Chapter 7: The North American Southwest

# Chapter Summary [Copied from Olszewski 2019, Chapter 7]

* During the Late Archaic period, hunter–gatherer–foragers incorporated domesticated maize and squash from Mexico/Mesoamerica into their subsistence economies.
* The Ancestral Pueblo region:
  + During Basketmaker II, people grew maize using floodwater and dry farming, hunted various wild animals, and collected wild plant foods. They lived in pithouses and used baskets for stone-boiling of foods. Burials indicate there are some individuals who may have been ritual specialists.
  + Pottery became widespread in Basketmaker III. As a durable container, it was more useful than baskets for storage and cooking. Basketmaker III peoples grew maize and squash and added domesticated beans from Mexico/Mesoamerica, in addition to hunting and gathering. Pithouse villages ranged in size; some villages had great kivas.
  + In the Pueblo I period, people shifted from living in pithouses to above-ground masonry dwellings. Early on, there are many small sites with just a handful of above-ground rooms (habitation, storage, and activity), a pithouse (often called a kiva), and a trash area. At the end of the Pueblo I period, small roomblocks became common. These have associated pithouses, some of which are identified as great kivas. The earliest evidence for cacao, an import from Mexico/Mesoamerica, is found during Pueblo I; this bean was used to make a chocolate beverage likely used in rituals.
  + The Chaco Phenomenon was centered on Chaco Canyon in the San Juan Basin in northwestern New Mexico. It occurred between AD 900 and 1220 (Pueblo II and most of Pueblo III), which is locally called the Bonito Phase.
  + Chaco Canyon had many small roomblock settlements, as well as several large roomblocks known as great houses. Another feature was the Chacoan roads, some of which connected great houses in Chaco Canyon to Chacoan outliers (great houses built in other areas of the Ancestral Pueblo region). Some of the Chacoan roads led to resource areas.
  + Connections between Chaco Canyon and Mexico/Mesoamerica included copper bells, macaws, and cacao. Other items traded into Chaco Canyon included turquoise from sources in New Mexico, Colorado, and Nevada, pottery from the Mogollon region, and shell jewelry possibly from the Hohokam region.
  + Evidence for elite members of society includes elaborate burials at Pueblo Bonito and nonlocal designs on pottery vessels associated with some of these individuals.
  + There is limited evidence for violence during the Bonito Phase.
  + During the Late Bonito Phase, several new great houses were built, as was the great kiva known as Casa Rinconada.
  + By AD 1220, the Chaco Phenomenon came to an end, although people continued to live here until AD 1300, when the canyon was finally abandoned. In this 80-year period, small sites in the so-called Mesa Verde style were built, suggesting the movement of Ancestral Pueblo people from Mesa Verde in southwestern Colorado.
  + The end of the Chaco Phenomenon is sometimes interpreted as resulting from the breakdown of social bonds and ties that linked people together.
* The Hohokam region:
  + Developments here were contemporary with those in the Ancestral Pueblo and Mogollon regions. The Hohokam are known for their extensive canal systems, which began during the Late Archaic period, allowing them to divert river water to fields to grow maize, beans, squash, and cotton.
  + During the Pioneer, Colonial, and Sedentary periods, they built shallow pithouses as dwellings. Evidence for trade with Mexico/Mesoamerica included copper bells, pyrite mirrors, and macaws, but also the idea of ball courts. The Hohokam traded with other regions of the North American Southwest for turquoise, and they traveled to the Gulf of California to collect marine shell that they made into jewelry.
  + The Classic period overlaps with and extends later than the Bonito Phase at Chaco Canyon. During the Classic period, the Hohokam built adobe great houses at places such as Casa Grande in Arizona, abandoned the use of ball courts, and began to construct large platform mounds. Cacao from Mexico/Mesoamerica is present at some sites.
  + Around AD 1450, the Hohokam abandoned their sites and canal systems.
* The Mogollon region:
  + Mogollon groups also grew maize, beans, and squash, as well as hunted and collected wild foods. They shifted over time from living in pithouses to above-ground masonry structures, although this transition occurred later in the Mogollon region than in the Ancestral Pueblo area.
  + Pithouse villages of the Early and Late Pithouse phases could be small, just a house or two, or could be large, with up to 200 pithouses. Not all pithouses were contemporary, which reflects long-term use of sites, where some structures were abandoned or fell into disrepair and new ones were built. Some pithouse villages had great kivas.
  + The use of above-ground masonry roomblocks represents the beginning of the Mogollon Pueblo period. Room blocks could be small or large (up to about 800 rooms). Larger sites usually had more than one roomblock. At some sites, each roomblock is interpreted as representing people related to each other by lineage. At other sites, architectural styles and material remains found in each roomblock suggest that some were Mogollon peoples, whereas others were from the Ancestral Pueblo region. In both cases (lineages or different peoples), the Mogollon Pueblo sites are interpreted as aggregation sites.
  + Mogollon region sites were abandoned sometime around AD 1400.
* Abandonment in Ancestral Pueblo, Hohokam, and Mogollon regions occurred before the arrival of the Spanish and was likely caused by a combination of factors. These include prolonged and persistent drought cycles and breakdown of social bonds. Many of the people relocated to other areas of the North American Southwest. Their living descendants include Native Americans such as the Hopi, Zuñi, Rio Grande Pueblos, Tohono O’odham, Pima, and many other groups.

