

PIPES FROM GOZO, MALTA

Background

Gozo and Malta lie midway between Gibraltar and Lebanon, at almost the geographical centre of the Mediterranean (Fig.5). Sicily is 58 miles to the north, Tripoli 220 miles due south, and Tunis slightly over 200 miles to the west. The Maltese archipelago thus forms a port of call between Europe and North Africa, between the Christian and Moslem worlds. The Maltese have been in contact with both for centuries, and the cultures of both have contributed many customs and ideas which the islanders have adapted for their own use.

Gozo is only 9 miles by 5 miles, with an area of 26 square miles, and the whole archipelago is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Emigration has been one solution to the problems of overcrowding, and contact has been maintained between home and overseas communities.

The reed pipes

The collection of reed pipes (Pipa tal Qasba), Nos 1-20, was shown to me by Mr A. Bajada, of the Gozo Museum, and my observations are published with the kind permission of Dr T.C. Gouder, Director of the National Museum of Archaeology, Malta. The pipes are designated for display in the Crafts Museum in the Citadel, Victoria, Gozo.

In 1981 I contacted the Sales Manager of Malta Pipeworks, Ltd; neither he nor his father ever remember reed pipes being made locally, and said they were probably imported. In the same year, the folklorist, Dr Cassar Pullicino, in a personal communication to me, remembered, as a youth, seeing Gozitan priests smoking the Pipa tal Qasba. This was substantiated by the late Dr Francis Mallia, then Director of the National Museum in Valletta.

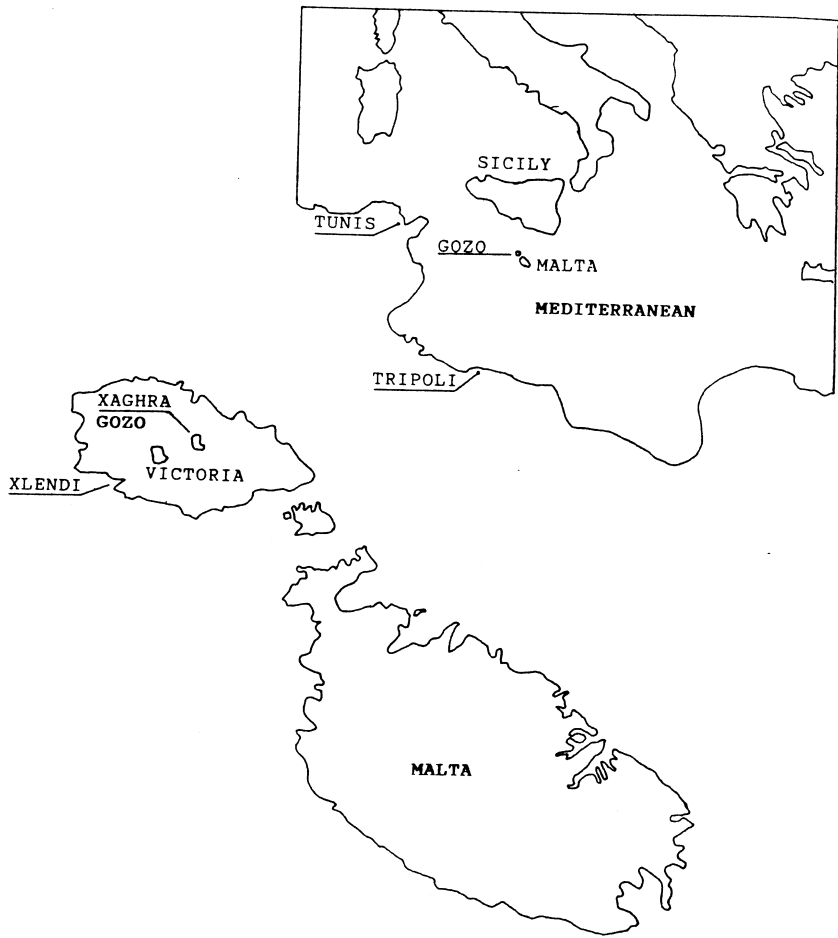


Fig.5 Geographical location of Gozo

Father Joseph Bezzina (1985) quotes from the Archbishopal Archives, Malta: 'Some ecclesiasts were indulging in the not commendable but increasingly popular habit of smoking a pipe. Due to their state and dignity, they were prohibited to smoke in public, but they were free to do so in private'. These circumstances pertained between 1801 and 1840.

