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Clay Tobacco Smoking Pipes from Tell el-Retaba An Archaeological and Ethnographic Examination within the Context of Ottoman Egypt

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Abstract: This paper examines a small assemblage of clay pipes discovered at Tell el-Retaba by the Polish–Slovak Archaeological Mission since 2007. Although the site is primarily associated with its Pharaonic remains, the pipes, most of which date to the first half of the nineteenth century, provide important evidence for the social history of Ottoman Egypt. The study outlines their archaeological context, typology, and tentative chronology, situating them within broader research on pipe production and use in Egypt. Particular attention is given to the role of tobacco consumption in both urban and provincial settings, highlighting its growing accessibility during the nineteenth century. By integrating archaeological, historical, and ethnographic perspectives, the article underscores the significance of tobacco smoking in rural communities, an aspect of Egyptian material culture that has so far received little attention.

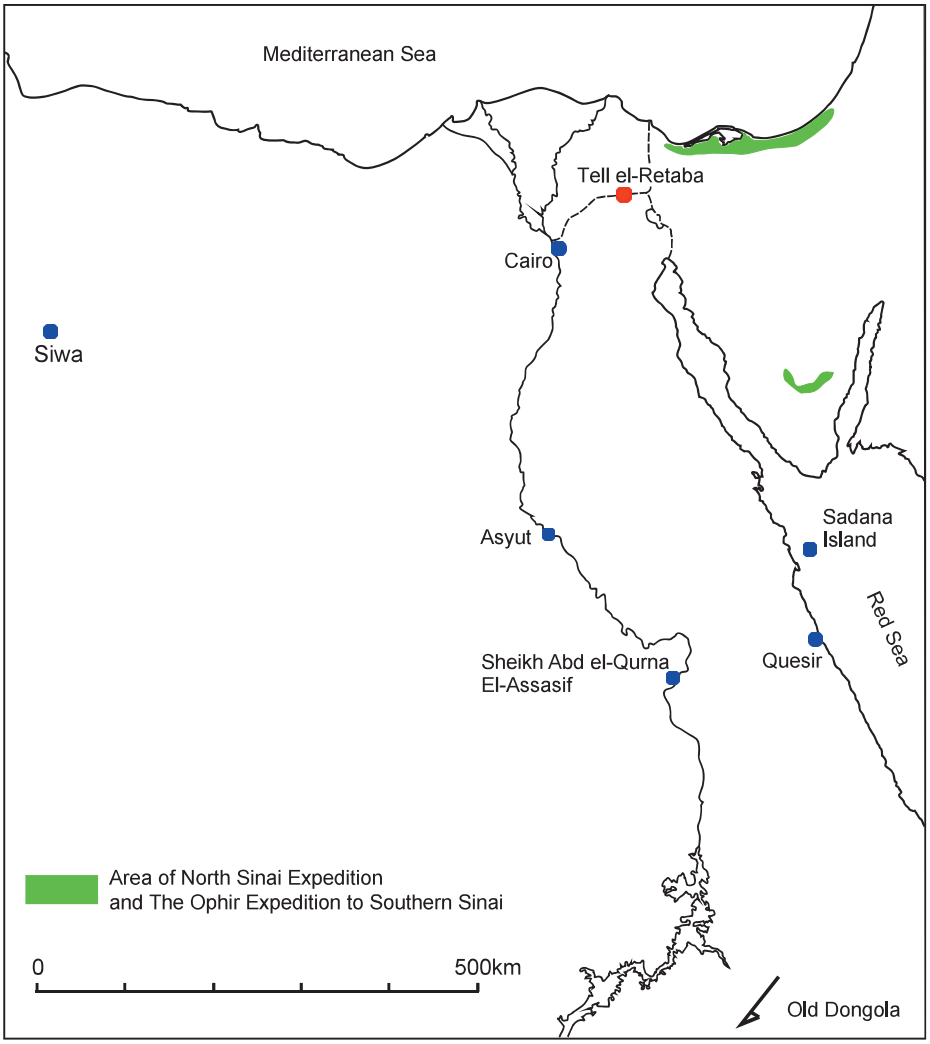
Keywords: Ottoman Empire, Tell el-Retaba, clay pipes, tobacco smoking