# Key Terms

**Ancestral Pueblo**: a term used by some archaeologists for the Native American groups who occupied southeastern Utah, southwestern Colorado, northern Arizona, and northwestern New Mexico from about 500 cal BC until just before Spanish contact in AD 1540; their descendants live in the Hopi, Zuni, and Rio Grande pueblos of Arizona and New Mexico. The term “Ancestral Pueblo” replaces the archaeological term “Anasazi,” although many archaeologists have continued to use Anasazi, given its historical precedence, and note that modern pueblos in Arizona and New Mexico likely also include descendants of the Mogollon and other archaeological cultures such as the Hohokam.

**Aztec Ruins**: an Ancestral Pueblo region in northern New Mexico with many great houses. It became an important center during the late Pueblo III period, after the abandonment of most of Chaco Canyon.

**Casa Grande**: a Classic period Hohokam site in Arizona. It has a great house, residential compounds, and platform mounds.

**Casa Rinconada**: a great kiva built in Chaco Canyon (New Mexico) in the North American Southwest during the late Bonito phase (beginning of the Pueblo III period).

**Casas Grandes**: a large Pueblo IV settlement (also called Paquimé) in northern Mexico. It contains evidence for trade and exchange into the Ancestral Pueblo, Mogollon, and other North American Southwest regions.

**Cave 7**: a Basketmaker II burial cave site in southeastern Utah. It contains 96 individuals of both sexes and a range of ages, including 18 adult males with signs of violence, suggesting that raids between Basketmaker II groups occurred from time to time.

**Chacoan Outlier**: an Ancestral Pueblo community in the region outside of Chaco Canyon (New Mexico) that dates to the Pueblo II and III periods; it includes a great house built in a similar way to the great houses of Chaco Canyon, a great kiva, and several surrounding small roomblock settlements.

**Chaco Phenomenon**: an unusual set of archaeological features found in the Chaco Canyon region of New Mexico from AD 900 to AD 1220 (Bonito phase). It includes a population of 2000 to 3000 in this marginal agricultural area, great houses and small settlements, Chaocan roads, Chacoan outliers, trade with other regions of the North American Southwest (turquoise, shell jewelry, certain types of pottery) and Mesoamerica (copper bells, macaws, cacao), and the possible presence of elites at the great houses.

**Early Agricultural Period**: a term used by archaeologists to describe the Late Archaic period in the area of southern Arizona that becomes the Hohokam region. This term is used in preference to Late Archaic because domesticated maize was introduced from Mesoamerica and then incorporated into mobile hunting, gathering, and foraging lifeways. Thus, people in this area of the North American Southwest were engaged in at least some agriculture, as well as the early construction of canals for irrigation of fields.

**Grasshopper Pueblo**: a Mogollon period site in the mountainous east-central part of Arizona. It was occupied between AD 1275 and AD 1400. At its peak between AD 1300 and AD 1330, it was an aggregation site with large, multistoried roomblocks with enclosed open plazas. The roomblocks to the west of the stream were occupied by Mogollon peoples, while those on the east side of the stream were where Ancestral Pueblo groups lived.

