

Kodak House and Others at Wetherill Mesa

Together with the Wetherills, Nordenskiöld explored other alcove sites along the westerly cliffs of Wetherill Mesa. One, *Step House*, had an occupation that spanned the BM-III to P-III eras. Four pithouses have been excavated; one, informatively reconstructed, cf. Figure 2.5. Others remain beneath a nearby P-III pueblo. The site is accessible to visitors. Another, called *Mug House* [Rohn; 1963], is named for the abundance of decorated ceramic P-III “coffee-type” mugs that were unearthed there and which are regarded as a quintessential Mesa Verde innovation—diagnostic of a time and a people.

Mug House is difficult to reach, and the explorers placed their field camp there to protect their belongings. Even now, over one century later, it remains closed to visitors. Another off-limits alcove ruin, *Kodak House*, is unexceptional except for its name. With six kivas and 30 to 40 rooms, it is about one-quarter the size of Long House. As Nordenskiöld writes [1893:30], “I shall not enter into any description of this ruin, which would only be a repetition of what I said above of Long House.” But Kodak House had its own advantages, as Nordenskiöld [1893:21] explains: “This cliff-dwelling is named after the well-known instantaneous camera, ‘Kodak,’ as we kept one of our apparatuses hidden for some time in one of the rooms.”

Mesa Verde, long a National Park, is now a *World Heritage Cultural Site*. The greater story, replete with modern photographs, is well-told by Wenger [1991], a retired Mesa Verde Park archaeologist.

THE GREATER MESA VERDE REGION, INCLUDING THE TOTAH

The Ancestral Puebloan Mesa Verde area explored by Nordenskiöld and the Wetherill brothers is believed representative of a considerably larger and coherent Four-Corners Puebloan occupation, extending into southern Utah and Colorado, north of Mesa Verde itself, and exclusive of New Mexico. Here, in the Mesa-Verde-related part of what we have loosely called Four Corners, there was a relatively uniform series of post-BM-III Mesa Verdean Puebloan cultural developments. This greater cultural region, and its people, are often called *Northern San Juan Anasazi* and used interchangeably with *Greater Mesa Verde Anasazi*. The story, with photographs, is well told by Fersuson [1996] for the Greater Mesa Verde region.

It is important to comprehend the scope of this Greater Mesa Verde region. Varien et al. [1996:86 ff] have compiled, and analyzed, a vast amount of disparate information in the edited Adler [1996] volume referenced earlier. They find that a region about ten-fold larger than Mesa Verde, extending mainly towards its northwest, was relatively uniform culturally (and linguistically), judged in part from the uniformity of pottery designs and architecture throughout the greater region.

Varien et al. [1996] also deduced an average, and relatively stable, population density of about 30 people per square mile throughout the P-III period—corresponding to 2,500 people at Mesa Verde and 25,000 in the greater region. This population estimate for all of Mesa Verde, about ten-fold greater than for Cliff Palace itself, seems reasonable. The relevance, among other considerations, is that such estimates must be consonant with any model of P-IV Puebloan migrations to the northern Rio Grande Valley, particularly the Chama and Jemez Cycles.

Greater Mesa Verde comprises those Puebloan regions minimally influenced by the expansive Chaco culture to the south, which was comparable in population and larger in spatial extent than Greater Mesa Verde, as quantified later in this chapter. The Chaco-Mesa Verde interface, certainly during P-I to P-III times, followed the San Juan River downstream: westerly, from the Continental Divide, then past Navajo Reservoir to the Arizona border.

Remarkably, very little is known about the prehistoric population dynamics along this interface. Was there, for example, a sharp ethnic boundary dominated by one of the two major Ancestral Puebloan cultures at a particular time, or was it a region that helped blur such ethnic distinctions? The answers, significant for our interests, are few. Historically, Mesa Verde scholars have studied the Greater Mesa Verde area, with its extensive ruins in remote northern areas and Chaco scholars have looked to the south, each ignoring activities along the San Juan River interface. But, in response to growing interest, some archaeologists have recently named this area the *Totah*—Navajo for *rivers coming together* [Stein & Fowler; 1996]. The geographic reference is to the broad region where the San Juan intersects its several tributaries, including the Chaco Wash and the La Plata and Animas Rivers. The new name enhances the legitimacy of the Totah—where the Northern San Juan and Chaco Anasazi cultural areas overlapped—as a subject for specialized study. We return to this cultural interface later.

MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK, A HISTORY

1880s to 1906

In letters to his father written a few days after his arrival at Wetherill's Alamo Ranch, the younger Nordenskiöld [1991:29–31] told of the collections of P-III Mesa Verde material culture that the local “educated cowboys” had amassed. Dated July 2, 1891, we learn that

A few years ago, Wetherill's sons . . . began digging the ruins. During the first winter, they dug almost exclusively in “Cliff Palace” and put together an impressive collection of all types of household items, as well as a number of crania and several mummies, that is to say, human bodies preserved by drying, etc. The collection was sold to a museum for 3,000 dollars.

Continuing,

Some time after that, they made excavations in several cliff houses, and assembled yet a larger and more complete collection, which is being offered for [an astounding] 8,000 dollars. It consists of 5,000 items. I include a sort of catalog of it here. Two workers, who used to be under the employ of the Wetherills have since put together another important collection from excavations in another area. It has been taken eastward to be exhibited, and will possibly direct scientific attention towards the region. As I have said, all of this has been done by cowboys as a speculative enterprise.

The following day, he wrote to his father, “the only scientific expedition that has examined [the ruins] was the Jackson and Holmes party in 1874. . . since then, the matter has been handled only by cowboys and dilettantes.”

Science and method came naturally to Nordenskiöld, and he understood instinctively that a well-documented artifact collection, with known provenance, would command high prices in the rapidly emerging prehistoric Puebloan antiquities market. Thus, in a postscript to an August 14th letter to his father, Nordenskiöld [1991] pleads, “Couldn't 8,000 dollars be gotten from some rich man in order to buy Wetherill's collection? It is one of the two or three good collections in existence, and is certainly the most complete.”

Although Richard Wetherill had not yet learned the added value of careful archaeological documentation—he would soon enough—the high \$8,000 price included the fact that Wetherill himself had discovered, amassed, and vetted each of the 5,000 Puebloan items.

The Tano language, believed to be similar to the Tewa dialect of Santa Clara, was spoken at several Puebloan villages southeast of Santa Fe, along Galisteo Creek: among them the former Pueblos of San Lazaro, Galisteo, and San Cristóbal. Along with two Tewa Pueblos further north, Cuyamungue and Jacona, these Tanoan Pueblos—which survived no more than 100 years after the arrival of the Spanish colonizers—will figure in chapters that follow.

The Towa Villages

The single Jemez Puebloan village of Walatowa is about 30 miles downstream from the sources of the Jemez River high in the Valle Grande. The Jemez River, too, is a major tributary of the Rio Grande, joining it well south of the Chama River and somewhat south of Santa Fe and Galisteo Creek. Today, the Indians of Jemez Pueblo are the sole speakers of Towa, and have been for the past 150 years. It was in 1838 that the (supposedly) Towa-speaking Pueblo of Pecos, about 25 miles southeast of Santa Fe, was abandoned. Sited in the southern foothills of the Sangre de Cristo range and near an east-west trail long a route for trade between the Plains and the Southwest, Pecos was the largest and most prosperous pueblo when the Spaniards first entered the Rio Grande Valley in the 1500s. However, during the 1800s, after debilitating raids from Indians of the Southern Plains (who now had swift horses) and devastating epidemics of European diseases—particularly smallpox and measles—the last of the people of Pecos, fewer than two dozen, moved westward to resettle at Jemez Pueblo. (Figure 4.6)

Interestingly, there is no agreement at present regarding the language spoken at Pecos. The details are worth recounting, if only as an example of the difficulty of obtaining unambiguous verification of issues still found in textbooks and guidebooks as well documented