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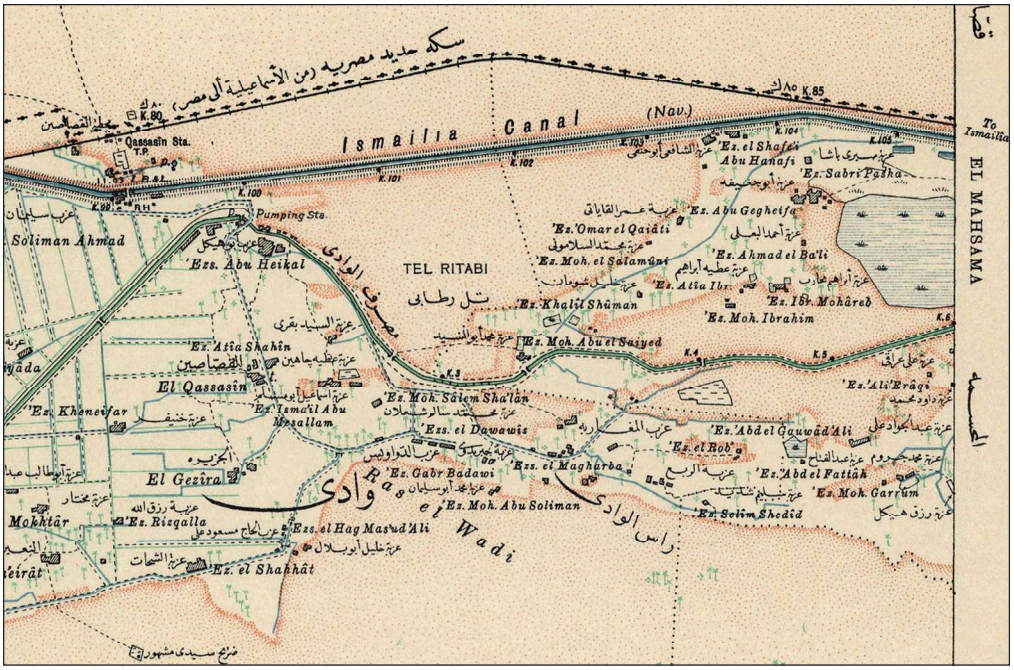
This paper presents a comprehensive study of clay pipes discovered at Tell el-Retaba (Wadi Tumilat, north-eastern Egypt) since the beginning of the excavations of the Polish-Slovak Archaeological Mission in 2007 (**Figs 1–2**).[1] The subject was first addressed in the 2014 excavation report, where the available material was provisionally dated and the overall characteristics of the assemblage of eight objects were outlined.[2] Due to the limited scope of that publication, however, only four illustrative examples were included.

[1] Rzepka *et al*. 2015. The archaeological site best known for its Pharaonic period remains.
[2] Rzepka *et al*. 2015.



1. Map of Egypt with sites which provided clay pipes (processed: P. Sójka; based on: Google Earth 2025 satellite image).

The current paper offers a concise overview of this category of archaeological material, including its definition, production, and the current state of research in Egypt. It discusses the context of discovery, presents a typological and comparative analysis, and proposes a tentative chronology. The study is further supplemented by a history of pipe smoking in Egypt and provides an initial exploration of the pipes' social role, both in urban and provincial contexts, with particular reference to Tell el-Retaba. It illuminates a little-explored corpus of material culture that has long been overshadowed by the archaeology of pharaonic, Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt. Its aim is to situate the finds within the broader archaeological and ethnographic context of Ottoman Egypt.



2. Fragment of the 1914 map of the Wadi Tumilat, showing the archaeological site of Tell el-Retaba (Tel Ritabi) and its surroundings (*David Rumsey Historical Map Collection*: Sheet 76 Tel El Kebir).

