

THE MIDDLE PERIOD IN THE SOUTHERN SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

Robert Cartier
Archeological Resource Management
496 North Fifth Street
San Jose, CA 95112

ABSTRACT

This introductory paper to the compendium on the South Bay Middle Period provides a brief discussion of the organization and prominent themes of the papers. Organized primarily by the age of the sites discussed, the papers present a wide variation in the archeological record for the Middle Period. Variation in settlement patterns, artifact types, and cemetery data is brought out in the studies. Through the myriad of variation, recurrent trends during the Middle Period are seen. Times of inundation evidently caused widespread settlement relocation among prehistoric populations in the South Bay. Also, a possible intrusion of Windmiller culture is noted particularly in the record of the southeastern portion of the Bay Area. These and other patterns in South Bay archeology serve to better illuminate the local Middle Period while also exposing ill-understood areas for needed research.

INTRODUCTION

A general treatise on the Middle Period is sorely needed in the archeology of central California and such a work has never before been published. There have been general works written on the Early, Late, and Contact Period of central California prehistory, but never on the Middle Period per se. For various reasons, it stands as a vast hiatus in the literature. This is somewhat remarkable when it is realized that there are more archeological sites dating to, and possibly existing in, this time period than any other period of the Central California Taxonomic System (C.C.T.S.). Numerous well-known assemblages are reported within this period of time from most geographic regions in the central state. Extensive data are available on lithic industries, faunal remains, shell and bone ornaments, and most every other facet of the archeological culture available with contemporary techniques in the discipline. Given this condition, why is it that the Middle Period has gone without general study?

Variation, in a multiplicity of dimensions, is a pervasive characteristic of the Middle Period. This variation is found both spatially and temporally. The duration of the period is marked by change and transition in most every cultural element studied by archeologists. Initial portions of the Middle Period share many traits of the Early Period, whereas the closing of the Middle Period is marked in many ways by characteristics of the Late Period. In this sense,

the Middle Period was very aptly referred to by Lilliard et al. as the "Transitional" (1939). There are also synchronic variations within the period between geographic regions. Assemblages reported at the same points in time, but with some spatial distance from one another, show wide contrasts in archaeological assemblages. It is essential that the variations are recognized and studied to reveal the cultural processes which have given rise to them. Variability is probably the most important theme of the Middle Period and also a powerful analytic tool to understanding the dynamic mechanisms during this period of cultural activity. However, even though the tremendous amount of variation is a useful heuristic device, it also has most likely been the agent which has thwarted any earlier treatments of the Middle Period in toto.

This study of the Middle Period in the South Bay is presented through discussion of particular sites and site complexes. The site presentations deal primarily with settlement patterns and cemetery data, although some mention of the diagnostic artifacts are contained in several of the papers.

The chronological range of the Middle Period is a topic in itself which should be mentioned in the introduction. There are several temporal frameworks for the Middle Period which in most cases differ in the initial and/or terminal dates. The initial dates of the Middle Period in the literature vary between 3000 to 4500 B.P., whereas the terminal dates range from 1000 to 2000 B.P. (Moratto 1984; Chartkoff 1984). Within the papers in this compendium, most Middle Period chronologies are set at 1000-3000 B.P. Two of the papers (Bard and Busby on Coyote Hills, and Anastasio on North San Jose) employ the B1 chronological scheme of Bennyhoff and Hughes (1983). It is thus essential that readers of this compendium and future researchers of the Middle Period keep in mind the chronological parameters set for particular sites or topics. Hopefully the works contained in this group of papers will aid in clarifying pertinent questions related to the temporal range of the Middle Period.

THE CONCEPT OF "MIDDLE PERIOD," NOMINALISM AND REIFICATION

The term "Middle Period" was chosen for use after careful consideration of alternatives and implications. The alternative of "Middle Horizon" was abandoned due to concern that the use of "Horizon" would connote reference to the structured cultural sequence applied specifically to the interpretation of burial data and/or assemblages in the Sacramento Delta and Valley (Fredrickson 1973). "Period" is used instead as a relatively open and neutral term that would allow for more contemporary lines of inquiry and less preconceived notions of distant cultural sequences. However, this is not to say that the South San Francisco Bay is divorced

from the basic artifact forms and sequences described in the C.C.T.S. (Lilliard et al. 1939). The typologies and chronologies developed out of the C.C.T.S. are by far the most powerful tools for a great deal of temporal analysis in central California (Beardsley 1954). This can be seen in the application of typologies within the papers. Still used in the concept of Middle Period is the diachronic framework developed out of the three horizon system. It is questioned if using this chronology in the South Bay may be applicable. Is this use of Middle Period a reification? Heizer (1964) argued for the Middle concept, using a wide data base to affirm the C.C.T.S. chronology as containing factual separations in the archeological record. But perhaps the use of this period of time in the South Bay could in fact be obfuscating a more factual and meaningful separation in the local prehistoric record. With such precautions in mind, it is intended that "Middle Period" will be employed in a nominalistic sense and that the data presented in this symposium will contribute toward revealing a real and accurate cultural understanding.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDIES AND THEIR THEMES

