

Pottery at the Crossroads: Ceramic Trends in Southeast Arcadia*

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Ceramics found at Arcadian sites play a potentially important role in helping us to understand the extent of cultural uniformity in the region. This paper examines the nature of the pottery from various sites in Arcadia between the 10th and 7th centuries B.C. From the 10th to the early 8th centuries, we have limited ceramic representation in the region, with a large assemblage of ceramics known only from the southeastern part of the region, from the sanctuary of Athena Alea at Tegea. It is not until the late 8th and early 7th centuries that we start to have significant ceramic remains from northern, southwestern, and eastern Arcadia. Interestingly there is very little uniformity between contemporary types of pottery from the different parts of the region. There is no 'Arcadian' style as such. Instead, what we see are cultural pockets of influence. In southeastern Arcadia in the Early Iron Age, for instance, we have ceramics that reflect an affinity with Argive Protogeometric and Geometric, as well as large amounts of a style known as Laconian Protogeometric. This mixture suggests influences coming to Tegea from both neighboring regions, *i.e.*, from the Argolid and from Laconia. By the late 8th – early 7th centuries, we see Corinthian influence in the ceramics from sites throughout Arcadia. In sum, the ceramic remains from Arcadia reveal little evidence for uniformity of style or for innovative local schools, between

* Many thanks to Erik Østby and the Norwegian Institute in Athens for offering me the opportunity to present my research at this very fine symposium. In the following analysis, I include the recently unearthed ceramics from Tegea, found in the Norwegian campaign at the site. I am currently preparing this material for publication. I am grateful to Erik Østby, director of the excavations at Tegea, for allowing me to include this information in my paper. I am also grateful to Lois Kain for her fine work on the archaeological illustrations of the ceramics and small finds from Tegea. I am indebted to the many students who helped us to sort through the finds, and to draw the pottery in the field, especially Theresa Moreno and Heather Russell. Finally I wish to thank Thomas Fenn, my research assistant, who has been invaluable in assisting me to create the plates and figures for this paper and for the final publication.

the 10th and 7th centuries. On the other hand, we see considerable diversity in the local adaptations of the regional pottery styles of the Peloponnese.

After many years of studying the archaeological remains from ancient Arcadia, I am struck once again by the great diversity observable in the material culture from the various parts of the region. Since one often encounters references to Arcadia that conjure up an image of a somehow culturally unified and uniform region, it is all the more surprising to discover considerable differences in the remains from the southwestern part of Arcadia compared to the eastern part, for example. Although this variety was most likely the result of numerous geographical, geological, and cultural factors that shaped the developments in the region, I believe it requires closer examination. In the present paper, I further explore this diversity with a focus on a particular class of artifact: ceramics. The evidence shows that despite the idealized version of a culturally uniform Arcadia that we may have in our minds, in reality there are many cultural pockets within the region that have greater affinities with areas outside of Arcadia than with the other 'pockets' within it.

We begin with the Early Iron Age pottery from the region. Until recently, virtually no Early Iron Age pottery was known from Arcadia, except for a handful of Protogeometric and Middle Geometric sherds from the southeastern part, from Tegea.¹ Although there is still virtually no evidence for early pottery from any other part of Arcadia to my knowledge, there is now significantly more evidence from the southeastern area. The Norwegian excavations at Tegea have uncovered a wealth of Early Iron Age material from this site, and a small amount has also been found in recent excavations at Asea.² By the late 8th century, there is ceramic evidence from other sites in the region as well, such as Mavriki and Mantinea in the southeast.³ Because of the continuous nature of the ceramic material from southeastern Arcadia, I focus on this area below. It is my hope that as more material is unearthed and published from the various parts of Arcadia, we shall gain a better sense of the ceramics throughout the region.

The sanctuary of Athena Alea at Tegea has produced the most abundant ceramic remains from Arcadia to date. This material was found in the early excavations at the site by the French and the Germans, at the end of the 19th century, and more recently by the international team working at Tegea under the

1. Dugas 1921, 403-18; Voyatzis 1990, 65-71, pls. 2-9.

2. For Asea see Forsén, Forsén and Østby 1999, esp. 180. For Tegea see Østby *et al.* 1994, 126-8, figs. 97-105; *Tegea I*, forthcoming.

3. Voyatzis 1990, 84-9, pls. 46-53, figs. 17-21.

direction of Dr. Erik Østby.⁴ The early excavations uncovered the 4th century temple, an altar, a fountain and considerable evidence of pottery and small finds going back to the 8th century B.C.⁵ A handful of earlier ceramics were also found in these campaigns.⁶ The recent excavations have confirmed that below the 4th century temple, there was a late 7th century temple and, below that, at least two 8th century temples. A huge amount of pottery was unearthed in the area of the 8th century temples, below the cella of the 4th century temple. This ceramic material is primarily Late Geometric and Protocorinthian, and 7th century in date.⁷ In the pronaos area of the 4th century temple, a metal workshop of 8th century date was found. Below the metal workshop, a *bothros*, or sacred pit, was uncovered containing evidence for cult activity going back to the 10th century. The material from the *bothros* ranges in date from Protogeometric through Middle Geometric II/Late Geometric I (with some Mycenaean mixed in).⁸ Although none of the Mycenaean material was found in context, it reflects likely activity in this vicinity in the Late Bronze Age.

