Smithian growth in a non-industrial society

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TEASER: The archaeological record provides model systems for investigating fundamental processes of economic growth

ABSTRACT

A defining feature of the contemporary world is economic growth, and the most frequently cited cause is technological change, especially with respect to energy capture and information processing. This framing masks the potential for economic growth in non-industrial societies, but there is growing evidence for episodes where the material conditions of life did improve in the pre-industrial past. Here, we explore a potential mechanism behind these improvements. We utilize settlement scaling theory to distinguish agglomeration-driven from technology-driven growth, and then we apply this framework to archaeological evidence from the Pre-Hispanic Northern Rio Grande Pueblos of New Mexico, USA. Results suggest agglomeration-driven or "Smithian" growth was the dominant factor behind improvements in the material conditions of life over time in this society. We also summarize evidence that this growth took place in the context of a stable regional population, declining levels of inequality, and increasingly inclusive social institutions. These results provide clear evidence that expanding agglomeration, the (economic) division of labor, and exchange are sufficient to support sustained increases in per capita productivity.

KEY WORDS: Economic growth, division of labor, settlement scaling theory, Pueblo Indians, archaeology, US Southwest.

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INTRODUCTION

A defining feature of the contemporary world is economic growth, understood as sustained increases in a society's material output per capita. Recent perspectives on this process attribute it primarily to increases in energy capture and information processing driven by technology (*1, 2*). These capacities have increased rapidly since the onset of the industrial revolution and this has led many to conclude that economic growth was therefore negligible in earlier periods (*3, 4*). However, it is increasingly clear that many past societies did in fact generate substantial *per capita* increases in material outputs (*5*), energy capture rates (*6*), farming surpluses (*7*), consumption rates (*8*) and wealth accumulation (*9*), with proposed explanations for such trends ranging from technological progress (*10, 11*) to institutional structures (*9*), urbanization (*12*), and expanding trade networks (*13-15*). Studies have also noted that economic growth is but one manifestation of a more general process of development involving improvement in material well-being (*6, 16*).

Given the growing body of evidence indicating that material well-being did improve in the past, it is useful to recall that one of the original theorists of economic growth (Adam Smith, who lived and worked in a preindustrial society) proposed a growth mechanism based on population size, exchange and the (economic) division of labor that explains how economic growth can occur even in the absence of technological change (*17*). Unfortunately, it has been difficult to isolate "Smithian growth" empirically using contemporary data, and as a result this mechanism tends to be overlooked in discussions of social and economic policy. Here, we suggest a two-part strategy for overcoming this problem. First, we employ the settlement scaling framework to distinguish agglomeration-driven from technology-driven growth. Then, we examine time series data which show that per capita outputs increased over time, but population

growth and technological change were both very slow. In this situation the settlement scaling framework predicts growth will exhibit a specific relationship with agglomeration, and we show that this is in fact what the evidence reveals.

It is a common misperception that archaeological data are not useful for the study of economic development because they derive from smaller and simpler societies than those of recent times. (By development we mean improvement in the material conditions of life in a society (*6*)). We suggest here that, on the contrary, these features are helpful in that they allow one to more readily isolate specific mechanisms of interest. In the contemporary world, evidence of Smithian growth is difficult to separate empirically because urbanization, population and technology are all changing rapidly and simultaneously. A focus on small-scale societies of the past, where most interaction was face-to-face, movement was pedestrian, and technological change was slow, allows one to observe the productivity effects of agglomeration (*i.e.*, the social concentration of individuals in physical space) much more readily (*18*). Our strategy thus illustrates an important way that studies of past societies known through archaeology can contribute to the overall science of socieconomic development; namely, the smaller and simpler societies of the past can be used in an analogous way to model systems in other fields. In the biological sciences, for example, model systems such as *C. elegans*, *E. coli*, fruit flies and mice provide direct insight into fundamental processes because of their relative simplicity. We suggest past societies known through archaeology can do the same for the social sciences.

SMITHIAN GROWTH

There is no specific section of *The Wealth of Nations* (*19*) which presents a fully developed model of economic growth, but observations and arguments regarding conditions which facilitate increased labor productivity are interspersed throughout the book (*20*). Smith

observed that specialization made possible through the division and coordination of labor can generate significant increases in individual-labor productivity, and that specialization is also stimulated by increases in the size of domestic markets (effectively, increases in population size) or the amount of trade. Both phenomena are captured in Smith's famous dictum "That the Division of Labour is Limited by the Extent of the Market". Smith attributed the productivity gains generated from an enhanced division of labor (i.e., one that extends beyond the family) to the efficiency gains from the increased intellectual and manual deftness of each worker through "learning by doing" and the reduction in the number of times individuals have to switch between tasks (*3, 17, 21*). The classic Smithian account was later augmented by noting that specialization and the concentration of producers facilitates—through copying, imitation and social learning—the transmission and accumulation of minor innovations resulting from attempts at improving standard procedures (*22, 23*). All these insights came to constitute the foundations for a theory of economic growth that is largely independent of R&D-driven technological change (*24-26*).

The standard interpretation of Smith's famous dictum is that larger markets support larger levels of production which, in turn, demand increasing separation of this production into discrete components and an increasing concentration of individuals on specific tasks. A sociologically richer interpretation, which is not restricted to market economies, is that the extent of the division of labor is related to the number of individuals who interact with each other in meeting their needs. The division of labor is not simply about the vertical integration of specialized tasks but about the distribution of tasks in networks that facilitate learning, knowledge flow and the integration (recombination) of information (*27*). Furthermore, the conditions necessary for "learning by doing" are not restricted to modernity. Even in ancient societies, agglomerated individuals engaged in specialized tasks (making pottery, weaving textiles, making hunting tools,

gathering edible plants, etc.) and would have had the opportunity to learn from and improve upon each other's way of performing these tasks.

Smithian growth is a manifestation of the effects of increased market (population) size and interaction rates for socio-economic organization, the diversity of tasks and tools, and productivity (both individual and group-level). From this perspective the phenomenon of the division and coordination of labor emphasizes information and communication in networks. Although these phenomena are of long-standing interest to anthropologists, archaeologists, sociologists and economists (*28-32*), measuring the consequences of Smithian growth in contemporary economies is far from straightforward due to the confounding effects of technological change. Below, we illustrate one means of doing so.

SETTLEMENT SCALING AND GROWTH

In this section we show that a theoretical framework known as *settlement scaling theory* (SST) incorporates and formalizes the mechanism of Smithian growth and provides a framework for isolating its effects. The basic models and empirical evidence in support of SST have been presented in previous publications (*27, 33-35*). Here, we focus on its connection with growth dynamics.

Piketty (*36*) observes that economic growth "… always includes a purely demographic component and a purely economic component, and only the latter allows for an improvement in the standard of living" (p. 72). But an *interacting* population blurs the distinction between demographic and "economic" effects (*37*). A fundamental axiom of SST is that per capita productivity is proportional to the average interaction rate among individuals (the degree k of an individual's undirected socio-economic network), given the frictional effects of distance. This notion, that increasing productivity derives from the concentration and intensification of social

interaction, is the basic idea behind economic models of agglomeration effects, from lowered transaction costs to increased complementarities in production to knowledge spillovers (*2, 38-40*). Together with the assumption that human social networks involve as much mixing as is possible (including weak ties), given spatial constraints, the aggregate (extensive) output of a strongly interacting population in a *settlement* can be written as:

$$Y_i(N_i, t) = \frac{G(t)[N_i(t)]^2}{A_{n_i}(t)} * e^{\varepsilon_i(t)}, \quad (1)$$

where $Y_i(N_i, t)$ is the aggregate output (a socio-economic rate) of a given settlement Y_i with resident population N_i at time t; $[N_i(t)]^2 \approx N_i(t) * (N_i(t) - 1)$ is the total number of links (interactions) that are possible within that population; $A_{n_i}(t)$ is the area over which interactions occur in that population; $G(t)$ represents the range of social and technological factors (common to all settlements) that convert these interactions into output; and $e^{\varepsilon_i(t)}$ captures the range of influences unique to each city that lead to a deviation of productivity in any given settlement from the average expectation. Statistically the *ε(t)* term accounts for deviations in each city from the expected (power-law) scaling relationship. We represent this deviation as an exponential so that it will take the form of a Gaussian random variable following natural log transformation (see below).

