

## Geography, Society, and Cosmology in the Puebloan Northwest: Monumental Features on Cedar Mesa, Utah

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**Abstract:** Systems of monumental features (including great houses, great kivas, shrines, and roads) are now apparent for the Northern San Juan region. This presentation calls attention to the “Et Al network” on Cedar Mesa, perhaps the westernmost known “system” of monumental features during the Pueblo II-III period. To better understand the Et Al network, we turn to other monumental feature systems in the Northern San Juan and develop a comparative perspective of these systems. We examine the Et Al network in light of our comparative efforts, and then discuss other possible great features on Cedar Mesa. These features have a high potential to contribute to our understanding of social structure, identity, and deep history of the Northern San Juan region.

*The mystery does not get clearer by repeating the question,  
nor is it bought with going to amazing places.*

*Until you've kept your eyes  
and your wanting still for fifty years,  
you don't begin to cross over from confusion.*

—Rumi (trans. Coleman Barks 2004)

The first 100 years of archaeological work on Cedar Mesa did not address the magnificent and profound monuments constructed and storied by the ancestral Puebloan societies of the 11<sup>th</sup> through 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Archaeologists have come to refer to the social institution(s) that inspired these tremendous landscapes as the “Chaco Phenomenon.” These landscapes include a constellation of built features that include great houses, great kivas, earthen berms and/or platforms, and roads. In southeastern Utah, these features were not recognized as coherent landscapes that were parts of a greater whole until the late 1980s (Gabriel 1991; Hurst and others 1990; Hurst and others 1993). While prescient researchers involved with the Glen Canyon and Cedar Mesa project lay the groundwork for understanding the deep history of Cedar Mesa’s various social landscapes across the past several millennia, they could not know the complex but subtle pattern that comprises the Chaco Phenomenon in this part of the Northern San Juan region.

After a brief discussion of terminology and localized epistemologies, our paper will provide a cursory outline of the larger cultural features in the “Et Al network,” examine several other networks and their associated natural features in the Northern San Juan for comparative purposes, and return to the Et Al network for a fuller discussion of that particular system. Our paper concludes with a broader discussion of monumental

landscapes and their relevance to the varied histories of geography, society, and cosmology in the northwestern portion of the Puebloan world.

### **Terminology and Epistemology**

Tedious though it may be, we are obliged to say at the outset what we mean by certain terms or expressions. Perhaps the most important terms for explication are those involving the root word “Chaco.” For our purposes, the noun, “Chaco,” refers to the particular place, Chaco Canyon and its surrounds in the San Juan Basin of northwestern New Mexico. Used as an adjective, “Chaco” or “Chacoan” references an apparent wide-spread social phenomenon that is represented by a strong architectural pattern, and includes “monumental features” such as great houses, great kivas, and roads (these are also loaded terms, but not to the point that archaeological scholars of the region would potentially confuse what the words reference). Other earthworks such as “berms” or “platforms” also figure prominently in this constellation of constructed features (Cameron 2002, 2009a).

We also reference the root “Chaco” in our use of the terms “Chaco era” and “post-Chaco era.” There is a whole symposium at the Sacramento meetings devoted to the development of these putative time periods, which directly acknowledge the historical trajectory of Chaco Canyon society. “Chaco era” refers to the general period of great house construction in Chaco Canyon. This span of time is roughly co-incident with the Pueblo II period (A.D. 900-1150). More specifically, in the Northern San Juan region, “Chaco era” probably best references the latter half of the Pueblo II period from A.D. 1075-1150 (Cameron 2009b:11-12). The “post-Chaco era” gives a nod to the apparent continuation of the Chacoan pattern outside Chaco Canyon itself. Although great house construction in Chaco Canyon ceased, Chacoan landscapes continued to be sculpted even well beyond the bounds of the San Juan Basin. This continuity in tradition spans the first half of the Pueblo III period in the Northern San Juan, spanning A.D. 1150 to a poorly defined mid-1200s date.

