

PIPES: FROM HABIT TO ART

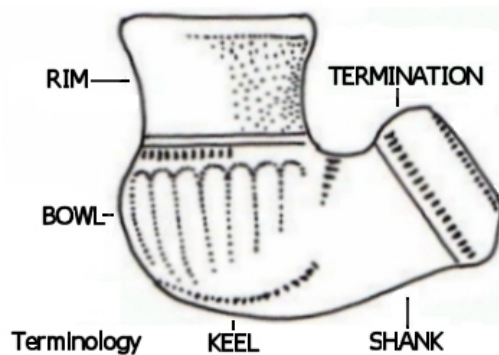
Exhibition Curator: Francesca Balzan M.A.

Palazzo Falson Historic House Museum,
Villegaignon Str., Mdina, Malta

21st October – 12th December 2010

The subject of pipes and pipe smoking is intimately linked to the last owner of the Palazzo Falson ('The Norman House') Olof Gollcher (1889 – 1962), who was himself an avid pipe smoker and collector of a number of unusual pipes. Gollcher was one of a brotherhood of artists who took to calling themselves the Confraternity of the Pipe.¹

These '*Tal-qasba*' (reed or chibouk pipes), on loan from private and museum collections in Malta, formed part of the exhibition.



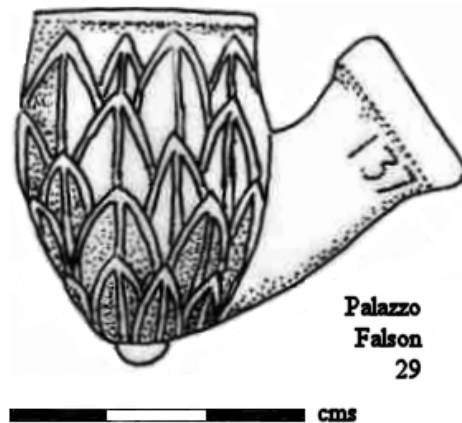
The above terms are used in describing these artefacts.



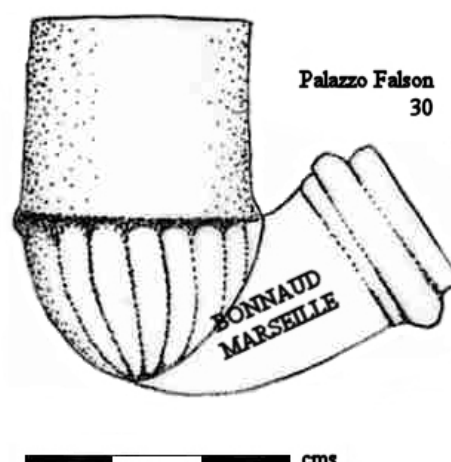
No. 25 An intact terracotta pipe, made in a mould. Internal diameter of the rim is 19 mm. There is a shallow foot under the

¹ Pers. comm. Francesca Balzan

bowl and the shank terminates in a double moulding with a 9.3 mm socket. The sacklike bowl has a pineapple pattern. There is impressed abraded lettering on the left shank which appears to have the legend MADE IN FRANCE. I have not previously seen a comparable 'pineapple' pattern or the MADE IN FRANCE mark, although the size and style are reminiscent of some mid 19th century Bonnaud products.

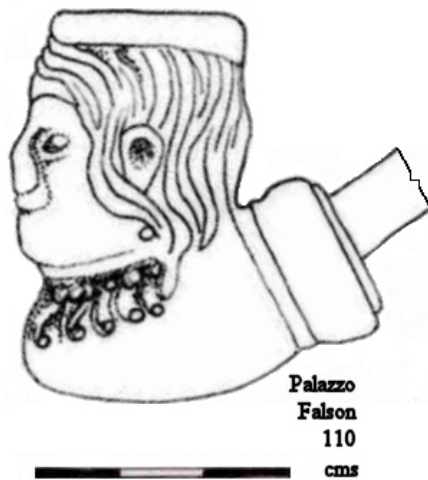


No. 29 An intact mould made terracotta pipe from the Bonnaud factory. Lightly burnished with raised numbers (1?)137 near left hand shank end. The bowl is decorated with an overlapping leaf pattern and has a small spur at the lowest point. Inside diameter of the rim is 17.1 mm. Stem opening 8.6 mm. Made in Marseille between 1824 and 1880.

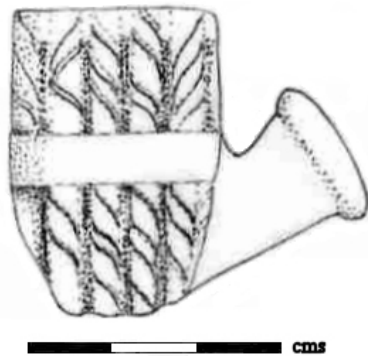


No. 30 Another intact mould made terracotta pipe from Bonnaud. It has a plain, slightly tapering rim, a rounded gadrooned bowl and a plain shank. This feature has a keel with stepped end.

Inside diameter of the rim is 19 mm and the shank opening 10.5 mm. This maker's mark was in use 1824 – 1880.