Eq. (1) can be simplified by expressing $A_{n_i}(t)$ in terms of $N_i(t)$. We accomplish this in several steps (subscripts, errors, and time are omitted below to simplify the notation). First, we consider the balance of costs and benefits for individuals when they interact from the perspective of a spatial equilibrium. In the case of a small and amorphous settlement the cost for a person to interact with others is largely set by the energetic cost of traversing the maximum distance between individuals, which is given by $c = \mu A^{1/2}$ (where μ is the energetic cost of movement and A is the circumscribing area); and the benefit of the resulting interactions is given by $y =$

$\hat{g}a_0 lN/A$ (where $\hat{g}$ is the average productivity of an interaction, a_0 is the average distance at which interaction occurs, l is the average length of the path taken by an individual, and N/A is the average population density of the settlement). Implicit here is the assumption, foundational to the social sciences, that human effort is bounded and needs to be allocated based on benefits and costs. In the context of moving in physical space this implies that individuals move about, or explore, only portions of the space in which their social interactions are embedded (*41*). Setting $c = y$ (balancing costs with benefits) and simplifying, one arrives at:

$$A(N) = (G/\mu)^{2/3} N^{2/3} = aN^{2/3}, \quad (2)$$

where $G = \hat{g}a_0 l$ and $a = (G/\mu)^{2/3}$. Thus, the area circumscribing a settlement grows proportionately to the settlement population raised to the $2/3$ power, such that larger settlements become progressively denser. Note also that the pre-factor of this relationship varies in accordance with the productivity of interactions and with transportation costs but is independent of population.

Second, we consider how the interaction area changes as settlements become larger and more organized. In organized settlements, interaction occurs through movement along an access network of roads, paths and other public spaces as opposed to straight paths. We assume that the expansion of this interaction infrastructure follows the expansion of concentrated population so that the space devoted to the access network ρ is added in accordance with the current population density, $\rho = (N/A)^{-1/2}$, such that the total area of the access network $A_n \sim N\rho = A^{1/2}N^{1/2}$. Substituting $aN^{2/3}$ for A in this equation, based on Eq. (2), then leads to (with subscripts and time added back in):

$$A_{n_i}(t) \sim a(t)^{1/2} N_i(t)^{5/6}. \quad (3)$$

Eq. (3) indicates that the area over which interaction occurs in a settlement grows proportionately to the settlement population raised to the $5/6$ power. We can now replace $A_{n_i}(t)$ in Eq. (1) with $a(t)^{1/2}N_i(t)^{5/6}$ from Eq. (3) and simplify, leading to:

$$Y_i(N_i, t) = Y_0(t)[N_i(t)]^{\beta} * e^{\varepsilon_i(t)}, \quad (4)$$

with $\beta = 7/6$. Eq. (4) suggests that as settlements increase in population their average aggregate socio-economic rates grow proportionately to population raised to the β power. It also suggests per capita rates are given by:

$$y_i(N_i, t) = Y_0(t)[N_i(t)]^{\delta} * e^{\varepsilon_i(t)}, \quad (5)$$

which implies increasing per capita productivity in accordance with population raised to the $\delta = \beta - 1 = 1/6$ power. Together, Eq. (4) and (5) imply there are increasing returns to scale such that more populous settlements are more productive per capita simply due to the network effects of individuals interacting regularly in space.

Next, we consider the effects of increasing settlement population for labor specialization (subscripts and time once again omitted for simplicity). We posit that to persist an individual requires access to a certain range of outputs, broadly construed, to satisfy their needs, and these must be met either through individual effort or social interaction. These outputs in turn are the results of a set of functions, F, determined by the interplay of technology and culture. As a result, $F = k(N) \times d(N)$, where $k(N)$ is the average connectivity (degree per capita) in a settlement of population N, $d(N)$ is the average functional diversity (tasks per capita) in that settlement, and F is a constant independent of N. This relation shows that with increasing social connectivity individuals have the opportunity to specialize in a decreasing range of functions d, such that the product $F = k(N) \times d(N)$ is constant. In this scenario increasing connectivity enables decreasing functional diversity, and increasing functional specialization (i.e. division of

labor), so given that Eq. 5 implies $k(N) = K(N)/N = k_0 N^{\delta}$ then $d(N) = (F/k_0)N^{-\delta}$. As a result, functional diversity per capita (specialization^{-1}) is:

$$d\big(N_i(t)\big) = \big(F/k_0(t)\big)[N_i(t)]^{-\delta}, \tag{6}$$

and the total functional diversity is:

$$D\big(N_i(t)\big) = \big(F/k_0(t)\big)[N_i(t)]^{1-\delta} * e^{\varepsilon_i(t)}. \tag{7}$$

This relation specifies that the range of productive activities performed by individuals in a settlement is proportional to its population raised to the $1-\delta$ power. This in turn implies that on average the range of activities performed by an individual is proportional to the population raised to the $-\delta$ power. This means that new activities are added more slowly than people, and as a result as settlements become more connected and diverse as they grow in size, but with each individual becoming increasingly specialized.

These models capture and formalize the Smithian growth mechanism by relating increases in average per capita productivity directly to increases in per capita specialization. This specialization is in turn stimulated by increasing connectivity due to the concentration of people in space that emerges from the spatial equilibrium of interaction-dependent costs and benefits. We next show that this framework incorporates Smithian growth into the overall pattern of economic growth in a society. We first take the natural logarithm of Eq. (4) to express it as a linear function:

$$ln[Y_i(N_i, t)] = ln[Y_0(t)] + \beta ln[N_i(t)] + \varepsilon_i(t). \tag{8}$$

Then, we express this result in terms of the ensemble average across all settlements:

$$\langle ln[Y(t)]\rangle = ln[Y_0(t)] + \beta\langle ln[N(t)]\rangle, \tag{9}$$

where the ensemble averages are defined as:

$$\langle ln[Y(t)]\rangle = \frac{1}{N_s}\sum_{i=1}^{N_s} lnY_i(N_i, t), \text{ and} \tag{10a}$$

$$\langle ln[N(t)]\rangle = \frac{1}{N_s}\sum_{i=1}^{N_s} lnN_i(t), \quad (10b)$$

And where N_s refers to the total number of settlements. Since by definition $\langle \varepsilon_i(t)\rangle = 0$, it can be dropped from the ensemble average. Eq. (9) indicates that the average log-output of settlements in a system at a particular time is the sum of the log-baseline productivity in that society (which incorporates non-rivalrous technology) and the average log-settlement population multiplied by the scaling exponent $\beta = 7/6$. One can also think of Eq. (9) as representing the center of the data in a scatterplot relating $ln[N_i(t)]$ to $ln[Y_i(N_i, t)]$, the log of settlement size vs. the log of settlement output for individual settlements, the average relation of which is given by Eq. (8) (minus the error term), a line with slope β and intercept $ln[Y_0(t)]$. Note also that Eq. (10a) implies that the total output of the society is given by $N_s * \langle ln[Y(t)]\rangle$.

Finally, we can differentiate both sides of Eq. (9) to convert it to a growth equation:

$$\frac{d\langle lnY\rangle}{dt} = \frac{d(lnY_0)}{dt} + \beta\frac{d\langle lnN\rangle}{dt} \rightarrow \gamma_{\langle Y\rangle} = \gamma_{Y_0} + \beta\gamma_{\langle N\rangle}. \quad (11)$$

Eq. (11) states that the growth rate of mean settlement output is the sum of the growth rate of baseline productivity and the growth rate of the mean settlement population multiplied by $\beta = 7/6$. This relationship illustrates that overall economic growth can be decomposed into growth in baseline productivity γ_{Y_0}, which is driven by the variety of technologies that affect movement costs and interaction benefits, and Smithian growth $\beta\gamma_{\langle N\rangle}$, which is driven by increases in settlement population (market size) and its associated network effects (division of labor).