There are now several hundred Early Iron Age sherds catalogued from Tegea. They consist of standard Protogeometric types with Argive and/or Attic affinities (Fig. 1), as well as large amounts of the very distinctive Laconian Protogeometric style.⁹ (Fig. 2) In addition, large amounts of standard Geometric pottery, Early Geometric through Late Geometric, and Protocorinthian ceramics were uncovered at the site. (Figs. 3-4)

Perhaps the most surprising fact about this recently uncovered selection of early pottery from Tegea is the great number of Laconian Protogeometric sherds found (over 1000 of both catalogued and uncatalogued pieces). Until recently, only one such sherd was known from the site.¹⁰ As we know from Coulson's fundamental study of this type of pottery, the hallmarks of the Laconian Protogeometric style (which he calls "Laconian Dark Age" pottery) typically consist of the following features: rectilinear ornament, often in registers, shiny metallic paint, distinctive, angular shapes, and horizontal ridges or grooves in the clay.¹¹ (Fig. 2) It is therefore fairly easy to distinguish this sort of pottery from the standard Protogeometric material.

4. Milchhöfer 1880; Mendel 1901, 256-7; Dugas 1921, 403-23; Voyatzis 1990, 62-84; Østby *et al.* 1994, 126-31; *Tegea I*, forthcoming.

5. Dugas 1921; Voyatzis 1990, 20-8 and 69-84.

6. Voyatzis 1990, 62-9, pls. 1-4.

7. Østby *et al.* 1994, 126-31; *Tegea I*, forthcoming.

8. Voyatzis 1997; *Tegea I*, forthcoming.

9. Desborough 1952, 283-90; Coldstream 1968, 212-9; Cartledge 1979, 81-6; Coulson 1985.

10. Voyatzis 1990, 67 P9, pl. 4, fig. 8.

11. Coulson 1985, 33-4.

The question of chronology for Early Iron Age pottery found outside the Attic sequence is often problematic. As Desborough rightly asserted, Proto-geometric is a style, not a period.¹² For Athens, it is typically believed to range from about 1050 B.C. (or slightly later) through 900 B.C.¹³ Depending on the region of Greece, however, there is an enormous amount of variability in the dates of this type of pottery, with some areas beginning in the 10th century (Laconian Proto-geometric) and some ending well into the 9th century (Euboean Sub-protogeometric).¹⁴ When there are clear parallels to the Attic sequence, one can venture a date with some confidence, but, otherwise, it can be difficult to date material with any degree of certainty.

In the case of Tegea, the Early Iron Age pottery with Argive or Attic parallels can be assigned a relative date based on its style (*i.e.*, Proto-geometric/Early Geometric, ca. 950-850 B.C.), but the same is not necessarily true for the Laconian Proto-geometric found at Tegea. The stratigraphical information from Laconian sites for Early Iron Age ceramics is very limited. Amyclae is the only site in Laconia with any stratigraphy to speak of, and it is of limited value. What we know about Laconian Proto-geometric from Amyclae is that it is later than Mycenaean (though exactly how much later is debated) and that it lasts through the early 8th century (when Middle Geometric II is in vogue in other regions). By the mid-8th century it is replaced by a local Late Geometric style, but there is virtually no local Early Geometric/Middle Geometric pottery known from Laconia.¹⁵

Because of the mixture of material found in the *bothros* at Tegea, and the distinctive layers visible, we may now say a bit more about the relative chronology of the ceramics from this site. There are eight main levels in the *bothros*, and the lowest layer in the lowest level (B8b) can be dated to the late 10th century. It contains standard Proto-geometric and Laconian Proto-geometric material mixed together, as well as some Mycenaean mixed in as well. (Figs. 1-2) In the layer just above (B8a) we find a small amount of Early Geometric I as well. In layers B7 and B6, the latest material is Early Geometric II, and there is also Proto-geometric, Early Geometric I, and Laconian Proto-geometric. In layer B5, the latest ceramics are Middle Geometric I; there is also Proto-geometric,

12. Desborough 1948; *id.* 1972, 133-5. See also Coulson 1990, 8-12, for a discussion of the general confusion between 'style' and 'period' when discussing Proto-geometric.

13. For the most recent analysis of the chronology of the Proto-geometric style, see Lemos 2002, 24-6.

14. For Laconian Proto-geometric, see *supra* n. 9; for Euboean Proto-geometric, see Coldstream 1968, 164-5; Coldstream 1977, 40-5; Lemos 2002, 20-1.

15. Coulson 1985, 30-2. See also Lemos 2002, 194 n. 33, for a very brief synopsis of Laconian Proto-geometric and its date.

