

Pottery from the Norwegian Arcadia Survey: A Preliminary Report

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This paper presents initial impressions of the pottery finds from the Norwegian Arcadia Survey. Material from the survey dates from the Bronze Age and through the medieval period. The project provided evidence of extensive local production of pottery in the classical and Hellenistic periods, and only limited importation of Laconian, Corinthian and perhaps Argive ceramics. It provides a basic description of the local ceramics and describes the possible discovery of a workshop or potter's quarter as well as the identification of what appears to be a local Tegean amphora shape.

The aim of this paper is to give a preliminary description of the pottery that has been collected during three seasons of survey undertaken by the University of Oslo, within the project named Norwegian Arcadia Survey in the years 1999-2001.¹ In this perspective, I shall try to give a general overview of the whole collection of materials and to point out some lines of research that are going to be developed in further studies.

The main target of the Norwegian Arcadia Survey project is the description of the urban area of Tegea and its neighbours. This means that the expected range of findings, in terms of chronology, was very wide, since the area of the

1. I would like to thank all the people who helped me in my work and gave me the possibility to take part in a beautiful experience both from the human and professional point of view. I shall start, of course, from Professors Erik Østby and Knut Ødegård, who invited me to join their project, but I want to thank also the team leaders and members and all the students coming from different countries and universities who took part to the Norwegian Arcadia Survey: their help and kindness made everything easy and efficient. I need to thank also Prof. Mary Voyatzis, who explained me in a rapid and efficient way the main features of the local pottery productions of Arcadia: without her knowledge, liberality and skills, my work would have been really difficult. Last but not least, I need to thank Prof. Berit Wells and her team, who visited us both in 2000 and 2001 and with whom we discussed the features of Argive local pottery production. Of course, what I shall say is completely my own responsibility.

ancient *polis* has been occupied from prehistory to modern times. In fact, the chronology of the findings confirmed this supposed situation: the most ancient pieces collected are a few flint objects, the latest are medieval and Turkish sherds; and this wide time span is completely covered, although for some periods by very little material.

Before going *in medias res*, it is necessary to focus our attention on some preliminary remarks.

In the town area, as the geomorphological analysis has shown,² the shape of the landscape in ancient times was characterized by the presence of low hills with small rivers and channels running between them, while now the modern villages are located on a quite regular, horizontal plain. This situation has obvious consequences for the way in which sherds can be collected and gives an explanation for the high frequency of fields where the chronology of the findings is recent, although they can be close to others where more ancient traces are found. For instance, in the supposed urban area of ancient Tegea one or more small fields with pottery datable in the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. could be found that were surrounded by fields with material of the medieval or Turkish period; this could mean that the area with the earliest material was in classical times on the top of a small hill, protected from erosion and floodings by channels and riverbeds that could contain the waters from rainfall. Then the abandon or, simply, a lack of maintenance of the channels could have caused them during the centuries to be filled up to (or next to) the top level of the hill.³ So, when the results of the survey are to be evaluated, we must consider all these features, both in terms of chronology and interpretation.

Although the impressions received from pottery collected on the surface may involve some distortion, the picture that emerges from a rapid look at the whole collection shows the presence of a great amount of local pottery, while the imports are very few, especially in the time-span from the classical times to the Roman conquest. So Tegea seems to have been an area counting mainly on local production, and this seems to be naturally connected to the abundance of available natural resources, like clay beds, water and fuel.

This picture is true for all the surveyed areas, although there is an important exception represented by the great and famous sanctuary of Athena Alea, where imports are well known from the excavations; they are justified by the presence of the sanctuary itself. However, this situation is similar to what is described

2. See the paper by K. Ødegård in this volume.

3. This is the case of the temple of Athena Alea, as K. Ødegård points out in his contribution to this volume.

elsewhere in the neighbourhood by previous researches, such as the well published excavation in the temple area at Pallantion.⁴

Tegean pottery fabric can be described as follows: the colour of the clay varies from pinkish yellow to brown, and the presence of two main types of fabric is evident. The first is pink/orange inside and yellow on surface, the second is homogeneously light brown/beige/brown.

The fabric of black-glazed vessels is often fine, with few inclusions consisting of rare, small, white dots, probably calcium-carbonate based rocks, and very thin pieces of gilded and silvered mica. Very rare, thicker grains of sand also occur. A precise qualitative and quantitative analysis has been promoted by M. Voyatzis on a considerable number of samples datable in the Geometric period, while it has yet to be made on the material from the survey, so this description is obviously imprecise and rough. The feel of the fabric is smooth in some circumstances, but very often powdery, while it is hard in yet a few cases. These differences would seem to depend on the temperature and atmospheric conditions in the kiln during the firing process more than any other circumstances. As for the glaze, one can say that it is normally not very shiny, sometimes it is definitively matt. The colour of the glaze could often turn to brown or dark grey, and this is surely due to an imperfect reduction phase during firing.

