

## Rural Malta: First Results of the joint Belgo-Maltese Survey Project

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### Abstract

The paper presents the first interdisciplinary results of a joint survey project in the northwest of Malta, with finds ranging from the Prehistoric till the Early Modern period. Three permanently inhabited sites were encountered dating to at least the late 6th or early 5th century BCE, with a clearer attestation in the Hellenistic/Roman and Late Antique periods. The resulting reconstructed settlement pattern of the Phoenician/Punic period suggests a managed landscape that seems to be a good reflexion of what is happening in North Africa and elsewhere in the central and western Mediterranean. At least from the Roman period on, these sites seem to have been focussed upon the production of olive oil.

### Tobacco pipe fragments

The following five tobacco pipe fragments (Cat. 33-37, Fig. 26), are in the chibouk style, known in Maltese as *pipa tal-qasba* or reed pipe. The terminology follows that established by R. Robinson.<sup>1</sup> Tobacco pipes were introduced in the Mediterranean around 1600, developing over the next two centuries. Early pipes were fired grey and were superseded by browns and reds during the 18th century CE, increasing in size with the availability of tobacco.<sup>2</sup> It would seem that reed pipes were not made in Malta on a commercial basis as more recent oral information suggests.<sup>3</sup> Mid-17th century CE quarantine registers show that over three quarters of the trade in tobacco products originated in Greece and the Aegean.<sup>4</sup> Arrival Booklets for 1743-1747 in the National Archives of Malta Libretti confirm this pattern. In the 19th century there was still a lively trade with Constantinople and Smyrna, attested in Lloyd Maltese Shipping Registers in the National Library. Heritage Malta and the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage already possess 349 chibouk style pipes, mostly in reserve

<sup>1</sup> Robinson 1985, 154.

<sup>2</sup> Hayes 1980, 3-10.

<sup>3</sup> A. Wetz, manager of Malta Pipeworks at Marsa, who works with briar, kindly informs that neither he nor his father remember reed pipes being made locally. In their opinion they were imported. A resident from Zejtun interviewed in 1992 remembered an old man who made and sold pipes. He also said his grandfather brought red *pipi tal-qasba* from itinerant North Africans who sold them in Malta before 1940 at two and a half pence (less than a cent), along with the sweet sedge root *habb għażiż*, the latter being a treat for the children. According to the late Salvu Axiaq, a life-long pipe smoker, the Gozitan potter Carmel Sacco dug and processed clay from il-Harrax. Sacco occasionally made pipes for Axiaq. Tessie Vella, formerly of Rabat, said a professional potter worked at Bir Riebu (a suburb of that town) in the 1930s. He made pipes as a side-line for his friends. She also remembered North African nationals selling attractive pipes in cream coloured clay.

<sup>4</sup> Cutajar 1987.

collections. Many were from a wet environment.<sup>5</sup> The present collection from the survey may add significantly to our knowledge of this popular addiction.

**Cat. 33:** MSP2008/1/A119/P6/1, 1 end of shank fragment of mould-made tobacco pipe. Hard fired very pure light brown clay, discoloured grey towards the edges, with some very fine white rounded particles (less than 0.1 mm) and isolated sub-angular white particle (0.2 mm), surface gray 10 YR 6/1). PL 1.6, max. Diam. 2.6. Plain swelling with an incised groove under the terminal ring. Early Modern import. (Possibly 18<sup>th</sup> century)

**Cat. 34:** MSP2008/1/A41/P6/9, 1 end of shank fragment of mould-made tobacco pipe. Hard fired very pure red (10 R 5/6) clay with few very fine mica, surface light red (2.5 YR 6/4) slip or wash. PL 2.4, max. Diam. 2.0. Slightly swollen termination. Early Modern import. (19<sup>th</sup> century)

**Cat. 35:** MSP2008/1/D44/P4/1, 1 end of shank fragment of mould-made tobacco pipe. Hard fired very pure red (2.5 YR 5/6) clay with isolated brown particle (0.1 mm), surface light red (2.5 YR 6/8). PL 1.3, max. Diam. 2.0. At first sight, the clay looks very much like that of ARS. The terminal ring has incised oblique decoration consisting of indents of rouletting in two rows, under which is a twist of rope work, both popular motifs. Early Modern import. (late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> century)

**Cat. 36:** MSP2008/1/F158/W110/1, 1 bowl fragment with plain burnished rim of mould-made tobacco pipe. Hard fired very pure light red (2.5 YR 6/8) clay with some very fine mica in the smoothed light red (2.5 YR 6/6) surface. PH 2.6; Diam. rim 3.0. At first sight, the clay looks very much like that of ARS. Decoration in relief consisting of two overlapping leaves. A similar motif was used to decorate a light brown bowl recovered from the quarantine harbour of Valletta as well as on an unpublished bowl and shank fragment found on the roof of a farmhouse at Is-Srug (Gozo).<sup>6</sup> The latter lichen covered object had been collected with other broken domestic pottery to be made into *deffun* (see above). Early Modern import. (late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> century)

**Cat. 37:** MSP2008/1/A57/P4/3, 1 bowl fragment of mould-made tobacco pipe. Hard fired very pure reddish yellow (7.5 YR 6/6) clay with few red inclusions (0.1 mm), surface reddish yellow (7.5 YR 7/6). PH 3.1, Diam bowl 2.7, PL 3.3. Surface very much abraded; most of the rim, shank and base are missing. Gadrooned decoration under a raised horizontal band. This style of pipe is well illustrated in contemporary paintings. One may, for example, mention Louis Ducros' watercolour of 'A group of young Gozitans dancing' (1778),<sup>7</sup> Charles Brockdorff's 'Maltese pothouse' (1820),<sup>8</sup> George Badger's 'Country man' (1838),<sup>9</sup> and Michelle Bellanti's 'The New Aqueduct' (1843).<sup>10</sup> Archaeologically, the style of decoration is found in many examples from Malta.<sup>11</sup> Early Modern import. (late 18<sup>th</sup> early 19<sup>th</sup> century)

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. Wood 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Wood 2001, 85.

<sup>7</sup> Freller 1997, 83.

<sup>8</sup> Copy of illustration in the National Library (Valletta); present whereabouts unknown.

<sup>9</sup> Badger 1989, 92.

<sup>10</sup> Museum of Fine Arts Valletta.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. from the Quarantine Harbour, Wood 2008, 18-21, figs. 4-5 (QH023, QH048, QH055),

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line drawings



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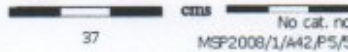
36 37



33 34



35 36



37 No cat. no.

MSP2008/1/A42,P5/5