Early Geometric, and Laconian Protogeometric. In layers B4 to B2 the latest pottery is Middle Geometric II and there is also some earlier material (Early Geometric, Protogeometric, Laconian Protogeometric and Middle Geometric I), and in layer B1 the latest material is Middle Geometric II/Late Geometric I, with small amounts of Middle Geometric, Early Geometric, Protogeometric, and Laconian Protogeometric (Figs. 1-3). The surface of the *bothros* contains Late Geometric II material.¹⁶

The pottery unearthed inside the cella (and in the workshop area) at Tegea reflects a different pattern. The early material (Neolithic, Mycenaean, Protogeometric through Middle Geometric) is mixed in with later ceramics. The earliest secure date for the structures in this area is Late Geometric. The pottery found in association with the lowest surface of Building 3 may be as early as Late Geometric I. The smaller apsidal Building 2 can be dated to Late Geometric II (720-700) based on the ceramics, which include some Early Protocorinthian. The larger apsidal Building 1 may be dated to the very end of the Geometric/Early Orientalizing periods (700-675) on the basis of the Late Geometric II through Middle Protocorinthian I sherds found in the floor levels.¹⁷ (Fig. 4) The Geometric material reflects primarily Argive influence in shapes and decoration. The themes of horse-taming and dancing are very popular in Tegea, as in the Argolid.¹⁸ There is however, also an increasingly strong Protocorinthian presence at the site towards the end of the 8th century. Laconian imports and influences continue to be seen at Tegea at the end of the Geometric and Early Orientalizing periods; these pieces reflect a blending of Late Geometric and Protocorinthian elements, as one finds at Laconian sites as well.¹⁹

Overall the ceramic evidence suggests that Laconian Protogeometric co-existed at Tegea alongside standard Protogeometric, and that it continued in use through Middle Geometric II. A recent scientific analysis of the ceramics from Tegea indicates that the Laconian Protogeometric pottery from the site is chemically similar to pottery from Amyclae and chemically different from the standard Early Geometric/Late Geometric found at Tegea.²⁰ I thus conclude that the Laconian style pottery was brought to Tegea from somewhere in the region of Laconia, beginning in the late 10th century and continuing into the early 8th

16. Voyatzis 1997; *Tegea I*, forthcoming.

17. Østby *et al.* 1994, 98-103; *Tegea I*, forthcoming. See also the paper by E. Østby in this volume.

18. For Tegea see Voyatzis 1990, pl. 11, P24, pl. 19, P40; Østby *et al.* 1994, 129 fig. 108. For the Argolid, see Coldstream 1968, 129-46, pls. 28-30.

19. Coldstream 1968, 215-9.

20. See T. Fenn, M. Ponting and M. Voyatzis on the ceramic analysis project in *Tegea I*, forthcoming.

century. On the other hand, the Early Geometric through Late Geometric material from Tegea was for the most part probably locally manufactured somewhere near the site, in a standard style related to the Argive. This seems to be the 'default' style as it were at Tegea, probably since Mycenaean times. Although it is not always easy to distinguish local fabric, I believe one can detect a consistent pattern of types of ceramics that persist from Protogeometric through the Archaic period. The evidence thus suggests that we have Argive-inspired locally produced pottery from Protogeometric through to the Orientalizing period (and most likely through the Archaic period as well, to judge from Dr. Iozzo's study of the later material from the site).²¹

It would be helpful now to take a brief look at the material from other southeastern Arcadian sites to put the Tegean ceramics into a context. From Mantinea we have some fine Geometric pottery from graves in the area (on display in the Tripolis museum). They consist primarily of large pieces of Middle Geometric/Late Geometric pots of Argive style, with some hints of Corinthian influence.²² From a sanctuary nearby, at Gortsouli, we have a fair amount of what appears to be locally produced 7th century pottery with some Argive elements and also strong Protocorinthian features.²³

From a sanctuary of Artemis above Mavriki, to the south of Tegea, we have some Late Geometric II sherds. This material reflects affinities with the ceramics from Tegea and seems to contain a blending of Argive and Laconian elements.²⁴ Given the location of the site, such a combination of traits is not surprising.

Recent excavations at Asea further west have produced a few Laconian Protogeometric sherds and large amounts of later Geometric and archaic material.²⁵ Two Late Geometric sherds were also uncovered from graves in this area, one with Laconian affinities (a *lakaina*) and one with Argive elements (a *kantharos*).²⁶

There is very little other ceramic material known from the rest of Arcadia from the 10th to the 7th centuries. Lousoi, in northern Arcadia, has yielded some Geometric and archaic sherds in recent excavations. These ceramics reveal both Corinthian and Achaean affinities and were probably locally produced.²⁷ From southwest Arcadia, there are virtually no early ceramics known. From Cretea a couple of Late Geometric sherds with Laconian affinities were found at a pos-