This paper is heavily informed by what we have written or, occasionally, published about “things Chacoan” in the Northern San Juan (e.g. Hurst 2000; Hurst and Till 2009a,b; Hurst and others 1990; Hurst and others 1993; Till 2001). Most recently, we presented a paper in which we expand upon what we mean by the term “monument” or “monumental” (Hurst and Till 2010). In that paper, we extended “monumentality” to include both constructed and natural features in the landscape in much the same way British archaeologist Richard Bradley (1998; 2000) does in other parts of the globe. For the purposes of this paper, we heavily consider the important and expansive work of Ruth Van Dyke (2003, 2007) in her effort to incorporate direction, associations with earlier sites, and balanced dualism as fundamental components of monumental Chacoan landscapes. Kantner (1997, 2006), too, has played a significant recent role in developing testable arguments for the esoteric functions of roads and road systems in the northern Southwest. Other scholars that have significantly shaped our understandings of roads and things Chacoan include Fred Nials and colleagues (Kincaid 1983; Nials and others 1987), Fowler and Stein (1992), Roney (1992), and Vivian (1997a,b). Finally, though poorly

represented here, the recent work by various researchers in Snead and others (2009) will undoubtedly inform our future road studies.

We must also give a nod to an “experiential” or “phenomenological” perspective to which we are becoming increasingly attuned (sensu Tilley 1994). We also agree with Snead’s (2009) suggestion that we really are looking at an “ethnogeography of the past”; consequently, ethnographic data inform our perceptions and interpretations. By their nature, monumental landscapes require intensive and extensive investigation. The terms “phenomenology” and “experience” are almost pejorative words amongst us processualists, but we must acknowledge that it is only after many years of walking across the landscapes of the Northern San Juan that we have been able to identify several apparent monumental Chacoan landscapes. Our understandings of these landscapes are constantly revised, elaborated, extended, retracted, and sometimes obliterated. Some of our most profound realizations have occurred on or along sites that we have researched and revisited for years before a serendipitous moment opened our minds to a new context, association, or pattern. As one of our colleagues recently noted, “These are things that cannot be documented during a CRM project” (Jason Chuipka, personal communication, 2011).

### **The Et Al Network**

Both R.G. Matson and Bill Lipe will describe and discuss several Chacoan sites important to the Et Al network in this symposium, so we only briefly touch upon these sites here. The sites primarily concerned include: the Et Al Site (42Sa4960/42Sa18431), the H.S.T. Site (42Sa28201), and the Bullet Canyon South (42Sa28203) and Bullet Canyon North (42Sa28202) roads. Other features, both natural and cultural, are associated with this configuration of sites; these will be discussed more fully later in this paper.

The Et Al Site is situated on the mesatop interior of Cedar Mesa, approximately 2 km south of Bullet Canyon (Hurst and Ambler 1993). Surrounded by pinyon-juniper woodland, the architectural elements of the Et Al Site include a great house, a possible great kiva, and road segments. Tree-ring dates obtained from the site indicate that construction activities occurred at the great house during the early A.D. 1200s. The site’s pottery assemblage suggests two components for the site: the first during the late Pueblo II period, and the second during the early A.D. 1200s (Lipe, this symposium). Matson (this symposium) makes the argument that these components reflect the Windgate (A.D. 1060-1100) and Woodenshoe (A.D. 1165-1210) phases, with an occupational hiatus between the two.

The H.S.T. Site is similarly nestled in woodland, approximately 0.5 km north of Bullet Canyon. The apparent primary architectural elements of the site include a great kiva and a road. The site’s pottery assemblage suggests a single component for the site, which appears to date to the early A.D. 1100s, mostly likely spanning the years A.D. 1100-1120 (Matson and Lipe 2009). This would place the site in the early years of the Clay Hills phase (A.D. 1100-1150).

The “tie that binds” these two architectural sites is an apparent single road alignment that has been documented as two sites, one south of Bullet Canyon (the Bullet Canyon Road) (Hurst 2009a) , and one to the north of the Canyon (the Bullet Spring Road) (Hurst 2009b). The Bullet Canyon Road emanates from the Et Al Site. As documented, the road consists of four surviving segments, which vary in width from 8 to 12 m. For most of its length, the road was constructed by means of the cut-and-fill technique (Hurst and Till 2009:61-66; Till 2001; Vivian 1997), resulting in occasional ephemeral lateral berms. As the road descends into Bullet Canyon, it passes by a possible herradura, and then down a possible ramp to the canyon bottom. The road spans a distance of about 2 km. As the road leaves the Et Al Site it has a bearing of nearly due north, but soon bears just west of north.