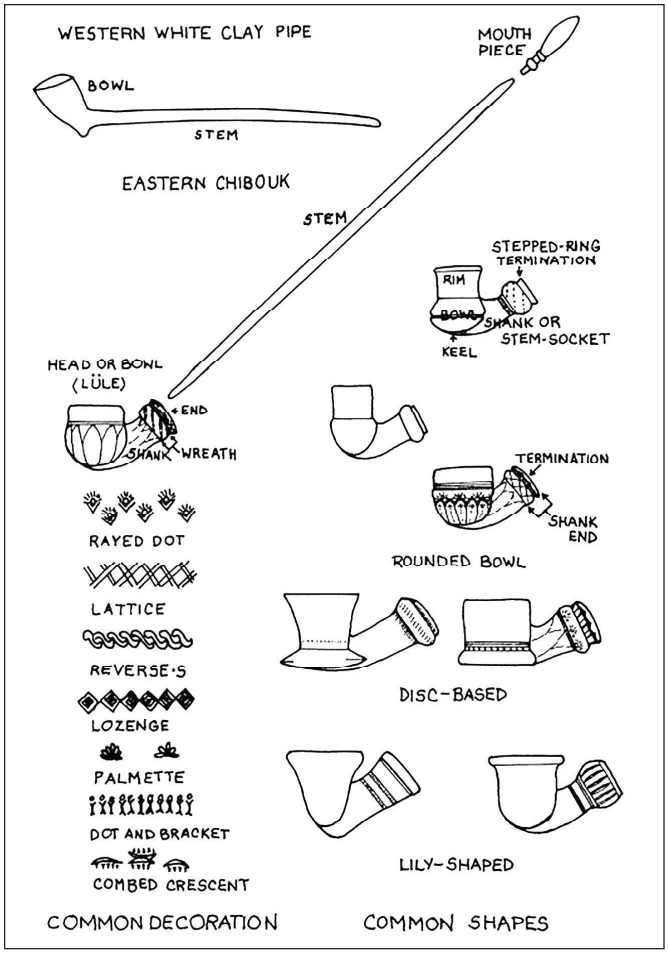
CLAY PIPES AND THEIR MANUFACTURE

Clay pipes discovered in Egypt are representative of the *chibouk* type,[3] commonly found across Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean, and regions historically influenced by the Ottoman Empire. The traditional Turkish pipe consists of three principal components: a bowl, a stem, and a mouthpiece – a set designed to be easily assembled or disassembled (**Fig. 3**).

The bowl, known as *lüle* in Turkish,[4] was typically crafted from fired clay – commonly moulded, though less frequently produced from metal or stone. Its surface was often ornamented and coated with slip prior to firing. This component comprises a bowl with a generally circular cross-section and a shank, which contains an aperture to receive the stem. Based on morphological distinctions, bowls are categorised into three primary types: rounded-bowl, disc-based, and lily-shaped variants (**Fig. 3**).[5]

The manufacture of tobacco pipes was a complex process requiring the specialised knowledge of skilled craftsmen. The individual stages of production have been extensively discussed in the literature[6] and will be only briefly outlined below.

[3] De Vincenz 2011: 43; Molga 2021: 77.
[4] Molga 2021: 78.
[5] Robinson 1985.
[6] Robinson 1985; Simpson 1990; Bakla 1993; de Vincenz 2016; Molga 2021.



3. Ottoman pipes, their types and decoration (Robinson 1985: 154, Fig. 1).

The bowls were mould-made in two parts, dried to leather-hardness, and subsequently carved to form the shank opening and interior. After a slip was applied, decoration was added by carving, stamping, rouletting, incision, or inlay, sometimes introduced already in the mould. Finishing treatments included an additional slip, polishing, gilding, or glazing before final firing. Decorative motifs range from geometric and vegetal designs – triangles, circles, leaves, palmettes, rosettes, stylised blossoms to inscriptions, most often placed around the shank.[7]

The stem (*çubuk* in Turkish)[8] designed to cool the smoke produced during combustion, was typically a hollowed wooden tube made from jasmine, cherry, hazel, or rosewood,[9] though materials such as reed, metal, or ivory were also used.