21. M. Iozzo in *Tegea II*, forthcoming.

22. For a brief mention of the excavations of the graves from Mantinea, see *AR* 1984-85, 23-4.

23. Karageorga 1963; *ead.* 1992-93; Voyatzis 1990, 87-9, figs. 19-21; *ead.* 1995, 277.

24. Rhomaios 1952, 1-27; Voyatzis 1990, 84-7, pls. 46-53; *ead.* 1995, 277.

25. See Forsén, Forsén and Østby 1999.

26. Coldstream 1968, 364.

27. Schauer 1998, 268.

sible shrine of Apollo.²⁸ From Gortys, some Subgeometric sherds, with Corinthian affinities, were mentioned as coming from the sanctuary of Asklepios.²⁹ Finally, the sanctuary of Apollo at Bassai yielded some Late Protocorinthian/Transitional pieces.³⁰

In order to make sense of the Arcadian ceramic evidence, let us take a closer look at the regions surrounding it: the Argolid, Corinthia, Laconia, and Western Greece (Messenia, Eleia and Achaea). Coldstream's research on the development of Geometric pottery and the rise of the *polis* is relevant to this discussion.³¹ He identifies eleven distinct regional schools of pottery in the 8th century. Those that he identifies in the Peloponnese are the following: Argive, Corinthian, Laconian, West Greek, and Arcadian. Using his work as a model, I would like to look briefly at the ceramics from the regions surrounding Arcadia, from the 10th through the 7th centuries.

In the Argolid, a Protogeometric style developed, very similar to the Attic, with similar shapes and decoration, but some evidence for regional preferences.³² From 900 B.C. a Geometric style began to develop, based on the Attic sequence for Early Geometric/Middle Geometric, but more austere in decoration. By Late Geometric, an original, local style had emerged and carried on in a Subgeometric style in the 7th century B.C.³³

In the Corinthia, there was also a local Protogeometric style, based on the Attic.³⁴ The subsequent Geometric pottery was distinctive in terms of shapes and decoration from Early Geometric onwards. This was especially evident in the Late Geometric and Early Protocorinthian periods. The Protocorinthian style of pottery was widely dispersed throughout the Mediterranean by the 7th century B.C.³⁵ These ceramics typically had a fine, buff-colored fabric and were of high technical quality.

We have already discussed the development of Laconian pottery in the Protogeometric period. We noted that the Laconian Protogeometric style continued to be produced into the 8th century. By Late Geometric, a recognizable Laconian style had emerged with regional shapes, unique decorative elements, and some visible Argive and Corinthian influences.³⁶

Western Greece covers an enormous geographical region. For the purposes of

28. Kourouniotis 1903; *id.* 1910a, fig. 6 cols. 35-6; Voyatzis 1990, 90-1.

29. Courbin 1952, 245; Voyatzis 1990, 91.

30. Kourouniotis 1910b, 279-89, fig. 9; Voyatzis 1990, 90.

31. Coldstream 1983; Lemos 2002, 12-4, 17, 21-2.

32. Snodgrass 1971, 56-8; Desborough 1952, 204-12; Wells 1976-83.

33. Coldstream 1968, 112-47.

34. Snodgrass 1971, 58-61; Desborough 1952, 202-4; Weinberg 1943; Lemos 2002, 14, 200.

35. Coldstream 1968, 91-111.

36. Coldstream 1968, 212-9.

this paper, we limit ourselves to the Peloponnese. Achaea and Eleia had a distinctive Protogeometric style (called “Western Greek”), with local shapes (like the low-handled kantharos) that continued until Late Geometric. Finally, a distinctive and homogeneous Late Geometric style emerged with strong Corinthian influence.³⁷ Messenian Protogeometric pottery is related to Western Greek, but has distinct shapes and decoration. By Late Geometric, it too had developed its own style, primarily with Corinthian elements, but with some Argive traits as well.³⁸

Coldstream notes that the Corinthian, Argive and Laconian styles are the most creative schools in the 8th century, while the Western Greek and Arcadian are highly derivative. He concludes that the most original ideas are the most uniform and based on an urban center, whereas the more derivative styles are not related to any important urban center in the late 8th century. He sees a direct connection between the rise of the *polis* and the creation of an original and creative Late Geometric style. Coldstream notes that Arcadia belongs to the land of the *ethne*, where older tribal organization persisted. These areas were not so heavily populated, and their pottery was deeply influenced by the more progressive styles of the neighbouring *poleis*.³⁹

While I believe that there is truth in Coldstream’s conclusions about pottery of the *polis* versus the *ethnos*, I also think that the situation in the Peloponnese in general, and in Arcadia in particular, is more complex. The reason why Arcadian pottery seems ‘derivative’ probably has more to do with the region’s extensive and varied geographical terrain, than with its political groupings *per se*, although the political groupings were themselves likely shaped to a certain extent by the terrain.