We have been able to document the Bullet Spring Road in two segments, one of which passes just east of the great kiva at the H.S.T. Site (Hurst 2009b). The road is similar in appearance and apparent construction technique as the Bullet Canyon Road. The road spans a distance of about 0.7 km. From near the north edge of Bullet Canyon, the road approaches the H.S.T. Site from the SSE. As the road exits the north side of the H.S.T. Site, it readjusts to a bearing that is nearly due north.

### **A Very Preliminary Characterization of a Few Select Monumental Chacoan Landscapes in the Northern San Juan Region**

To provide a somewhat comparative “dataset” for this paper, we briefly characterize several select, apparent monumental Chacoan landscapes in the Northern San Juan region. The monumental landscapes that we consider here are for the Bluff Great House, Decker Ruin, and the relatively enormous Cottonwood-Comb Network. In addition to the obvious built features in these landscapes, we draw particular attention to natural features and to sites or materials that either precede or follow the Chaco and post-Chaco eras.

#### *Bluff Great House*

The architectural components of the Bluff Great House Site itself have been extensively reported in Cameron (2009c). In the past we have been able to discuss and report on some of the components in the Bluff Great House monumental landscape, including: alignments to the equinoxes and winter solstice; alignments to or associations with impressive natural landscape features; directional references to earlier community centers associated with the Pueblo I and early Pueblo II periods; and apparent protohistoric shrines on and in the great house rubble mound (Cameron 2009a:136-138, 190; Hurst 2010; Hurst and Till 2006, 2009; Till 2009; Hurst 2010). These relationships are summarized in Table 1. We underscore the fact that these associations were only made across the span of at least a decade as researchers from the University of Colorado investigated the Bluff Great House, and only through the collaborative efforts of many people.

Most recently (and heretofore unreported), we have observed apparent summer solstice alignments between the Bluff Great House and natural and built landscape features in the Bluff valley. Standing atop the great house at summer solstice, the sun rises over a point on the eastern cliffs that marks an access route from the top of the Bluff Sandstone cliffs to the valley below. This subtle access has been known by Bluff locals for years, and its antiquity is underscored by the presence of strategically placed hand-and-toeholds along the route; however, it is only this past year (2010) that we made the association between route and solstice. Encouraged by the possibility that horizon markers might be associated with the summer solstice, Till observed where the sun set on the horizon from the great house. In previous years, no features were immediately apparent from the Bluff Great House at this point below the Bluff cliffs. This year, however, Till actually went to this place, at the top of a steep talus slope and at the base of the steep Bluff Sandstone cliffs and LOOKED.

On the narrow terrace between cliff and talus is an unusual configuration of cultural features. These features include a well-faced masonry platform built against the cliff face, a boulder with deep bedrock grooves, a boulder with well-executed spiral petroglyphs, and a number of small stone enclosures. The scattered pottery assemblage at this unrecorded site includes Mesa Verde Black-on-white pottery and Tusayan Polychrome, a Tsegi Orange Ware, both of which indicate a strong Pueblo III (or A.D. 1200s) component for the site. As yet, an earlier component is not indicated on the site, though we caution that our observations for the unrecorded site are very preliminary.

#### *The Decker Ruin Monumental Landscape*

Decker Ruin is found in Cottonwood Canyon approximately 14 km north of Bluff. As the site is situated on private ranch land, access is a tricky issue, and our knowledge of the site itself is scant, and has only been mentioned in passing in past research (Hurst and Till 2002, 2009). The site is perched on a mesita that immediately overlooks Cottonwood Wash. The primary architectural component is a candidate great house structure with a strong Pueblo III component (Hurst and Till 2002). No great kiva is apparent for the site. However, along the southern face of the mesita is a large, slab-lined enclosure that is similar to other Pueblo I – very early Pueblo II period “dance plazas,” observed in the region (Allison and others in press). The site is also associated with a configuration of roads. Since most of the road alignments occur on public lands, it is to these features that we turn our attention.