'A Maltese Pothouse' by Brockdorff (who was painting local scenes c. 1825), shows the proprietor smoking a reed pipe. The earliest local reference I can find is in a late 18th-century copperplate engraving by Zimmelli (in the National Museum of Fine Arts, Valletta), showing a peasant in wedding costume with a similar reed pipe.

Underwater finds, No.21 for example, were commonplace at one time. Some pipes were obviously imported into Gozo (No.22). Others were made locally. I am told that Zeppi (ta Koli) Grech made pipes at Xaghra Windmill until well within living memory (see SCPR 37 for more information about this man, and the wooden and stone pipes connected with him). The local cultivation of tobacco was, and is, illegal; it must therefore have been imported or grown illicitly.

Much remains to be done to trace the development of pipe smoking in Gozo.

Conclusion

There has been ample opportunity for seamen, emigrants, and re-emigrants to import smoking materials into Gozo during the 17th-19th centuries, and on the evidence of clays, manufacturers' marks and stamps, it would appear that the majority of Pipe tal Qasba were imported.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to St John Simpson, Wolfson College, Oxford, for the notes and comments provided with Nos 7, 15 and 21, and for his help in setting out the illustrations. Thanks also to Father Bezzina for permission to quote from his book.

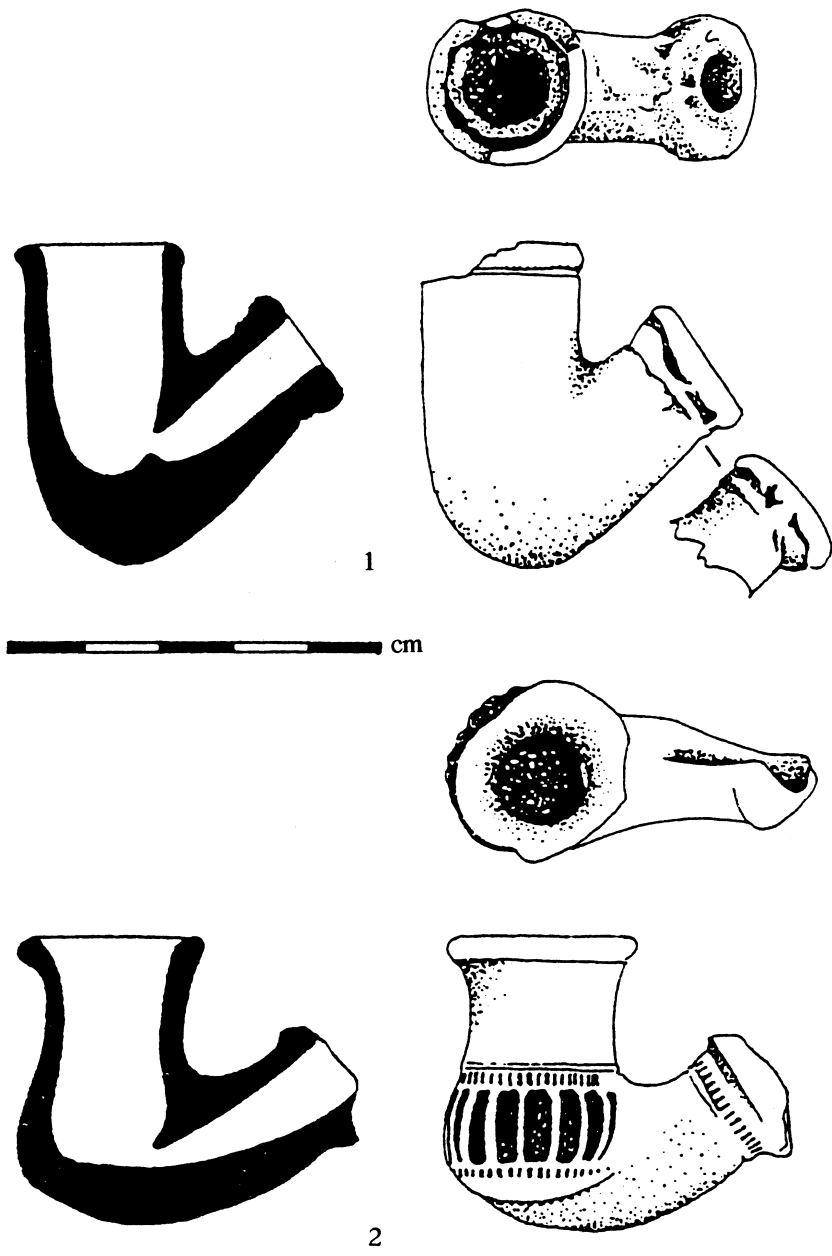
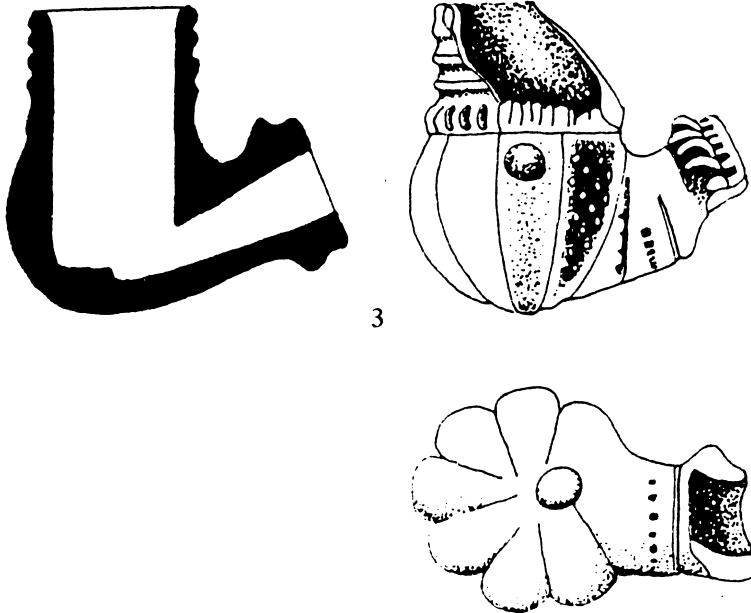