The settlement scaling framework leads to an analytical strategy for distinguishing these two forms of growth empirically using time series data for the population sizes and socio-economic rates of settlements in a regional system. First, one can plot $ln[N_i]$ vs. $ln[Y_i]$ by time period and use regression to estimate the slope and intercept of the relationship for each period. A prediction of the framework is that the slope β of the fit line will be consistent across periods

and should be within the range of statistical tolerance of $7/6$. Second, one can examine the movement of the center and the intercept $ln[Y_0(t)]$ from one period to the next to distinguish the contribution of technology-driven and agglomeration-driven growth to the overall growth rate. In contemporary societies such time series analyses typically reveal a changing intercept of the scaling relation and a movement of the center along the fit line to the combined effects of urbanization and technological progress (*42*). But in cases where technology was static, our framework predicts the intercept of the fit line $ln[Y_0]$ will be constant, such that $\gamma_{\langle Y \rangle} \propto \beta\gamma_{\langle N \rangle}$ across periods. In this circumstance, all growth will be attributable to the Smithian mechanism. In the following section we illustrate that this situation can occur, and may have been typical of pre-industrial societies, using archaeological time series data from the Pre-Hispanic US Southwest.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

We examine measures of settlement population and material outputs in the society encountered by 16th century CE Spanish explorers in the northern Rio Grande drainage of what is now New Mexico, USA. Previous research demonstrates that this society took shape ca. 1250 CE as peoples moved into the region from elsewhere (*43*). Between that time and the imposition of Spanish colonialism in the 17th century, the Native American Pueblo inhabitants of this region coalesced into larger settlements, produced and exchanged pottery more widely, developed substantial trade networks with neighbors to the east, and experienced lowered rates of interpersonal violence (*18, 44*). These changes occurred in the context of a relatively stable regional population (ca. 35,000 people) from 1300 to the mid-1500s, after which European-introduced diseases began to take a toll (*45, 46*). There is evidence for the development of increasingly inclusive social institutions during this period (*44, 47*), but there is no evidence for

substantial change in technology related to transport, energy capture, or information processing. Also, although the first permanent Spanish settlement was established in 1598, Spanish introductions and impositions only began to impact the Pueblo economy in a substantial way in the mid-1600s, the end point of this investigation (*48*). Throughout the period of this investigation all movement was pedestrian (there were no beasts of burden), travel was limited to use-developed trails, the same crops were grown using the same techniques, the same domestic animals were kept (dogs and turkeys), the same set of tools were made, and information was exchanged only orally or via visual culture.

The archaeological record of this region is especially well-known due to a long history of archaeological research, high surface visibility of archaeological remains, cultural resource management work related to private development and federal land management, the persistence of vibrant Pueblo communities in the region, and a precise ceramic chronology that supports a chronological resolution of 30-65 years. As part of the Village Ecodynamics Project, the lead author and associates compiled information for settlements in this society from the literature, governmental agency databases, and archival sources (*18, 49*) (Figure 1). The assembled databank includes the beginning and end dates of occupation at individual archaeological sites or portions thereof (these are referred to as habitation components), the number of rooms associated with each component, the floor areas of excavated or otherwise visible rooms, and when available, amounts of pottery and chipped-stone debris in tabulated samples of artifacts.

Many of the analyses below rely on population estimates derived through a procedure known as *uniform probability density analysis*. As discussed in (*49*), this procedure produces estimates of the number of people who resided in a habitation component during each of a series of time periods based on its architectural footprint and associated pottery assemblage (or a

logistic growth model over the occupation span when a pottery assemblage is not available). The method first estimates the maximum number of people who could have lived within the architectural footprint of a component based on the extent of architectural remains. Then, it computes a probability density function based on the relative frequencies of pottery dating from various time periods in the associated artifact assemblage (or a logistic growth function). Finally, it assumes the maximum population coincides with the period of peak probability of occupation and scales the off-peak populations proportionately. The resulting estimates are probabilistic in nature (they are not census counts), but they incorporate both living space and trash accumulations and thus follow current best principles for regional demographic reconstruction in archaeology (*50*). In this case, the results allow us to examine the distribution of population during each of a series of ten time periods between 1250 and 1650 CE. Figure S1 presents rank-size distributions of settlement populations (habitation components) for the Northern Rio Grande Pueblo settlement system during each of these periods. Note that the distribution became increasingly non-Zipfian over time, indicating a strong agglomeration trend in a context where there was an upper limit on the maximum settlement size. As a result, the mean of the log of settlement size changed much more than the log of the maximum settlement size over time. This is important because the settlement scaling framework suggests Smithian growth is driven by increases in the former and not the latter, and in this case, the latter was relatively stable.

We also examine three socio-economic measures to investigate growth dynamics. Because these measures draw on the total accumulation of artifacts and architecture at each habitation component over its occupation span, we assign these measures to the end date of the final period of occupation for each component. The first measure is the ratio of potsherds derived from painted fine-ware serving vessels to potsherds derived from utility-ware cooking vessels.

This measure builds from prior research on artifact accumulations in archaeology, which emphasizes connections between trash accumulation, people, and time (*51, 52*). Such studies have concluded that cooking vessels are "low-income-elasticity goods" that are used, wear out, and accumulate at consistent rates per household, thus providing an index of person-years of occupation. (In economics, income elasticity of demand indicates how the quantity of a good consumed by a household varies as the household income increases.) Serving vessels, in contrast, are high-income-elasticity goods for which one would expect demand to increase along with rates of socializing with food and status display. As a result, the accumulation rate of fine-ware potsherds would be expected to co-vary with living standards. Since the denominator of the fine-ware to utility-ware ratio is an index of person-years and the numerator represents the same time interval, the ratio is an index of the per capita accumulation rate of fine-wares. And since these accumulations are of fragments from broken vessels, the accumulation rate is also a consumption rate (*8*).

The second measure is the average floor area of rooms associated with a component. Several studies in archaeology have shown that house area is related to household possessions and food stores, and that the distribution of house sizes is a reasonable proxy for "income" and "wealth" distributions (*53*). This is because in ancient societies all wealth took the form of tangible goods that took up space. House area is therefore also a high-income-elasticity good reflecting household possessions. Although it is difficult to distinguish house boundaries in Northern Rio Grande Pueblo settlements, the sizes of individual rooms can often be determined through excavation or surface survey, and previous research suggests a reasonable conversion is one resident per room (*49*). Given this, room area is a reasonable measure of possessions per person. We therefore use the mean room area as a per capita measure that is also correlated with

living standards (Along these lines, we note that the correlation between the fine-ware to utility-ware ratio and the mean room area, averaged by time period, is r=.399).

Finally, the third measure is the ratio of chipped-stone fragments to utility ware potsherds in samples for which both were collected and tabulated. Unlike service wares which accumulate because of *consumption*, chipped-stone debris accumulates as a by-product of the *production* of chipped-stone tools. The ratio of chipped-stone fragments to utility ware potsherds represents the relative stone tool production rate per capita, and we consider it to be a proxy for the division of labor. This interpretation builds from the fact that stone tools are also low income-elasticity items. In a society where households are isolated and self-sufficient, there is no division of labor above the household level. As a result, each household must produce all the tools they need to use themselves. As these households become more connected, however, individuals have more opportunity to get the tools they need through their social contacts. As a result, the tools that exist are shared and used more intensively, and fewer tools will be needed overall. This implies that the average individual will not need to spend as much time making stone tools, and the community's tool needs can be met by a decreasing fraction of people producing such tools. The net result will be a stone tool production rate that increases more slowly than the population, at the same rate as the division of labor expands.

Table 1 presents numerical summaries of the data we examine (the source data are available at: https://core.tdar.org/project/392021/social-reactors-project-datasets.), and Figure 2 presents a summary of economic change over time using several of these measures. Figure 2A shows that the mean settlement size grew much more strongly than the size of the largest settlement between 1250-1650 CE, and that the total regional population was relatively stable between the late 1200s and the mid-1500s. Figure 2B shows that the mean ratio of fine-ware to

utility-ware sherds across sites for which tallies are available increased fairly consistently from the late-1200s to at least the mid-1500s, with notably less precise estimates beginning in the 1400s due to the decreasing number (but larger size) of inhabited sites, and a potential decline (with a wide confidence band due to the small number of components for which assemblage data are available) beginning in the later 1500s. This index provides evidence for increasing per capita consumption of painted serving vessels over time. Finally, Figure 2C is generally consistent with a slowly increasing house size over time, with estimates for the 13th century being especially imprecise due to the small number of components from which room sizes are available. The notes associated with Table 1 show that increases over time in all three measures are statistically significant. Overall, these summaries are consistent with previous research which suggests consistent long-term improvement in material living standards from the time it initially formed until it was disrupted by Spanish colonization in the 17th century.

Since two different indexes of living conditions show long-term growth trends that correspond with an agglomeration trend, we utilize the settlement scaling framework to assess the sources of this growth. The first step is to convert site-level fine-ware to utility-ware ratios, mean room areas, and chipped stone to utility-ware ratios to indexes that reflect settlement-level consumption, household possessions, and productive diversity. We convert the potsherd ratio to an extensive consumption index by multiplying it by the maximum population estimate for that settlement, which is the room count. We convert the mean room area into a possessions index by first assuming that as living standards improve half of the gains will go into larger room sizes and the other half will go into additional rooms. This implies the square of the mean room area should provide a good index of possessions per capita, and the product of this number and the maximum population estimate then converts this intensive index to an extensive one. Finally, we

convert the chipped stone to utility-ware ratio to an extensive measure of productive diversity by once again multiplying this ratio by the room count.