[7] De Vincenz 2016: 113.
[8] Molga 2021: 78.
[9] De Vincenz 2016: 113; Molga 2021: 77.

The mouthpiece (*ağızlık* in Turkish),[10] often fashioned from amber and occasionally coral, was the most costly component of the pipe, sometimes exceeding the value of the bowl by a factor of fifty.[11]

STATE OF RESEARCH ON CLAY SMOKING PIPES

The corpus of archaeological evidence for pipes in Egypt is limited. Tobacco represents the most commonly encountered substance for smoking. However, the consumption of other materials, including psychoactive substances, was also possible.[12]

Only a few sites have yielded such artefacts (**Fig. 1**). It is highly probable that, from the beginning of archaeological research in Egypt, this material was largely overlooked, since scholarly attention focused almost exclusively on the Pharaonic or Ptolemaic-Roman period. Even when such objects began to be collected and curated, they were seldom subjected to systematic study or publication. This trend began to shift in the 1970s.[13]

To date, scholarly publications on Egyptian smoking pipes remain scarce, with the most notable contributions dedicated to object from a few specific locations: Cairo,[14] Sheikh Abd el-Qurna,[15] El-Assasif,[16] Asyut,[17] Quesir,[18] and Sadana Island,[19] the latter associated with a shipwreck dated to 1764. Additional finds have been reported from northern[20] and southern Sinai[21] and the Siwa Oasis.[22] Clay pipes imported from Egypt have been confirmed in Old Dongola in present-day Sudan.[23]

Our principal knowledge of clay pipe production derives from eighteenth- and nineteenth century ethnographic sources primarily travelogues authored by European and American visitors.[24] Archaeological evidence of production sites is exceedingly rare. The only definitively identified pipe-making workshop, found in the Bāb al-Maḥrūq in Cairo,[25] yielded approximately 280 finished pipes and 44 misfired examples, dated between 1730 and

[10] Molga 2021: 78.
[11] De Vincenz 2011: 43; 2016: 113.
[12] Molga 2021: 76.
[13] Simpson 2009: 1.
[14] 280 clay pipes from Bāb al-Maḥrūq (Pradines 2004), 95 clay pipes from Tatar al-Higaziya (French 2001).
[15] 21 clay pipes from Tomb TT29 (Bavay 2010).
[16] 173 clay pipes from Tomb TT32 (Kárpáti 1998).
[17] 29 clay pipes (Molga 2021).
[18] 59 clay pipes (Le Quesne 2007).
[19] 21 clay pipes (Ward, Baram 2006).
[20] Saidel 2008. North Sinai Expedition.
[21] Saidel 2014. The Ophir Expedition to Southern Sinai.
[22] A single clay pipe (Simpson 1991).
[23] *c*. 49 clay pipes (Danys, Wyżgoł 2018).
[24] For further details, see Bavay 2010: 28–30, which also provides information on several workshops producing pipes in Cairo itself. Other major production centres in the mid-nineteenth century were located at Asyut, Qena, and Aswan; for pipes from Asyut, see also Molga 2021.
[25] Pradines 2004; in the town of Fustat.

1780 based on ceramic typologies and a coin minted in 1780.[26] The facility featured three or four kilns and several large terracotta basins, interpreted as vessels for water storage or clay preparation.[27]

Clay pipes are rarely exhibited in museum collections.[28] Known collections include the Ismailia Museum, the Museum of Islamic Art (Cairo), and the Gayer-Anderson Museum (Cairo), of which only the Ismailia collection has been published.[29] Outside Egypt, examples are recorded in the Louvre, reportedly originating from early excavations at Fustat (Cairo).[30]

FIND CONTEXT OF SMOKING PIPES FROM TELL EL-RETABA

The archaeological context of the smoking pipes recovered at Tell el-Retaba remains somewhat ambiguous. Most of the artefacts were retrieved from the subsurface stratum (SU1) in Area 9,[31] a deposit of loose aeolian sand that had accumulated over time and became intermixed with organic material, including animal excrement, before forming part of the surface layer. This deposit nevertheless attests to the presence of both humans and animals at the site: the former represented by clay pipes, the latter by dung.[32] The nature of the layer unfortunately does not allow for a precise determination of the time at which the artefacts found in this context were deposited.