Fig.6, Nos 1, 2. Gozo

Catalogue

- 1 Orange body with black and tan grits. Smooth orange slip, burnished. 2mm thick residue of black ash inside the bowl. No provenance.
- 2 Orange clay with small black grits and a sparkling micaceous effect. Rounded gadrooned bowl. Keel with milled edges. Milled shank end. Thick sooty deposit inside the bowl. No provenance.
- 3 Charcoal grey body. Very thin dark brown slip. Moulding mark along stem dorsal edge. Rounded gadrooned bowl with incised and ringed chimney. Gadrooned stem with milled shank end. No provenance.
- 4 Terracotta body. Wedge impressed decoration. No provenance.
- 5 Terracotta body. 2mm thick sooty deposit inside bowl. (Another similar but heavily abraded bowl and stem fragment in the same collection.) Roulette decoration on bowl shoulder. No provenance.



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Fig.7, No.3. Gozo

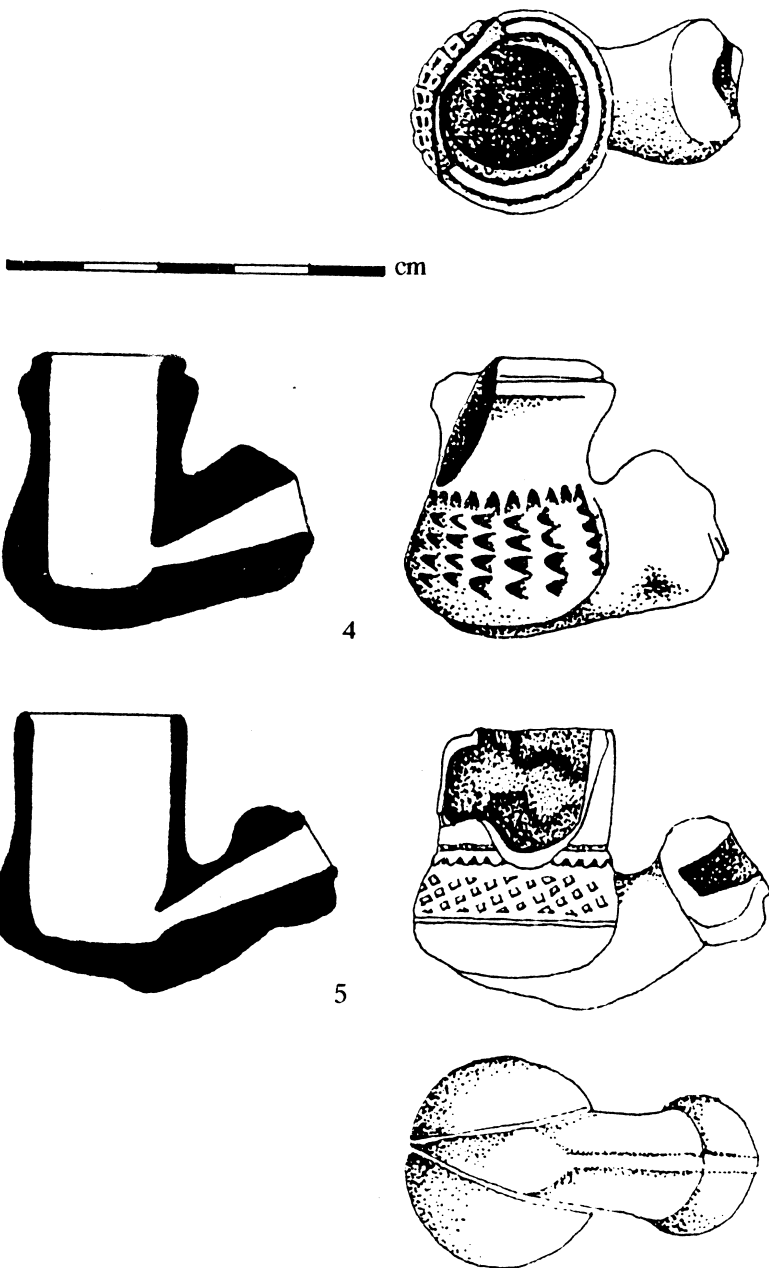


Fig.8, Nos 4, 5. Gozo

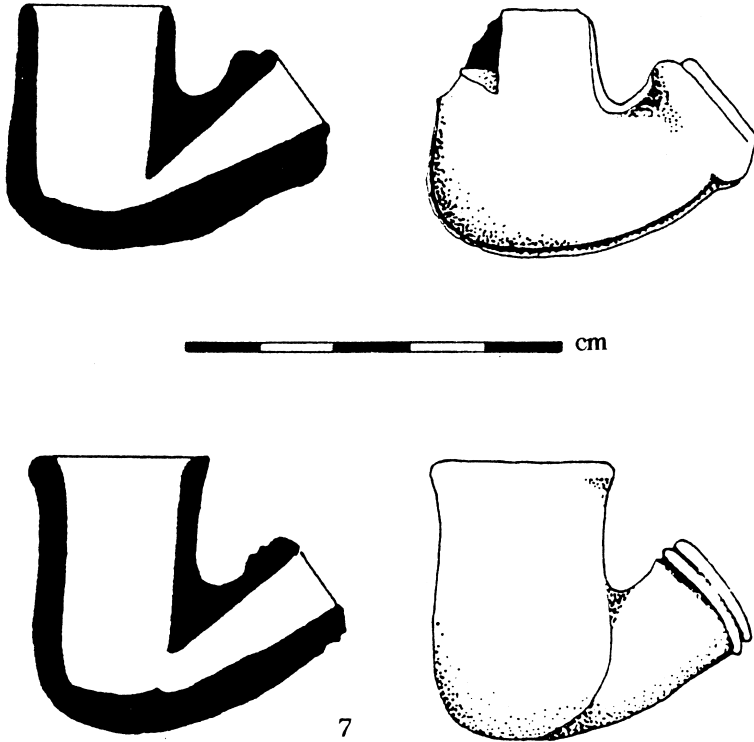
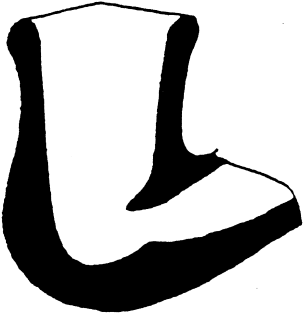
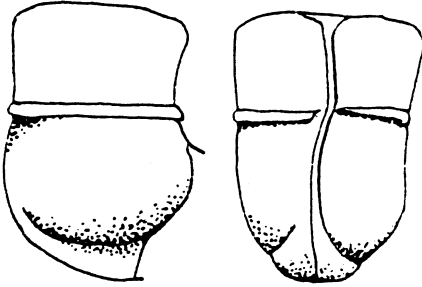
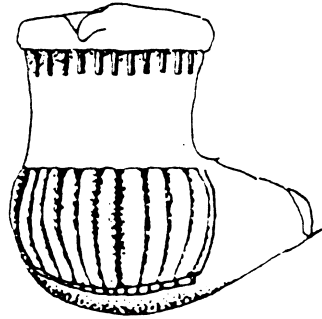