Roads apparently approach the Decker Ruin from the south and the north. We focus on the north road here. The road is unrecorded, so our discussion of the feature should be considered preliminary. The road is apparent as a series of segments that traverse about 2.7 km of the high, alluvial Pleistocene terrace west of Cottonwood Wash. Like many of the roads in the Northern San Juan, the road tends to be 8 to 10 m wide (Hurst and Till 2009; Till 2001). Probably most of the segments do not exceed 50 cm in depth, though a few do exceed that depth. The road is constructed in much the same way as is apparent in the region, using some version of the cut-and-fill technique. This often results in the removal of fill in the center of the cut, and being deposited either on one or

both sides of the cut, resulting in one or two lateral berms. As a personal observation, some of the region's most dramatic examples of berms occur along this particular road. This probably results from the removal and use of alluvial cobbles, which naturally occur in the terrace on which the road is cut.

The road has a general north-to-south bearing. However, the road segments vary considerably in its bearing along its course. The general impression is that the particular segments were engineered and directed to connect or reach particular places, which include arroyo crossings and a relatively large Pueblo I period pueblo. The arroyo crossings are particularly interesting. These small drainages flow into Cottonwood Wash from the west, deepening as they flow from west to east. In many instances, the road segments appear to cross the arroyos where they begin to cut deeply into the underlying bedrock, and drop from the ancient alluvial terrace to the current floodplain of Cottonwood Wash.

Currently, the senior author is not particularly struck by any particular horizon markers in association with the road, except perhaps by its apparent termination at a point to the north where the Cottonwood Canyon drainage becomes more enclosed by canyon walls, presenting a rather "tunnel-like" effect. At this point of termination, the road descends into an arroyo that flows into Cottonwood Wash. Like other arroyo crossings along the road, the arroyo's character changes from wash to canyon, plunging deeply to the floodplain below and to the east. Large trees grow at many of these crossings.

A few words should be said about the road stretching south of Decker Ruin. This road appears to approach an impressive pueblo structure, if not candidate great house, that is perched on and around a mesita (42Sa23744) that overlooks the Cottonwood drainage. Jalbert (1999:93-99) recorded the site, and noted that the pottery assemblage reflects considerable time depth, spanning the middle Pueblo II through late Pueblo III periods. Jalbert emphasizes the late Pueblo III component of the site, and further notes the presence of Hopi yellow ware, the latter indicating one or more protohistoric visits to the site.

We should note that another road south of 42Sa23744 apparently links this site to other significant cultural features, including an apparent Pueblo I period great kiva, and natural features such as the paired alcoves that are known locally as Baby Mummy Cave site. Numerous springs and seeps occur around the Baby Mummy Cave, which also marks the road's descent again into Cottonwood Wash. Just downstream of this descent is a candidate great house site, the significance of which was first acknowledged by Nancy Mahoney (in Jalbert 1999:90). The pottery assemblage at this site includes well-represented components from the Pueblo I, II, and III periods.

### *The Cottonwood-Comb Network*

Nearly 10 years ago we described the Cottonwood-Comb Network as a "loop" of great house sites connected by a set of road segments that span Comb Ridge (Hurst and Till 2006:80; Till and Hurst 2002). Severance (2006) has criticized the network as an

enclosed loop, particularly the eastern portion of it in Cottonwood Wash. Severance may be correct. The extensive set of apparent roads discussed above associated with Decker Ruin may represent one or more networks there, and may not actually be a part of a larger “loop.” However, we remain firm in our belief that the western portion of the network is just that, a network of built and natural features that are interconnected by a number of road segments. We believe that the construction of these roads could have initiated during the late Pueblo II period (ca. A.D. 1075 to 1150), but were also maintained or constructed throughout the early Pueblo III period (ca. A.D. 1150 to 1225). It is quite possible that at least some of these features had earlier origins in the late Pueblo I or early Pueblo II periods as well.