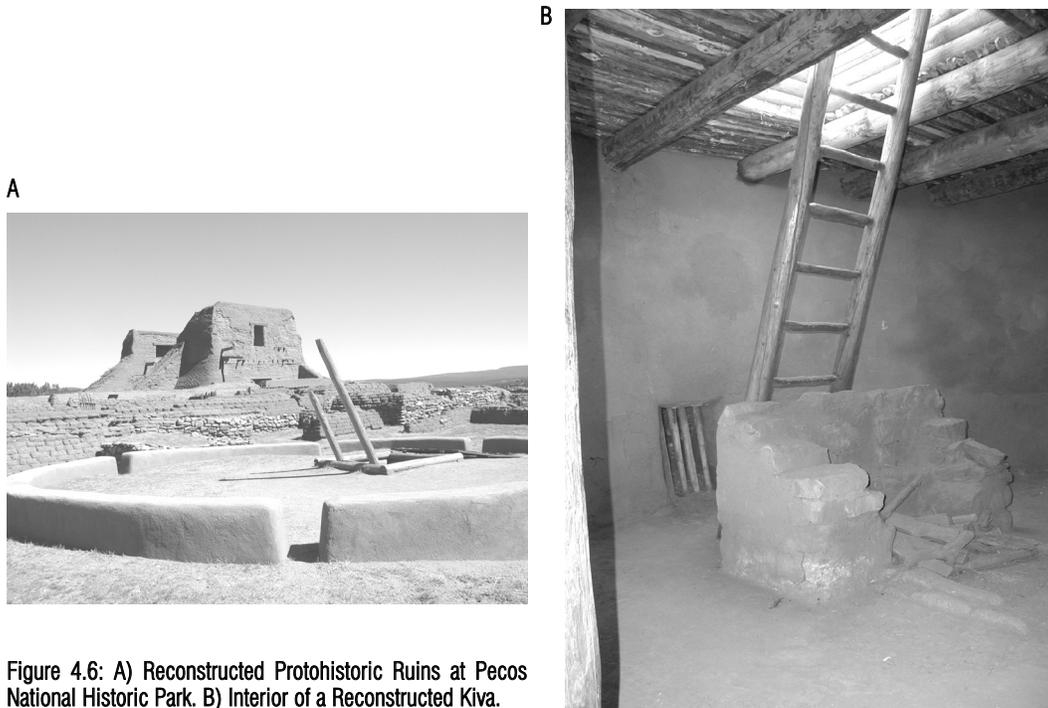


Figure 4.6: A) Reconstructed Protohistoric Ruins at Pecos National Historic Park. B) Interior of a Reconstructed Kiva.

and long substantiated. Thus, Benavides remarks in his *1630 Memorial* [Ayer; 1916] about the language at Pecos, “these [Pecos] Indians are of the Hemes [Jemez] nation, being here alone and strayed out of their territory, they are taken for a separate nation, though it is *one same tongue* [italics added].” Similarly, from a later translation by Morrow [1996], meant to preserve the original sense and yet read less awkwardly, one finds “And although these Indians are part of the Jemez nation, they are considered to be a people apart due to their isolation and the fact that they are cut off from the Jemez territory proper, even though they speak the same language.” It does appear that Benavides, at least, believed that both the Pecos and Jemez Indian villagers spoke the same language.

About 150 years after Benavides, Fray Francisco Atanasio Dominguez was put in charge of Spanish missions in New Mexico. His 1776 inventory of Spanish property in New Mexico includes astute observations of daily life in the Pueblos and their conventos. It is also one of the rare ethnohistoric Spanish documents from the 1700s. Regarding the languages of Jemez and Pecos Pueblos, Dominguez says [Adams & Chavez; 1956:181, 214]:

The natives of this pueblo are called Jémez, like their town. The language they use (in this respect, but in no other, they conform with Pecos) is also called Jémez. It is very different from all the other languages of these regions, and its pronunciation is closed, almost through clenched teeth. They also differ greatly from the others in their characteristic customs. . . . They speak Spanish . . . but not all of them use it, because they do not wish to.”

Regarding Pecos, Dominguez remarks that

these poor people are . . . fugitives from their homes, absent from their families, selling those trifles they once bought to make themselves decent. . . . The natives of this pueblo and their native tongue are Pecos, the language agreeing . . . with Jémez. . . They speak Spanish very badly.

