

Raw Material Procurement and Hunting Behaviour during the Middle and Later Stone Age at Nasera in Northern Tanzania

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Abstract

Many archaeologists use the linear distance to exotic lithic raw materials as a direct indicator of mobility system and trading/exchanger network, a set of assumptions that remains widely employed today. Such generalised strategies for the raw material procurement only measure the movement of specified items and rarely correlate other processes influencing raw material use and transport. This paper examines the interpretive significance of distant transported raw materials at Nasera by incorporating insights from technological organisation and subsistence strategies. Accumulated evidence suggests that non-local raw materials had significant functional and cultural values, despite foray movements having been influenced by other subsistence needs such as drinkable water, plant food and hunted games. Foragers moved on regular intervals in various places within the circuit of foray biomes based on the reliability of ecological resources. Non-local lithic raw materials were easily accessed either through direct procurement at the source during the seasonality movements or indirect procurements via the secondary source such as trade and exchange with neighbouring groups.

Background information

Nasera is a quartzo-feldspathic gneiss inselberg located 2° 44'S and 35° 12' E, East of the Serengeti National Park. LSB Leakey excavated Nasera in 1932. He excavated ten trenches covering an area of at least 10m². These trenches were mainly on the western side of the shelter (Leakey, 1936). Michael Mehlman carried out another excavation at Nasera from 1975 to 1976, covering an area of 7.5 m². In sum, a total of 17.5m² have been excavated at Nasera. These are intensive excavations and may be considered to be a devastation of the site. Even though excavation techniques and sorting procedures of pioneers do not meet present-day standards, new research on overwhelmed sites such as Nasera should rather focus on museum collections to minimise additional destructions to the historical site.

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