We have discussed the Cottonwood-Comb Network elsewhere (Till and Hurst 2002), but focused on the cultural features (i.e. great house sites, great kivas, roads and road-related sites), giving short shrift to natural features. Additionally, many of the “great features” along this route have significant earlier components. Most of these components date to the Pueblo I period (A.D. 750 to 900), although earlier Basketmaker components may be easily obscured in these places as well. We wish to touch briefly on the particulars of these natural features, and earlier cultural components, in the text below and in Table 2.

As the Tank Mesa Road extends from the Bluff valley, and its remarkable array of cultural and natural features, the Tank Mesa Road was apparently built to follow the alignment of two important early Pueblo sites, the Bluff Pueblo I village and the Dance Plaza site. Both sites are marked by remarkable natural formations of paired monoliths. The Tank Mesa Road exhibits a remarkably straight bearing, and may make some reference to the Bears Ears, a remarkable natural horizon marker in the region (Hurst and Till 2010; Till 2001). As the road crosses Tank Mesa, it approaches a small canyon head that harbors a spring. This spring is notable for its singularity in contrast to the expansive, relatively “barren” landscape surrounding the spring. Currently, this location is made all the more visible for the presence of a cottonwood tree. We also call attention to the fact that this location is also marked by a long, pecked bedrock rock groove, a consistently rare feature in the Northern San Juan region and the San Juan Basin.

The road alignment, if not the road itself, continues to Comb Ridge, a mighty monocline of rock that traverses a large portion of the Northern San Juan landscape. The location of the road alignment’s crossing at the crest of the ridge is marked by a complex of remarkable built features including a large shrine or herradura and an apparent signal fire location (Hurst and Till 2009; Till 2001). The road descends the precipitously steep west face of Comb Ridge along an arguably manipulated talus slope or ramp (Hurst 1998; Till 2001). At the very base of this descent the road passes through two herraduras that flank either side of the road. At this point the road makes a significant change in bearing to the north. Facing north, a walker faces directly toward the next cross-over point along the ridge, a significant natural notch in the Comb Ridge, which lies some 17 kilometers to the north. In both of these cross-over locations, researchers have observed petroglyph panels that contain arguable road-related imagery (Hurst and Till 2009; Severance 1999; Till 2001).

Traversing the landscape to the aforementioned notch, a walker will pass by two great house locations. From south to north these are the Comb Wash Great House site (post-Chaco era) and Arch Canyon Ruin (Chaco era). Hurst (Hurst and Till 2009:77-78) makes a compelling case that these sites may represent a set of serially constructed Chacoan features that seem to span the Pueblo II and III periods in much the same way that Fowler and Stein (1992) have documented in Manuelito Canyon. Both places are remarkable for natural landscape features. Both sites are located near or overlooking major confluences with Comb Wash. The Comb Wash Great House is situated such that it lies below two natural spires at the crest of Comb Ridge. The Arch Canyon Ruin, with its candidate great house, is dramatically nestled at the mouth of Arch Canyon, which quickly becomes a deep, steep-walled canyon to the west of the site, a remarkable contrast with the nearby open flats of Comb Wash. Significantly, we think, this canyon system reaches up toward the Bears Ears buttes (Hurst and Till 2010). Table 2 lists other important cultural and natural features associated with the sites, including an interesting configuration of towers at the Comb Wash Great House Site.

After crossing the Comb Ridge at the notch, the road proceeds to the north (Severance 1999). The senior author has observed a Jeddito Yellow Ware sherd at the crest of the Comb following the projected route of the road. En route to the Red Knobs Great House site, the road crosses the steep-walled Whiskers Draw. Very near to this juncture of road and canyon is the Waving Wand Great Kiva site, which consists of a great kiva and an associated roomblock that is set into a relatively deep “cave” at the bottom of the canyon (REFS).

A walker then continues north along the road route to the Red Knobs Great House site (Severance 1999). The site is located at the confluence of a large side drainage with Cottonwood Wash. In addition to a great kiva, the site includes an interesting cluster of relatively large roomblocks situated on and around two large sandstone buttes in the valley’s bottom (Allison 2004; Till and Hurst 2002). Examining pottery assemblage data and architecture, Jim Allison (2004) has demonstrated considerable time depth at this location, a significant component of which reaches at least as far back as the Pueblo I period.