Nonetheless, Trager, a linguist whose expertise includes the origins of Tanoan and related languages, reviewed the Pecos language question at an international conference on Southwestern Ethnolinguistics. In the proceedings, experts talking to experts, Trager [1967:337] observes that “Despite Harrington’s remark [in 1910], there has never been any direct evidence that the language of Pecos was indeed Towa, or, for that matter, even Tanoan.” This view is modified somewhat in remarks of the linguists Hale and Harris [1979:171] in their subsequent review, “The extinct Pecos is traditionally assigned [by western scholars] to Towa . . . although phrases remembered by Pecos descendants at Jemez, while unquestionably Tanoan, do not clearly identify it as Towa (Joe S. Sando, personal communication 1973).”

Sando, a Walatowa elder, is a noted historian of matters Puebloan. In the same handbook volume as Hale and Harris, Sando [1979:418] asserts that “Towa is a branch of the Kiowa-Tanoan language family consisting of Jemez and, traditionally, the now extinct language of Pecos Pueblo.” To us, this is a less informative statement than his private remarks to Hale and Harris, unless one takes “traditionally” to refer to Jemez oral traditions distinct from western scholarship. However, Sando [1982:149] subsequently published a history of Walatowa, in which he expands on the language of Pecos Pueblo:

What few words are known of the Pecos language sound more like Tewa than Towa; Pecos surnames [of Pecos descendants at Jemez] also sound more Tewa than Towa. The difference is also indicated by the old saying that someone was “just like a Pecos, fumbling for words.”

Finally, in a popular style, but documented by extensive notes and commentary, Riley [1995:97] concludes, “There is little doubt that Pecos Pueblo, founded around 1300 and continuing to grow by amalgamation with other towns in the Pecos valley for the next century or so, was Towa speaking.” However, Riley’s remarks were meant to demonstrate the wide geo-

impressive oversize food and water storage vessels to neighboring Puebloan villages in exchange for food. The course clay for these vessels is mixed with ground black lava *temper* from nearby Jemez beds, and then fired. The resulting wares are dense and heavy, a distinguishing mark of Zia wares. Their designs, applied with iron-containing mineral paints that tend towards reds and rusts, are otherwise like older Zia wares and those of nearby Santa Ana and Acoma Pueblos. (Figure 4.21)



Figure 4.21: Zia Urn.

Although Oñate lists Santa Ana Pueblo (Keresan name *Tamaya*) as Keresan, it appears that neither he nor de Sosa visited there. Whether the Pueblo was at the same location earlier, at the time of Coronado, is an unsettled question, and it not yet known when the modern Santa Ana village was established, and precisely where. It is known that the present mission church, Mission of our Lady Santa Ana, was built on an earlier structure in 1734, and that their farmland was so inadequate—as at Zia—that, about the same time, the Pueblo itself began acquiring land along the Rio Grande [Adams & Chavez; 1956:170]. This settlement, called *Ranchitos*, was a success, and the Santa Ana Indians, for the most part, live there now, returning to the original Pueblo for ceremonials.

Perhaps surprisingly, there are three major published ethnographies of Santa Ana Pueblo—White [1932], Strong [1979], and Bayer et al. [1994], the latter compiled with guidance of the Santa Ana elders—given the limited early information. What one does learn is that the people of Santa Ana are little different from the other four eastern Keresan Pueblos, particularly in mythology, societal organization, and ceremonial practice—details of which are covered in Part II.

THE PERVASIVE KERESAN CORE CULTURE

From the foregoing, the five modern Eastern Keresan Pueblos plus Acoma were located much where they now are, speaking dialects of a single language, when the Spaniards arrived and colonized the northern Rio Grande Valley. Before that—as we learn from Keresan oral traditions, Anglo archaeological findings, and Spanish ethnohistoric documents—these Ancestral Puebloans arrived during P-IV times, i.e., after 1300, following the abandonment of Mesa Verde and the Four-Corners region. For eastern Puebloans, the intermediate locations were the southern parts of Parajito Plateau and for Acoma, the abandoned Great Houses at Chaco Canyon. Later studies of Keresan religion serve not only to confirm these points, but help to date them more realistically and demonstrate the close internal consistency of Keresan world views among all Keresan Puebloans—a story addressed in Part II. Looking ahead just a bit, Keresan and Navajo views are very similar and both differ fundamentally from Tanoan constructs. In Part II, we explicate this in terms of an identifiable *Keresan Core Culture*.