RESULTS

Figure 3 presents scaling analyses of the relationship between maximum settlement size and consumption, possessions, and productive diversity, respectively. In these plots, habitation components are color coded to show broad time intervals, and the centers of the data for each of the ten time periods are shown in yellow. The OLS best-fit line across all periods is also shown, and the associated regression results are presented in Table S1. The high r-squared values derive from autocorrelation effects in index construction, but there is nothing inherent in these procedures that would force the observed estimates of β to approach the values predicted by SST. Yet, this is what happens in all three cases. The point estimates of β for the two output measures are within .021 and .008, respectively, of the predicted value of 7/6 from Eq. (4); and the point estimate of β for the diversity measure is within .012 of the predicted value of 5/6 from Eq. (7). An addition, the 95% confidence intervals of all three estimates easily encompass the predicted values, and indeed the predicted values are within one standard error of the point estimate in all cases. These results provide strong evidence that larger settlements in this society, which were associated with larger local markets, experienced increasing returns to scale in consumption and possessions, and decreasing returns in productive diversity, at rates that are predicted by our framework. In addition, all three plots suggest no significant change in the intercept of the scaling relation over time. In all three cases, the centers of the data for each of the ten time periods are close to the global fit line. This is consistent with previous research which suggests limited technological change during the period of interest.

Consistency in baseline economic outputs can be shown more directly by tracing the intercept of the scaling relation $ln[Y_0(t)]$ for consumption and possessions, which can be estimated from the center coordinates and Eq. (9). (For the productive diversity index sampling by period is too sparse for these additional analyses). The center coordinates and estimated intercepts for the consumption and possessions index by time period are presented in Table S2, the time series of the intercepts are plotted in Figure 4A, and the relationship between period end date and intercept for each index is summarized in Table S3. The regressions demonstrate that there is no relationship between time and intercept for either index. In both cases the estimated correlation between the two variables comfortably includes zero, the regression is not significant, and the intercepts essentially fluctuate around a constant value, except for a negative perturbation in both indices in the early 1300s. These results reinforce the conclusion that there was little change in the energetics of social interaction over time in this society.

The fact that $ln[Y_0(t)]$ was effectively constant for the consumption and possessions indices over time implies that improvements in material living standards this society were due exclusively to agglomeration via the Smithian growth mechanism, such that $\langle ln[Y(t)]\rangle \propto \beta\langle ln[N(t)]\rangle$. Due to partial sampling, small samples, and the fact that we have associated the accumulated data for each habitation component with a single time period, there are likely errors in our estimates of $\langle ln[Y(t)]\rangle$ and $\langle ln[N(t)]\rangle$ that translate into errors in the associated growth rates, $\gamma_{\langle Y\rangle}$ and $\gamma_{\langle N\rangle}$. Still, the strong relationship between population and the consumption and possession indices at the settlement level, regardless of time, suggests sampling errors in $\langle ln[Y(t)]\rangle$ and $\langle ln[N(t)]\rangle$ will covary, such that $\langle ln[Y(t)]\rangle \propto \beta\langle ln[N(t)]\rangle$ should still obtain. That this is the case is shown by Figure 4B, which shows the movement of the center of each index over time and illustrates that the slope of the best fit line to these data is $\beta \cong 7/6$ in each

case. This result reinforces our contention that Smithian growth at the societal level is simply the integration of such growth in individual settlements across an agglomerating regional population.

The scaling results thus suggest it is reasonable to estimate the overall economic growth rate in this society using $\gamma_{\langle Y_t \rangle} = \beta \gamma_{\langle N_t \rangle}$. This calculation is presented in Figure 5A, using the data series for $\langle ln[N(t)] \rangle$ from Table 1, which represents all the major settlements and most of the minor settlements in this system. This figure shows that Northern Rio Grande Pueblo society generally experienced positive growth, at rates of a fraction of a percent, for most of its history. In addition, it experienced one period of stagnant or slightly negative growth in the mid-1500s, and two periods of pronounced positive growth: one in the period immediately following a population influx from the northwest in the late 1200s (*43*), and a second from the late 1500s through the mid-1600s. The effects of infectious diseases introduced by the Spanish may be responsible for the mid-1500s period of stagnation; but Spanish colonialism is not likely responsible for the later growth episode, as Spanish presence only became permanent in 1598 and substantial impacts are most apparent from the mid-1600s (*45, 54*).

DISCUSSION

We have shown that settlement scaling theory incorporates and formalizes the growth mechanism first hypothesized by Adam Smith and leads to an analytical strategy for distinguishing technology-driven growth from agglomeration-driven growth. We then applied this approach to time series data for settlement populations and three economic indicators for a small-scale non-industrial society where population growth and technological change were minimal over a four-century period. Material living conditions clearly improved over time in this society, and we were able to show that these improvements can be attributed entirely to the Smithian mechanism. Results suggest the Puebloan society of the Northern Rio Grande Region

of New Mexico, USA experienced consistent and sustained growth, at a long-term average of .8 percent per year, for a several centuries-long period of development. As a result, there was an approximate four-fold increase in the standard of living between 1250 and 1650 CE.

At the same time, room area distributions suggest there was no relationship between economic growth and increasing inequality. The Gini coefficients of these distributions by time period (Table 1), which we argue reflect levels of inequality in material possessions, suggest a long-term average of about .2, relatively low in comparison to other New World societies of similar scale and technology (*53*); and if anything these coefficients show a declining trend over time (Figure 5B). Recent perspectives from economic history suggest economic growth in the absence of redistribution of private gains inexorably leads to increasing inequality (*36*). If so, the fact that inequality did not increase with growth in ancestral Puebloan society hints at the presence of redistributive social institutions. And on a more general level, this finding suggests that there is no necessary relationship between Smithian growth and increasing inequality.

We also note that, in order for a stable population to agglomerate into fewer, larger settlements, many existing settlements must be vacated. One can view this process of internal migration away from existing built infrastructure and capital improvements in agricultural land toward a smaller number of growing settlements where agglomeration economies were enhanced as a form of creative destruction—an additional process that is often cited in discussions of economic growth (*55, 56*). Along these lines, studies of population history across the Northern Rio Grande Pueblo region have found evidence for migration flows to and from specific settlements and regions over time (*18, 44, 49*). Thus, an important ingredient of Smithian growth, at least in the context of a stable population, is reduced barriers to internal migration. A form of creative destruction would appear to be a necessary byproduct.

Our results suggest the proximate cause of economic growth in this society was increases in the average level of agglomeration, social connectivity, and productive diversity over time, as specified by the settlement scaling framework. Since physical technology was constant over the period of interest, these changes must have been stimulated by factors that supported the peaceful long-term coexistence of larger numbers of people in settlements. Several researchers (*9, 55, 56*) have suggested that increasingly inclusive social institutions can have these effects, and we note that there is abundant evidence for the development of such institutions in this case. Changes in the rate and distribution of interpersonal violence (*47*), community architectural plans (*44*), redistributive rituals (*57*), and cultural discourses (*44*) all suggest an evolution away from kin-based institutions toward institutions that supported place-based, regional group identities and a strong communal ethic. We also note that these cultural changes seem to have coincided with the formation of Northern Rio Grande Pueblo society, as studies of comparable data from earlier periods in other parts of the US Southwest have found lower and more unstable levels of agglomeration, and higher levels of interpersonal violence (*44*). Such cultural changes thus appear to represent the ultimate drivers of growth in this case. Smithian growth can therefore be seen not merely as a mechanism to achieve economic growth, narrowly defined, but more broadly as a set of conditions and interactions facilitating *social development* and concomitantly, improvements in material well-being (*6*).

Examining episodes of socioeconomic development in the past helps one see an important explanatory distinction between the social interactions that generate economic growth (i.e., increases in material output brought about by productivity increases) and the productivity enhancing effects of energy converters and other technologies in which such relationships are embedded at any given time. While energy capture and technology are very important in

determining a society's level of material development, social interactions are the fundamental substratum that generates such improvement by stimulating increased specialization and exchange, leading to improvement in the material conditions of life. Focusing on the scale and pace of socioeconomic development associated with the Industrial Revolution can obscure the fundamental role that social interactions and their supportive institutions play in causing sustained (albeit modest) improvements in physical well-being across different technological settings (*58*).

The archaeological data used in this investigation come from a small-scale, non-industrial society, with all the caveats this entails. Indeed, the scale of Pre-Hispanic Northern Rio Grande Pueblo society was modest even relative to other pre-industrial civilizations, from ancient Greece and Rome to China and Egypt, Mesoamerica and the Andes. Despite all this, we find that archaeological data from this society are useful for investigating the mechanisms of economic growth because they provide a means of controlling for population growth and technological change, thus isolating the effects of population agglomeration. When this is done, the effects of agglomeration for growth are much clearer than they often are in contemporary data, where population growth, agglomeration and technological change are all occurring simultaneously (*59, 60*). Archaeological evidence can thus be seen to play a surprising and important role in the overall effort to develop a scientific understanding of economic growth and socioeconomic development.

