to commune with
- Easy to get quiet here and listen
- Closer to natural world
- Love the sound of rushing water, calms me

- Began and continues for eternity (the waterfall)
- Calming
- Universe showing power here
- Very relaxed
- Enjoy sounds of running water
- In a wedding here
- Peaceful
- No civilization, wild here
- Happy.

### Blue Hole Spring

*Blue Hole Spring*, also known as Council Spring is located 25 miles east of Chattanooga, Tennessee, near Cleveland, Tennessee, in Bradley County. The spring is located 300 yards north of the Tennessee/Georgia state line (Figure 5). Information regarding *Blue Hole Spring* is extremely limited. The site is part of Red Clay Historic State Park but little is known of the actual spring's use. The spring also known as Council Spring is historically significant for the Cherokee Nation because the last capital of the Cherokee Nation in the East was located in sight of the spring. The site was chosen for the capital for several reasons, but mainly because it was just over the state line and close to the old Capital Echota in Georgia and also because of the springs in the area

Prior to the Cherokee, a tribe of American Indians known as the Yuchi (Euchee) were identified to have lived in the area according to archeologists from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and Indiana University (Corn 1959). The area where the spring is located is in a beautiful green valley that was used by the Cherokee and the Yuchi for farming. Written history of this area is limited (Corn 1959).

Red Clay Historic Site was the location of the last Cherokee Capital prior to removal of the Cherokees from the east. The Cherokee elected to move their capital from Georgia to Tennessee to escape General Andrew Jackson federal troops' persecution. A group met at the site of Red Clay for periods of time between July and August of 1837 to determine how to agree to the United States government treaties about their land and removal (Lillard 1976). The spring area served as the Cherokee Supreme Court (Van West 1995). An estimated 5,000 Cherokees with eleven general councils met at this site (Van West 1995). The final goodbye for many Cherokees occurred at this site and the Trail of Tears begins near here (1959).

The spring itself was believed to have been a water source during council meetings and why the council house was located nearby, east of the spring (Lillard 1976). The spring was referred to as the great spring (Lillard 1976). The spring is in a bowl-like depression and a deep blue color due to the depth and limestone bedrock feeding the spring (Figure 21). The spring is estimated to produce 4000 gallons of water daily (Van West 1995). Natural springs are important landmarks throughout many different regions of the world and often have some myth or spiritual connection to them (Van West 1995). Council spring, locally known as *Blue Hole Spring* (also known as Blue Hole on the

Tennessee State Park website (Tennessee State Parks, 2009) is a pure running spring that attracted Cherokees to the area (O'Brien 1990). In an in-depth interview with Park Ranger Amber Meadows, she discussed how the Cherokee recognized the spring as a spiritual space and a break between worlds. As discussed previously in Chapter II, springs were believed to link the underworld with this world and various myths are associated with springs throughout the world. According to Ms. Meadows, the springs blue color comes from the high copper and mineral content from the limestone bedrock leaching out into the water. The spring although it may look shallow from the bridge is 14 feet deep. According to the Cherokee other than the spring being a water source, it was also important for ceremonies such as going to water for spiritual cleansing. Anytime a member of the tribe was going through a great change, before or after shedding blood, or major decisions in their life they often would go to the water such as a spring to contemplate and receive answers (personal communication 2009).



Figure 21: Blue Hole Spring/Council Spring photograph taken from bridge (Author 2009)

*Is Blue Hole Spring a Spiritual Landscape?*

*Blue Hole Spring* was visited on July 31<sup>st</sup> and August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009 (Table 1, Chapter IV). Sixteen visitors were given the questionnaires to fill out while at the spring. Here I found that distractions of watching children was a factor in some parents answering the questionnaire, because children kept getting into the stream and some were trying to hang off the bridge and get into the spring. There were several children at this site, perhaps due to one day being the Cherokee Heritage Day Festival. Surprisingly, even though my visit was the day before and the day of the Cherokee festival, only four of the visitors that filled out the questionnaire were full blooded Cherokees. This site could be a place of unhappy memories and associations for some Cherokee descendants. The festival seemed more for the non-Cherokee people to witness traditional song and dance of the

Cherokee and shop for gifts made by Cherokees. This observation may be just for this site but it could be true for a lot of Native American festivals in the Eastern United States. Table 5 shows the percentages as well as number of responses for each spiritual dimension question trying to answer if the site is a spiritual landscape. These responses are discussed in greater detail below.

One of the questions asked visitors, “Is this a sacred landscape to you?” At *Blue Hole Spring*, 100 percent (%) of those interviewed said yes. Even though all of the respondents said the site was a sacred landscape it was never clear if the actual spring itself was considered sacred or if those answering the questionnaire thought the entire park area and council grounds were sacred. No distinction was made on the questionnaire and since the question was asked at the spring I would have assumed the responses would have focused on the spring itself but it is hard to ascertain what those answering were really thinking about with that question. The site and park is a sacred site historically for the Cherokee and a Historic Site for the state of Tennessee.

Two in-depth interviews were conducted during the visit: with Amber Meadows the park historian and ranger, and Dr. Michael Abrams, M.D., a Cherokee expert from the Cherokee Museum in Cherokee, North Carolina, who was recommended for an in-depth interview by Ms. Meadows for his involvement with the park and historical knowledge of Cherokee myths and the spring.

Table 5: Percentages of Yes Responses to Spiritual Dimension Questions for Blue Hole Spring

SITE	NUMINOUS Does the site evoke feelings of awe and/or fear to you?	COSMIC Is the site set apart as special for you through ritual and/or ceremony?	AESTHETIC Is the site beautiful to you?	Is this site a Sacred Landscape to you?
	Percentage of Yes Responses			
Blue Hole Spring N=16	25% (4)	18.8% (3)	87.5% (14)	100% (16)

The **numinous** is a personal experience and only 25% of the respondents reported that feelings of awe were produced for them while visiting. During my observation time I heard many visitors exclaim whisper how wonderful the spring was. The park ranger, Amber Meadows reported that has heard visitors say they felt drawn to the spring, dreamt or felt like they needed to visit it, and it makes them feel calm and peaceful (personal communication 2009).

Most visitors during the day were walking around the historic buildings and area and would briefly walk by the spring. A few visitors stopped and would stare at the spring for a few minutes but on average most visitors were only at the spring for 5 minutes. Some with families stayed longer only because their children were playing in the stream downstream from the spring. People are not allowed in the spring but are allowed in the stream. For the numinous experience although the visitors responded with a low percentage of yes they felt awe when at the site the visitor log book records gave more insight into the numinous experience visitors had there. The following list was

generated from tallying the number of times each word was said in the guest log book from July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007 to July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008.

- Unbelievable (1)
- Hidden treasure (1)
- Sobering (1)
- Power and presence (1)
- Enlightening (1)
- Thank you, Great Spirit (1)
- Enigmatic (1)
- Touched (1)
- Peaceful (4)
- A quiet, gentle place very spiritual and very moving (1)
- Sacred place (1)

From the guest log books for 2009 beginning in January 2009 up until when I was there at the end of July 2009 the following comments were recorded.

- Spiritually awakening from a visitor in Rome, Georgia (1)
- Very moving (1)
- Earth blessing (1)
- Feel at home (1)
- Inspiring (1)
- Spiritual place from a visitor in Tazwell, Tennessee (1)

- Relaxing (1)
- Impressive (1)
- Walking in water here is wonderful (1)
- Love it here (19)

There were many comments written in Cherokee. Other noteworthy comments in other years included.

- Touches soul (1)
- Emotionally moving (1)
- Sacred ground-heart teaching place (1)
- Very special, spiritual place of beauty (1)
- Makes you feel close to God (1)
- The water is healing (1)
- Coming here for 25 years for peace and tranquility

In July of 2000 a visitor wrote: come every year and find it a very spiritual and healing place. Red Clay is a place of peace; it is a place where one can have a private spiritual moment with Self and God. Sacred Place hope people treat as so. From the various comments in the guest log book we can infer that the place does produce a numinous experience for some visitors.

**Cosmic** refers to order and a distinction between the sacred and profane through ritual or ceremony preformed or from some focus point or center. At *Blue Hole Spring*, 18.8% of the visitors questioned responded that the site was set apart as special through

ritual/ceremony. This number seems to be an accurate representation from talking to Amber Meadows and Dr. Michael Abrams.

From the in-depth interviews it is known that weddings do occur within the park and at the spring every year. Most of the weddings are very informal and very small with most couples claiming Native American ancestry. Amber Meadows knows of one woman who comes twice a year to honor ancestors at the spring and leaves small offerings. On July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009 in the guest log book one visitor wrote they had renewed their vows there, the previous day July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009 a couple had gotten married at the site. There is also a man in the area that has permission to collect water from the spring to use at a local church for baptisms. There are also others who visit from the Cherokee Reservation in North Carolina an hour away to collect water. Dr. Abrams elaborated on the fact that one has to know how to collect water from a healing spring such as Blue Hole. There is a certain ceremony in which prayers are said in Cherokee, offerings are left, and permission is asked of the water before the water can be used for “good medicine”. Not everyone knows the ceremony. He has taken five gallons of the water himself to an elderly medicine man in Cherokee, North Carolina who uses the water mixed with herbs for medicinal teas for patients. Dr. Abrams visits the spring several times a year and at the Annual Gathering of Cherokee Days at the park for 20 years he has watched as he refers to them “white people oh and ahh at the spring for it being pretty, peaceful, and cool” but according to him that could be any spring. The young Cherokees have forgotten about the Cherokee traditions such as going to water, collecting sacred water, and praying near water because “they live in the white world and don’t

show respect”. He believes many today do not visit the spring for the reasons they once did because they have forgotten. The cosmic dimension of *Blue Hole Spring* may have been at one time truly a landscape that was set aside as special through ceremony but that seems to a spiritual experience for many in the twenty first century at this location that is losing its importance.

The **aesthetic** dimension of *Blue Hole Spring* was easily answered through the visitor questionnaire, with a response of 87.5% that considered it as beautiful. One question I have with this is I wonder if those answering were thinking about the spring area itself or the entire park? Looking over the guest log books again From July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007, to July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008, 83 visitors used the words wonderful, fantastic, beautiful, pretty, or nice. From January 1<sup>st</sup> till July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2009, 32 visitors had written beautiful place. When assessed if *Blue Hole Spring* fits the third dimension of a spiritual landscape through aesthetics, it is hard to answer because of discrepancies in understanding if people were talking about the spring in the visitor guest books or the park itself.