### **A Consideration of the Et Al Monumental Landscape**

We return now to Cedar Mesa and the Et Al landscape. In the first part of our paper, we disclosed details particular to the main sites, but did not think outside the bounds of the sites. Are there natural landscape features that figure significantly in the Et Al network? If so, how do these compare with other features observed elsewhere in the Northern San Juan region? Are there other cultural features or materials associated with the Et Al network that might have figured importantly in a larger, monumental landscape? What are the chronological relationships of these features? Are changes through time in the configuration of the network apparent? Perhaps a good way to address these questions is to “process” the road itself, or in this case to walk the Et Al landscape along the path of words.

Starting from the Et Al great house, a walker notes that the road departs from a “socket” created by the great house (to the west) and an encircling berm of midden and earth to the south and east (Hurst 2009a). The pottery assemblage in the berm suggests a strong Pueblo III (early 1200s) association (Lipe, this symposium). Proceeding along the faint swale that is the road, just north of the Et Al site one might find a few Jeddito Black-on-yellow bowl sherds. A little farther on, the walker encounters faint indications of a late Pueblo site, perhaps dating to the early Pueblo III period. Soon afterwards, the road all but disappears into the grasslands of a local alluvial basin.

Cedar Mesa’s horizon line changes with the tilt of the landscape and the type of vegetation. Frequently, however, the Et Al skyline is dramatically punctuated by several features, which include the Bears Ears and Woodenshoe Butte to the north, the Mossback Buttes to the northwest, the Henry Mountains to the west, and Navajo Mountain to the southwest. From the Et Al landscape, occasional views to the south and east offer Monument Valley, the Carrizos and Lukachuki Mountains, Shiprock, the Sleeping Ute, a distant Mesa Verde, and the closer Abajo Mountains.

The northern buttes in particular dominate the Et Al skyline. A walker leaving the Et Al great house by road is oriented to the Woodenshoe Butte, which is actually a pair of darkly forested buttes or hills on the northern horizon. However, near where the road disappears into the aforementioned grasslands, the road makes a course change, bearing just slightly to the west. Not until the walker reaches the next forested ridgeline does the road appear again as a slight swale that is found immediately east of a Pueblo II period habitation site. The ephemeral road commences on its NNW bearing through the pinyon-juniper woodland, and ultimately re-emerges from the forest at the slickrock edge of Bullet Canyon. With the exposure of bedrock, the road swale necessarily disappears; however, near the canyon’s edge and along the projected route of the road is a herradura, a low, C-shaped masonry feature open to the direction of the road toward the canyon. At the canyon’s edge, an apparent “ramp” of earth and rock descends into the canyon. While most of the material in the ramp is probably native, one has the impression that this feature may have been manipulated to accommodate the passage of the road.

Bullet Canyon is not terribly deep at this point. Indeed, one is essentially at the head of the canyon in this location. As the walker begins to ascend the north side of the canyon, he finds a seep or small spring. A few corrugated jar sherds have been noted in this location, indicating only a Pueblo II-III association.

The road continues a few hundred meters to the NNW of the spring, and proceeds into the heavily forested mesa top of Cedar Mesa to the H.S.T. Site (Hurst 2009b). As discussed earlier, this site is characterized by a great kiva depression and an early 12<sup>th</sup> century midden. At the H.S.T. Site, the road changes bearing again, to a degree or two east of true north. The road proceeds along this new bearing through a dense pinyon-juniper forest for about 0.5 km before “disappearing.”

Nearly due north of the Et Al road's northern terminus is a late Pueblo III period mesa-top site, which has the descriptive name of "Fortified Pueblo" (42Sa3680/5026) (Lipe 1970). While no apparent road segment has yet been observed to approach this site, its proximity and northern alignment suggest a relationship or an association between the two features. The curious architecture of this open set of rooms, which include possible plaza spaces, may indicate that community-oriented functions occurred here. The settlement pattern on Cedar Mesa associated with the mid to late A.D. 1200s (Redhouse phase) is characterized by the occupation of places where access may be tightly controlled, places such as canyon alcoves and perched mesitas. Assuming that the Woodenshoe phase population was the same genetic group as the succeeding Redhouse phase, this radical shift in settlement strategy presumably marked significant and concomitant changes in that society's political structure and ritual life as well. Crow Canyon's research in neighboring southwest Colorado show compelling spatial associations between late A.D. 1200s villages and earlier great house sites (e.g. Coffey 2010; Duff and Ryan 1998; Till 2007). Perhaps a similar kind of relationship existed in this Cedar Mesa case.