Ordering of the individual studies was attempted chronologically, starting with those that addressed the older portions of the Middle Period near 3000 B.P. and progressing to those studies discussing sites from the more recent range of the Middle around 1000 B.P. Sometimes this was not a simple matter as many of the studies discuss settlement or cultural change over various lengths of time and thus there are overlaps in the chronological treatments. Most of the papers discuss the spatial relocations of populations over time making use of absolute dating techniques, particularly radiometric dating and secondarily obsidian hydration. Over sixty radiometric dates are referred to directly in the papers in discussions features, components, deposits, and site complexes. This intensive use of radiometric analysis is only partially represented in Table 1 below, in Bocek's paper on the San Francisquito drainage, and in Table 1 of the CA-SCI-593 paper.

Radiometric dating is becoming more widely used in the area during the last five to ten years. Absolute dating of this magnitude incurs a methodological deviation from the earlier analytical approach used during the creation of the Middle Period concept. Grave lots are no longer necessary now to date archeological features or deposits. A component or deposit can be accurately dated, in most cases, without reference to burial positions or burial associations or even temporal diagnostics. This has opened the door, as seen in the South Bay, to dating special use areas, short term habitation sites, and accurately boxing in the basal and terminal dates of sites. In turn, this has allowed detailed discussions of intersite relationships which were previously cumbersome and rarely attempted. Those studies which use radio-

TABLE 1
MIDDLE PERIOD SOUTHERN SAN FRANCISCO BAY

Chronology	Selected Sites	C-14 Dates	Site Name
1000 BP-----	SC1-327	1030	Jasper Ridge
<u>Transitional</u> Phase	SMA-204	1070	Eastridge Site
	Ala-424	1050	Ardenwood
1100 BP-----	SC1-268	1110	Lamp Lighter
<u>Terminal</u> Phase	SMA-160	1110	Hiller Mound
	SC1-464	1145	Stanford West
	Ala-343	1300	Stivers Lagoon
1400 BP-----	SC1-302	1450	North 1st St.
<u>Late</u> Phase	SC1-276	1500	Spectra Physics
1600 BP-----	SC1-593	1660	Berryessa Creek
<u>Intermediate</u> Phase	SMA-160	1660	Hiller Mound
	SC1-300	1760	North 1st St.
1800 BP-----	SC1-302	1910	North 1st St.
	SC1-464	1930	Stanford West
	SC1-137	2000	Snell Site
<u>Early</u> Phase	SMA-263	2270	Oak Knoll Site
	SMA-248	2320	Tarlton Site
	SC1-418	2960	Rolm Site
	SMA-77	3000	University Village
3000 BP-----			

carbon in this way have strong capabilities for finite examinations of settlement patterns in relatively small geographic areas. Examples of these treatments are seen in the studies of the Tarlton site (CA-SMa-248), the sites of North First Street/Guadalupe River, and the Stanford site complex.