The landscape of Red Clay Historic Park and *Blue Hole Spring* is considered a sacred landscape to a group of people. However, we cannot assume that the spring itself is considered a sacred landscape, it may be the entire landscape site from the Cherokee history of the area. From the way this research investigated landscapes and the peculiarities of this site being a natural feature and a historic site, it is hard to conclude if the spring is sacred. Is *Blue Hole Spring* a spiritual landscape? Again, this question is very hard to answer at this site due to the historical use of the surrounding landscape. This is a site where it seems a very personal experience as to if the spring itself is sacred

and produces numinous, cosmic, and aesthetic experiences for people at the site. Most of those with Native American ancestry will probably say the site is sacred and contributes to a spiritual experience.

### Cumberland Falls

*Cumberland Falls* is located in Whitley County, Kentucky, approximately 40 miles north of Burnside and 27 miles south of William (Figure 5, map). This waterfall is known for the phenomenon that happens only during a full moon at night in which a moon bow may be observed. This is the only known site in the western hemisphere where this occurs according to signs within the park. The other site in the world that produces a moonbow is Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe, Africa. Scientists believe that the moonbow is produced from the moonlight being refracted from the mist rising from the pool below the fall. The chances of seeing a moonbow are much better on a bright, moonlit cloudless night, usually three days before or after the full moon. *Cumberland Falls'* orientation and minimum forest cover around the falls, as well as the mist and wind patterns, is believed to contribute to the moonbow phenomenon observed. The colors of a moonbow are often not as vivid as those of a rainbow, and to many onlookers the moonbow looks like only white light. During the day, a single or double rainbow may be observed from below the waterfall.

*Cumberland Falls*, also known as “The Niagara of the South” perhaps because of its horseshoe shape as much as by its size, is the largest waterfall south of Niagara and east of the Rocky Mountains. The waterfall varies in height depending upon the river level but is usually between 55 and 68 feet (Figure 22). The width of the waterfall also

varies depending upon the river level and averages 125 feet but during high flows has been reported to be 300 feet wide. The drainage area is 1,900 square miles (sq. mi.) and the discharge varies between 4 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 59,600 cfs (McGrain, 1983). There is a massive amount of water moving in the Cumberland River over this waterfall which contributes to its size and beauty.



Figure 22: Cumberland Falls view from downstream. (Author 2009).

The waterfall is along the Cumberland River, at one time known as the Shawnee River. The river flows through the Cumberland Mountains and near the Cumberland Escarpment. The waterfall was formed over thousands of years by processes of erosion and uplifting, primarily water action (McGrain 1983). At one time much of the

Appalachian Mountains were under a sea. Over time sediments were deposited and layers of material collected on the bottom of the sea floor. The sediment material deposited was originally for other land masses. This process occurs throughout the world even today but at one time in geologic history the region in the Appalachian Mountains experienced this kind of deposition. As the seas withdrew and the land uplifted, the sediment present converted into rock material. Over millions of years, the Cumberland River cut through and formed the current V-shaped valley. The softer rock materials were easily eroded which created *Cumberland Falls*. The waterfall was formed from an undermining of sandstone rock layers in the valley. The valley exposes alternating layers of hard and soft sedimentary rocks. A change in bedrock resistance from hard to soft rock formed the ledge or nickpoint which became the initial falls. Active downcutting of the softer sandstones to a harder rock layer produced the abrupt elevation change along the river. The variable between the different types of sandstones is what maintains the waterfall (McFarlan 1961). Over long periods of time, the harder resistant rock layer slowly erodes as well due to the weight of the rock materials hanging on the ledge and the forces of erosion and weathering primarily due to water action. Freezing and thawing within the joints of the bedrock is also contributing to the weathering process here (McGrain 1983). The bedrock along the walls of the valley is weathering faster than the lip of the waterfall due to extensive weathering and erosive forces (1983). The waterfall is moving slowly upstream due to the erosion and weathering processes occurring. Over time the nickpoint migrated upstream as the ledge continues to waste away. Geologists believe the

waterfall has retreated 45 miles upstream (McConnell 1983; Kentucky Park Service 2009).

The Native Americans in the region were believed to have temporary hunting camps near the falls from early summer to fall. Native American tribes included the Shawnee, Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Creek. *Cumberland Falls* and Eagle Falls nearby were regarded as sacred by many of these tribes (KPS 2009). Both falls were used as a place of worship by Native Americans due to the moonbow (McConnell 1982). There are three waterfalls in the area that form a triangle. Three is a sacred number for many cultural groups around the world including Native Americans. According to one employee, Eagle Falls, *Cumberland Falls*, and Yahoo Falls are the sacred three waterfalls in the area worshiped by the Cherokee and Shawnee (personal communication 2009)

Early Europeans settled in the region in the mid to late 1700's. A majority of the first settlers were hunters and explorers. In the 1800's, as more and more people entered the region and saw the falls it became known as something to see for the rare "moonbow". During the Civil War era, the first log cabin built near the falls served as a recuperative facility for confederate soldiers. There were several mineral springs nearby that were believed to cure respiratory ailments (McConnell 1982). Over time, with funding from the state, better transportation routes were in place as well as a bridge which made it easier for people to visit the falls. Since then, several hotels and resorts have been built near the falls.

In 1947, the Commonwealth of Kentucky assumed ownership of the falls. Over the years the park has grown into a resort park with a hotel and restaurant for meetings, weddings, vacations, and gatherings. Although relatively isolated, the waterfall is heavily promoted by Kentucky State Parks for being an ideal vacation spot for families since a resort is within the park. The park has historically been known as a good honeymoon site for people in the region. The park also advises visitors to experience and see the moonbow by publishing on their websites dates for the full moon. On average in the summer, the parking lot at the falls is full around 11 pm with sometimes 1,000 spectators waiting and hoping to catch a glimpse of the moonbow (Lawrence 1993). Many locals, college students, families, and photographers come to the falls to be blessed with seeing the moonbow. Not every full moon produces a moonbow due to weather conditions and river levels. So some people visit several times before seeing their first moonbow. New York Times writer Lawrence Joseph upon a visit to the falls in 1992 reported a waitress by the name of Norma saying “Moonbow’s like that. Sometimes you see it, sometimes it sees you”. The rainbow during the day, usually in the morning hours, is easier to observe (Figure 23). If one is lucky, according to the park rangers, two rainbows might be visible.



Figure 23: Rainbow taken at 10:13 AM (Author 2009)

*Is Cumberland Falls a Spiritual Landscape?*

*Cumberland Falls* was visited on July 8th-9th, 2009 (Table 1, Chapter IV). Sixteen visitors were given the questionnaires to fill out while either at the top or along the trail towards the bottom of the waterfall. I found that distractions of watching children were not a factor, partially due the fact most of the children there were older with parents and in general there were fewer children, it was a week day. Also of note, those sampled for the visitor questionnaires were from nearby or from Ohio and/or

Florida. *Cumberland Falls* is near Interstate 75 that connects many major cities from Gainesville, Florida to Cincinnati, Ohio. Those interviewed here seemed more responsive, talkative, and interested in the topic of spiritual and sacred landscapes as well as those at *Amicalola Falls*. Table 6 shows the percentages as well as number of responses for each spiritual dimension question trying to answer if the site is a spiritual landscape. These responses are discussed in greater detail below. One of the questions asked visitors, “Is this a sacred landscape to you?” At *Cumberland Falls*, 75 percent (%) of those interviewed said yes.

Three in-depth interviews were conducted during this time. Ms. Lisa Davis the park superintendent, Ms. Valerie Thompson a park ranger, and an anonymous expert on the local history were interviewed.

Table 6: Percentages of Yes Responses to Spiritual Dimension Questions for Cumberland Falls

SITE	NUMINOUS Does the site evoke feelings of awe and/or fear to you?	COSMIC Is the site set apart as special for you through ritual and/or ceremony?	AESTHETIC Is the site beautiful to you?	Is this site a Sacred Landscape to you?
	Percentage of Yes Responses			
Cumberland Falls N=16	100% (16)	25% (4)	93.8% (15)	75% (12)

*Cumberland Falls* is a significant geologic formation and there are several myths associated with the waterfall as mentioned above. Native Americans worshiped it for the rare and special moonbow it produces during full moons. Although myths surround the waterfall and the moonbow, is *Cumberland Falls* a spiritual landscape?

Unlike the other sites, there seems to be more fear produced at this waterfall from comments heard during the observation. Several people have committed suicide or accidentally fallen from the waterfall before it was roped off. There is also a ghost story associated with the fall, known as “The Bride of the Falls”, who has been seen by visitors as well as two park rangers. She was reported wearing all white in the area and quickly disappeared. This ghostly apparition at the waterfall produces a feeling of the numinous for those that experience the sighting. The sighting of such apparitions goes beyond the obvious and into another dimension, it is an unexplainable phenomenon to those that experience it, leading them into the numinous, or awe and fear of the unknown. This experience is not about the geology and geography of the site, but about the perceptual dimension and numinous experience. The site does produce an awe response from visitors, and when asked if visitors experience awe/fear there, 100% said yes (Table 6). The **numinous** is a personal experience and most respondents reported that feelings of awe were produced for them while visiting especially due to the rainbow (Figure 24). During my observation time during the day and especially at night I heard many visitors exclaim how magnificent the falls were and I literally did here people saw they were in “awe”. I also heard other words during the observation period such as “God’s work, amazing phenomenon, ahhhhh, and incredible”. The park superintendent, Lisa Davis

reported that she had been “christened” her first week employed at the park when a photograph was taken of her at an observation deck downstream of the waterfall with a double rainbow; one rainbow in the photograph seemed to touch her (personal communication, 2009).