First, however, we return to Hewett [1906, 1936, 1953], since he tried for almost one-half century to establish the ethnicity of the Parajito Plateau settlements, both north and south. In our view, those who settled the northern part of the Pajarito Plateau—for exam-

ple, the builders of Puyé and Tsankawi—ultimately relocated to nearby contemporaneous riverine Tewa Rio Grande villages: Santa Clara, San Ildefonso, and presumably others. These indigenous sites were already aggregated, enlarged, and reorganized in response to earlier local influences, with modest corn agriculture added to their long-established hunter-gatherer subsistence base.

Abandonment of the Pajarito Plateau brought the more advanced aspects of P-III-derived Ancestral Puebloan culture of these immigrants to the Tewa-speaking Rio Grande villages, which adopted all but the Keresan language. Thus, in our global view, the inhabitants of Puyé and Tsankawi spoke Keresan and, for them, resettlement among the nearby riverine Tewa-speaking Rio Grande pueblos involved a change of language, but little else, at least superficially—as for most immigrants to the United States, as an example. Given the more advanced agricultural capabilities of the former Four-Corners Pajaritans, it was advantageous to farm along the broad valley of the Rio Grande, the major permanent water source at hand.

This conjecture—that Keresan was the language of Puyé and Tsankawi—differs from the perceived wisdom found in many accounts of Ancestral Puebloan prehistory, which asserts that the language of the northern Pajarito Plateau was Tewa. Even Hewett [1953] has one chapter titled “*an Ancient Tewa Town: Puyé*” and another “*el Rito de los Frijoles: The Old Keresan Homeland*.” This categorization, by the master archaeologist of the Pajarito Plateau, has contributed much to the basic assumptions current today. But his research was completed one century ago, about the time that Mesa Verde was first explored, and much has been learned since then.

The actual views of Hewett [1930:207] are considerably more complex, rather equivocal, and certainly not definitive. In his retrospective popularization of his long experience in this area, Hewett points to the difficulty of making the archaeology of the Pajarito Plateau consistent with the realities of the modern Tewa population of the Rio Grande Valley. He resorts to naming “a new . . . culture for which a specific term seems necessary; hence the designation Pajaritan culture.” He continues:

It will suffice for the moment to state three principal reasons for qualifying the theory that the Tewa of the Rio Grande Valley are in entirety descendants of the ancient cliff-dwellers of the adjacent plateau. 1. There is a general non-conformity between modern Tewa pottery and ancient Pajaritan ware. 2. There is non-conformity of physical type, the Pajaritans having been a homogeneous people while the Tewa, and all other Pueblos, are noticeably composite, predominantly brachycephalic. 3. Tewa tradition, when thoroughly sifted, does not support the hypothesis of complete identity.

He subsequently explains [Hewett; 1953:119 ff.]:

That I speak in this work of Puyé, Tsirege, and Otowi as ancient Tewa towns, and El Rito de los Frijoles and the adjacent region to the south as the old Keresan homeland, is evidence of where I stand on the question of former occupancy of the Pajarito Plateau by ancestral groups of existing Pueblo villages in the Rio Grande Valley. *It is not to be understood, however, that I accept the theory that the modern Pueblos are simply the descendants of the ancient Pajaritans.* [Italics added.] Their somatology [physical characteristics] does not support it, nor does any cultural evidence.

Hewett summarizes: “I would go so far as to say that the ancient Pajaritans furnished strong ethnic elements that entered the makeup of modern Tanoan and Keresan stocks. . . .”

Clearly, Hewett’s early views, as elaborated by him retrospectively, are compatible with our conjectures that there is a core Ancestral Puebloan culture in the northern Rio Grande Valley, derived from the Mesa Verde area, that is Keresan. Those who settled the southern part of the Pajarito Plateau, for example, Frijoles Canyon, were Keresan speakers from the Chama Cycle who later went south and east, after abandoning the plateau. Together, they established the five eastern Keresan villages along, or close to, the Rio Grande and its