New Light on the Cultures of South Carolina's Distant Past - 2002

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New Light on the Cultures of South Carolina’s Distant Past

South Carolina Archaeology Month
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In 1998, archaeologists with the SC Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of South Carolina initiated a program designed to explore the cultural history of the Southeastern United States. This program involved work with the University of South Carolina, Department of Anthropology, as well as other universities and organizations. The collaboration was funded by the National Science Foundation and the South Carolina Commission on Archaeology and Historic Preservation. The project was led by Dr. Mark Brooks, Savannah River Archaeological Project, SCIAA and Dr. John Cable, Palmetto Research Institute.

The Topper Site, Evidence of Ice Age Hunter-Gatherers in South Carolina

In 1998, archaeologists initiated the Topper Site Project in Allendale County, South Carolina. The site, located near the Ogeechee River, is significant because it is believed to be the oldest known site in South Carolina, dating back to the end of the last ice age. The site is occupied by Clovis hunters, who were some of the first people to settle in North America. The site contains evidence of the use of stone tools, charcoal, and animal bones, indicating that these early inhabitants relied on hunting and gathering for their subsistence. The site is also significant because it provides insight into the migration patterns of early humans into North America.

Investigations at the Tomatina Hills: Settlement Structure and Function

One of the many projects undertaken by the Topper Site Project was the investigation of the Tomatina Hills, a series of mounds located in Allendale County, South Carolina. The mounds are believed to be the remnants of a prehistoric settlement, which was likely occupied by hunter-gatherers during the Early Archaic period. The project involved the excavation and analysis of the mounds, which revealed evidence of subsistence activities, such as the use of stone tools and the presence of animal bones. The project also involved the use of advanced technologies, such as GIS, to analyze the settlement and its relationship to the surrounding environment.

The Paleoindian and Early Archaic Southeast

The Paleoindian and Early Archaic periods are two of the most important periods in the cultural history of the Southeastern United States. The Paleoindian period, which lasted from about 13,000 to 10,000 years ago, was characterized by the use of stone tools and the exploitation of wildlife. The Early Archaic period, which lasted from about 9,000 to 3,000 years ago, was characterized by the development of more complex societies, with the use of more sophisticated stone tools and the emergence of agriculture. The Topper Site Project has contributed to our understanding of these periods by providing evidence of the early human presence in South Carolina and the development of more complex societies in the region.

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Investigations of Hunter-Gatherer Settlement Systems

The Topper Site Project has also contributed to our understanding of the settlement systems of early hunter-gatherers. The project has involved the excavation and analysis of several sites, which have revealed evidence of the use of stone tools, the presence of animal bones, and the evidence of subsistence activities. The project has also involved the use of advanced technologies, such as GIS, to analyze the settlement and its relationship to the surrounding environment.

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