The results presented here reinforces recent work which argues archaeological evidence has great untapped potential for research on contemporary issues and is especially important for the study of urbanization (*35*). In this case they show that, when holding technology constant, increases in per capita productivity are not driven by the total population, or the population size

of the largest settlement, but by changes in the average level of agglomeration across settlements. Our results also indicate there is no necessary relationship between Smithian growth and increasing inequality. Given this, important areas for additional research on economic growth, especially in the developing world, include exactly how culture and institutions stimulate or hinder the agglomeration process, and how such arrangements reduce the coupling between economic growth and increasing inequality. Our results also suggest it would be profitable to investigate whether the relationships observed here are apparent in other settings where agglomeration occurred in the context of stable population and physical technology. It may also be profitable to identify potential cases of technology-driven growth in the context of stable population and agglomeration, although whether this scenario has happened in human history, or is even feasible, is at this point an open question.

Acknowledgements: We thank Kaitlyn E. Davis for assistance in compiling the room area and artifact assemblage data analyzed in this paper, and Luis Bettencourt for discussions.

Funding: Portions of this research were supported by grants from the James S. McDonnell Foundation (#220020438) and the National Science Foundation (CNH-0816400).

Author Contributions: Scott Ortman: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, data curation, writing, review and editing, visualization; Jose Lobo: conceptualization, methodology, investigation, writing, review and editing.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Data Availability Statement: All data needed to evaluate the conclusions in the paper are present in the paper and/or Supplementary Materials. The raw data files are available at: https://core.tdar.org/project/392021/social-reactors-project-datasets. Additional data are available from the authors upon request

Table 1. Summary data for the Northern Rio Grande Pueblo area, 1250-1650 CE

Period (CE)	1200-1250	1250-1280	1280-1315	1315-1350	1350-1400	1400-1450[2]	1450-1515	1515-1550	1550-1600	1600-1650[2]
Occupied sites	1540	1684	1586	810	703	561	445	410	228	36
Est. population	9699	20225	26862	31398	35417	37211	35180	25763	19369	8490
Mean site size (room count)[1]	13	24	34	69	98	151	232	243	239	283
Mean of ln[site size][3]	1.9	2.14	2.68	2.92	3.17	3.48	3.68	3.67	4.47	4.99
Largest site (room count)	623	700	1018	2179	1862	2833	2636	2272	2317	990
Sites with pottery tallies	10	9	11	68	36	26	7	6	11	5
Mean ratio fine/utility sherds[4]	0.35	0.369	0.447	0.611	0.806	1.447	1.569	0.896	1.029	1
S.D. ratio	0.17	0.284	0.254	1.083	1.212	2.482	1.513	0.903	0.469	0.63
Sites with chipped-stone data	7	5	2	15	7	9	1	2	3	6
Mean ratio chipped stone/ utility sherds	0.6	0.642	0.895	0.411	0.748	0.391	0.152	0.644	0.577	0.33
S.D. ratio	0.32	0.383	0.555	0.575	0.877	0.542	N/A	0.083	0.491	0.3
Measured rooms	22	45	193	540	177	248	377	421	154	1382
Sites with measured rooms	5	8	21	63	12	8	5	11	8	4
Mean room area (m^2)[5]	6.6	6.32	5.54	5.31	6.18	6.51	6.99	7	6.32	8.55
S.D. area	2.73	1.88	1.54	1.39	1.9	1.14	1.32	1.6	2.14	1.65
Gini coefficient (room areas)	0.28	0.178	0.166	0.233	0.188	0.202	0.154	0.164	0.204	0.19

Notes:
1) The mean number of rooms inhabited at each site during each period, from (*49*).
2) Throughout this paper, the data for these periods are averages of results for two periods encompassing 1400-1450 CE and 1600-1650 CE, respectively, in (*49*).
3) Linear fit: $\langle \ln [N_t] \rangle = (.006 \pm .0007)t - (6.958 \pm .9633)$, $ANOVA\ F(1,8) = 108.8$, $P < .0001$, $r^2 = .923$.
4) For three chronological groups of log-transformed observations (pre-1280, 1280-1450, 1450-1650 CE), $ANOVA\ F(2,193) = 13.995$, $P < .0001$.
5) For three chronological groups of log-transformed observations (pre-1280, 1280-1450, 1450-1650 CE), $ANOVA\ F(2,148) = 11.162$, $P < .0001$.

Figure Captions.

Figure 1. Location of the Village Ecodynamics Project Study Area in New Mexico, USA, and major settlements considered in this study.

Figure 2. Summary of economic change in the Northern Rio Grande Pueblo region. All three time-series show statistically significant increases over time, as explained in Table 1: A) settlement population; B) ratio of fine-ware to utility-ware sherds; C) mean room area. Dotted lines represent 95% confidence intervals surrounding the mean estimates by period.

Figure 3. Relationship between settlement population and indices of consumption (A), personal possessions (B), and the division of labor (C). Symbols reflect chronological groups and yellow circles are the centers of the data for each time period. Note that for all three indices there is evidence of increase in both settlement size and the relevant socio-economic rate over time, but the data series follows a single scaling relation. For full regression results see Table S1.

Figure 4. (A) Scaling intercept for the consumption index (purple) and possessions index (blue) through time, the intercept is estimated using the center coordinates for each period (see Table S2) and Eq. (9), note that there is no temporal trend in these data (see Table S3); (B) Movement of the center of agglomeration vs. consumption (purple) and possessions (blue) over time, note that in both cases the centers gradually progress up a single scaling relation with slope $\beta \cong 7/6$, consistent with Eq. (9) in the case of constant technology.

Figure 5. History of economic growth (A) and inequality (B) in the Northern Rio Grande Pueblo area. Growth rates are average per year over each period, estimated from $\langle [lnN(t)] \rangle$ across all inhabited sites, see Table 1, and Eq. 11. Gini coefficients are based on the distribution of room areas during each period, see Table 1.

