

GEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT OF THE NOGAHABARA I SITE

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Interpretation of the Nogahabara I assemblage as a Late Pleistocene abandoned toolkit rests primarily on the premise of a single brief occupation at the site. The limited contextual data presented do not discount a palimpsest of non-contemporaneous assemblages in secondary contexts associated with a lag deposit. Spatial patterning, lithic assemblage patterning, artifact surface alteration, and disparate radiocarbon dates at the site, as well as geological data from the Nogahabara and nearby Kobuk dunes, indicate that the cultural material was subjected to post-depositional disturbance. Alternate hypotheses of site formation and avenues for testing these hypotheses are considered.

La colección de Nogahabara I ha sido interpretada como un conjunto de herramientas abandonadas durante el pleistoceno tardío. Esta interpretación asume como premisa una breve y única ocupación del sitio. Con los datos contextuales limitados que se han presentado, no se puede desacreditar un palimpsesto de contextos no contemporáneos en condiciones secundarias asociadas con un depósito de residuos sedimentarios. El patrón espacial, la composición del conjunto lítico, la alteración superficial en los artefactos, y la diferencia en los fechados de carbono-14 del sitio, así como los datos geológicos de las dunas de Nogahabara y Kobuk, indican que el material cultural estuvo sujeto a alteraciones post-deposición. En este artículo, se consideran hipótesis alternativas de la formación de sitios y vías para probarlas.

While we find Odess and Rasic's (2007) theoretical discussion of toolkit composition and assemblage variability intriguing, their interpretation of the Nogahabara I site as a single, short-term occupation, reflecting a systemic assemblage unbiased by taphonomic disturbance, is unsubstantiated by the data presented in their article. Because their argument hangs on the premise that all of the artifacts are the same age and represent a toolkit or cache that belonged to one or possibly a small group of hunters, site context is critical to this interpretation. Odess and Rasic view the artifacts as having been freshly eroded

from a primary burial across a large blowout in a currently active dune field; yet there is a notable absence of discussion or references on northern eolian depositional environments and processes. Alternative interpretations of the geological context of the site and site formation processes, more consistent with the data, are evaluated here, as well as avenues for testing alternate hypotheses. Much of the data are consistent with the cultural materials being situated in an eolian lag deposit, and thus not in a primary context.

In addition to the contextual problems with the site, the assemblage data were not analyzed criti-

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