Three specimens were recovered from the base of *sebbakhin* pits, which may have been dug by the pipe users themselves. Furthermore, a series of these pits, cut by local Egyptian agricultural workers into the ruins of mudbrick structures dating to the Third Intermediate Period, were documented (**Fig. 4**).[33]

The evidence suggests that the area in which the pipes were recovered lay beyond the boundaries of any Ottoman period settlement, as indicated by the absence of architectural remains.[34] Moreover, analysis of early twentieth century maps of the Wadi Tumilat demonstrates that the area surrounding Tell el-Retaba (Tel Retabi) likewise remained uninhabited at that time (**Fig. 2**).[35]

Two ovens [1219] and [1221] were discovered within two such pits <1126> and <1142> (**Fig. 4**). The oven [1221] was particularly well preserved (**Fig. 5**). During the excavation of the ovens and their immediate surroundings, ceramic vessels dating to the Ottoman

[26] Pradines 2004: 283–284.
[27] Pradines 2004: 282; Bavay 2010: 28.
[28] Kárpáti 1998: 39–44.
[29] 12 clay pipes (Ellabban 2021).
[30] 2 clay pipes (Guedeau 2023).
[31] Abbreviations: S – small find; SU – stratigraphic unit; [] – architecture unit; <> – cut.
[32] Rzepka *et al.* 2015: 136.
[33] Rzepka *et al.* 2015: 138.
[34] Rzepka *et al.* 2015: 138.
[35] From Napoleon's expedition to Egypt until the early 1860s, the area remained even less inhabited than suggested by the 1914 map. Between 1861 and 1863, a freshwater canal was constructed along the Wadi Tumilat, linking the Nile with the emerging settlements on the Suez Canal. This infrastructure project facilitated the establishment and growth of permanent communities in the region.



4. View of the Area 9 in 2014 with ovens marked (Phot. S. Rzepka).



5. View of the oven [1221] (Phot. S. Rzepka).

period were identified.[36] One vessel was containing organic material including tobacco seeds according to Claire Malleson's analysis.[37]

One of the pipes (S1607+1627) was found in close proximity to this oven, but there is no conclusive evidence to suggest a direct functional association between them. Although dung found in the subsurface stratum in Area 9 could potentially have been used as fuel in these ovens, there is no definitive evidence to prove this. Two pipes, S1905 and S1911, were recorded at the bottom of two pits (SU 1499 and SU 1497), adjacent to one another. Generally, it is highly probable that all of these smoking pipes were discarded by their owners after becoming damaged through use.

MATERIALS

The corpus of tobacco pipes uncovered during archaeological excavations at Tell el-Retaba currently include thirteen items. They are described in detail in the catalogue at the end of this paper. The entries are organised according to the chronological order of pipes documentation. Descriptions of each object include an inventory number, followed by a characterisation of the clay type and its inclusions, as defined by ceramologist Anna Wodzińska.[38] Where possible, detailed metric data are provided, presented in accordance with a standardised schema (**Fig. 6**). This is followed by a visual description encompassing the object's shape, preserved components, state of preservation, decorative elements, appliqués, and any visible traces of use (**Figs 7–11**). The catalogue also provides information on the archaeological context of the find. Subsequently, the probable chronology of the object and references to similar finds are provided, if available.

DISSCUSION

The catalogued material consisted mainly of bowl fragments. No other smoking accessories were recovered. The pipes display traces of use, notably dark discoloration within their bowls. A vessel containing tobacco seeds, although not directly associated with the pipe assemblage, provides strong grounds for inferring that tobacco was smoked. No archaeological evidence has been identified to suggest the consumption of other substances, such as hashish or opium. Almost all of the pipes can be assigned to the rounded-bowl type (**Fig. 3**) within Rebecca Robinson's classification system,[39] and to the late form of PP1–3/PP4 in Katia Cytryn-Silverman's typology.[40] Only a single specimen (S1607+1627) may be classified as PP1.[41]

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[36] Rzepka *et al.* 2015: 146.