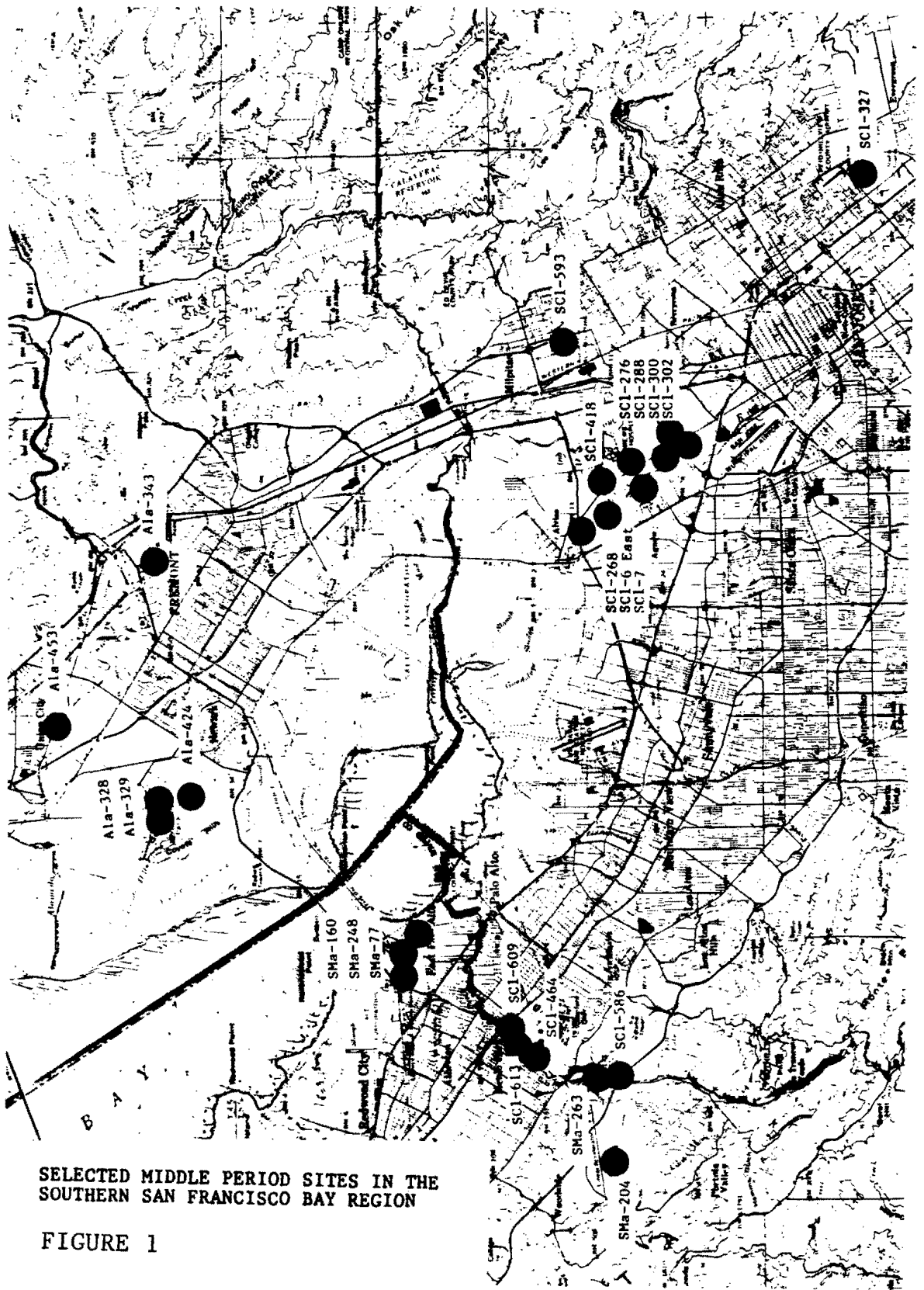
Conversely, the studies which rely heavily on burial data, temporally sensitive artifacts, and other diagnostics in the material cultural are well-suited for discussions of cultural patterns which may extend over larger geographic areas. These studies often place emphasis on cultural affinities rather than temporal dimensions. This tendency is seen in the studies which contain rich assemblages and extensive grave lots. These data provide key opportunities to flesh out the lifeways of the populations using the material culture. Examples of this approach within this symposium include the studies of CA-SCl-327, CA-Ala-343, and CA-Ala-453. The later two sites have traits of the Meganos pattern or culture. (The symposium presentations of CA-Ala-453 and the Meganos cultural were not submitted as papers for publication.)

Site locations and clusters referred to in the studies display patterns worthy of mention. In looking at the map of selected Middle Period sites, three general concentrations are seen. However, this distribution does not truly reflect prehistoric settlement patterns. Instead, it appears that these areas result from targeted archeological study zones, intense construction development, and requirements from certain governmental jurisdictions for archeological evaluations. The clearest example of this is the concentrated efforts of archeologists at Stanford University in the survey and evaluation of the San Francisquito Creek drainage (Bocek 1987).