Fig.9, Nos 6, 7. Gozo

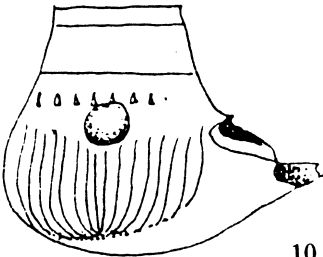
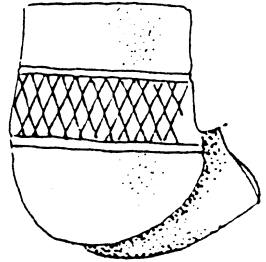
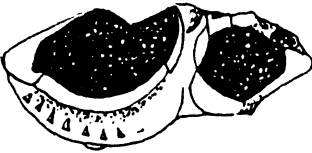
- 6 Charcoal grey body. Moulding mark all round, crudely smoothed on base of stem. No provenance.
- 7 Charcoal grey body. Moulded. (There is another similar example with complete chimney and broken stem.) No provenance. Slightly more flared shapes, dated as 19th-20th century by Robinson (1985, 199-200, pls 63-4: Agora 30, 37 and refs). Also found at Wadi Qash (Bell et al. 1984, 44, fig.17k) and in Jerusalem (Wightman 1989, fig.63.3).
- 8 Terracotta body. Gadrooned bowl. No provenance. Very similar to No.2.
- 9 Charcoal grey clay. Crude finish on moulding. No provenance.



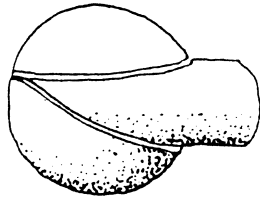
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Fig.10, Nos 8-11. Gozo

