Hamlet to Village Life

1800 to 1300 years ago
Hamlets, Villages, Towns

• This represents a continuum of settlement size and sedentism
  – Hamlets have a few residences
  – Villages have 10s of residences
  – Towns have 100s of residence

  – Sedentism increases with settlement size
Diffuse economy = one that uses a diverse range of resources that come available at different times of the year

Focal economy = one that focus on a few productive resources, close by home
The Hamlet – Village Transition

- Starts from Logistical foraging
- Farming of **corn** and **squash**
  - *Deficient in lysine*
- **Beans** occur after 2300 years ago
  - Complement corn/squash
  - *Abundant in lysine*
  - The addition of beans reduces need for gathering
The risks of farming

• Farming is productive, but **focused**
• But when crops fail, they do so **completely**
  – Can cause famine
• Plus, fertility can outpace productivity
  – Leads to soil depletion
  – Can lead to overpopulation and abandonment
Village period trends

• Pithouse hamlets & villages common
  – Village size grows
• Pottery is gradually adopted
• Efficiency of groundstone increases
• Capacity to store food increases
• Focus on farming intensifies
• Sedentism increases
Pithouse adaptation

- Pithouses are a common form of architecture worldwide
  - Semi-subterranean
  - Energy-efficient
  - Comfortable

“The pithouse design provided a quick architectural solution to the need for shelter, because much of the earth required for the roof came from original excavation of the building” Richard Wilshusen
Shabik’eschee
Famous pithouse village near Chaco Canyon, NM
Excavated in the 1920s & 1970s
19 houses in map
60 houses total
45 “storage bins”
Inhabited between 1500 & 1300 years ago
The SU site

- Western New Mexico
  - Excavated in 1930s & 40s by Paul S. Martin
  - 40 pithouses, storage pits inside

www.fieldmuseum.org
The Knobby Knee Site

- In southwestern Colorado
- Occupied around 1400 to 1300 ya
- Hamlet of up to 3 families
- Stockaded
- Part of larger regional community

www.crowcanyon.org

Wilshusen 2006
Community Architecture

• Most villages did not have large community buildings
• But there are some with very large pithouses
  – SU pithouse A, Snaketown
• Others have Great Kivas

• This suggests that regional communities gathered at times
  – Kinship, economic, social benefits to aggregation
Antler House Village
Pottery

• Pottery develops and becomes important from 1800 to 1300 ya

• Pottery enhances cooking efficiency
  – “Bring to boil & simmer”
  – Cooking dried foods

• Pottery enhances storage
  – Storing dried grains for 1 year

• Better cooking enhances digestibility of starches
Pottery, cont’d

• Pottery enhances food storage & processing
• Broader effect is to stabilize fertility
• Accentuates potential for population growth
• Accentuates sedentism
  – Most often pottery is a sedentary adaptation
Summary

“Focal adaptations tend to arise in environments with variable diversity, but only where one or a few are fairly productive and reliable” (Rafferty 1985).

• Several thousand years ago – environmental stress
• Archaic changes in foraging, residential to logistical = T&O change
• Population growth = more T&O change
• From 1800 to 1300 years ago, focal economy
• Sedentary village life evolves into town life