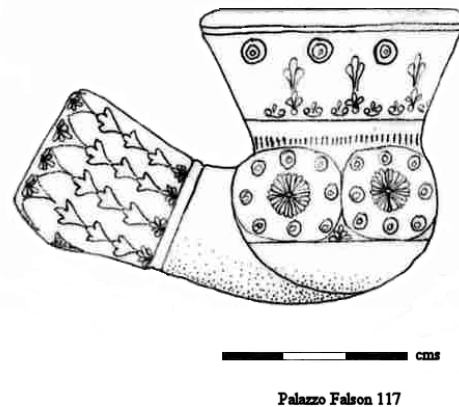
No. 110 Mould made pipe in reddish brown clay. The rim represents a female? face with shoulder length hair, gaunt features and a damaged nose. She is wearing an elaborate necklace which dangles over a plain shank with rounded termination. The shank opening is 10 mm and has a blackened wooden stem, protruding 210 mm, the last 57 mm of which has been shaved. The proportions of the pipe are Italian in style. 19th century.



Palazzo Falson 111

No. 111 A mould made terracotta pipe with a matt finish. Appears little used but

evidence of mica on the surface may indicate a rejuvenation process in which foul artefacts were placed in ash under a blazing fire.² The bowl is decorated with vertical bundles of vegetation restrained around the middle by a plain strap. The undecorated shank has a raised moulded edge with an opening 9.8 mm diameter. Possibly 19th century.

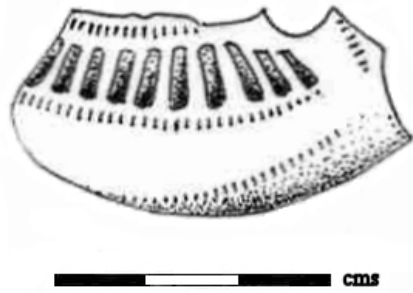


No. 117 A pipe made from red clay with a coat of burnished slip. It has a rounded bowl, lily shaped rim and ornately decorated and faceted shank, a third of which is missing. Bowl and rim are separated by rouletting at the waist. The rim has a string of scrolled petals between which are gold embellished circles. The circular theme is continued around the bowl with discs of eight circles orbiting a larger flower with radiating petals. There is an impressed gold band around the shank and the scrolled petal design is repeated on each facet.

Lily shaped pipes were introduced in the mid 19th century. Istanbul pipe makers, and perhaps other workshops, imported Gülbahar clay from the region of Lake Van. This made red slip which gave their artefacts such a rich colour.³

² Wood, J. (2009) 'Tobacco pipes from an underwater excavation at the quarantine harbour, Malta.' *Malta Archaeological Review* Issue 7, 2004-2005, pp. 15-26.

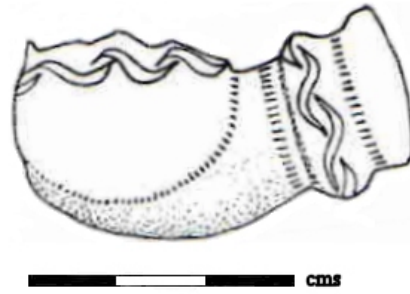
³ Robinson, R. (1985) 'Tobacco pipes of Corinth and of the Athenian Agora' *Hesperia* 54. pp. 153, 163.



Palazzo Falson 122

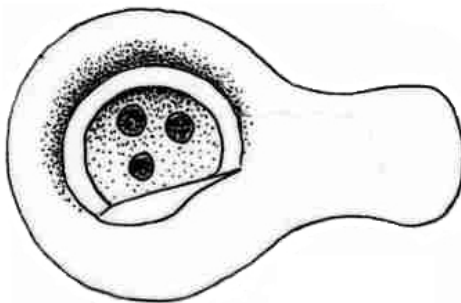
No. 122 Fragment of pipe bowl in black clay. The rim and most of the shank are missing. The vestigial shank is connected to the bowl with a keel joint. This latter feature was introduced in the late 17th to early 18th century and remained popular. It is delineated by rouletted lines. There are also rouletted lines around the shank and above and below an impressed string of gadrooning on the upper bowl. The artefact was found by a farmer in a field at Zejtun and given to the present owner.

well be Venetian 1670 – 1750 See QH 232.⁴



Palazzo Falson 124

No. 124 A bowl and keel jointed shank in light terracotta clay. The rim is missing. The upper bowl is decorated with intertwined horizontal bands. This motif is repeated around the shank end. Lines of rouletting define the bowl to shank junction and two parallel bands separate the intertwining around the terminus. Shank opening 7.5 mm.