Figure 24: Rainbow taken by author at 10:11 AM July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009 (Author 2009)

During my observation of the moonbow, the parking lot was almost full by the time I arrived back at the site around midnight. Many families and couples had made the walk from the resort down to the falls. It was crowded with people close to the edge, waiting on the safe side of the ropes for only a few seconds of seeing the moonbow. I estimated that there were around 400 people at any time on the rock at the top of the waterfall. There were many people hanging out in the parking lot or walking back and

forth at different times, so an accurate head count was impossible. Many people were there for over an hour, only seeing the moonbow faintly for a few seconds at random throughout their time there. Many people I spoke with had visited the waterfall during a full moon several times and had not caught sight of a moonbow. I was extremely lucky that I saw the moonbow, appearing more like a white light. I also happened to be standing next to a graduate student from Kentucky who had come there to see the fall with friends. She had a camera similar to mine so she allowed me to use her tripod, and she changed the settings on my camera so I could catch the moonbow in a photograph (Figure 25). Many of the children around reported or screamed out that they saw colors in the moonbow, while the adults stood around and either could not see the moonbow or only saw a gray outline. The park area near the waterfall stays open late for five days around the full moon for visitors to experience and be part of what some refer to as a “full moon” ceremony.

Some people were frustrated that they could not easily see the colors. It was interesting to experience and be around so many people who were constantly looking behind them at the full moon and clouds waiting for the full moon’s “show” at the waterfall. I overheard some people stating they were not impressed with the moonbow. Perhaps they expected to see it the entire time they were there or in bright colors. Due to the weather or personal eyesight problems they should have understood that some people come there several times and never get to see the moonbow for even a second. Patience seemed to be a big experience for many standing around waiting. The numinous experience of watching and waiting for the moonbow to show itself was a very personal

experience, but at the same time the entire crowd would cheer when it showed itself. There was a group experience of the night, although most people came alone or in small groups.



Figure 25: Moonbow photograph taken at 12:42 AM.  
Full Moon Night July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009. (Author 2009)

Several visitors during the day were sitting observing the view either at the top of the waterfall or along the various view points along the trail below. Many on top reported how good the “mist” felt from the waterfall. I even heard one couple discussing how the positive and negative ions of the mist from the waterfall were making them feel good. There is also a local man who is part Cherokee who visits the falls often and plays his flute. According to the rangers, he could be sitting anywhere and likes to hide from

visitors and play his flute to make them feel special or question what is around them. From the information gathered, *Cumberland falls* does fit the first dimension of a spiritual landscape through the numinous experience.

**Cosmic** refers to order and a distinction between the sacred and profane through ritual or ceremony performed or from some focus point or center. Under “cosmic”, words such as “ritual, weddings, memorials, and gatherings” are the focus. At *Cumberland Falls*, 25% of the visitors questioned responded that the site was set apart as special through ritual/ceremony. This number seems low considered what occurs once a month at the site with a full moon phenomenon.

There is a monthly gathering of people at *Cumberland Falls*, coming as first timers or every month in order to catch a glimpse of the moonbow during the full moon. Weddings are common within the park although the number of weddings actually at the fall is unknown and much smaller. Most people choose to get married at the resort and have photographs taken at the falls. According to the on-site wedding coordinator, the choice by couples of not having a wedding at the waterfall is primarily due to the public use of the waterfall and the fact the park cannot section off the waterfall for a private wedding. If a couple chooses to get married at the waterfall they know random guests may be watching. Memorials are unheard of at the waterfall other than memorials of those who have committed suicide at the waterfall or accidentally fallen off. Many couples I spoke with celebrated their honeymoon at the park and waterfall area so they return for anniversaries. Several couples recently had 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversaries while

visiting the park. Two couples in one weekend celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary at the falls where they originally honeymooned.

The park rangers report that they have seen groups that come to the falls during the full moon and drum and dance, but I did not witness this activity while there and the rangers did not know who the groups were or how often they came. Churches have retreats at the falls and resort throughout the year but the park employees do not know how many. Most of the respondents answered in the affirmative when asked if the site was set apart from other areas as special through ritual and/or ceremony

The **aesthetic** dimension of *Cumberland Falls* was easily answered through the visitor questionnaire, with a response of 93.8% that considered it as beautiful. The experience of people seeing the falls as beautiful was observed during the day and during the full moon night. Words such as “beautiful, pretty, peaceful, breathtaking, awesome, awe-inspiring, and gorgeous” were noted during the observation period of visitors during the day and at night. All respondents on the questionnaire checked that the site was considered beautiful. When assessed if *Cumberland Falls* fits the third dimension of a spiritual landscape through aesthetics, it is obvious from each method that it provided an aesthetic experience for those at that location.

*Cumberland Falls*, according to a majority of the respondents, fits the three dimensions of being a spiritual landscape. There were no available guest logs books to review for comments and at the time of the study there was not a social networking “fans” of page on Facebook. Other interesting comments written for the open answer

questions in the visitor questionnaire of how this site made them feel and heard during the observation included:

- See face in the rock on the waterfall, lady face
- Breath deeper
- Leave feeling better
- Makes you think nature and gods work, is bigger than you are
- Spirits in park, spirits at waterfall
- Incredible phenomenon
- Clears mind
- Realize how small human is near God
- See and feel beauty of gods work
- Lots to do/feel here but peaceful
- Inspired and in awe
- Magical
- Wonderful phenomenon
- Miracle of gods work
- Time stands still
- Magic because we do not understand it all really.

## 5.2 Sacred Place verses Spiritual Landscape results

The visitor questionnaire was aimed at discovering how the dimensions of a spiritual experience played into to defining a spiritual landscape according to visitors. There were discrepancies in how the visitors answered the questions and the actual activities and behavior of visitors at the sites. One interesting comparison in this study is understanding why the averaged results for the visitors responding to the dimensions of numinous, cosmic, and aesthetics were relatively low compared to how the visitors responded to each site being a sacred place (Table 7).

Table 7: Summary of all Sites Percentages of Yes Responses to Questions

SITE	NUMINOUS Does the site evoke feelings of awe and/or fear to you?	COSMIC Is the site set apart as special for you through ritual and/or ceremony?	AESTHETIC Is the site beautiful to you?	Spiritual Dimensions Averaged for Spiritual Landscape identification.	Is this site a Sacred Landscape to you?
Site	Percentage of Yes Responses (N)				
Amicalola Falls N=16	86.7% (13)	31.3% (5)	100% (16)	72.6%	93.8% (15)
Blue Hole Spring N=16	25% (4)	18.8% (3)	87.5% (14)	43.8%	100% (16)
Cumberland Falls N=16	100% (16)	25% (4)	93.75% (15)	72.9%	75% (12)
Grandfather Mountain N=17	64.7% (11)	29.4% (5)	94.1% (16)	63.3%	64.7% (11)
Mount Mitchell N=17	76.4% (13)	17% (1)	100% (17)	64.5%	82.4% (14)

When comparing how people responded to the question if the site was a sacred landscape and comparing that response to how they responded to answering the spiritual experiences dimension questions some interesting differences surfaced. Interesting when asked if the sites were sacred landscapes the percentages were much higher than the overall average at each site of a person's spiritual experience including the numinous, cosmic, and aesthetic dimensions. So some people from this naturally on some level believe these landscapes to be sacred without knowing why or having experiences themselves of the sacred or a spiritual experience.

At *Amicalola Falls* 93.8% said the falls were sacred whereas averaging the spiritual dimensions we arrive at only 72.6% of the visitors having a spiritual experience there. One reason this percentage may be different, could be attributed to the wording of the cosmic question because through the various other methods we can ascertain that the site does produce numinous and aesthetic experiences and that for some of the visitors the site is set apart as special through a non-secular activity. Some of the sacredness of the waterfall, may have to do with the known Cherokee myths of the waterfall and the fact it lies within historic Cherokee territory. Although, when asked during the visitor questionnaire if they knew of any myths associated with the waterfall, only five out of the sixteen visitors mentioned the cascades representing the Cherokee Nations (Table 8).

At *Blue Hole Spring*, 100% of the visitors said the site was sacred but as discussed previously, is it the spring or the council grounds that they viewed and answered as sacred? *Blue Hole Spring* thru the visitor questionnaires came out very low as provoking the spiritual experiences in the visitors. From reviewing the guest log

books, many of the responses were spiritual and/or religious in nature. It might be easier for most people to see this spring landscape as sacred because of the history of the area and the heavy Cherokee influence. Fourteen of the visitors responded out of the sixteen that they knew of myths associated with the spring; most of them knew it was a water source for the council.

At *Cumberland Falls*, the sacred landscape percentage and the spiritual landscape dimension questions average both were around 75%. This site was historically used and considered magical for Native America groups and is still observed as special through observance of the moonbow during the full moon “gathering” and various other non-secular activities that are promoted at the park. Ten of the visitors out of sixteen responded that they knew of myths associated with the waterfall pertaining to the Cherokee in the area. The percentage of responses from the visitors that believed the site to be a sacred landscape seems low since 100% of the respondents reported a numinous experience there. However, this site had a more religious Christian fundamental tone in the sample population in which I received more comments from visitors about nature not being sacred and church being “the only sacred place for God” as one visitor stated to me. The difference in sample population could have attributed to the variations in responses.

At *Grandfather Mountain*, non-secular activities that are promoted including weddings and gatherings that may lead people to view the landscapes in a different light and may help people develop various attachments and beliefs to these landscapes. When asked if *Grandfather Mountain* is a sacred landscape, 64.7% of the respondents said yes

and the average for the spiritual experience was 63.3%. These numbers are relatively close. When asked if the visitors knew of any myths associated with each site, only nine out of the seventeen visitors said they knew about the mountain either the naming of the mountain being Cherokee and only a few made references to the naming of the mountain based on the profile of a man. Some people may consider the profile name a myth others may not. The population sample was similar to *Cumberland Falls*, in that many people seemed to have an opinion about sacred being more related to Christian ideologies and church, not natural settings such as Grandfather.

At *Mount Mitchell* 82.4% of visitors responded that the mountain was sacred while only 64.5% may deem it a spiritual landscape from the way the questions were worded. The Mountain has myths associated with it and is a special landscape especially here in the region however, it is not being used in the same way and non-secular activities here are not heard of often. Only eight visitors out of the seventeen questioned, responded that they knew of a myth and/or story attached to *Mount Mitchell*. They all mentioned the debate about it being the highest point and a few referred to Dr. Mitchell's death.