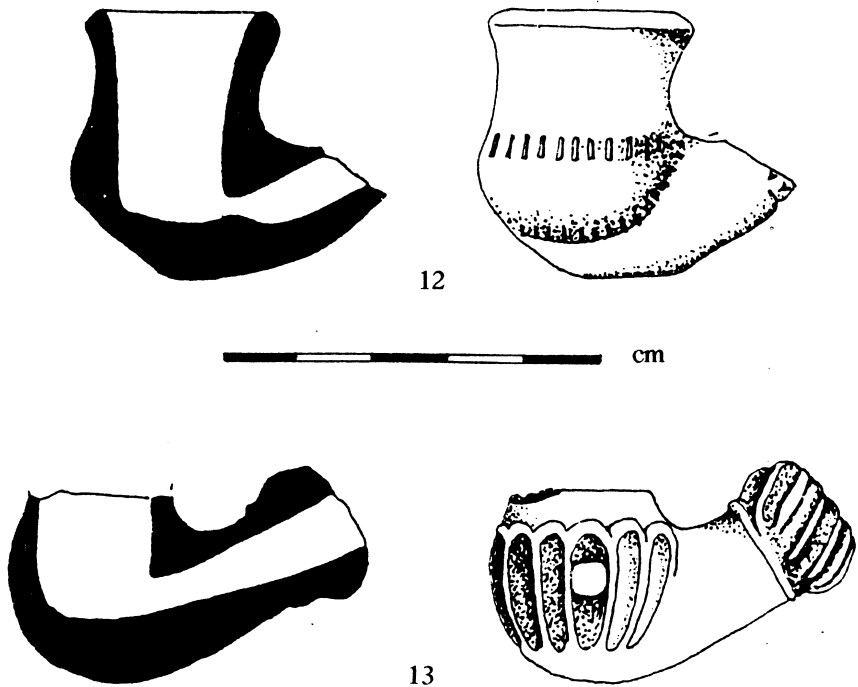
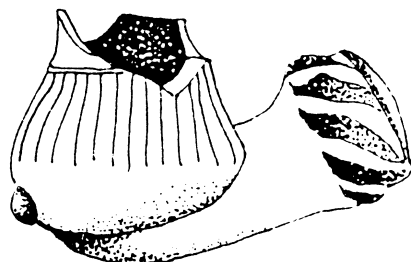
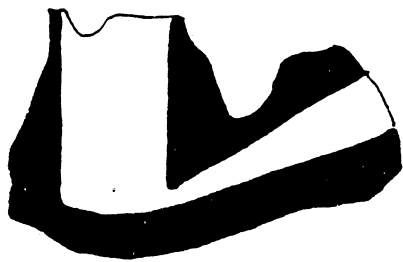
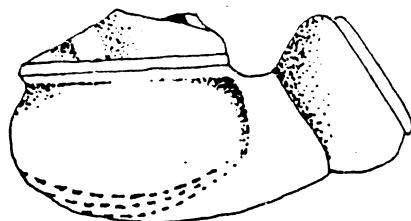
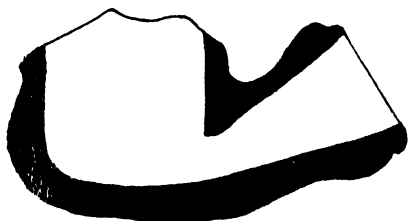


Fig.11, Nos 12, 13. Gozo

- 10 Red clay body with burnished chestnut coloured slip. Provenance: Xaghra windmill.
- 11 Red clay body. Another similar with chimney squashed oval. No provenance.
- 12 Buff body. Both bowl and stem have milled decoration. No provenance.
- 13 Charcoal grey body. Moulded with scraper marks on stem; slightly raised square decoration in centre of left side and bow-tie on the opposite right hand side, both bracketed by the gadrooning. No provenance.
- 14 Charcoal grey body. Moulded, hemispherical termination to keel, twisted decoration on shankend. No provenance.