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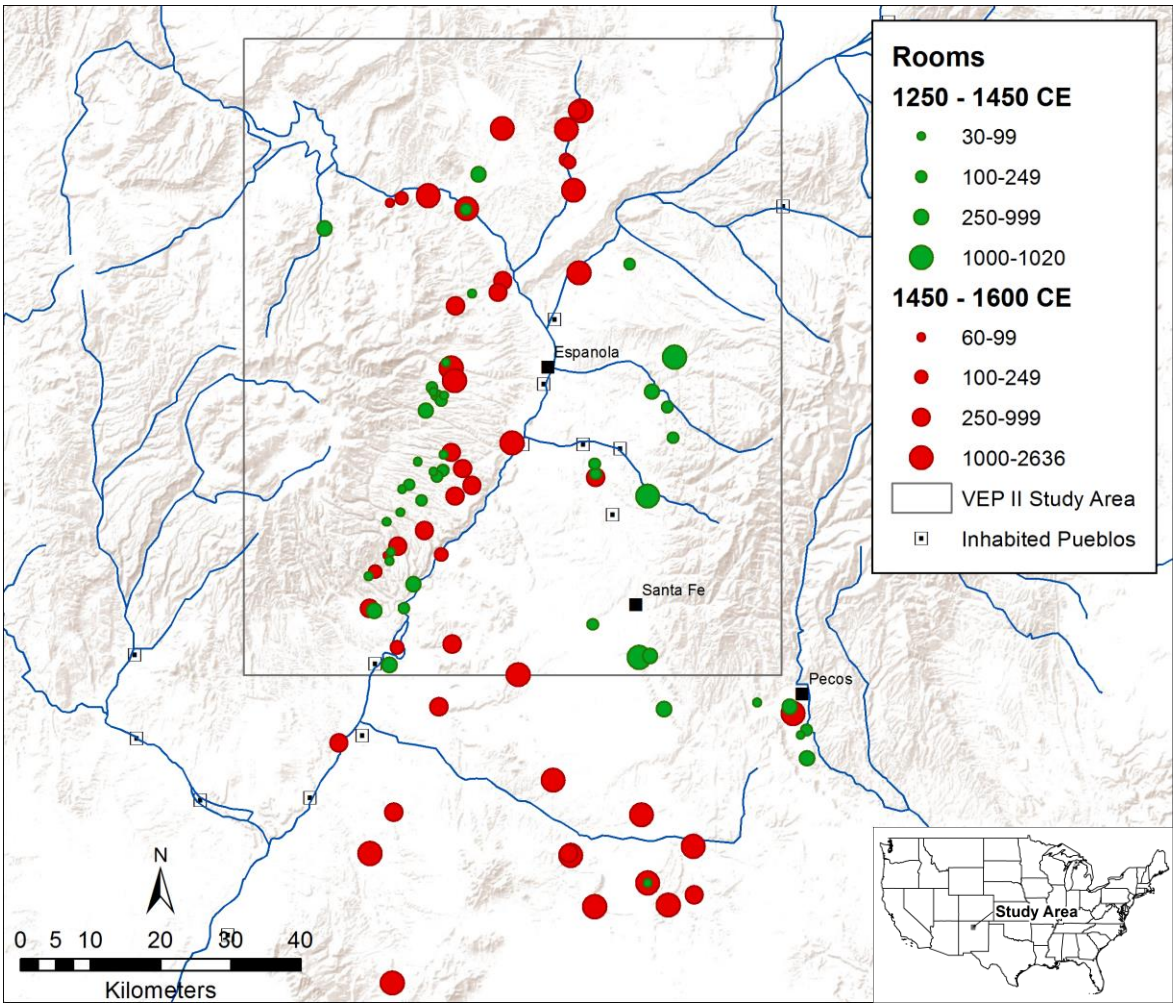
Rooms
1250 - 1450 CE
30-99
100-249
250-999
1000-1020
1450 - 1600 CE
60-99
100-249
250-999
1000-2636
VEP II Study Area
Inhabited Pueblos
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Santa Fe
Pecos
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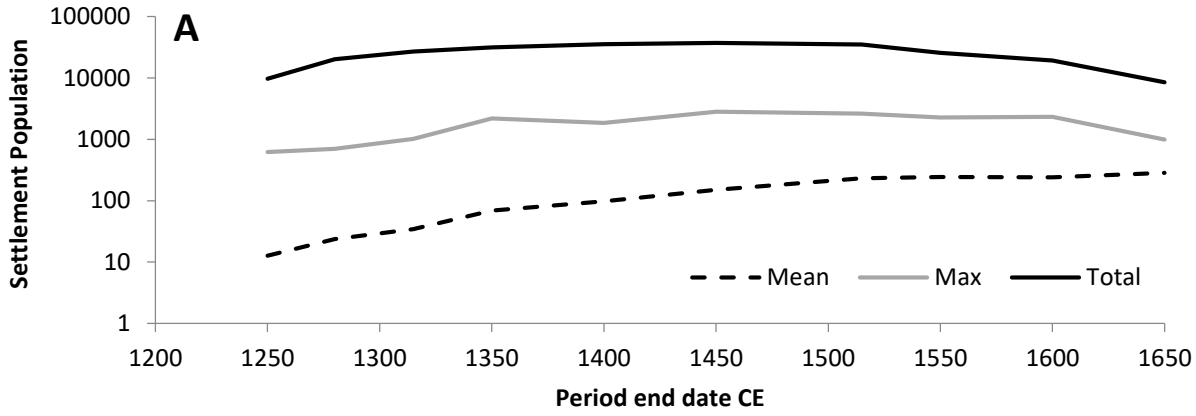
Kilometers
Study Area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Settlement Population
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10000
1000
100
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Mean
Max
Total
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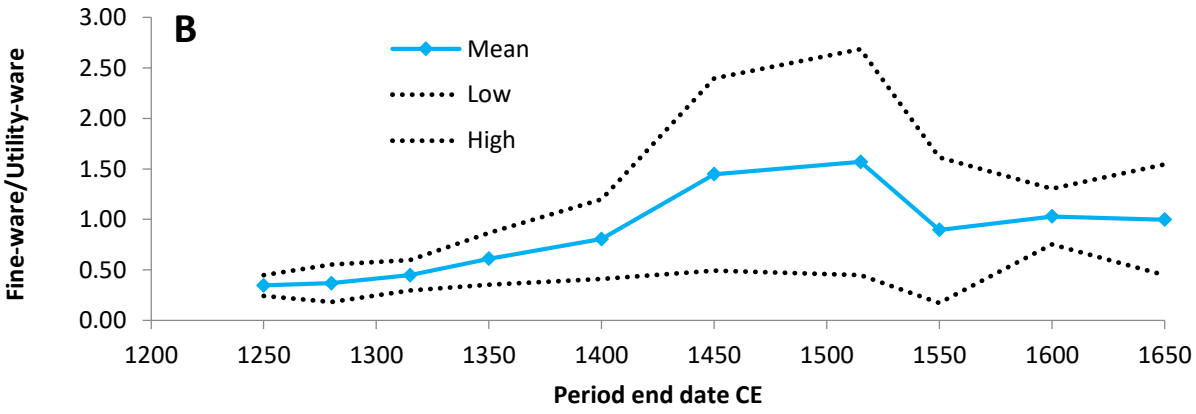
1350
1400
1450
1500
1550
1600
1650
Period end date CE