In this survey, apart from prehistorical material, the most ancient pieces of pottery collected are a few fragments of Mycenaean cups, very badly preserved, of very poor quality and most probably locally made. (Fig. 1)

In the archaic period the imported vases come from Laconia, Corinth and perhaps the Argolis, but these are always only a few pieces among many of local production. In the classical and Hellenistic periods, no imported vases have been recognized yet, but further studies could give more precise indications. In the Roman times some fragments of sigillata and trade amphoras show a situation that can be considered normal for that age. (Fig. 2)

Back to the classical period, of some interest are the many clues which indicate the existence of ceramic workshops in certain fields that have been surveyed in the urban area of Tegea. A considerable number of slag pieces come from different fields and cover a period which surely extends, at least, from the classical period to the Middle Ages. (Fig. 3)

Some sherds belonging to stacking rings and kiln firing supports would seem to be decisive for the identification of a production site in field 332. (Fig. 4)

In the Greek world, the use of tools to separate stacked vases in the kiln begins in the 5th century B.C. and it lasts through the Hellenistic and Roman

4. M. Iozzo and M. Pagano, "Scavi di Pallantion: Catalogo degli oggetti," *ASAtene* 68-69, 1990-91, 121-283.

times.⁵ Its diffusion in the Mediterranean area seems to be connected with the deep change in the methods of pottery production that took place when the massive production of red figured and black glazed pottery developed outside of Attica.

The best parallels for the supports found in Tegea are, in my knowledge, from the Achaean colony of Metaponto, in Southern Italy.⁶ (Fig. 5) The presence of both supports and slags suggests that at least one workshop, if not a potter's quarter, was located in that field. The chronology of these objects, and their shape, seems to suggest that this (or these) workshop(s) were connected with the production of Arcadian red figure vases, although the hypothesis needs necessarily to be confirmed by an excavation.

The last argument that I would like to point out is the possibility that a local shape of amphora existed in Tegea. The best examples are two fragments of rim, neck and handle of a small amphora, both from field no. 246. (Fig. 6)

The clay features are typically local: both sherds are powdery at touch, and the colour is pink inside and yellowish outside in one case, light brown in the other.

I must say that I have not found any comparison for the shape, but this could be only due to a personal lack of knowledge.

At this stage of the research, some features like the rim or the clay seem to recall, from the technical point of view, the Late Roman amphoras like the Almagro 50 or Keay XVI/XXII, but I have no clue for the chronology, since the field where they have been found has been occupied since the classical period. So, any suggestion by scholars and experts will be well received.

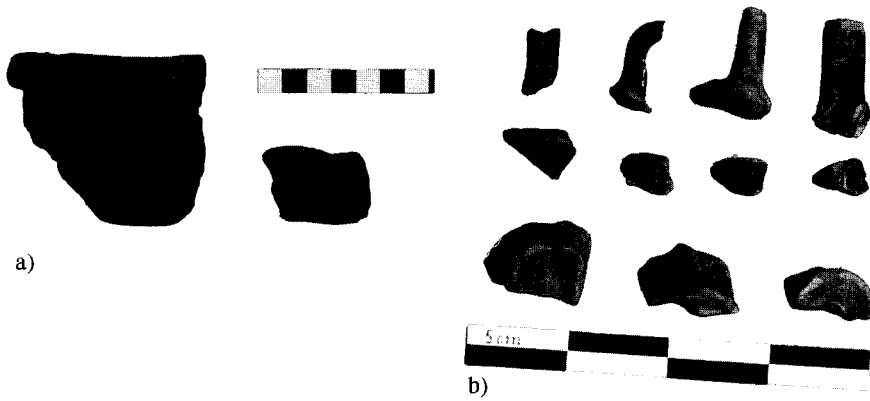
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5. The function of this kind of tools is twofold: the first is to improve the stability of the stack, the second to avoid fusion of different vases in the same stack. Another kind of support, leaf-shaped, was used also in the archaic period, but the function was simply to improve the stability of big vases with flat bases in the kiln. For such objects in Athens, see J.K. Papadopoulos, "ΛΑΣΑΝΑ, Tuyères and Kiln Firing Supports," *Hesperia* 61, 1992, 203-21; M.C. Monaco, *Ergasteria. Impianti artigianali ceramici ad Atene ed in Attica dal protogeometrico alle soglie dell'ellenismo*, Rome 2000.