A few words should be said about possible associated sites in the vicinity of what now appears to be a relatively modest monumental landscape. R.G. Matson has observed and documented a possible C-shaped shrine to the northeast of Et Al, and Till has noted several possible shrines, of varying configuration, to the southeast of Et Al. These northeastern and southeastern shrines are within 2 km of the Et Al site. Hurst has observed slightly farther flung shrines to the east and west, at distances of about 6 km from the Et Al site. Leaning heavily on the ethnographic work by Ortiz (1969), Ortman (2008) has made a terrific argument for directional shrines in association with Castle Rock Pueblo, a Pueblo III community center in southwestern Colorado. Although Castle Rock is arguably a few decades later than the last occupation of Et Al, it does not seem such a stretch to suggest that such a system may have occurred in association with Et Al.

## **Discussion**

The apparent Et Al monumental landscape, with its configuration of constructed features, natural landscape elements, and noncontemporaneous sites or materials, does not appear to differ radically from other Chacoan/post-Chacoan monumental landscapes sampled here for the Northern San Juan region. Indeed, patterned relationships both among and between monumental landscapes are suggested by the comparison. Finally, we suggest that later regional differences in settlement strategies may correspond with the differing associations between domestic architecture and ancestral community centers.

Great houses, great kivas, the routes followed by roads, and road-related features were consistently positioned in the landscape to accommodate topographic high and/or lows. Recognizing the manipulation of the cultural landscape to accommodate both topographic highs and lows at the larger monumental landscape scale is not something that archaeologists in the Northern San Juan region have done consistently or systematically until recently, particularly in the Utah portion of the Northern San Juan

region (but see Severance (1999:188), Till (2001), and Van Dyke and King (2010) for exceptions). The summer solstice horizon alignments of the Bluff Great House landscape emphasize the “high” and the “low” in its apparent solstice pageantry. The perched position of the Bluff Great House Site within the Bluff valley reflects this emphasis in high/low differentiation. So too does the passage of the Decker North Road, the segments of which seem to be oriented toward canyon heads, where the character of the drainage changes from arroyo to canyon, or where the drainage actually begins to cut into the underlying bedrock. Furthermore, there is a possible correspondence between “low” and “wet.” Great houses in the Northern San Juan frequently occur at the confluence of drainages, and the routes of roads are manipulated to intersect occasionally with springs. Van Dyke and King (2010) argue that Pueblo III period towers may have referenced the lower, wet worlds of Puebloan origins, and the higher, drier world of the present and future. The presence and positioning of towers at the Comb Wash Great House site is an outstanding example of this possible association.

Cardinal direction, particularly along the north-to-south axis, appears to figure consistently in northern San Juan landscapes. These orientations are explicit in the Decker and Et Al landscapes, and may be implied in roads associated with the Cottonwood/Comb Network. The north-to-south axis figures prominently in the monumental landscapes of the San Juan Basin, and Chaco Canyon proper (e.g. Lekson 1999). Differentiating the Northern San Juan landscapes from those of the San Juan Basin is a the very strong association of Northern San Juan landscapes with natural and twinned features. The orientation of the Et Al road is associated with both geographic north and tremendous paired monumental features (Woodenshoe Buttes) on the northern horizon.

The monumental Chacoan landscapes of the Northern San Juan clearly reference or elaborate upon aspects of Lipe’s (2006:263-271) San Juan pattern, a long-lived set of architectural and settlement elements that include direction, dualism, and apparent cosmological references in architecture and settlement layout. As patterned elements of the monumental landscape, the San Juan pattern is thus extended from architectural feature to site layout to the vast landscape surrounding a community and beyond. While incipient, our considerations of the Et Al landscape may unfold into a more systematic program of study to evaluate the potential for nested sets of shrines akin to what Ortman (2008) has observed for Castle Rock Pueblo in nearby southwestern Colorado.