Vertical site location is also patterned and deserving of comment. Most of the Middle Period sites recorded during the last decade on the lower Valley floor were completely or partially buried under alluvial silts. This includes at least ten of all the sites on Figure 1. Construction excavation and archeological testing were responsible for exposing sites silted over from the periodic flooding of the valley floor in prehistoric times. This process of siltation has created difficulties in finding Middle Period sites in the lower elevations.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE SYMPOSIUM PAPERS

From this collection of South Bay studies, it appears that the most widespread and notable change during the Middle Period of the South Bay is site abandonment and relocation. Progressing through the papers in the compendium, we find sites such as the North San Jose complex, the Tarlton site, the Berryessa Creek site, the Coyote Hills site com-



SELECTED MIDDLE PERIOD SITES IN THE
SOUTHERN SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION

FIGURE 1

plex, and the Eastridge site with evidence of site establishment and/or abandonment between 1000 and 2000 B.P. The North First Street site complex, with its extensive grave lots, dates to the early portions of the Middle Period. This complex provides multi-site examples of the cemetery data and the basal-terminal dates of key sites such as CA-SC1-300 and -302. The settlement pattern in the North First Street complex is seen with fairly exacting chronology where several sites (CA-SC1-300, -302, and -418) have their upper layers radiometrically dated at no later than 1450 ± 140 B.P. The sister sites in North San Jose along the Guadalupe River (CA-SC1-6, -7, -276, and -278) have basal radiocarbon dates no earlier than 1500 ± 100 B.P. These data from the North San Jose sites indicates that a major change in settlement took place in the South Bay at approximately 1500 B.P. It is not presently understood if the shifts in settlement were a direct relocation of populations or if a hiatus is present and new populations may be involved. This settlement pattern, together with known abandonment and initiation of many other sites in the region at this general time period, very possibly may have greater implications. Widespread climatic events appear to have taken place, which resulted in South Bay flooding and the realignment of river and creek systems. It is questioned whether events at this time may mark a meaningful division between the Middle and Late Periods.

Another observation that can be drawn from the papers regards population growth as represented by site frequency. It appears from the fairly large corpus of data currently available in the South Bay that there was a population explosion in the Middle Period. Middle Period sites identified in the South Bay exceed the Late Period and Early Period sites several times over. This same general observation of population growth was expressed in Bocek's study based on her sample from San Francisquito Creek (Bocek 1987).

From artifact assemblages and cemetery data at CA-Ala-343 and 453, it appears that there is a possible influx of a Windmill-like cultural pattern during the Middle Period in the South Bay. Referred to as the Meganos Aspect by Bennyhoff (1968), the traits of this intrusion include ventral extensions which are uncharacteristic otherwise for the Middle Period in the South Bay. The paper on CA-Ala-343 provides an example of the possible Meganos Aspect included in this compendium of papers (Dietz 1987; Bennyhoff 1987).

As a conceptual unit, the Middle Period proves to have real viability in the archeological record of the South Bay. Many of the earliest sites in the South Bay have basal dates at approximately 3000 B.P. indicating some implications for cultural change at this point. In fact, relatively few sites are known in the South Bay to predate this time. The terminal boundary of the Middle Period is, however, more problemat-

ic for establishing a clear separation between Middle and Late periods. Many sites show habitation or use and continued transition right into historic times. As stated earlier, a natural closing date of the Middle Period may be seen in the resettlement events at circa 1500 B.P. (This date corresponds well with the Middle Period terminal chronology proposed in other studies as discussed above.

Due to the tremendous variability and complexity of the Middle Period in the South Bay, only a few examples and topics have been treated in this compilation of studies. However, this work will hopefully serve as an initial effort in approaching this important subject. In conclusion, several research questions are offered which further studies in the South Bay Middle Period may consider as avenues of inquiry.

1. What are the antecedents of the Middle Period in the South Bay?
2. What are the causes for the great variability in the archeological record during the Middle Period in the South Bay?
3. Do metric data from burial populations indicate major genetic differences within the Middle Period or between Late and Early Periods?
4. Is there, in fact, a population explosion during the Middle Period and what might be its cause?
5. Can climatic events or changes be documented which may correspond to the beginning of the Middle Period and again to the 1400-1600 B.P. period or site abandonment?
6. Is there increased evidence of social conflict as marked in trauma in the burial populations or mass graves as at CA-SC1-327?
7. Did a distinct subculture penetrate into the South Bay such as a Meganos intrusion as exemplified by CA-Ala-343?
8. As Bocek has asked in her paper, are site clusters resulting from contemporaneous occupation or repeated use of favored sites?
9. Might the terminus of the Middle Period in the South Bay be marked at the point of repeated site abandonment and relocation (1600-1400 B.P.)?
10. Why are obsidian hydration dates in several cases in the South Bay (CA-SC1-137 and the North San Jose complex) inconsistent with the radiometric dates?

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