The Project: Periodic gatherings and recognized places of veneration help integrate residentially dispersed populations, such as those occupying Cedar Mesa. They contribute to the construction of a cultural landscape reflecting shared traditions. In May, 2012, we used auger testing and geophysical prospecting to investigate four possible great kivas, and also mapped a defensive/plaza site and a large possible shrine. The research was supported by grants from the Hampton Fund at U. of British Columbia and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Sampling surveys in the 1970s (Fig. 1, right) had identified numerous small dispersed habitation and limited activity sites dating to AD 1060-1270 (late PII and PIII) in central Cedar Mesa. Community center sites (large, with public architecture) were not found, and shrines were not recognized. In subsequent years, probable community centers or places of veneration were identified by others. Our May fieldwork focused on some of these sites.

Two Late PII sites—HST (Fig. 2) and Todie (Fig. 3) showed large depressions with little evidence of surface architecture, possibly indicating they were isolated great kivas. HST also has an associated road trace. Our fieldwork did reveal kivas, but not great ones. Possible maximum and minimum kiva sizes are shown, but the actual diameters are most likely in the 4-6 m range. The large surface depressions appear to have resulted from erosion associated with filling fairly deep unlined kivas of standard size.

The Fortified Mesa site (Figs. 4 & 5) was mapped in 2012. It dates primarily to the early-mid 1200s (PIII) and is in a defensible position on a steep-sided mesita with a very large viewshed. It is dominated by a massively-built 4-room central structure with associated courtyards, and has a small wall-enclosed plaza (Fea. 4). This site could have served as a defensive redoubt, but appears also to have been a place for group assemblies.

Our 2012 investigation showed that the large shallow depression at Et Al (Fea. 10, Fig. 7, above) does not reflect a great kiva, although there evidently has been some artificial lowering of the ground surface. Auger and remote sensing results were in agreement. The close association of several small rubble and refuse deposits indicates that Fea. 10 was a locus for activities, possibly including group assemblies.

Augering and remote sensing indicate that the large depression at the Owen site (Fig. 8, left) was in fact formed by the collapse of a pit structure with a diameter between 11.1 and 14.3 m—within the lower part of the great kiva range. Our 2012 investigation showed that the large shallow depression at Et Al (Fea. 10, Fig. 7, above) does not reflect a great kiva, although there evidently has been some artificial lowering of the ground surface. Auger and remote sensing results were in agreement. The close association of several small rubble and refuse deposits indicates that Fea.10 was a locus for activities, possibly including group assemblies.

Fig. 1. Map of central Cedar Mesa showing locations of sites.

Fig. 2. (left) The HST site

Fig. 3 (right) The Todie site

Fig. 4 (left). View of central Roomblock.

Fig. 5 (far left). Map of Fortified Mesa site.

Fig. 6. (above) Main rubble mound at Et Al (42SA18431)

Fig. 7. (right) Map of central part of Et Al.

Fig. 8 (left) Map of the Owen site, showing the great kiva depression.

The Snow Flats Road mesita (42Sa6179; Fig. 9, left) is located in the North Road area (Fig. 1). It was intensively occupied in late BM III-early PI, but also has three circular or semi-circular dry-laid masonry structures we interpret as shrines and that probably date to late PI or PIII. The largest of these (Fig. 10, right) is ca. 10 m in diameter and has a massive enclosing wall.

Fig. 9. Snow Flats mesa, on the right.

Fig. 10. Large circular enclosure.