B
Fine-ware/Utility-ware
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2.50
2.00
1.50
1.00
0.50
0.00
Mean
Low
High
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1250
1300
1350
1400
1450
1500
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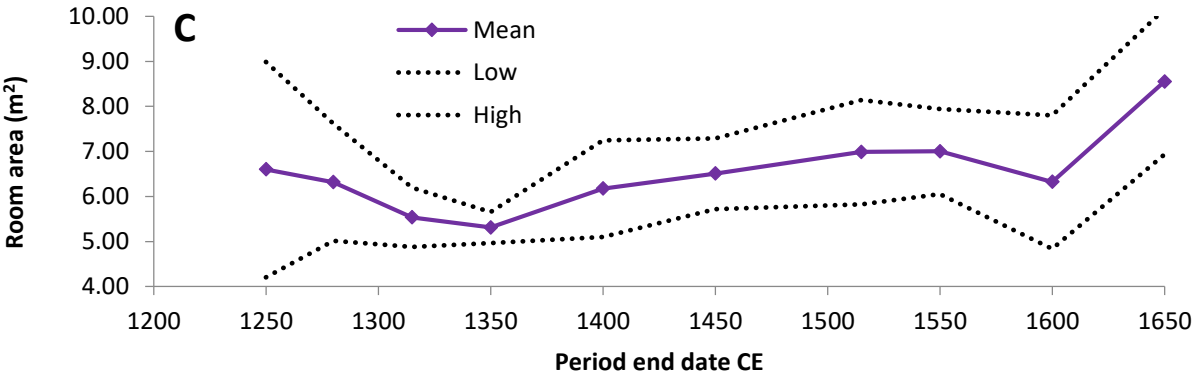
1600
1650
Period end date CE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8.00
7.00
6.00
5.00
4.00
Mean
Low
High
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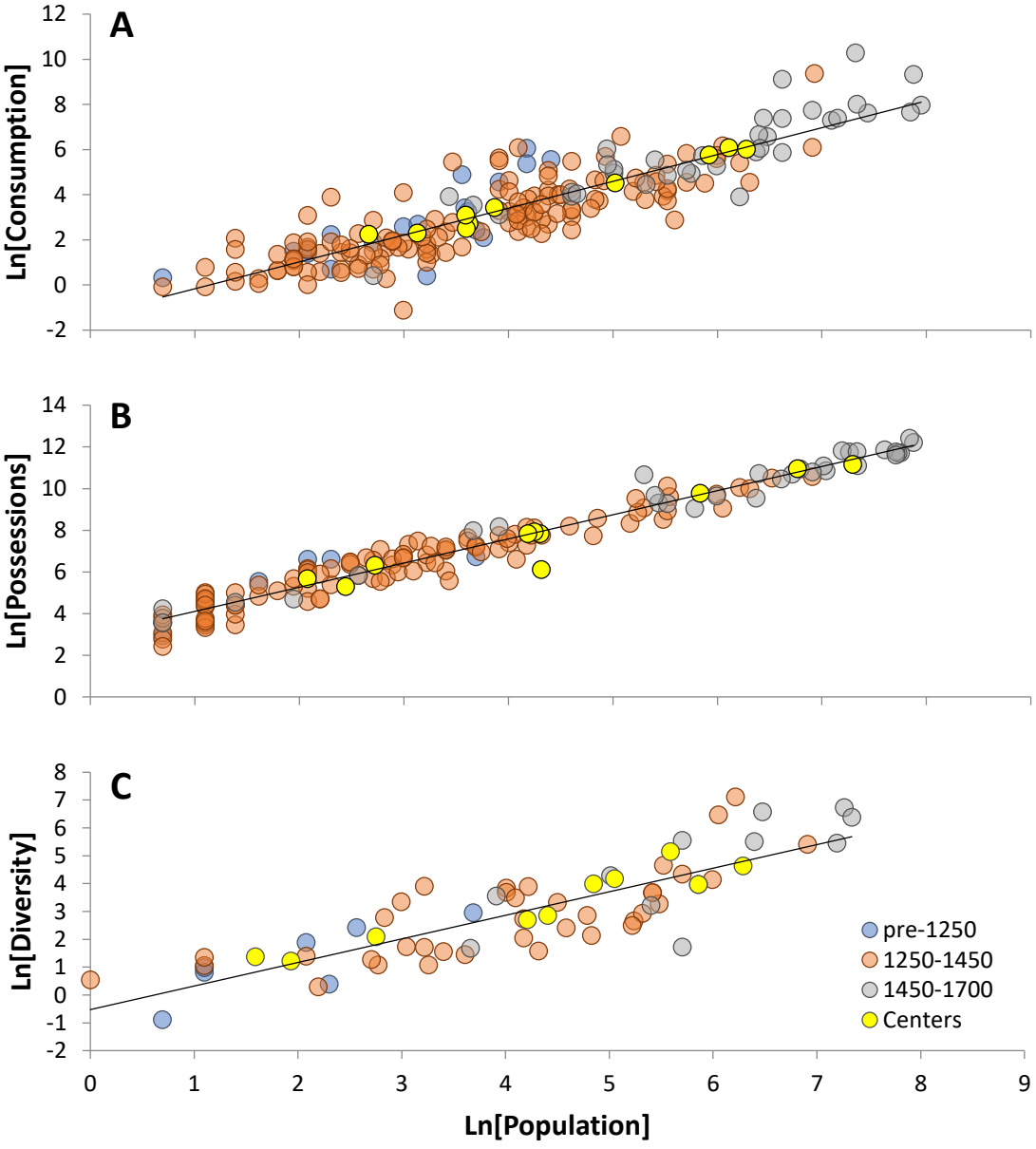
1350
1400
1450
1500
1550
1600
1650
Period end date CE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2
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-2
B
Ln[Possessions]
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12
10
8
6
4
2
0
C
Ln[Diversity]
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
-1
-2
0
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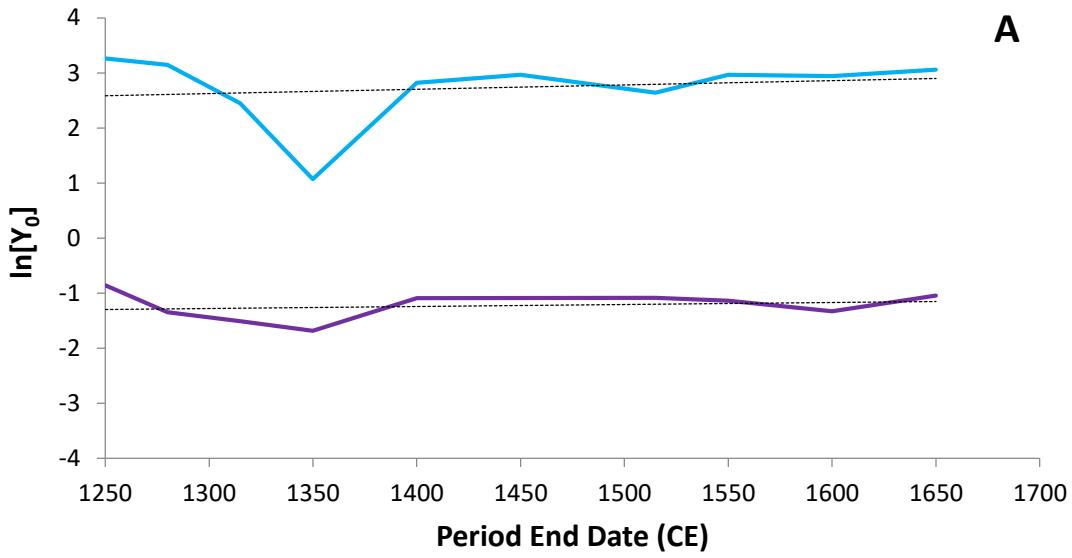
1250-1450
1450-1700
Centers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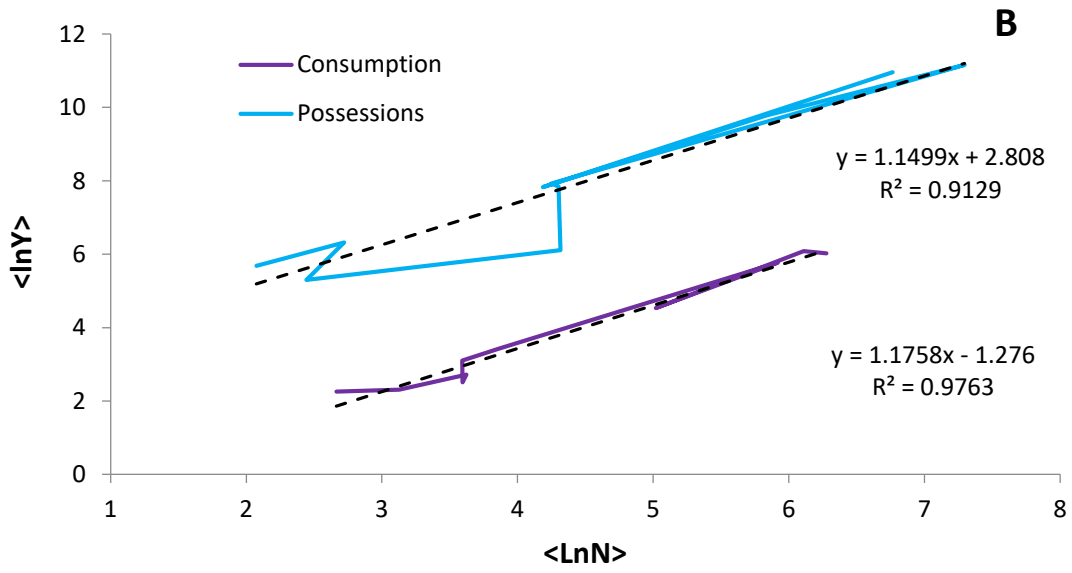
1500
1550
1600
1650
1700
Period End Date (CE)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Consumption
Possessions
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R² = 0.9129
y = 1.1758x - 1.276
R² = 0.9763
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8
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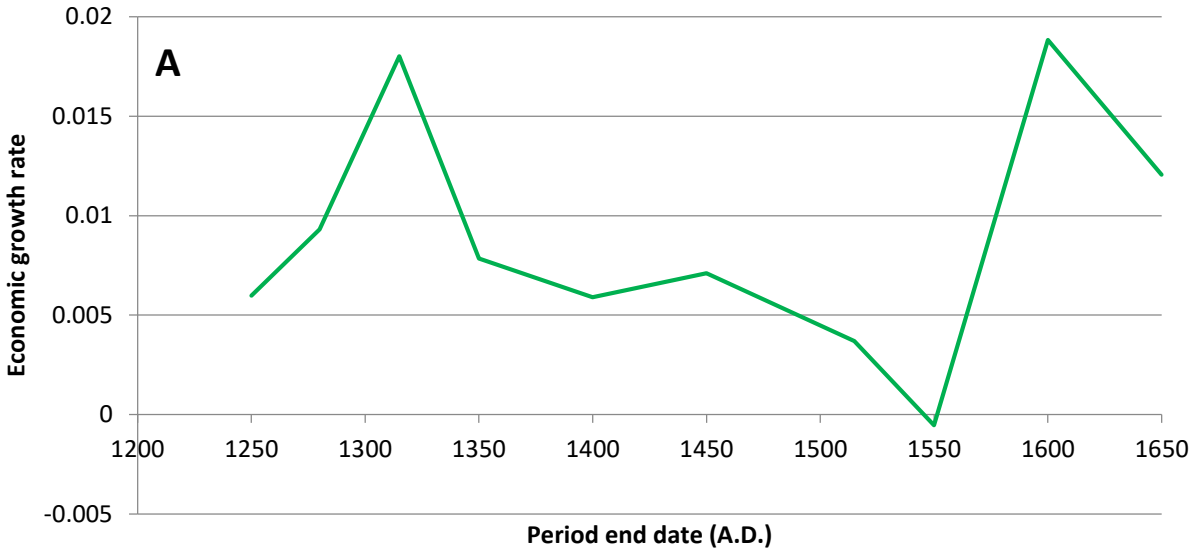
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0.01
0.005
0
-0.005
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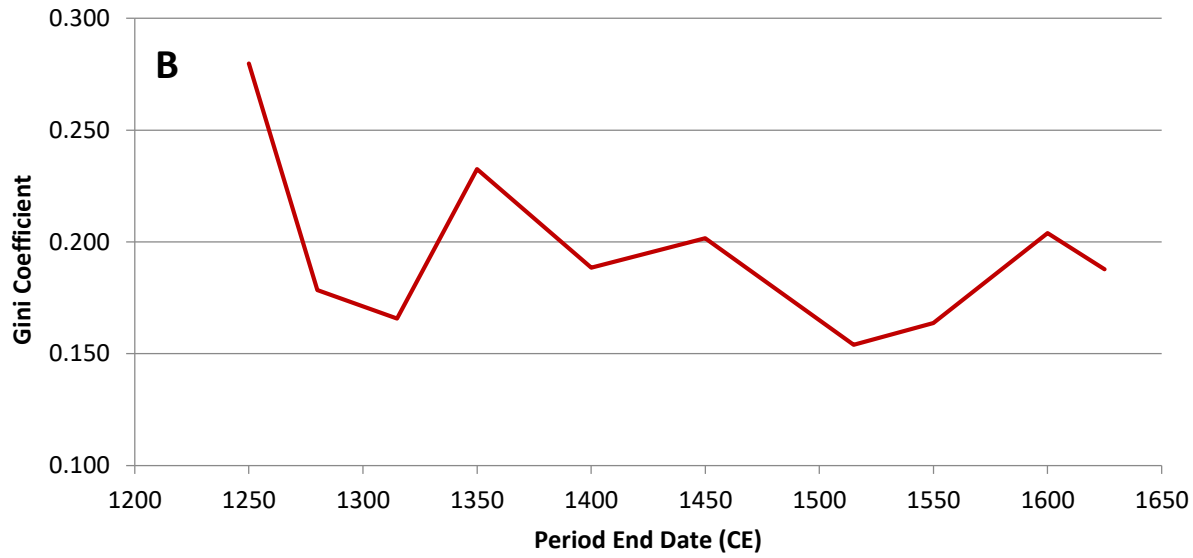
1250
1300
1350
1400
1450
1500
1550
1600
1650
Period end date (A.D.)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0.200
0.150
0.100
Gini Coefficient
1200
1250
1300
1350
1400
1450
1500
1550
1600
1650
Period End Date (CE)