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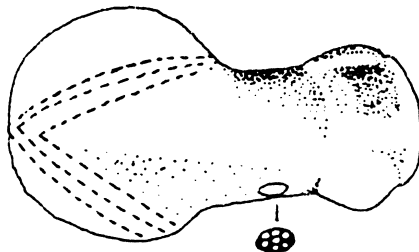
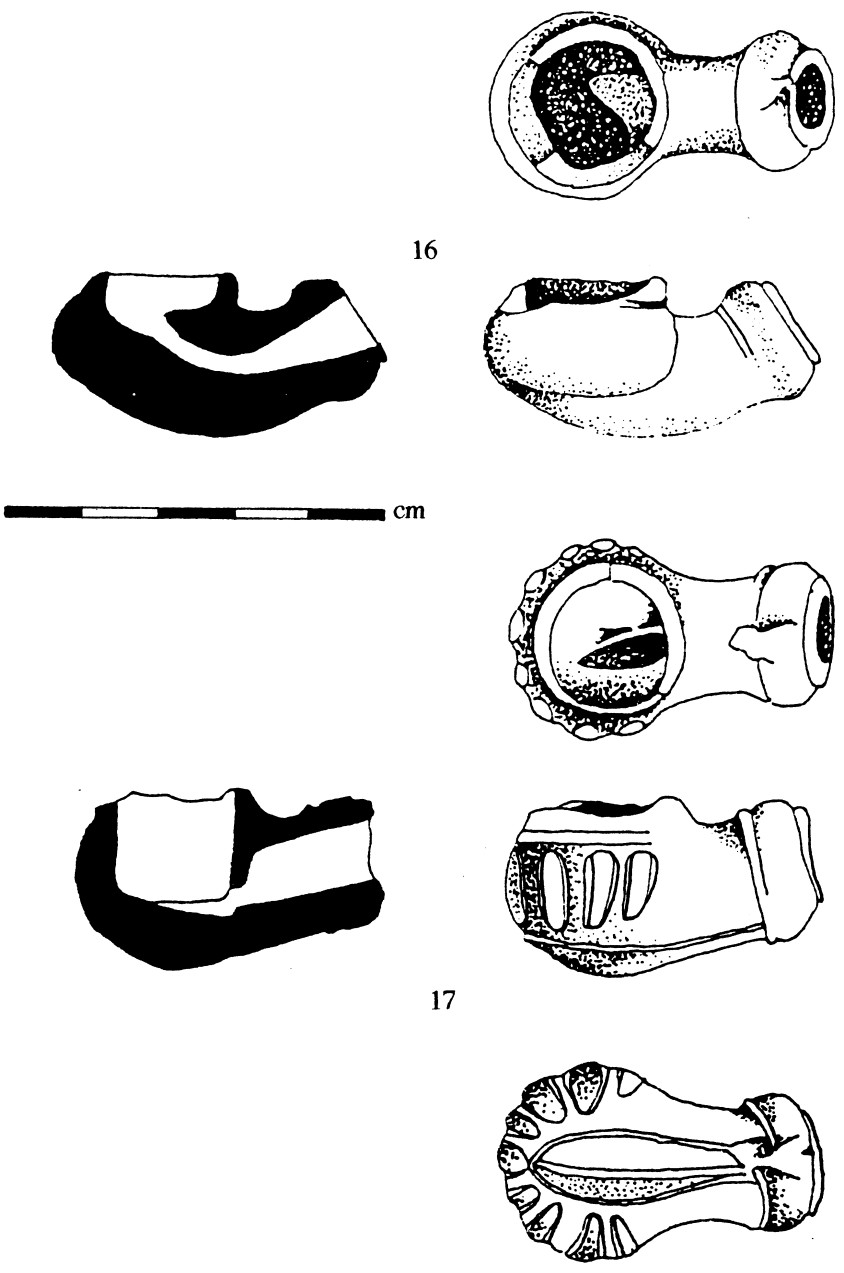


Fig.12, Nos 14, 15. Gozo

- 15 'Salt glaze' firing marks. Chestnut body with buff patches.
'Maker's mark' on lower right side of the keel. No provenance.

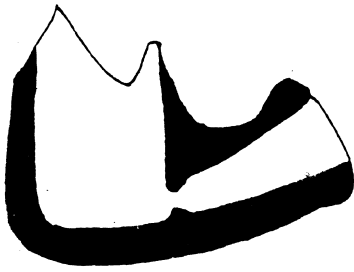
Stitch-like rouletted decoration found on pipes from the Agora (Athens), Corinth, and Varna, which were further linked together by the occurrence of a bird-shaped stamp, and suggested to be the products of a Varna pipemaker (Robinson 1985, 176, 195, pls 49, 61 - A11, C23; Stančeva 1972, 89, fig.13). The (admittedly simple) stamp on No.15 is also found on pipes from Varna (Stančeva 1975/76, 136, fig.22).



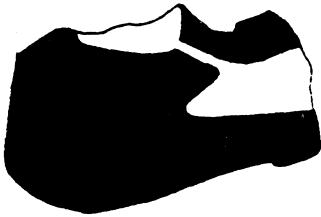
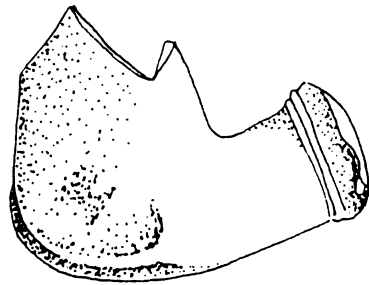
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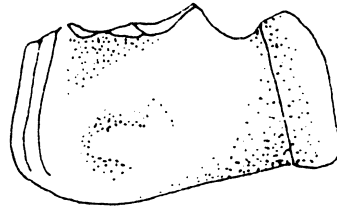
Fig.13, Nos 16, 17. Gozo