The diffusion of Corinthian influence in the ceramics found throughout the Peloponnese at the end of the 8th century may explain the appearance of Proto-corinthian pottery in southwestern Arcadia at that time. Coldstream states that, “by 700 B.C., no Greek site of any consequence was without its Corinthian imports”. The Corinthian style was the most influential style in the Greek world at this time.⁴⁰

The picture which emerges from this study of early ceramics in Arcadia is thus the following. (Figs. 5 and 6) In the 10th and 9th centuries, when Proto-geometric, Early Geometric and Middle Geometric I pottery is typically in use, we have virtually no ceramic evidence from Arcadia at all, except from the southeastern part (mainly Tegea, with some activity at Asea). The ceramic influences at Tegea reflect strong Argive and Laconian presence at the site. (See Fig. 5) By the 8th and 7th centuries, there is considerably more evidence to be

37. Coldstream 1968, 225-32; Coldstream 1983, 23-4; Lemos 2002, 194-5.

38. Coulson 1986; Coldstream 1977, 182; Coldstream 1983, 23-4; Lemos 2002, 193-4.

39. Coldstream 1983, 24-5.

40. Coldstream 1983, 22.

seen at Arcadian sites. (See Fig. 6) In the southeastern part, we continue to have influence from Laconia and the Argolid, but we also see a Protocorinthian presence in the pottery assemblage. In eastern Arcadia, we see more Argive and Protocorinthian elements. In northern Arcadia, we see West Greek and Protocorinthian traits in the local pottery at Lousoi. In southwestern Arcadia, there is evidence for Protocorinthian types of pottery at Bassai and Gortys.

In conclusion, I believe that the ceramic evidence from Arcadia reflects considerable diversity between the 10th and 7th centuries B.C. There is little evidence for the existence of distinct and innovative, local schools of pottery. I suspect that this situation is the result of the limitations imposed on the region by its geography, geology, the nature of its political and economic systems, the lack of infrastructure, and so on. The limited and uneven amount of excavation in the region and absence of publications from excavations may also play a role. But, based on the existing evidence, what we do see in Arcadia is diversity of style, pockets of influence, and local adaptations of regional Peloponnesian ceramic styles.

Does this mean that the pottery from Arcadia is not worthy of our attention? On the contrary, I would argue that it invites us to explore the situation further, and that it potentially enriches our understanding of the development of early Greek ceramics. In order to benefit from such a study though, I believe we must broaden our definition of Protogeometric and Geometric styles of pottery and their distribution. Perhaps one should think in terms of various, overlapping, popular ceramic trends and spheres of interaction in Early Iron Age Greek ceramics instead of in terms of rigid, linear development with Athens as the perpetual leader. We should, in any case, avoid constant comparison to Attic pottery as the norm and guard against making value judgments or assuming that one trend is superior or 'more advanced' than another.

The mixture of ceramic material from southeast Arcadia in particular helps us to begin to see how regional styles developed and spread in this part of the Peloponnese. In a more in-depth study on the early ceramics in the Peloponnese as a whole, I hope to build on this knowledge to develop a model, which will enable us to better understand the nature and extent of the various regional trends in Greek ceramics generally. In this way, I hope we can come to appreciate the intricate, diverse, and complex tapestry of regional styles that comprised Early Iron Age Greek ceramics.