For this research, a sacred place is a site that is known as culturally significant for a population and has associated myths with it at each site over half of the visitors thought the sites were sacred places for each landscape site based on the question in the visitor questionnaire (Table 8). This finding makes sense if sacred places are culturally significant with stories attached to them; all five sites have myths and/or stories associated to the importance of the physical landscape feature as summarized in Table 8.

Table 8: Summary of Myths at Each Study Site and Percentage of Responses for designating the landscape as sacred.

Site	Is this site a Sacred Landscape to you? (from Table 7)	Knowledge of Stories/Myths Associated with Landscape.	Myths/Stories
Amicalola Falls	93.8%	31.25% (5)	Seven Cascades Represent the Seven Cherokee Clans
Blue Hole Spring	100%	87.5% (14)	Spring used as water source for Cherokee Council
Cumberland Falls	75%	62.5% (10)	Native Americans including the Cherokee believed the three waterfalls in the area including Cumberland Falls are sacred. Moonbow attracted the sacredness for the Cherokee and other groups.
Grandfather Mountain	64.7%	52.9% (9)	Tanawha the name of the mountain in Cherokee means Eagle (messenger bird) Profile of the rocky terrain of Grandfather Mt. resembles a mans face
Mount Mitchell	82.4%	47% (8)	Kyanite is a sacred stone within the new age community which is found within the geology of the mountain. Named after Dr. Mitchell Highest Mountain in Eastern United States

From the visitor questionnaires assessing numinous, cosmic, and aesthetic experiences, the sites scored low in producing a spiritual experience especially under the cosmic dimensions even when known rituals and ceremonies were observed as summarized in Table 9. There were issues in the phrasing of the questions which confused some visitors and perhaps attributed to the low percentages. Many people may not understand how wide ranging and inclusive the terms ritual and/or ceremony refer to in understanding the cosmic dimension of a site. All five sites have some type of

ceremonies and/or rituals that occur at them although some are more individual while other non-secular activities are more group oriented large annual events. Also the question for the numinous regarding if the site produced awe and/or fear could have also been confusing to some visitors filling out the questionnaires.

Table 9: Comparison of known types of non-secular activities including Rituals/Ceremonies for each site and percentage of yes responses from visitors to cosmic dimension.

Site	COSMIC Is the site set apart as special for you through ritual and/or ceremony?	Non-Secular Activities
Amicalola Falls	31.3%	Weddings; Memorials; Family Gatherings; Engagements; Musical Instrument Playing; Church Services (Easter Sermon); Baptisms at lower pool; walking meditation; private meditation
Blue Hole Spring	18.8%	Baptism Water Source; Drinking Water; weddings (mainly for those of Cherokee descent)
Cumberland Falls	25%	Moonbow Full Moon Observance; Weddings; Musical Instrument Playing including Flutes and Drums; private meditation time
Grandfather Mountain	29.4%	Weddings; Engagements; Memorials/Ash Scatterings; Family Gatherings; Annual Highland Games; private meditation time; Annual Singing on the Mountain; Church Services; Sacred Apu (monument at unknown location by group in Asheville)
Mount Mitchell	17%	Peruvian despacho Ceremony (once); Sacred Apu (monument at unknown location by group in Asheville); weddings

### **5.3 Spiritual Landscapes of the Southern Appalachian Region**

The five sites were selected in order to help answer the research questions stated in Chapter I, not only to determine if they were spiritual landscapes. There are many more sites within the region both public and private that could have been included to investigate people's spiritual experiences in nature and non-secular uses. These five sites helped especially in understanding Mills definition of a spiritual landscape and if a particular landscape that produce a spiritual experience can be deduced to the numinous, cosmic, and aesthetic dimensions. The numinous and aesthetic dimensions of a landscape and the experiences produced for individuals and groups are easy for most to comprehend and articulate. The cosmic dimension of a spiritual experience seems to be a point of confusion and uncertainty. The visitor questionnaires all reported a low response to the cosmic dimension, yet there were many non-secular activities occurring that could relate to the cosmic dimension but few people reported that the landscapes were set apart for them as sacred or meaningful through ritual and or ceremony. The visitor questionnaires gave the least insight into the cosmic dimension; the in-depth interviews and observations at each site gave much more information about the cosmic dimension in that people were perhaps unknowingly on some level participating in various non-secular events and were experiencing the cosmic dimension.

Many people also participate in non-secular activities at these landscapes. Some of the reasons for non-secular activities have to do with topophilia. People have emotional attachments to a place for historical/cultural reasons or personal romantic reasons. Some of the experiences people had and the non-secular activities they were

involved with were serendipitous while others were carefully planned events due to the landscape site itself and its meaning for them within their lives.

Having discussed and assessed the three attributes of spirituality for each of the five locations examined in this research, the following section concludes by considering how well the research fulfilled the objectives outlined in Chapter I. Chapter VI also addresses how this research fills in the gaps related to the understanding non-secular uses and spiritual experiences of natural sites in the SAR and how this research ties into Tuan's topophilia.

## CHAPTER VI

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

#### 6.1 Spiritual Landscapes in the Region

This research explores place perceptions and non-secular uses of major highland and water features throughout the Southern Appalachian Region. Previous research in this field, particularly in the discipline of geography, has been limited as discussed in Chapters I and II. This research seeks to shed additional light on the topics of sacred places, spiritual experiences in nature, and spiritual landscapes in particular in the Southern Appalachian Mountains. Several basic questions framed the research and were answered throughout the study by various methods as summarized in the following sections.

Extensive research on sacred places exists for many regions of the world; however, little was previously focused on the American Southeast or the Appalachian Mountain region. This research concerning place perception of certain landscapes that may be considered sacred or culturally significant to different people on a smaller scale of particular sites where certain landforms and water bodies occur in the Appalachian Mountains can be extended out in additional studies to other regions. Few studies around the world examined the non-secular uses associated with spiritual and/or religious activities at various natural landscapes. This research explored more in-depth the types of non-secular activities at different landscapes to gain a better understanding of the

various activities that people as individuals or groups participate in at different natural settings. Information about *sacred places* and how landscapes are used religiously or spiritually through non-secular activities in the Southern Appalachian Region is important for preservation of cultural beliefs and popular public landscapes, and to understand the meaning of landscapes related to spirituality.

People throughout the world consider particular landscapes as sacred or culturally meaningful, including sites within the Appalachian Mountains, as this research brought to light. Many indigenous groups revere mountains with monolithic structures as shown by creation myths or stories of gods inhabiting them. Much of the previous work in this area focused on the American Southwest, Europe, or Asia. This research recorded historic myths and stories of the various landscapes related to cultural groups such as the Cherokee in the SAR, as well as the views of early European settlers on the physical terrain, which gave meaning and names to places. Monolithic sites, such as *Grandfather Mountain*, are important physically and culturally in the Southern Appalachian Region.

In his dissertation, Mills (1992, 218) raises the question “Do We, Can We, or Should We Have Spiritual Landscapes in Contemporary North America?” This study picked up where Mills left off in seeking to answer this question as it applies to the Southern Appalachian Region. This research was interested in not only places as sacred but additionally explored the human experiences that occur at the place in question, thus defining a spiritual landscape. Mills named three qualities for what he termed a “spiritual landscape”: a site with numinous, cosmic, and aesthetic qualities. These qualities create

experiences for people at places as defined in more detail in Chapter II and described in Chapter V as to how each dimension manifested itself at each site.

This study also expanded upon Tuan's (1976) ideas of topophilia, which involve the bonds between people and place. The concern of this study is in the present, examining how we as a society use places for non-secular activities and view particular natural landscapes in the twenty first century. Few studies have researched the interaction between the land and the ways in which people use areas outside of traditional outdoor recreation activities, or their spiritual experiences and perceptions of the place.

This research demonstrated that although it may not be commonly heard of or discussed, certain non-secular activities seem to occur and perhaps are occurring in increasing numbers at various natural landscapes. At *Amicalola Falls* and *Mount Mitchell* the park rangers, have seen an increase in the number of weddings, a type of ceremonial activity or non-secular event when a religious authority is present. In another example, natural landscapes that are respected and venerated, where non-secular activities take place, often produce feelings, attitudes, and a certain spiritual frame of mind. This research brought a greater understanding and awareness of natural landscapes that evoke spiritual experiences and non-secular activities by looking at the interactions people have at various natural landscapes in the Southern Appalachian Region.

In the following sections each proposed research question is addressed and a discussion follows concerning how the question was answered as well as the results analyzed. Within some of the initial research questions, additional questions, concerns, and thoughts are brought forward for future research in this area. Although this research

uncovered information regarding spiritual experiences in nature, Southern Appalachian Region sacred places, non-secular activities, and spiritual landscapes, there is much more that could be researched to expand the field of the Geography of Religion and Belief Systems.

## **6.2 Research Questions, Conclusions, and Discussions**

*Research Question: What types of **spiritual experiences** are associated with different natural sites?*

People as individuals, in small groups, and/or as part of large gatherings have various spiritual experiences at different landscapes. The spiritual experience including the numinous, cosmic, and aesthetic dimensions is very personal and cannot be captured or summarized by numbers alone. The various spiritual experiences were captured more in the in-depth interviews and by observations at each site. People reported feeling drawn to some of the sites, as the older gentleman was drawn to *Amicalola Falls* after a visit to a doctor. In addition to being “drawn” to places, other spiritual experiences ranged from people experiencing magical answers to their life’s questions, feeling connected to the world, feeling more at peace with major life changes, involvement in ceremonies, and moments of appreciating the beauty of the site. There really was no one spiritual experience that was the same at each site. Some of the experiences were similar but none were experienced in the same way, since everyone perceives their experiences from a different perspective.

*Research Question: What types of **non-secular activities** are associated with different natural sites?*

Spiritual experiences as reported in the visitor questionnaires included the numinous and aesthetic dimensions easily; however, the cosmic dimension was somewhat harder for people to identify with and associate with their perceptions. Through observation and participation in events, and knowledge shared by in-depth interviewees, non-secular activities that help understand the cosmic dimension at each site (Table 8, Chapter V). Non-secular activities are heavily promoted at some landscape sites through the various government agencies such as at *Amicalola Falls* with the Georgia State Parks, *Cumberland Falls* with Kentucky State Parks, and at *Grandfather Mountain* the privately owned section is promoted by Grandfather Mountain, Inc.

