A University of Southwestern Louisiana professor presented a paper "The Rise and Fall of Poverty Point" at the annual Caddoan Indian Conference held last week at Northwestern State University at Natchitoches. The Conference was attended by Caddoan specialists from all parts of the United States. Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas and Oklahoma had the largest delegations. Special guest of the Conference was Melford Williams, present chairman of the Caddoan Indian Council and a resident of the Caddo Indian Reservation at Anadarko, Okla.

Dr. Jon Gibson, USL assistant professor and archaeologist, pointed out in the paper, an abstract of his recently completed doctoral dissertation, that Poverty Point represented the earliest pristine development of a complex socio-political form in North America. The type site of the culture, located on Bayou Macon in Northeastern Louisiana, was inhabited by Louisiana Indians between 1500-600 B.C. The site is now a state park.

Gibson hypothesized that Poverty Point may have come about initially as a result of economic exchange of products and raw materials between diverse parts of the segmented environments in which these chiefdoms were situated. The increasing warfare, accompanying subsequent population pressure on the limited environmental locales, also seems to have played a prominent role in its genesis. Its collapse seems to have been a consequence of emigration into floodplain areas as a result of population expansion and power usurpation by its leaders.

The occupants were organized by internal social ranking, by matrilocality, by dualism and by marriage groups formed by rank and moiety exogamy. The political structure was of a chiefdom type - that is, a large population aggregate having as its principal leader, a priest-chief who was responsible for redistribution of goods and services and for coordinating the religious activities.

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