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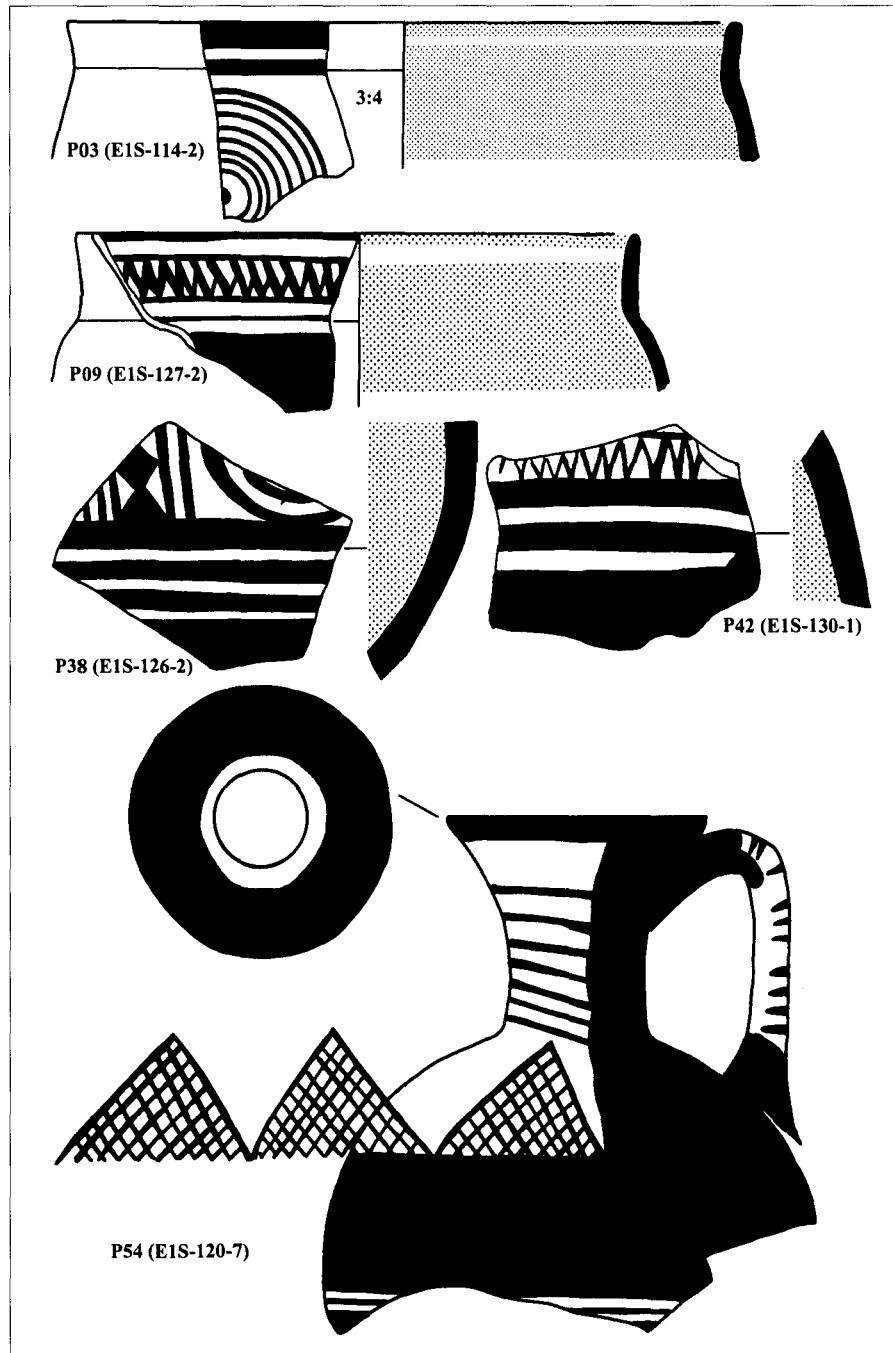


Fig. 1. Standard Protogeometric pottery from Tegea. (Inking by L. Kain.)

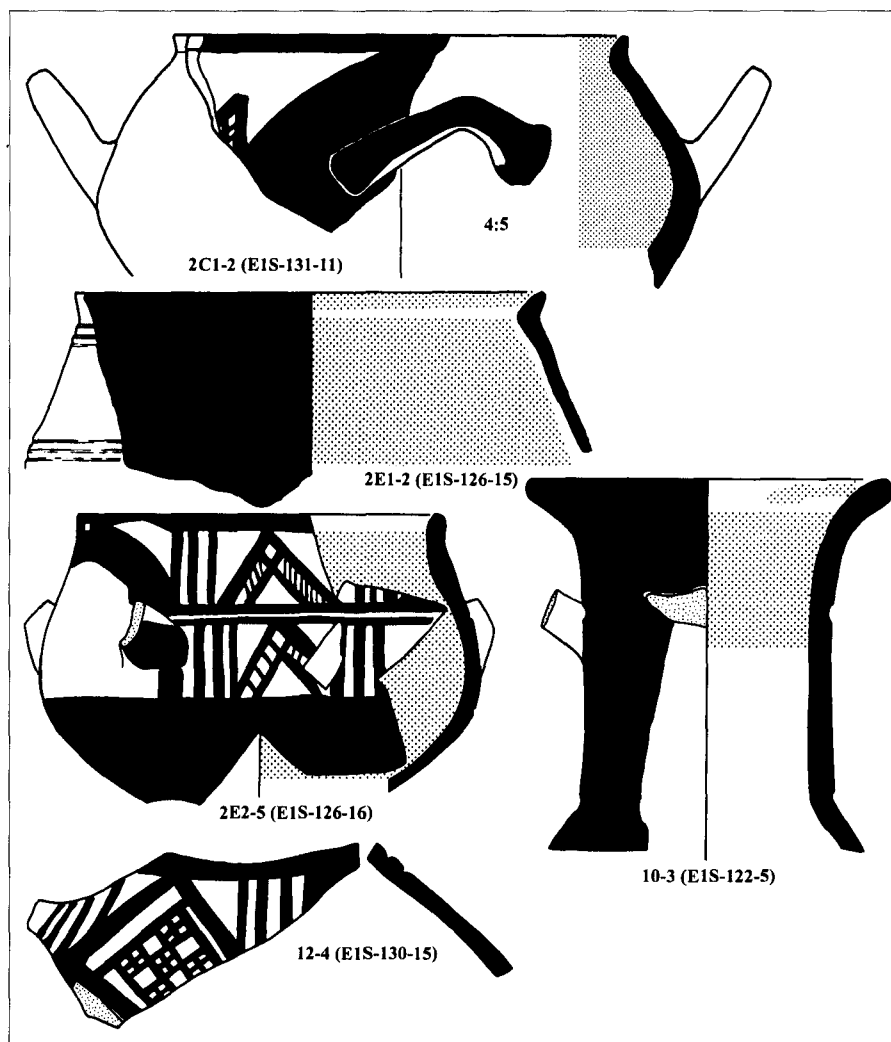


Fig. 2. Laconian Protogeometric pottery from Tegea. (Inking by L. Kain.)