Numbers as to how many non-secular activities such as weddings and memorials occur are hard to ascertain due to the various park offices not recording this information. Some parks do not allow the spreading of ashes although it is known to occur without the permission of park officials. Weddings at some parks require permits or organizational help, which made it easier to find out how many weddings occurred at *Amicalola Falls* every year. According to the wedding venue coordinators at *Amicalola Falls* and *Cumberland Falls*, there has been an increase in the number of weddings over the years. Most of the couples reported reasons for having a wedding at the landscape were because of the beauty of the site and some reported emotional attachments to the particular landscape. Often these emotional attachments were because the couple had been on a

date to the site and “feel in love” either with the site or each other there or they got engaged there. Although, both waterfall sites are set up to be ideal wedding venues because of the accessibility of the lodges and other material needs associated with weddings the wedding coordinators both shared that most couples simply think the site is beautiful. It is unknown as to how the economic factor plays into choices of weddings at these particular landscapes.

Other group gatherings may be hard to ascertain in numbers due to such activities being left off the radar of park programs and park permit requirements and/or a lack of groups informing the parks that they are there doing certain non-secular activities. Private meditations are almost impossible to record in numbers although they do occur according to interviews with visitors and other more in-depth interviews.

Many people may not understand that some of the activities they do at the parks are considered non-secular and/or a type of ritual and/or ceremony. The visitor responses for the question “Is this site set apart for you as special through ritual and/or ceremony” did not accurately reflect what was observed or known to have occurred at each site. The question might better have been followed with a question asking people to check off if they participated in the following type of events (to help clarify the cosmic dimension): weddings, spreading of ashes, memorials, family gatherings, other types of group gatherings, private meditation, meditation retreats, prayer, church services, or others of this nature that they could specify in an open response. A wedding may be a non-secular or a secular event depending upon the setting, who officiates the ceremony, and components of the ceremony. A wedding held at the county court house would be

secular compared to a wedding held in a park officiated by a Baptist Preacher for example. Also if other religious aspects are included in the ceremony such as a Celtic hand fasting, Native American Prayers, Christian prayers, or any other type of ritual are within the wedding ceremony it would be an attempt although maybe not always for the known religious reasons or in the same manor as a non-secular event.

The non-secular activities at the sites were often motivated by the beauty of the place and the terrain. The despacho ceremony at *Mount Mitchell* occurred there because of the groups belief in the power of the mountain. The Highland Games occur at *Grandfather Mountain* because that landscape, the mountain and the meadow remind people of similar landscapes in Scotland. Weddings at the waterfalls often occur because of the beauty of the place or attachments. At *Blue Hole Spring* non-secular activities often occur because of ancestral connections to the Cherokee. Other non-secular activities such as private meditations seem often to simply happen for people at random or because they went to the particular site for reflective alone time. Often people reported going to the sites to escape their daily lives and be alone, closer to God such as some said about *Grandfather Mountain* and *Mount Mitchell*.

Although this research focuses on five public natural areas, there are also private areas within the region that might also attract various no-secular activities. There are numerous waterfalls, rivers, mountain tops, forest, springs, and meadows that are privately owned that people may as well engage in non-secular activities especially if they have a personal connection to the site.

*Research Question: At the selected five study sites, what types of features within the landscape are people having spiritual experiences at within the Southern Appalachian Region?*

People have spiritual experiences at various locations throughout the region. The sites were chosen for this study because of historical myths and uses of the sites and known or rumored contemporary non-secular activities. Features in this study included originally two mountains, two waterfalls, and one spring. However, landscapes often have more than one feature within them or close by. Some of these features were mentioned by the visitors and during the in-depth interviews in addition to the original landscape that was being assessed for the study. Some of these physical features may have played into some interpretations and experiences (Table 10).

At *Amicalola Falls*, the waterfall was primarily of interest; however, at the top of the waterfall, the mountain view contributed to some of the “beauty” aspect of people’s spiritual experiences. At *Blue Hole Spring*, there was no other physical landscape feature that played into interpretations. At *Cumberland Falls*, the waterfall is along the Cumberland River which was never mentioned by visitors or guests as sacred or spiritual. However, the other two nearby waterfalls discussed were seen to form a triangle with Cumberland, which made the three waterfalls sacred sites. At *Grandfather Mountain*, the meadow played into how people interpreted and experienced the mountain for the highland games and their perception of the mountain and meadow similar to the Scottish landscape. At *Mount Mitchell*, the mountain originally was the primary focus. Upon talking with visitors and others, the surrounding spruce-fir forest plays into the spiritual

experience that some people have on the mountain, as well as the spring on the mountain which provides water for local people to collect for rituals.

Spiritual experiences may also vary from one type of waterfall to another or from one mountain peak to another. The experiences reported at *Grandfather Mountain* and *Mount Mitchell* seem to be similar perhaps due to their similar vegetation, climate, and location in North Carolina. However, the responses generated may vary if we compare these two mountains with open views of the surrounding landscape to a place nearby in Virginia such as Mt. Rodgers. Mt. Rodgers has a dense forest summit with limited views which might give a visitor a more enclosed private feeling verses the wide panoramic view and windy conditions of *Grandfather Mountain* and *Mount Mitchell*.

Table 10: Summary of Physical Landscape Features

Site	Originally investigated physical feature	Additional physical feature that came into play
Amicalola Falls	Waterfall	Mountains (view)
Blue Hole Spring	Spring	N/A
Cumberland Falls	Waterfall	River and two other waterfalls
Grandfather Mountain	Mountain	Meadow
Mount Mitchell	Mountain	Spring and forest

*Research Question: Is Mills' definition of a **spiritual landscape** appropriate and useful in helping to identify if we can and if we do have spiritual landscapes in America; in particular in the Southern Appalachian Region?*

This research took Mill's definition of a spiritual landscape using the numinous, cosmic, and aesthetic dimensions and ground tested these spiritual experience divisions at five selected sites in the SAR. Mills' definition of a spiritual landscape is not completely

appropriate for identifying if we can and if we do have spiritual landscapes in the Southern Appalachian Region. The aesthetic dimension is easy for most people to comprehend in most places in the world regardless of cultural or religious affiliations. The numinous experience is a personal experience and may be perceived by some individuals through differences in the various senses as evidenced in the stories people told about their experiences at sites. Examples of different sensory variations in the numinous include visual perceptions through changes in lighting, physical sensations and feelings, and/or inner knowing and thoughts. The cosmic dimension is much harder for people to fully understand. The main problem with using these dimensions came from the researcher's phrasing of the cosmic question and lack of follow up in clarifying rituals/ceremonies and non-secular activities for the visitor questionnaire. There is also a regional difference in how people understand the terms regarding rituals, ceremonies, non-secular, and spiritual. One issue is taking these terms from the scholarly academic world and using them in conversations with people of various educational levels, religious backgrounds, and cultural attributes. A topic like this one is also hard to fully comprehend from numbers and brief questions. The findings from the personal in-depth interviews gave much more insight into understanding and identifying spiritual experiences that occur at the five selected landscapes. Landscapes do exist in the SAR that create spiritual experiences for people as shown in studying the five sites selected and many more could exist that have not been discussed in this research.

Spiritual landscape is a complex term although on the surface perhaps easy to understand how spiritual experiences in nature at particular landscapes might be deemed

so by individuals, groups, societies, or nations. In the SAR, people think about nature and religion and the term spiritual landscape might have different meanings to various people or groups based upon their own experiences and knowledge of nature and spirituality. This research ground tested Mill's dimensions of a spiritual experience in order to understand the definition of a spiritual landscape and if Mill's ideas are useful in the application in everyday usage and understanding; however, based upon individual experiences of spirituality the term is not easily broken into three dimensions.

In trying to understand spiritual experience, it is important to know how people in different regions such as the Appalachian Mountains perceive, comprehend, and use the subjective terms of rituals/ceremonies, non-secular activities, and spiritual experiences. Spiritual experiences are very personal, wide ranging, and I do not think they can be combined into one definition or several dimensions. Spiritual experiences are manifested as individual realities and often vary between individuals or may be group realities of participants in a group that have similar experiences based on the intention of the group or background of the group. Spiritual experiences at particular landscapes cannot be narrowed down to a questionnaire; since they are experiences and associated with the interpreters or observers own reality of what a spiritual experience is. From my perspective, the term spiritual landscape would imply for an individual or group as a landscape that triggers some type of spiritual experience for them. Spiritual experiences will vary for people and are too encompassing to be narrowed into a box to test. Letting people openly discuss their experiences, feelings, and activities they do while there at the particular landscape in an unstructured format will give more insight into spiritual

experiences within natural settings. Also this information will shed light on the type of non-secular activities people engage in and any spiritual associations they have with a particular activity. While a wedding for some with a religious officiate may produce more of a spiritual experience for some, others may not have a spiritual experience by getting married at a particular landscape. For some people a spiritual experience may be purely random whereas for others it may be induced by the activity they engage in with purpose or by coincidence there.

*Research Question: Does the study of spiritual landscapes further Tuan's ideas of **topophilia** as it incorporates the spiritual bond and connections with people and place?*

The study of spiritual landscapes, and people's spiritual experiences at particular landscapes, is very useful for understanding the concept of topophilia. People have certain attachments and perceptions of various landscapes through spiritual experiences they have there or have heard of others having at particular places. The idea that people attach a spiritual experience to a landscape is nothing new, although few geographic studies have looked into this because it is hard to map and derive empirical values. Tuan's own work consists mostly of theoretical ideas of how different cultures respond to the land. This research applied Mill's dimensions of a spiritual landscape on the ground through visitor questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and observation/participation in non-secular events in order to more fully understand the idea of topophilia in the SAR.

