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English 210

Poverty Point, Louisiana

Poverty Point, located in the northeast portion of Louisiana, was home to many Native American Indians, making it rich in its own culture. The culture of these people flourished from approximately 2000 B.C. to 600 B.C. These Native American Indians lived in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas. They were hunters and gatherers and used the natural resources around them for food and water. The Poverty Point site is located in Louisiana but these Indians lived in the neighboring states to the east.

The Indians relied on hunting, fishing, and plant collecting for sources of food. They almost always lived next to a river or stream to collect water. These Native Americans gathered pecans, acorns, hickory nuts, and grasses for food. They also hunted animals, such as deer, rabbits, squirrels, raccoons, ducks, geese, and fished for bass and catfish. These served as their main sources of food. Their weapons were very advanced for their era and gave them a great advantage in the field. These weapons included spears with arrow heads and knives made out of rocks and different objects they could find to make sharp.

Some of the area’s Indians lived in very small, dispersed groups, while others established regional centers. These regional centers were where the largest groups of the Indians lived throughout the year. The Indians built oval or horseshoe-shaped rings around these centers and the reason for the construction is unknown. Scientists have studied these rings and are trying to find their meaning to further understand these people and the rings. Some believe that they used these rings to indicate that leaders lived at these regional centers. It is also suggested that the rings indicated points of trade and politics.

After years of research, the scientists have found that Poverty Point is the largest Native American structure in the Western Hemisphere. At Poverty Point, Indians constructed six semi-circular rings or ridges of earth around a central location and these rings covered 37 acres. The rings had aisles running through them and scientists have not determined what the aisles were used for. The Indians who lived at Poverty Point would have lived in the central plaza. There are several large mounds that surround the semi-circular rings. These mounds are incorporated into the overall design of their site. The largest mound at the Poverty Point site is 72 feet above the rest of the site, while the other of the mounds is not quite as tall. All of the mounds are said to have been designed to align with astronomical events.

These Native American Indians were very complex and must have had good reason to build such an extensive site at Poverty Point. Most of their sites were strategically placed to make sure there was plenty of a water and food resource to ensure their survival. Although no one can really understand the meaning of the mounds and rings, they must have had a purpose and significance to the Indians. These Indians were very smart and lived in these areas for many years, developing a site that is the curiosity of today’s visitors.

Works Cited

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