Palazzo Falson 123

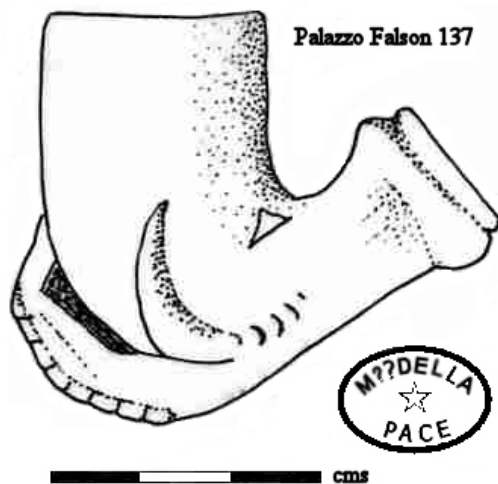
No. 123 Pipe fragment in beige clay. The plain shank extends under the bowl ending in a very flat foot. 8 mm opening. A plain squashed bowl has an internal three holed grate at waist level at which point a flaring rim begins to extend outward. The second of three artefacts found by a farmer in a field at Zejtun. May



Palazzo Falson 135

No. 135 An intact pipe with sooty black appearance and a hint of buff clay. Mould made. The bowl and shank have impressed parallel lines running their length. The plain rim has an upper and lower raised horizontal band. On the left hand side of the bowl to shank junction there is a raised five petal motif. Shank opening 12.8 mm, into which is fitted a charred wooden stem, length 87 mm, crudely sharpened at the extremity. At one time this artefact was the property of a priest, Fr. Gauci.

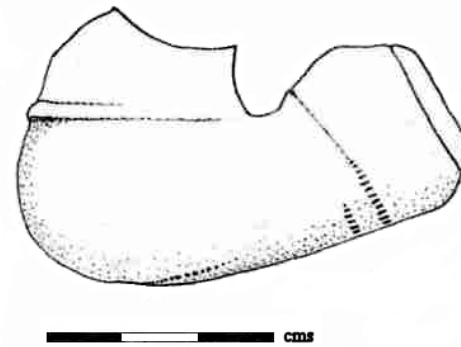
⁴ Wood, J, (2004-2005) 'Tobacco pipes from an underwater excavation at the quarantine harbour, Malta' *Malta Archaeological Review* p. 24



No. 137 A mould made pipe in pale terracotta clay. The shank extends under the bowl, gripping like a bird claw. The ventral bowl to shank junction has a curved bridge like spine, without access underneath. Internal diameter of the rim is 19 mm, shank opening 12 mm. On the right hand side of the bowl is a maker's mark consisting of an impressed oval 7 mm x 15 mm with a five pointed star in the centre. Above the star are the letters M??DELLA and under the star PACE all following the curvature of the impression. Pace is not an unusual name in Malta but as yet I have not been able to associate the surname with the product. A 'Claw' pipe, reminiscent of late 19th century English pipes, was recently excavated in Malta.⁵ There are reproductions of a socketed Eagle's Claw bowl presently advertised, which are made from a mould borrowed from the descendants of the early 20th Century pipemaker Jack Armstrong of Middlesbrough, UK.⁶

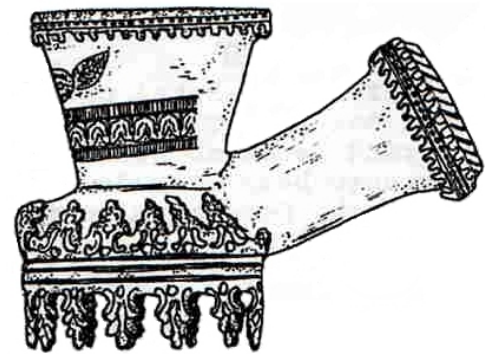
⁵ Wood, J. (2008) 'Tobacco pipes from Dockyard creek, Birgu' *Clay Pipe Research Monograph* 3, pp. 7 – 18.

⁶ Pers. comm. R. M. Key.



Palazzo Falson 209

No. 209 A mould made artefact in lightly burnished pale terracotta. Part of the shank end and most of the rim is missing. Between the rounded bowl and what remains of the rim is a raised horizontal band. The bulbous shank end has two bands of rouletting only one of which is continuous. Shank opening 13 mm. Late 19th century. Found in garden soil at a property in St Julians.



Also included in the display was an ornate pipe with filigree decoration similar to the above. No scale. 19th – 20th century. Marked B. FUCHES / CONSTANTINOPLE.⁷

Conclusion

Inspiration for this exhibition was Olof Golcher's personal pipe collection, which ranged from everyday wooden articles produced in Malta, to his exotic Ottoman and Chinese artefacts.

For an in depth account see Balzan 2010.⁸

This article describes the earliest pipes used by ordinary residents, farmers, artisans and seafarers alike. These were

⁷ Don Duco (1984) *Pijpeligentjes* Jaargang X, 3. p. 17, No. 32.

⁸ Balzan, F. 'The quintessential pipe smoker: Captain Olof Gollcher O.B.E. (1889-1962)' *Palazzo Falson Historic House Museum, Mdina*.

clay bowls designed to be used with a reed or bamboo stem (hence *tal-qasba*). They were generally made abroad and, as the island's lifeline was the sea, were imported this way.

There is a wide range of date and origin represented in this collection reflecting national lifestyle.

Acknowledgement

Francesca Balzan generously allowed me privileged access to this unique collection.

JRW
FEB 2011