Appreciation of the landscape is personal experience. Everyone sees beauty through their own interpretation. Most responded that the sites in this study were

beautiful. Visitors often as Tuan (1974) stated have a fresh perspective of places and easily see beauty whereas natives have a more complex view of beauty in particular landscapes they are familiar with. This study did not ask for demographic information; although from observation a majority of the people questioned were from within the region and yet a high number reported the sites as beautiful. Even the park rangers, local historians, and other experts who might be considered more “native” all referenced how beautiful the respective sites were. Wilderness areas historically in America were once places seen as threatening due to Indians/demons present. This perception has changed where today most people visit nature to experience things out of their normal realities. Throughout history around the world, mountains have flipped in how people perceive them from being threatening to places of worship and beauty. Tuan’s work on topophilia looked into the demographic variability of place perception and attachment but little has been done in relating people’s spiritual or religious ideologies to natural landscapes today in the twenty first century. As Tuan stated, “topophilia is richly informed by the reality of environment when it combines with religious love or scientific curiosity” (1974: 124). This research has perhaps opened the door to furthering the understanding of people’s religious or spiritual experiences in nature especially in the activities that they engaged in within nature.

### **6.3 Future Research Questions and Considerations**

This research sought to bring a greater understanding and awareness of natural landscapes that evoke spiritual experiences in the Southern Appalachian region. To identify where they are, why some places are respected more than others. Also to gain an

understanding of the types of experiences that people report having there. This study has opened the door for future studies related to this topic throughout North America and has also triggered additional questions about how to define spiritual experiences thus spiritual landscapes. Although this research shed light on topics that have seldom been the focus of geographic studies, there is still more that needs to be researched in order to fully understand spiritual landscapes and non-secular uses. Additional questions are outlined below for future research efforts.

- Do the Celtic roots of some mountain people flow through to the natural religious sites in the Appalachian Region?
- How does the Asheville, North Carolina “New-Age” community play into spiritual landscapes in the nearby area such as with Mount Mitchell?
- For *Blue Hole Spring*, is the spring itself considered sacred alone or is it because of the surrounding historic landscape site of the council grounds?
- Are the Cherokee youth learning about natural landscapes within their historic belief system, or how to respect and do ceremonies at springs today, or is this slowly being forgotten and replaced by contemporary, non-Native ways of being in everyday life?
- How has the promotion of sites such as *Amicalola Falls* and *Cumberland Falls* as wedding venues changed over the years, since they are now promoted in major wedding magazines?

- Has the number of weddings and memorials increased over the years at each site and if so, why? Is it for economic reasons or are people becoming aware of and desiring outdoor locations for such events?

In the end, do we, can we, and should we have spiritual landscapes in North America? This research demonstrated that we do have landscapes that produce spiritual experiences for people in the Appalachian regions. The spiritual landscape potential of the SAR is great due to the number of natural features, history, and culture in the region as shown when focusing on the five study sites. There are numerous other locations that produce these experiences for people and encourage non-secular activities not discussed here but could be identified in the region. The question of “should we have spiritual landscapes” seems more of a personal question, perhaps better left to individuals to decide, unless these landscapes become abused from over-use which at this time does not seem to be an issue. Sacred Places, places with stories attached to them and of cultural significance, are found everywhere in the world. Some sites may be forgotten over time or not used as they once were, as is the case with *Blue Hole Spring*. All of the sites except for *Mount Mitchell* were known to be sites used by the Cherokee or earlier Native American tribes. They had stories attached to them as well as previous uses which might have contributed to how they are perceived and the activities that occur at them today.

*Blue Hole Spring* is a sacred place to the Cherokee, although from information found it seems to be slowly fading into the past as a special place that provided spiritual insight, cleansing, and renewal for a group of people. A few people today perceive the site as producing a spiritual experience for them, but from observation and talking with

others it appears that *Blue Hole Spring* does not produce the same spiritual experience it once did for many. It also does not seem to produce a spiritual experience as often for as many people as the other sites do today. Why this is may be due to the history of the site, or the fact it is a spring that is fading into history, if the Cherokee culture is not preserved and promoted for future generations concerning how springs were respected, venerated, and worshiped through ceremonial acts.

*Amicalola Falls, Grandfather Mountain, and Cumberland Falls* are heavily promoted for various activities for people in the twenty first century. *Mount Mitchell* will always in some form be respected for being the highest peak in the eastern United States, and groups from Asheville will continue to perform ceremonies and do non-secular activities on the mountain. I believe in the coming years we will hear of more non-secular activities and spiritual experiences occurring at these sites as Americans are becoming more conscious of how and where they spend their money and more spiritually conscious as wars over religion continue. Nature and natural landscapes such as mountain tops and waterfalls may be the few places where people can continue to go for renewal and spiritual insight in the twenty-first century.

## REFERENCES

- American Heritage Dictionary. 2006. s.v. "sacred".
- American Heritage Dictionary. 2006. s.v. "spirituality".
- American Heritage Dictionary. 2006. s.v. "secular".
- Angelique. 1999. Sacred Sites in and around Asheville, North Carolina. Sacred Union. Asheville, NC.
- Appalachian Resource Commission. 2009. Website. <http://www.arc.gov/>. 16 April 2009.
- Appalachian Resource Commission. 2009. Map. [http://www.arc.gov/appalachian\\_region/MapofAppalachia.asp](http://www.arc.gov/appalachian_region/MapofAppalachia.asp). 16 April 2009.
- Ball, Martin. 2000. Sacred Mountains, Religious Paradigms, and Identity Among the Mescalero Apache. *Worldviews*. 4 pp. 264-282.
- Bennett, D. Gordon. 2008. Introduction Chapter 1 in *A Geography of the Carolinas*. Ed. Bennett, D. Gordon. Boone, North Carolina: Parkway Publishers, Inc.
- Blake, Kevin S. 2001. Geographical Field Note: In Search of a Navajo Sacred Geography. *The Geographical Review*. 91(4): 715-724.
- Blake, Kevin S. 2002. Colorado Fourteeners and the Nature of Place Identity. *The Geographical Review*. 92(2) pp. 155-179.
- Boord, Martin. 1994. Buddhism Chapter 1 in *Sacred Places*, ed. Jean Holm, with John Bowker (Themes in religious studies series). London, United Kingdom: Pinter Publishers Ltd.
- Buttimer, Anne. 1984. Water Symbolism and the human quest for wholeness. *Dwelling, Place, and Environment*. ed. D. Seamon and R. Mugerauer, pp. 159-290. Dordrecht: Nijhoff.
- Buttimer, Anne. 1990. Geography, Humanism, and Global Concern. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Vol. 80 (1): 1-33.

- Buttimer, Anne. 2006. Afterward: Reflections on Geography, Religion, and Belief Systems. Forum in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Vol 96(1): 197-202.
- Campbell, John. 1921. *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press.
- Celestine Prophecy. 2006. Motion Picture. Celestine Films, LLC.
- Choudhury, Anuradha Roma. 1994. Hinduism Chapter 3 in *Sacred Places*. ed. Jean Holm with John Bowker (Themes in religious studies series). London: Pinter Publishers Ltd.
- Craig, Locke. 1915. *Mitchell's Peak and Dr. Mitchell*. Raleigh, North Carolina: Edwards and Broughton Printing Company.
- Creswell, John. 1998. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Cohen, Erik. 1992. Pilgrimage and tourism: Convergence and divergence. *Sacred journeys: The anthropology of pilgrimage*, ed. A.Morinis, 47–61. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Corn, James Franklin 1959. *Red Clay and Rattlesnake Springs; a history of the Cherokee Indians of Bradley County, Tennessee*. Cleveland, Tennessee: Tennessee Press.
- Da Vinci Code. 2006. Motion Picture. Sony Pictures.
- De Blij, H. J., Peter Muller and Antoinette WinklerPrins. 2009. *The World Today: Concepts and Regions in Geography*, 4th Edition. John Wiley and Sons Inc.
- Eliade, Mircea. 1959. *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Translated by William R. Trask. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc.
- Ellison, George. 2005. *Mountain Passages: Natural and Cultural History of Western North Carolina and the Great Smoky Mountains*. Charleston, SC: The History Press Charleston.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. 2010. *Essays: First Series*. Nabu Press.
- Entrikin, J. Nicholas. 1976. Contemporary humanism in geography. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Vol. 66 (4): 615-32.

- Evola, Julius. 1998. *Meditations on the Peaks: Mountain Climbing as a Metaphor for the Spiritual Quest*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions.
- Farmer, Steven. 2002. *Earth Magic: Ancient Shamanic Wisdom for Healing Yourself, Others, and the Planet*. Carlsbad, California: Hay House Publishers.
- Fenneman, N.M and D.W. Johnson. 1946. Map. United States Geological Survey.
- Fishwick, Marshall William. 1978. *Springlure in Virginia*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Press.
- Francaviglia, Richard V. 2003. *Believing in Place: A spiritual geography of the Great Basin*. Reno: University of Nevada Press.
- Ford, 1962. *The Southern Appalachian Region: A Survey*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press
- Gade, Ole, Arthur B. Rex, James Young, with Baker Perry. 2002. *North Carolina: People and Environment*. Second Edition. Boone, North Carolina: Parkway Publishers, Inc.
- Gadon, Elinor. 1991. Sacred Places of India: The Body of the Goddess. Chapter 6 in *The Power of Place: Sacred Ground in Natural and Human Environments*. ed. James Swan. Wheaton, Ill: Quest Books.
- Garrett, J.T. and Michael T. Garrett. 1996. *Medicine of the Cherokee: The Way of Right Relationship*. Bear and Publishing Company.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The interpretation of cultures*. Selected Essays NY: Basic Books.
- Georgia State Parks. 2009. Amicalola Falls State Park and Lodge. Website. <http://www.gastateparks.org/Amicalola/> Georgia Department of Natural Resources. 5 February 2009.
- Gesler, Wilbert and Margaret Pierce, 2000. Hindu Varanasi. *Geographical Review*. Vol. 90 (2): 222-238.
- Grandfather Mountain, Inc. 2006. Website. <http://www.grandfather.com/>. 12 October 2008.
- Gray, Martin. 1991. Sacred Sites and Power Points: A Pilgrim's Journey for Planetary Healing. *Shaman's Drum* 25: 32-44.