Supplementary Materials

Smithian growth in a non-industrial society

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Supplementary Figures

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Figure S1. Rank-size distributions for the Northern Rio Grande Pueblo settlement system over time. Note that these distributions became increasingly non-Zipfian, with the population agglomerating into fewer, larger settlements at the top of the distribution.

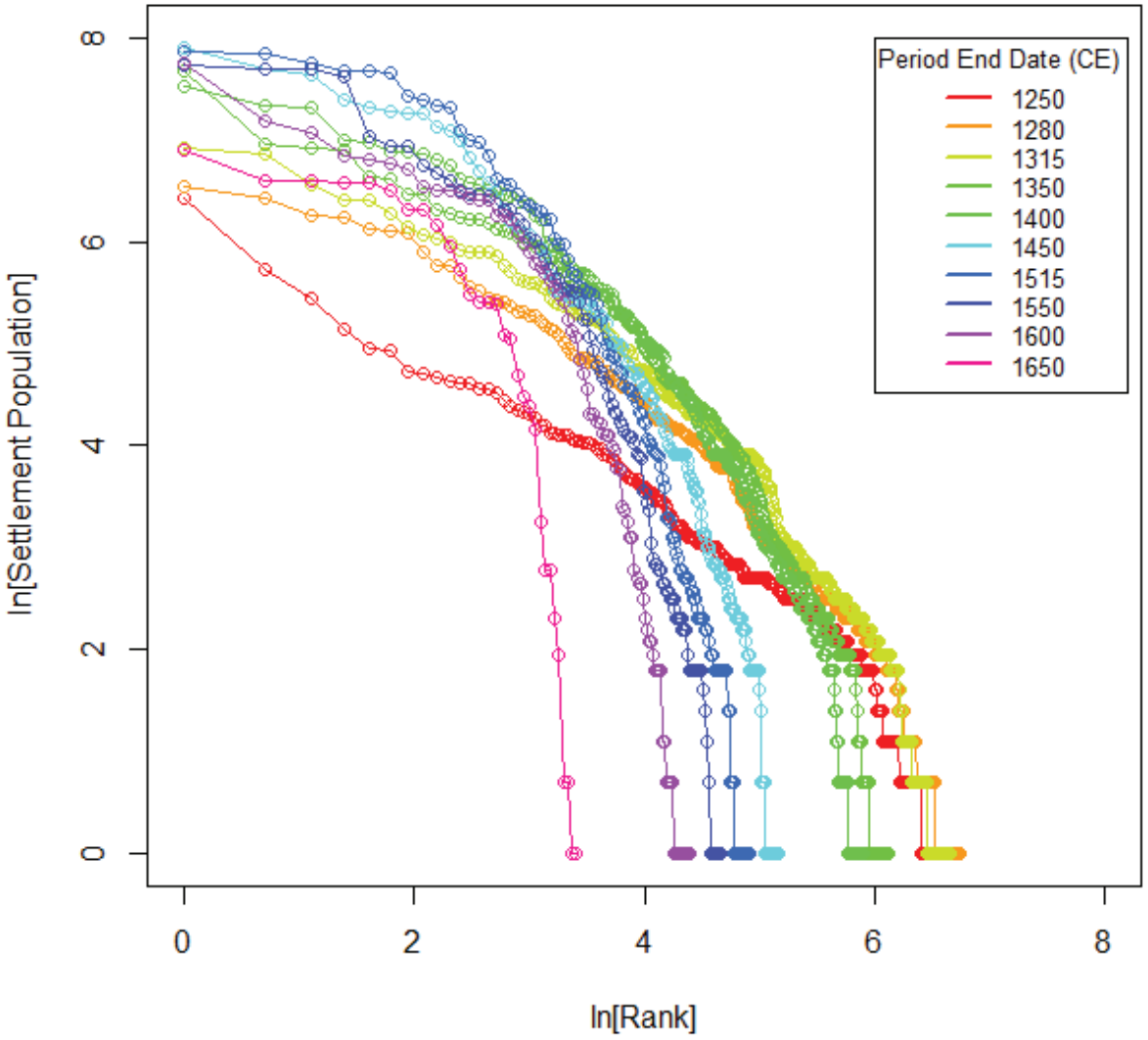

Table S1. Regression results for the relationship between settlement population, consumption and personal possessions. Data were log-transformed prior to analysis, and the independent variable is settlement population in both cases.

Dependent variable	Consumption index	Possessions index	Productive Diversity
Number of cases	192	141	57
Coefficient (95% C.I.)	1.188 (1.099 – 1.278)	1.159 (1.117 – 1.201)	.845 (.697 – .995)
Intercept (95% C.I.)	-1.355 (-1.743 – -0.968)	2.943 (2.769 – 3.118)	-0.524 (-1.198 – 0.149)
r^2	.779	.954	.692
F-ratio	671.222	2883.445	123.705
P-value	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001

Table S2. Coordinates of the centers and intercepts for consumption and possessions, by period. Note that $\langle lnN \rangle$ is different for each index in a given time period because the sample of settlements for which data are available vary, and the analysis focuses on the relationship between $\langle lnN \rangle$ and $\langle lnY \rangle$ given the available paired samples.

	Consumption index			Possessions index		
Period (CE)	$\langle \boldsymbol{lnN} \rangle$	$\langle \boldsymbol{lnY} \rangle$	$\boldsymbol{ln}[\boldsymbol{Y_0}]$	$\langle \boldsymbol{lnN} \rangle$	$\langle \boldsymbol{lnY} \rangle$	$\boldsymbol{ln}[\boldsymbol{Y_0}]$
1200-1250	2.664	2.254	-0.856	2.075	5.685	3.263
1250-1280	3.128	2.307	-1.343	2.722	6.322	3.146
1280-1315	3.623	2.721	-1.508	2.442	5.297	2.447
1315-1350	3.595	2.511	-1.684	4.316	6.110	1.073
1350-1400	3.592	3.101	-1.091	4.303	7.842	2.820
1400-1450	3.867	3.432	-1.081	4.248	7.926	2.968
1450-1515	5.919	5.771	-1.136	7.296	11.154	2.639
1515-1550	5.021	4.533	-1.326	5.837	9.778	2.967
1550-1600	6.109	6.085	-1.044	4.188	7.829	2.942
1600-1650	6.276	6.018	-1.306	6.765	10.952	3.057

Table S3. Regression results for the relationship between scaling intercepts and period end date.

Dependent variable	**Consumption index** $ln[Y_0]$	**Possessions index** $ln[Y_0]$
Number of cases	10	10
Coefficient (95% C.I.)	.0002 (-.0010 – .0014)	.0008 (-.0023 – .0039)
Intercept (95% C.I.)	-1.4714 (-3.2149 – .2722)	1.6002 (-2.8478 – 6.0483)
r^2	.0086	.0304
F-ratio	.0697	.2510
P-value	.7984	.6299