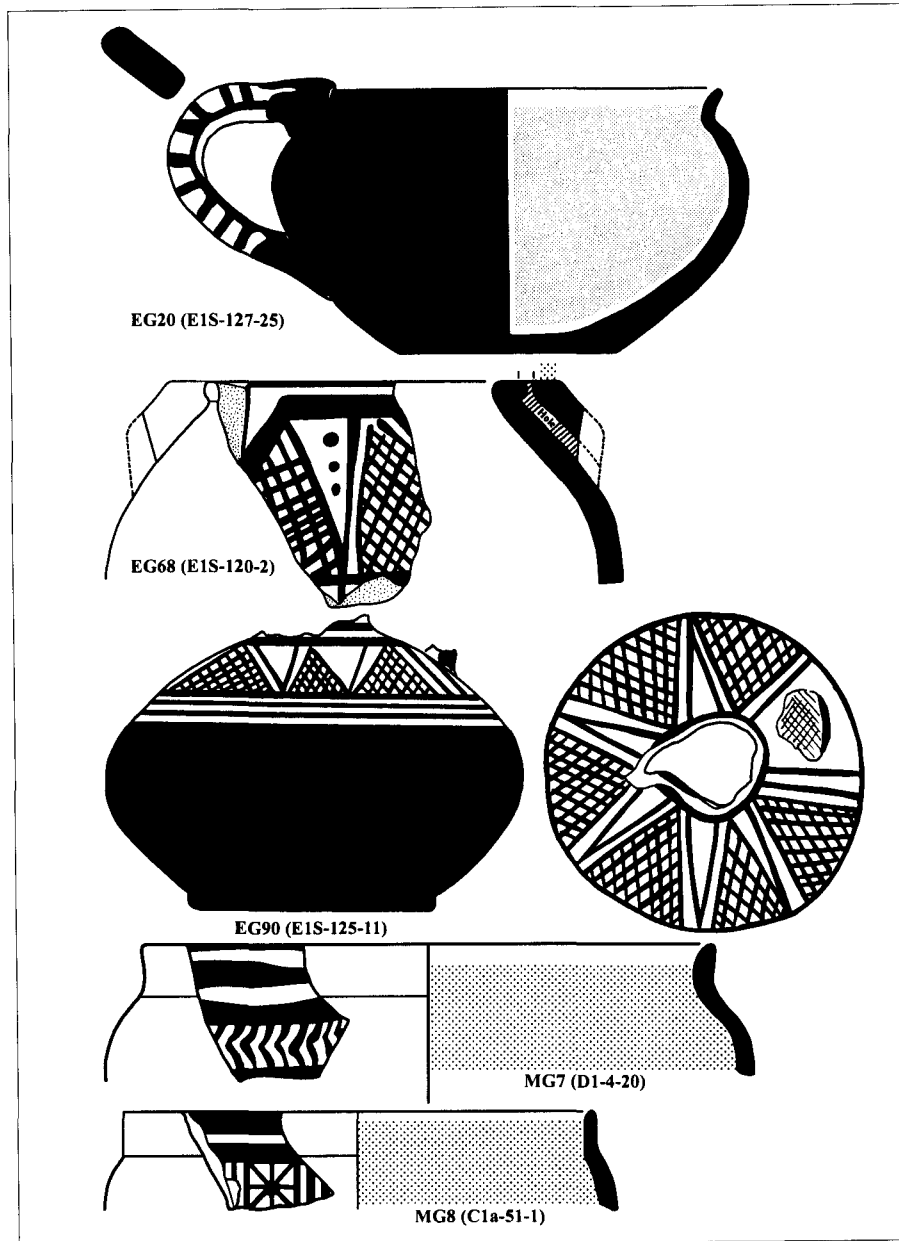


Fig. 3. Early and Middle Geometric pottery from Tegea. (Inking by L. Kain.)