6. In this picture, taken from my Ph.D. thesis, are shown some examples found by F. D'Andria in the potter's quarter of that polis, in a pit that has been connected with the early Lucanian workshop of the Creusa and Dolon Painters (waste deposit no. 1), which activity dates from the end of the 5th century to the first quarter of the 4th century B.C. To my knowledge, the use of this cylindrical shape begins in the 5th and lasts until the first half of the 4th century B.C. For further information see: F. D'Andria, "Scavi nella zona del Kerameikos, in Metaponto I," *NSc Suppl.* 1975, 355-452; V. Cracolici, *I sostegni di fornace dal Kerameikos di Metaponto*, Bari 2003.



Fig. 1. Fragments of Mycenaean cups from the neighbourhood of the urban area. (Photo: author.)



a)

b)



c)

Fig. 2. Some fragments of Late Roman amphoras. a) Laconian fragments; b) pottery of the 5th and 4th century B.C.; c) late Roman sherds. (Photo: author.)



Fig. 3. Ceramic slags. (Photo: author.)



Fig. 4. Kiln firing supports and slags from field 332. (Photo: author.)

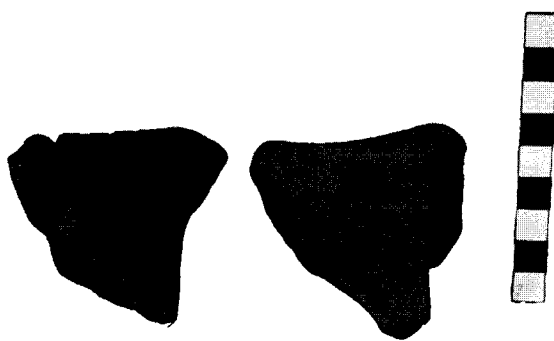


Fig. 5. Amphora fragments of local production. (Photo: author.)

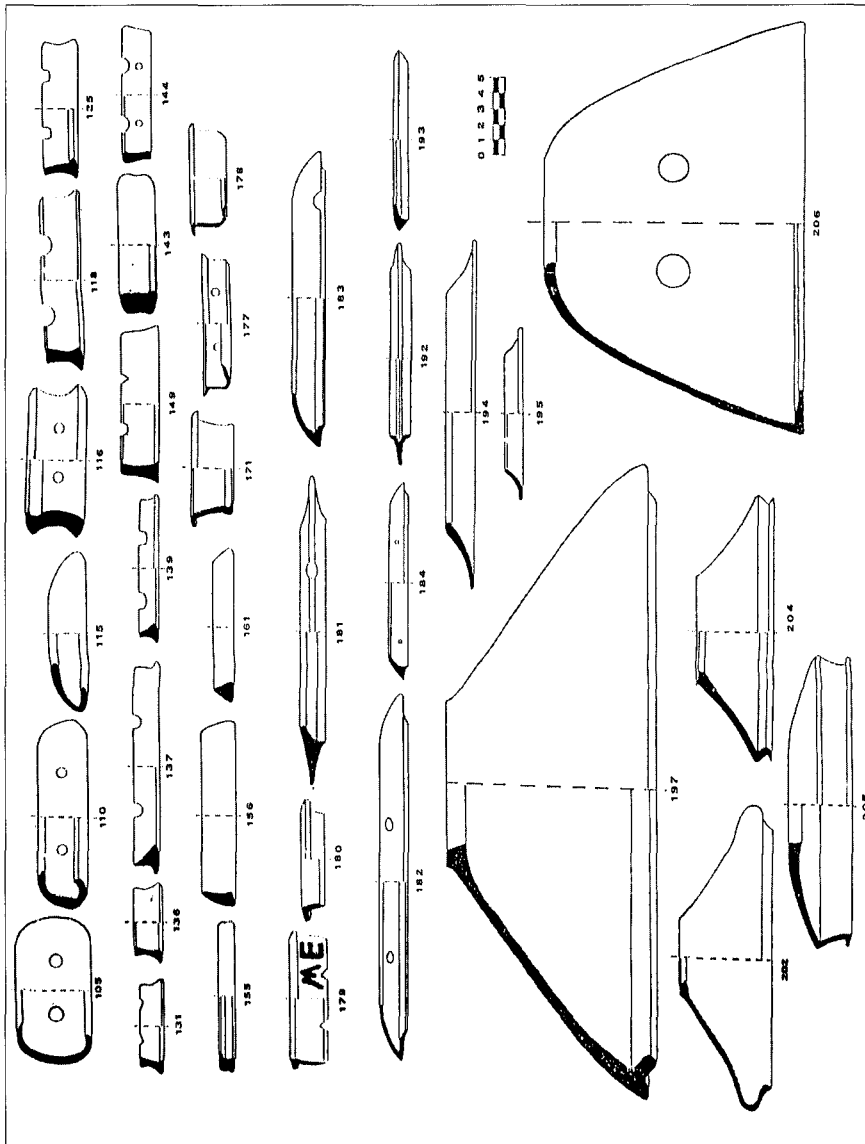


Fig. 6. Kiln firing supports from Metaponto. (Drawing: author.)