The communication of Puebloan cosmology was deeply embedded in these monumental landscapes. Rituals performed in and across these landscapes were, at least in part, perhaps universally shared and very public. This stands in contrast to great kivas and great houses, the frequent targets of our field research. Access to ceremonies performed in great houses and kivas could easily be controlled and restricted. Arguably this emphasis on architecture has structured our research to focus on the exclusionary nature of the Chaco phenomenon. As roads and routes become more apparent to us as stages for Puebloan ritual performance, their role in community politics, organization, and history will become more apparent.

The profound references to pre-Pueblo II period history are not very apparent for Cedar Mesa's Et Al landscape. This may be due in part to the near absence of Pueblo I and early Pueblo II period components on this part of Cedar Mesa. It is interesting to note that in other portions of the Northern San Juan, the Pueblo I and early Pueblo II period components seem to be the focus of architectural references, not the Basketmaker III period. This may simply be a function of visibility, or the lack thereof, for the Basketmaker III components. Since this earlier portion of Puebloan history is present on Cedar Mesa, the mesa might be an ideal landscape to test the hypothesis that Basketmaker III did not function to "anchor" the later Chacoan landscapes.

History, however, did play an important role in the Et Al monumental landscape. Recent work by Lipe, Matson, and their students at the Et Al site suggests two components for the site, one during the terminal portion of the Chaco era (A.D. 1075 to 1150) and another during the latter end of the post-Chaco era (A.D. 1150 to 1225). This is a pattern observed for the Bluff Great House, and is suggested by the serial relationship between the Comb Wash and Arch Canyon great house sites. Furthermore, this landscape was apparently traversed and recognized by Puebloan people well after the depopulation of the Northern San Juan in the late A.D. 1200s, an aspect of Puebloan history that seems to occur across the entire region.

As mentioned earlier, the final decades of Cedar Mesa's occupation ushered in a radically different settlement pattern. By the middle A.D. 1200s, the focus of habitation apparently shifted from mesa top to canyon interior, from open sites to locations with highly controllable access. Much attention has also been given to the defensive posture of these sites. At about this same time, communities east of Comb Wash and across the Great Sage Plain coalesced into large villages, resulting in what has been referred to as the "Great Pueblo period" of the mid to late 13<sup>th</sup> century (Kantner 2004). In contrast, the population of Cedar Mesa seemed to "disperse" into smaller communities tucked under the protected ledges of Cedar Mesa's canyons. Whereas the larger villages of the Northern San Juan still seemed to reference nearby or associated great houses, this generally does not seem to be the case for Cedar Mesa's smaller communities. Perhaps a social climate existed in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century that prohibited such relationships, or even made them undesirable. Lipe and Matson (this symposium) indicate that the Pueblo communities on Cedar Mesa may have ties with Kayenta populations to the south in northern Arizona. In contrast, the scanty extra-local materials found in the late Pueblo III communities of southwestern Colorado suggest some affiliation with Puebloan populations in central New Mexico (Till 2007). Do these pottery data indicate affiliations with different ethnic or social groups? If so, do the eastern and western Northern San Juan populations of the late Pueblo III period have different outlooks on their post-Chacoan antecedents, perhaps because of their far-flung relationships with populations to the south? Does the Fortified Pueblo site of the Et Al network offer an exception to this rule in the western portion of the Northern San Juan?

The Pueblo II and III period occupation of Cedar Mesa offers a wonderful opportunity to understand the complex history of changing ritual lifeways and social organization in the dynamic Pueblo world, particularly in the transitions from the Chaco

to post-Chaco eras, and from the post-Chaco era to the so-called Great Pueblo period of the mid to late A.D. 1200s. At least one other great house site, the Owen Site, has been documented on Cedar Mesa (William Lipe, this symposium; Natalie Fast, this symposium; Hurst 1999), and we know of other constructed features that may be integral to monumental landscapes on the Mesa. These features, and their associated surrounding communities, should become the foci of intense study. It is gratifying to know that Bill Lipe and R.G. Matson, with their keen interest and respect for the deep history of the Northern San Juan's western pale, are setting the course for at least another 40 years of productive research on Cedar Mesa.

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