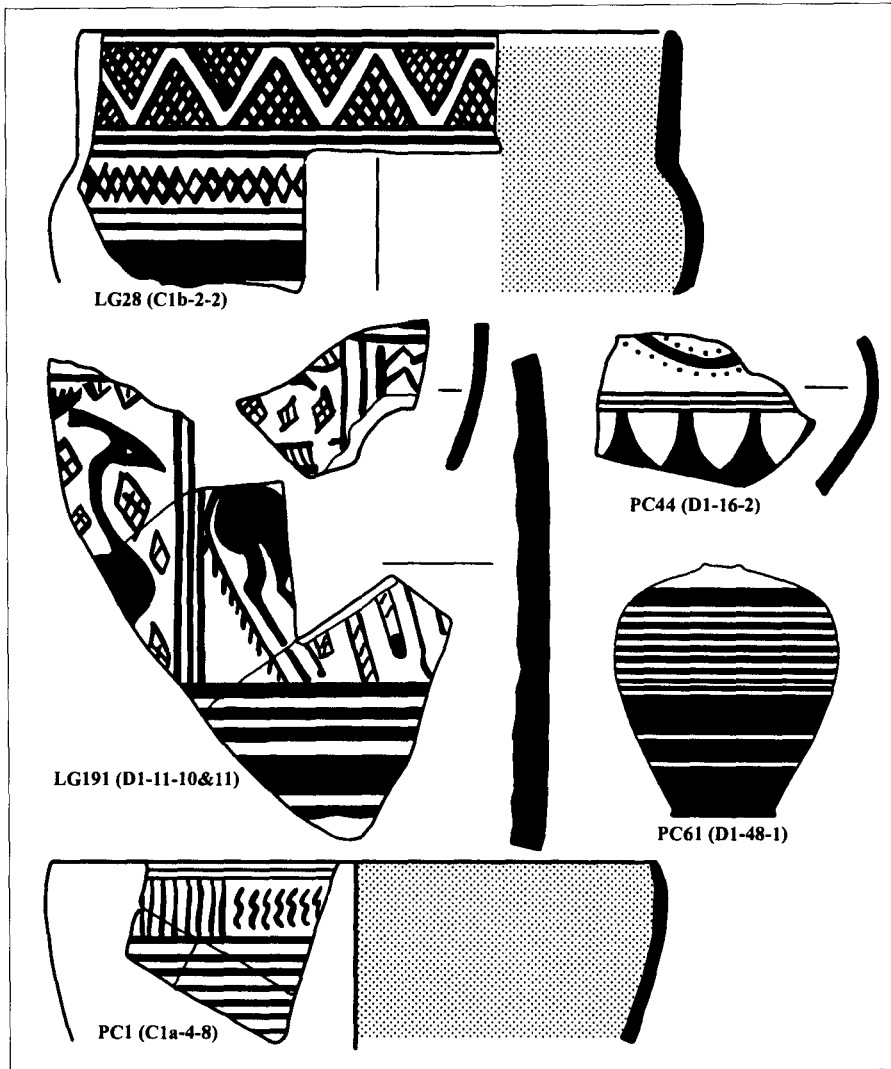


Fig. 4. Late Geometric and Protocorinthian pottery from Tegea. (Inking by L. Kain.)

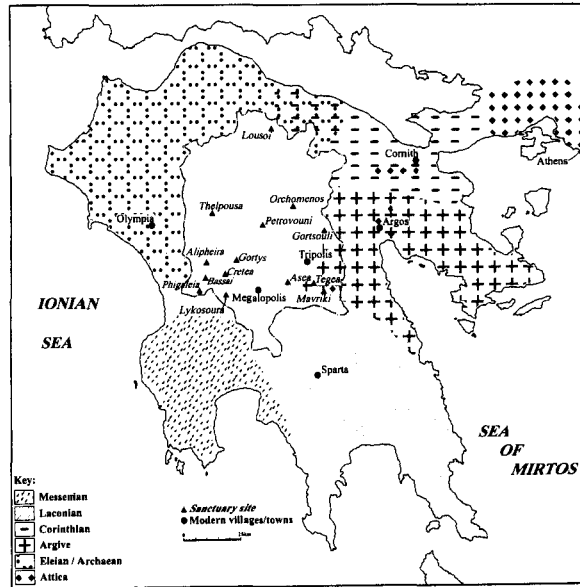


Fig. 5. 'Impressionistic' map of the Peloponnese with distribution of ceramics, 10th and 9th centuries B.C. (Map by L. Kain and T. Fenn.)

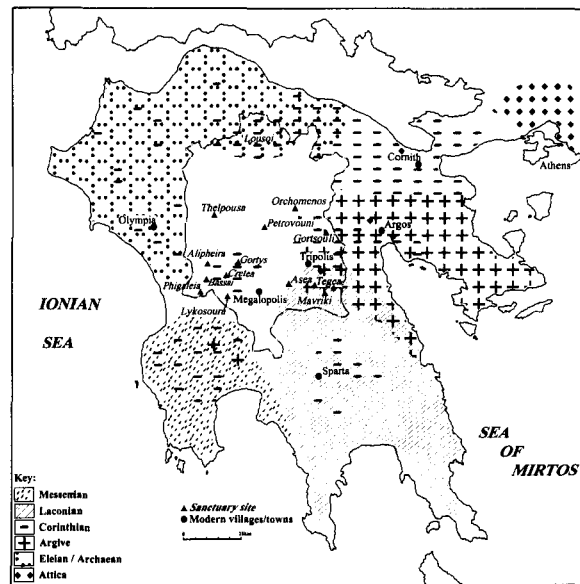


Fig. 6. 'Impressionistic' map of the Peloponnese with distribution of ceramics, in the 8th and 7th centuries B.C. (Map by L. Kain and T. Fenn.)