- Gray, Martin. 2008. *Sacred Earth: Places of Peace and Power*. New York: Sterling Publishers.
- Guiley, R.E. 1995. *Atlas of the Mysterious in North America*. New York: Facts on File.
- Hairr, John. 2000. *High Peaks of the East*. Averagesboro Press. Erwin, NC
- Hanafi, Hassan. 1999. World views of Arab geographers. Part I: 87-94 in *Nature and identity in cross-cultural perspective*, ed. A. Buttimer and L. Wallin. Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Kluwer.
- Hill, Samuel S, Charles Lippy, and Charles Reagan Wilson, eds. 2005. *Encyclopedia of Religion in the South*. 2005. 2nd edition. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press.
- Hillers. J, K. 1894. USGS Photo ID hjk00182. View of Black Mtns from Mt Mitchell [http://libraryphoto.cr.usgs.gov/cgi-bin/show\\_picture.cgi?ID=ID.%20Hillers,%20J.K.%20%20182](http://libraryphoto.cr.usgs.gov/cgi-bin/show_picture.cgi?ID=ID.%20Hillers,%20J.K.%20%20182)  
16 September 2010.
- Hole, Christina. 1970. Springs and Wells. *Man, Myth, and Magic: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Supernatural*. ed. Richard Cavendish. New York: BPC Publishing Ltd.
- Hooker, Elizabeth R. 1933. *Religion in the Highlands Native Churches and Missionary Enterprises in the Southern Appalachian Area*. Home missions Council The Polygraphic Company of America, Inc. New York: New York.
- Horne, Percy E. 1923. *Somerset holy wells and other named wells*. London: Somerset Folk Press.
- Hori, Ichiro. 1966. Mountains and Their Importance for the Idea of the Other World in Japanese Folk Religion. *History of Religions*. Vol. 6 (1): 1-23.
- Huntsinger, Lynn. and Maria- Fernandez-Gimenez. 2000. Spiritual Pilgrims at Mount Shasta, California. *Geographical Review*. Vol. 90 (4): 536-558.
- Hughes, J. Donald and Jim Swan. 1986. How Much of the Earth Is Sacred Space? *Environmental Review*. Vol. 10 (4): 247-259.
- Hughes, J. Donald. 1991. Spirit of Place in the Western World. Chapter 1 in *The Power of Place: Sacred Ground in Natural and Human Environments*, ed. James A. Swan. Wheaton, IL: Quest Books.

- Hughes, J. Donald. 1993. The Integrity of Nature and Respect for Place. *The Spirit and Power of Place: Human Environment and Sacrality*, eds. Rana P. B. Singh. Varanasi, India: National Geographical Society of India.
- Ivakhiv, Adrian J. 1997. *Places of Power: Sacred Sites, Gaia's Pilgrims, and the Politics of Landscape*. York University Dissertation.
- Ivakhiv, Adrian J. 2003. Nature and Self in New Age Pilgrimage. *Culture and Religion*. Vol. 4(1): 93-118.
- Ivakhiv, Adrian J. 2006. Toward a Geography of "Religion": Mapping the Distribution of an Unstable Signifier. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Vol 96 (1): 169-175.
- Jackson, Richard H. and Roger Henrie. 1983. Perception of Sacred Space. *Journal of Cultural Geography*. Vol. 3: 94-107.
- Jackson, Richard H., Gilbert Rinschede, and Jill Knapp. 1990. Pilgrimage in the Mormon Church. *Pilgrimage in the United States*. eds G. Rinschede and S.M. Bhardwaj. *Geographia Religionum* Bd. 5. Berlin.
- Jackson, Steve. 2006. Peoples of Appalachia: Cultural Diversity within the Mountain Region. in *A Handbook to Appalachia*. ed by Grace Toney Edwards, JoAnn Aust Asbury, and Ricky L. Cox. Knoxville Tennessee: The University of Tennessee Press.
- Janiskee, Robert L. 2008. Tourism and Recreation in the Carolinas. Chapter 8 in *A Geography of the Carolinas*. ed. Bennett, D. Gordon. Parkway Publishers, Inc. Boone, NC.
- Jones, Francis. 1964. *The Holy Wells of Wales*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Joseph, Lawrence. 1992. Waiting for the Moonbow. page 35 *New York Times* 15 March 1992.
- Kearns, R.A. and W.M. Gesler. 1998. *Putting health into place: landscape, identity, and well being*. Syracuse: New York University Press.
- Kemp, Steve. 1998. Pamphlet. *Great Smokey Mountains National Historical Association of Waterfalls*. Gatlinburg, Tennessee: Great Smokey Mountains Association.
- Kentucky State Parks. 2009. Cumberland Falls State Resort Park. Website. <http://parks.ky.gov/findparks/resortparks/cf/>. 2 February 2009.

- Kong, Lily. 1990. Geography and religion: trends and prospects. *Progress in Human Geography*. Vol. 14 (3): 355-71.
- Kong, Lily. 1992. The sacred and the secular: exploring contemporary meanings and values for religious buildings in Singapore. *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*. Vol. 20 (1): 18-42
- Kong, Lily. 1993. Negotiating Conceptions of Sacred Space: A Case Study of Religious Buildings in Singapore. *Transactions Institute of British Geography*. Vol. 18 (3): 342-58.
- Kong, Lily. 2001. Mapping 'new' geographies of religion: politics and poetics in modernity. *Progress in Human Geography*. Vol. 25(2): 211-233.
- Kuhlke, Olaf. 2008. *Geographies of Freemasonry: Ritual, Lodge, and City in Spatial Context*. Edwin Mellon Press.
- Lake, Medicine Grizzlybear. 1991. Power Centers. Chapter 4 in *The Power of Place: Sacred Ground in Natural and Human Environments*. ed. James Swan. Wheaton, Ill: Quest Books.
- Lane, Belden C. 1998. *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality*. Oxford University Press Oxford.
- Lane, Beldon C. 2002. *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality*. The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Leopold, Aldo. 1973. *A Sand County Almanac*. New York, New York: Sierra Club.
- Lillard, Roy G. 1976. *The History of Bradley County*. Cleveland: East Tennessee Historical Society.
- McConnell, Jeannie. 1982. *The History of Cumberland Falls*. Kentucky State Parks.
- McFarlan, Arthur C. 1961. *Geology of Kentucky*. Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press.
- McGrain, Preston. 1983. *The geologic story of Kentucky*. Lexington: Kentucky Geological Survey.
- McPherson, Robert S. 1947. *Sacred Land Sacred View: Navajo Perceptions of the Four Corners Region*. Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, Brigham Young University.

- Malville, J. M., and J. M. Fritz. 1993. Mapping the Sacred Geometry of Vijayanagara. *Mapping Invisible Worlds*. ed. G. D. Flood. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Matless, David. 1991. Nature, the modern and the mystic: tales from early twentieth century geography. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 272-286.
- Meade, Melinda. 2008. The Population of the Carolinas Chapter 7 in *A Geography of the Carolinas*. ed Bennett, D. Gordon. Boone, NC: Parkway Publishers, Inc.
- Mills, J.E. 1992. *Spiritual Landscapes: A Comparative Study of Burial Mount Sites in the Upper Mississippi River Basin and the practice of Feng Shui in East Asia*. University of Minnesota Dissertation.
- Morse, Janie. 1998. Designing Funded Qualitative Research. Chapter 3. Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry. Eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Mount Mitchell State Park. 2009. Visitors Museum. 7 August 2009.
- Muir, John. 1912. The Yosemite. Page 261-62 *New York Times*.
- Muir, John. 1992. *The Eight Wilderness Discovery Books*. Seattle: Diadem Books.
- Murray, Kenneth. 1993. *Paths of the Ancients...Appalachia Myths, Legends, and Landscapes of the Southern Highlands*. Johnson City, Tennessee: The Overmountain Press.
- Nabokov, P. 1985. Unto These Mountains: Toward the Study of Sacred Geography. *New Scholar*: 479-489.
- Narayanan, Vasudha. 2004. *Hinduism: Origins, Beliefs, Practices, Holy Texts, and Sacred Places*. New York: New York. Oxford University Press.
- Nash, Roderick. 1973. Hetch Hetchy Chapter 10 in *Wilderness and the American Mind*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- National Park Service Display Cherokee Reservation. 2009. Display.
- National Park Service. 2009. Website. <http://www.nps.gov/index.htm>. 10 August 2009.

- Natoli, Salvatore J. 1994. Guidelines for Geographic Education and the Fundamental Themes in Geography. Pp13-22. eds. Robert S. Bednarz and James F. Peterson. *A Decade of Reform in Geographic Education: Inventory and Prospect*. National Council for Geographic Education Indiana, PA Rand McNally Publishing Group support.
- Nature Conservancy. 2009. Website. <http://www.nature.org/> 8 June 2009.
- Nolan, M.L. 1983. Irish Pilgrimage: The Different Tradition. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 73(3): 421-438.
- North Carolina State Parks. 2009. Mount Mitchell State Park. Website. <http://www.ncparks.gov/Visit/parks/momi/main.php>
- O'Brien, Tim. 1990. *Tennessee Off the beaten Path*. Chester, Connecticut: Globe Pequot Press.
- Oldstone-Moore, Jennifer. 2002. *Confucianism: Origins, Beliefs, Practices, Holy Texts, and Sacred Places*. New York: New York. Oxford University Press.
- Oldstone-Moore, Jennifer. 2003. *Taoism: Origins, Beliefs, Practices, Holy Texts, and Sacred Places*. New York: New York. Oxford University Press.
- Olson, Brad. 2003. *Sacred Places North America: 108 Destinations*. California: CCC Publishing.
- Otto, Rudolf. 1925: *The idea of the holy*. translated by J.W. Harvey. 2nd edition. London: Oxford University Press.
- Parks, Chris C. 1994. Sacred Places and Pilgrimage. Chapter 8 in *Sacred Worlds: An Introduction to Geography and Religion*. New York, New York: Routledge
- Patton, Jeffrey C. 2008. Changing Landforms and Rivers, Chapter 2 in *A Geography of the Carolinas*. ed. Bennett, D. Gordon. Parkway Publishers, Inc. Boone, NC.
- Pennick, Nigel. 1996. *Celtic Sacred Landscapes*. New York: Thames and Hudson Publishers.
- Proctor, James. 2006. Introduction: Theorizing and Studying Religion. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 96(1). Pp 165-168.