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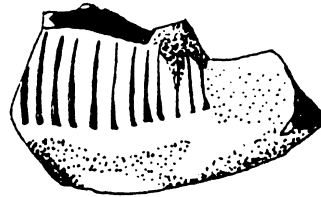


Fig.14, Nos 18-20. Gozo

- 16 Charcoal grey body. Moulded and scraped. No provenance.
- 17 Red clay body. Moulded with various crude smoothing marks. Gadrooned bowl. (One of two similar, from the same mould?) No provenance.
- 18 Charcoal grey body. Moulded. No provenance.
- 19 Charcoal grey body. Moulded. No provenance.
- 20 Charcoal grey body. Gadrooned bowl. A damaged fragment; stem incomplete. No provenance.

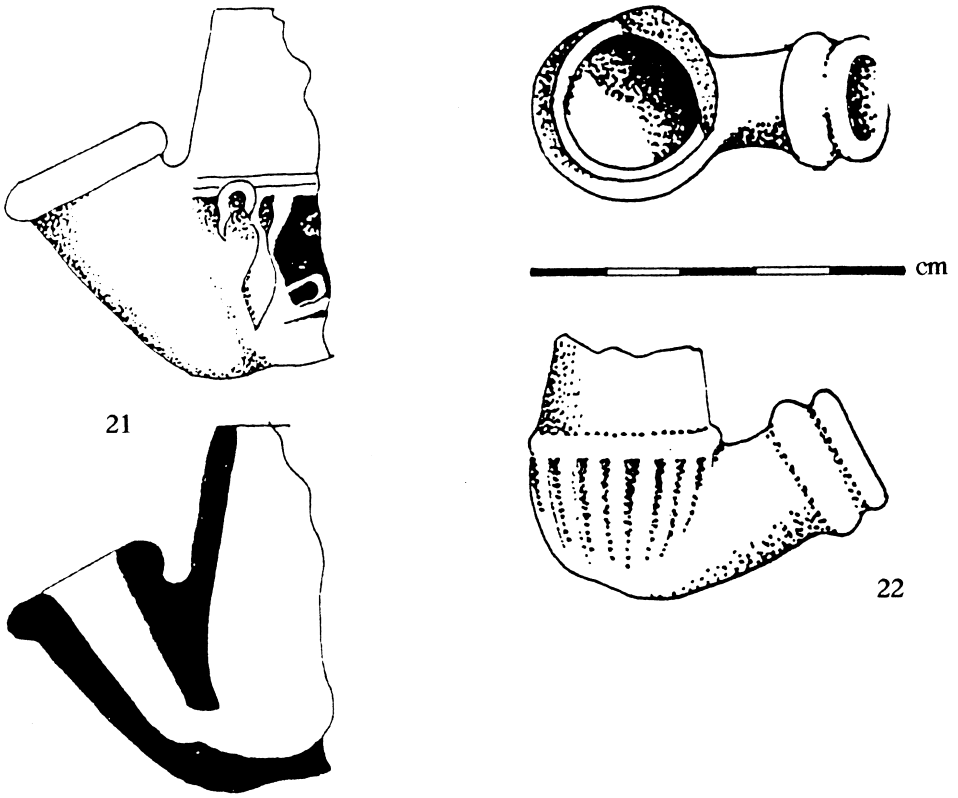


Fig.15, Nos 21, 22. Gozo

21 Chalky white body. crazed creamy glaze with chocolate brown underglaze(?) around nostril and eye. Moulded. Provenance: Xlendi bay, Gozo, Malta, 1991.

Glazed pipes are very rare in the Near East and Greece. Robinson published one from the Kerameikos, Athens, and four from Corinth (yellow or green glazed) and suggests that they are either local Corinthian potters' sidelines or are imports, perhaps even from Poland, where green and yellow glazed examples are dated from the late 19th century (Robinson 1983, 273, taf.52, no.3; 1985, 172-3, pl.47-C6-C9).

- 22 Grey clay body. Buff slip. Grooved bowl. Stamped BONNAUD MARSEILLE underneath the stem. The firm was founded by Hippolyte Leon Bonnaud in 1824; it closed in 1955. No provenance.

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