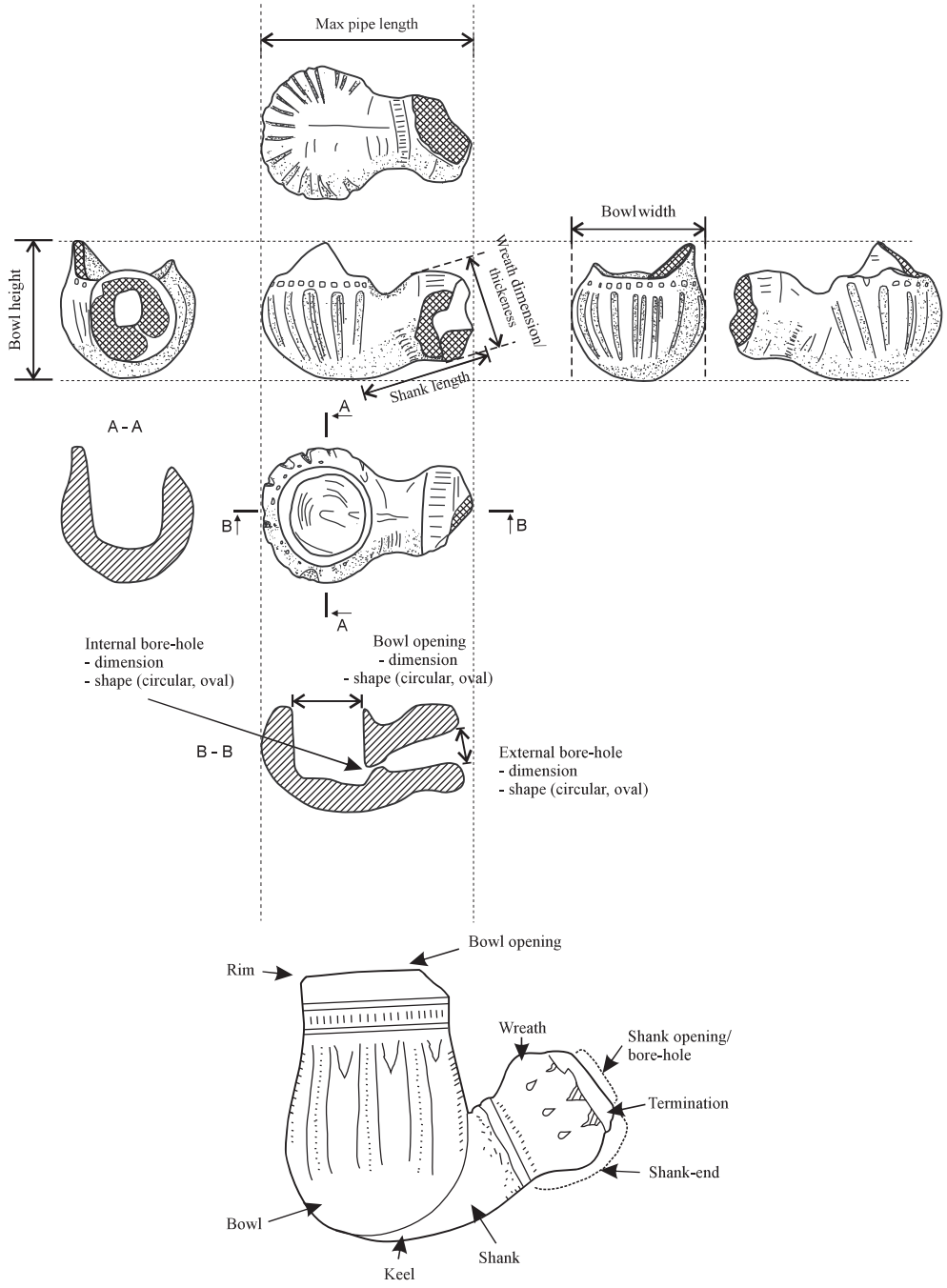
[37] Rzepka *et al.* 2015: 146, n. 138.