**Great House**: a large multistory building, this term is used for several of the prehistoric cultural areas in the North American Southwest. For the Ancestral Pueblo beginning in Pueblo II times and later, it describes multiple roomblocks often built of stone, such as Pueblo Bonito in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico. In the Hohokam region, great houses were built during the Classic period and were multistory adobe structures located within compounds. Great Houses also were built by Mogollon peoples.

**Great Kiva**: a very large round pithouse structure used by Ancestral Pueblo groups for communal activities such as ceremonies. They are found first in the late Basketmaker III period and continue into the Pueblo periods. Rectangular versions are characteristic of settlements of many living Native American groups in the North American Southwest.

**Hohokam**: an archaeological term for the Native American groups who occupied south-central and southeastern Arizona from about AD 1 until just prior to Spanish contact in AD 1540; their descendants include the Tohono O’odham and the Pima of Arizona.

**Kiva**: a round pithouse structure used by Ancestral Pueblo families for group activities such as story-telling, weaving, and rituals; see also Great Kiva.

**McPhee Village**: a Pueblo I period settlement in Colorado; it includes above ground masonry U-shaped roomblocks, linear jacal roomblocks, and more than 50 pithouses; there are two great kivas, which are associated with the U-shaped masonry roomblocks.

**Mimbres**: part of the Mogollon culture area, Mimbres Mogollon sites are found in southwestern New Mexico and a small portion of southeastern Arizona.

**Mogollon**: an archaeological term for the Native American groups who occupied much of central and southern New Mexico, the northern portions of the Sonoran and Chihuahuan Deserts of northern Mexico, and the mountainous region of central Arizona from about AD 100 to just before the arrival of the Spanish in AD 1540; their descendants likely moved to the Rio Grande pueblos.

**NAN Ranch Site**: a Mollogon site in southwestern New Mexico occupied during the Pithouse and Mogollon Pueblo periods. At its largest, during the Classic Mimbres phase (AD 1000 to 1130) of the Mogollon Pueblo period, Nan Ranch had three roomblocks with over 100 rooms and a ditch and small canal system to divert water to fields and a reservoir. It was abandoned shortly after AD 1130.

**Pithouse**: in the North American Southwest, pithouses are usually circular to oval dwellings that have been dug into the ground, although they also can be rectangular. In the Hohokam region, pithouses are shallow, while in the Ancestral Pueblo and Mogollon areas pithouses tend to be deep. In most cases, poles and/or beams are used to build walls and roofing above ground.

**Pueblo Alto**: an Ancestral Pueblo great house in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico, that has evidence in its trash mounds for large-scale, cooperative community feasts during the Bonito Phase.

**Pueblo Bonito**: an Ancestral Pueblo D-shaped “great house” in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico, that was built over the period from the late AD 800s to AD 1150. It had more than 350 ground floor rooms (perhaps as many as 700 rooms total with rooms from the upper stories), 32 kivas, and 3 great kivas.

**Ridges Basin**: a series of spatially close Pueblo I clusters representing a community in southwestern Colorado. Each cluster had a distinct social identity that can be seen in the types of architecture they built and in how they buried their dead.

**Santa Cruz Bend**: a Late Archaic period site in Tucson, Arizona, which has evidence of early maize, along with wild plants and hunting of animals. It is a small, settled village site with more than a dozen pithouse dwellings and a large, communal pithouse.

**Shabik’eschee Village**: a Basketmaker III occupation in the Chaco Canyon area, New Mexico, which is tree-ring dated to AD 550–700. It has 25 excavated pithouses, including a great kiva, and perhaps as many as 36 unexcavated structures. There also are more than 50 storage pits. Shabik’eschee Village is interpreted as an aggregation site.

**Snaketown**: a large Hohokam settlement in central Arizona near Phoenix. Snaketown had numerous individual pit structures occupied by families. It also had two ball courts, which are an architectural form likely introduced from Mesoamerica. The ball game ritual probably also was introduced from the south. Snaketown was occupied during the Pioneer, Colonial, and Sedentary periods and largely abandoned by AD 1150.

**Three Fir Shelter**: an Archaic period site in northeast Arizona with evidence for the early use of maize by 1990 cal BC.