- Poudel, P.C., and R. P.B. Singh. 1994. Pilgrimage and tourism at Muktinath, Nepal: A study of sacrality and spatial structure. *National Geographical Journal of India*. Vol 40: 249-68.
- Raitz, Karl B. Richard Ulack, and Thomas Leinbach. 1984. *Appalachia A Regional Geography: Land, People, and Development*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press
- Raivo, P.J. 1997. Comparative religion and geography: some remarks on the geography of religion and religious geography. *Temenos* 33: 137-49.
- Ray, Celeste. 2001. *Highland Heritage: Scottish Americans in the American South*. University of North Carolina Press. Chapel Hill.
- Reader, Ian. 1994. Japanese Religions Chapter 8 in *Sacred Places*. ed. Jean Holm, with John Bowker (Themes in religious studies series). London: Pinter Publishers Ltd.
- Reader, Ian. 2007. Pilgrimage growth in the modern world: Meanings and implications. *Religion*. Vol 37: 210-229.
- Redfield, James. 2000. *The Celestine Journal*.
- Rinschede, Gisbert. 1990. Catholic Pilgrimage Places in the United States. In *Pilgrimage in the United States*, ed. Gisbert Rinschede and S. M. Bhardwaj. Geographia Religionum 5. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag.
- Rinschede, Gilbert. 1992. Forms of Religious Tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*. Vol. 19 (1): 51-67.
- Roof, Wade Clark. 2000. Spiritual Seeking in the United States: Report on a Panel Study. *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, Vol. 45e (109): 49-66.
- Rossman, Douglas. 1936. *Where Legends Live: A pictorial guide to Cherokee mythic places*. Cherokee, NC: Cherokee Publishers.
- Ross-Bryant, Lynn. 2005. Sacred Sites: Nature and Nation in the U.S. National Parks. *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*. 15(1) pp. 31-62.
- Rubin, Robert Alden. 2000. *On the Beaten Path: An Appalachian Pilgrimage*. Guilford, Connecticut: The Lyons Press
- Sauer, Carl. 1963. *Land and Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Schwarzkopf, S. Kent. 1985. *A History of Mt. Mitchell and the Black Mountains: Exploration, Development, and Preservation*. Raleigh, North Carolina: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Dept. of Cultural Resources
- Shannon, Thomas. 2006. The Economy of Appalachia. Pp 67-84 in *A Handbook to Appalachia* ed by Grace Toney Edwards, JoAnn Aust Asbury, and Ricky L. Cox. The University of Tennessee Press. Knoxville, TN
- Silver, Timothy. 2003. *Mount Mitchell and the Black Mountains: An Environmental History of the Highest Peaks in Eastern America*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Singh, R.P.B. 1994. The Sacred Geometry of Indias Holy City, Varanasi: Kashi as Cosmogram. *National Geographical Journal of India*. Vol 40: 189-216.
- Sinha, A. 1993. Nature in Hindu mythology, art, and architecture. *National Geographical Journal of India*. Vol 39: 131-40.
- Sinha, A. 1994. Pilgrimage-journey to the sacred landscape of Braj. *National Geographical Journal of India* 40: 239-48.
- Smethurst, David. 2000. Mountain Geography. *The Geographical Review*. Vol. 90(1): 35-56.
- Smith, Jonathon Z. 1998. Religion, religions, religious. In *Critical terms for religious studies*, ed. M.C. Taylor, 269-84. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sopher, David. 1967. *Geography of Religions*. Englewood Cliffs. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Sopher, David. 1981. Geography and religion. *Progress in Human Geography*. Vol 5: 510-524.
- Stewart, Kevin G. and Roberson, Mary-Russell. 2007. *Exploring the Geology of the Carolinas: A Field Guide to Favorite Places From Chimney Rock to Charleston*. The University of North Carolina Press. Chapel Hill.
- Stoddard, R.H. 1968. Analysis of the distribution of Hindu holy sites. *National Geographical Journal of India* Vol. 14: 148-55.
- Stump, R.W. 1986. The Geography of Religion: Introduction. *Journal of Cultural Geography*. Vol. 10(2): 196-217.

- Straw, Richard. 2006. Appalachian History pp 1-26 in *A Handbook to Appalachia* ed by Grace Toney Edwards, JoAnn Aust Asbury, and Ricky L. Cox. The University of Tennessee Press. Knoxville, TN.
- Swan, James A. ed. 1991. *The Power of Place: Sacred Ground in Natural and Human Environments*. Wheaton, Ill: Quest Books.
- Tager, Miles. 1999. *Grandfather Mountain: A Profile*. Parkway Publishers, Inc. Boone, NC.
- Teather, Elizabeth and Chun Shing Chow. 2000. The Geographer and the Fengshui Practitioner: so close and yet so far apart. *Australian Geographer*. Vol. 31 (3): 309- 333.
- Tennessee State Parks. 2009. Red Clay State Park. Website. <http://tn.gov/environment/parks/RedClay/> 10 March 2009.
- Thayer, Robert. 1989. *The biopsychology of mood and arousal*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- The Center for Teaching and Learning. 1997. Appalachian Region Borders: Fords 1962. <http://www.unc.edu/~whisnant/appal/maps/Ford-1962.gif> 18 October 2009.
- Thoreau, Henry David. 1993. *A Year in Thoreau's Journal: 1851*. New York: New York: Penguin Publishers.
- Thoreau, Hendry David (2004). *Walden: A Fully Annotated Edition*. ed. Jeffrey S. Cramer. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.
- Touched by an Angel. 1994. TV Series. CBS Productions.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1973. Ambiquity in Attitudes toward Environment. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Vol 63(4) pp 411-423.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1974. *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1976. Geopietiy: A Theme in mans attachment to nature and to place. *Geographies of the Mind*. Ed. David Lowenthal and Martyn J. Bowden. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp 11-39.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1984. In Place, Out of Place. *GeoScience and Man* Vol. 24: 3-10.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1989. Surface Phenomena and Aesthetic Experience. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 79(2): 233-241.

- United States Geological Survey. 2010. Photo ID hjk00182.  
[http://libraryphoto.cr.usgs.gov/cgi-bin/show\\_picture.cgi?ID=ID.%20Hillers,%20J.K.%20%20182](http://libraryphoto.cr.usgs.gov/cgi-bin/show_picture.cgi?ID=ID.%20Hillers,%20J.K.%20%20182)  
16 September 2010.
- Van West, Carol 1995. *Tennessee's Historic Landscapes : A Traveler's Guide*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- Vastokas, Joan M., Jordan Paper, and Paul S. Tacon. 1990. *Perspectives of Canadian Landscape: Native Traditions*. Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies York University.
- Wagner, Melinda Bollar. 2006. *Appalachian History* pp 181-198 in *A Handbook to Appalachia*. eds. Grace Toney Edwards, JoAnn Aust Asbury, and Ricky L. Cox. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press.
- Weightman, Barbara A. 1996. Sacred Landscapes and the Phenomenon of Light. *The Geographical Review* 86 (1): 59-71.
- Wilson, K. 2003. Therapeutic Landscapes and First Nations peoples: an exploration of culture, health and place. *Heath and Place* 9: 83-93.
- Williamson, William W. [Letter] 1832 April 28. Camp Etowah, Cherokee County, [Georgia] to Wilson Lumpkin, Milledgeville, G[eorgia]. The University of Georgia Libraries.
- Winberry, John J. and Stine, Roy S. 2008. Settlement Geography of the Carolinas Before 1900 Chapter 4 in *A Geography of the Carolinas*. ed. Bennett, D. Gordon. Boone, NC: Parkway Publishers, Inc.

**APPENDIX A:**  
**EXPERT INTERVIEW SAMPLE QUESTIONS**





**APPENDIX B:**  
**VISITOR QUESTIONNAIRE**

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

Site: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why are you visiting this site today? Check all that apply.
  - Closeness from home
  - Distance from home
  - Beautiful scenery
  - Family tradition. Optional, how many times a year does your family visit?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - Certain activity available here. Optional what activity? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Special feeling when at this site. Optional describe \_\_\_\_\_
  - just enjoy visiting
  - other \_\_\_\_\_
2. What do you like best about this site?
3. What category best describes your party?
  - Family with children
  - Alone
  - Couple
  - Church charter group
  - Civic charter group
  - Friends and relatives
  - Other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you consider this place a sacred landscape?
  - Yes
  - No
5. If yes to Question 4, why do you consider this place a sacred landscape?
6. Check the box for a response of yes to the questions below.
  - Does the site evoke awe and/or fear to you?
  - Is this site set apart from other areas as special for you through ritual and/or ceremony?
  - Is this site considered beautiful to you?
7. Do you know of any historical and/or cultural uses of the site? Have you heard of any myths or folklore attached to this site?
  - Yes
  - No
8. *If you answered yes to Question 7, please describe what you have heard about the site briefly. If no, skip this question.*
9. Have you ever visited this site for any religious/spiritual purposes? (*i.e.*, weddings, memorial services, church ceremonies, other ceremonies, or Native-American vision-questing, etc.) If so, what activity have you been involved with? If no, skip this question.
10. How do you feel being at this site?

**APPENDIX C:**  
**PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS**  
**(IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS IN 2009)**

### **Amicalola Falls**

Anonymous. 2009. Visitor. 25 July 2009

Burson, Jim. 2009. Friend of the Park. 25 July 2009.

Dean, Laretta. 2009. Park Ranger. 25 July 2009.

Horn, Ronna. 2009. Lodge Wedding Coordinator. 14 October 2009.

Tanner, Bill. 2009. Park Superintendent. 25 July 2009.

### **Blue Hole Spring**

Abrams, Michael. 2009. Historical Expert. 31 July 2009.

Meadows, Amber. 2009. Park Ranger. 31 July 2009.

### **Cumberland Falls**

Anonymous. 2009. Local. 9 July 2009

Davis, Lisa. 2009. Park Superintendent. 8 July 2009

Thompson, Valerie. 2009. Park Ranger. 8 July 2009

### **Grandfather Mountain**

Aldrige, Diane. 2009. Employee. 10 July 2009.

Anonymous. 2009. Local. 18 October 2009.

Morton, Crae. 2009. Manager/Owner of Grandfather Incorporated. 10 July 2009.

Taylor, Thomas. 2009. Employee of Grandfather Mountain Highland Games.  
10 July 2009.

### **Mount Mitchell**

Anonymous. 2009. 8 August 2009.

Mutel, Matt. 2009. Park Ranger. 7 August 2009.

Tyson, Glenda. 2009. Park Employee. 7 August 2009.