[38] Based on personal communications. I would like to acknowledge with gratitude the expertise and insightful consultations provided by Anna Wodzińska.

[39] Robinson 1983; 1985. In Robinsons' system pipes were divided into: a rounded bowl, a disc-based, and a lily-based.

[40] Cytryn-Silverman 1996; Saidel 2008: 59–62.

[41] Type PP1 represents the earliest phase of pipes development. It is characterised by its comparatively small dimensions, a rounded bowl, and bright surface colours resulting from the firing process.



6. Standardised diagram for describing pipes (Drawing: P. Sójka).

The pipes bear geometric decoration, including straight and intersecting lines, zigzags, lattices, and triangles. These motifs were executed by a range of techniques, notably incision, stamping, and moulding.

Most examples were manufactured from fine Nile clay with extremely small inclusions, sometimes of organic origin, and were fired in shades ranging from brown to grey. A single pipe, S1607+1627, stands apart: it was made of fine marl clay with occasional white and micaceous inclusions and fired to a beige tone. Fabric analysis suggests that the pipes were most probably manufactured in Egypt, although the precise location of the workshop remains undetermined. The surfaces of all pipes are slightly polished, probably due to use and subsequent depositional processes.[42]

The oldest piece, S1607+1627, dates to the end of seventeenth–first half eighteenth century. Pipe S1602 is assigned to the eighteenth–mid-nineteenth century, while S1905 belongs to the second half of eighteenth century. Two further examples, S1911 and S2942, are dated to the second half of the eighteenth–first half of the nineteenth century. Another group of eight pipes S1260, S1530, S1542, S1549, S1590, S3021, S3903, and S4823 are attributed specifically to end of eighteenth–first half of nineteenth century.[43]

Among all finds, only S1911 may carry a manufacturer's mark: a rosette stamp impressed inside the bowl, although this detail might also have served a decorative purpose (**Fig. 9**). Producer marks were identified on several pipes from Egypt. The marks appear on the exterior surface, either impressed over the bowl or the shank of the object: a rosette was impressed on the bowl of the pipe no. 7.1 from Madrasa of Tatar al-Higaziya in Cairo,[44] and on the shank of pipe no. 5 from Tomb TT 29 at Sheikh Abd el-Qurna;[45] on pipe no. 3 from the Archaeological Museum in Ismailia, the mark was impressed on the keel.[46] In a context outside of Egypt, a pipe featuring a similar rosette imprint was discovered in Jerusalem.[47] In this instance, the imprint appears on the interior surface, like in the case of pipe S1911 from Tell el-Retaba.

Previous publication of some of the pipes from Tell el-Retaba have suggested that they are mainly from the eighteenth century because they do not have a craftsman's mark and most of the later ones have one.[48] However, considering that the material from which they were made is probably Egyptian clay, and based on comparison with similar material from other sites in Egypt, it can be assumed that most of the material found at the site dates from the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century. The craftsman's mark (or the lack of it) is not a sufficient indicator to determine a precise dating at the current state of research.

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[42] The general conclusions presented here were previously published in Rzepka *et al*. 2015: 139.

[43] They are larger than early forms, like S1607+1627. Among them earthy colours predominate, greater angle between shank and bowl and wider channel in shank. A distinctive feature is also its elaborate decoration.

[44] French 2001: 225, Fig. 76.

[45] Bavay 2010: 35.

[46] Ellabban 2021: 90.

[47] Simpson 2008: Fig. 268.

[48] Rzepka *et al*. 2015: 139.

Generally, dating this type of archaeological material remains challenging due to the limited number of comparative examples and the broad geographical distribution of specific types throughout the Ottoman world. The identification of direct analogies for individual objects is not always easy. Despite being produced using moulds, the pipes were subsequently decorated by hand, making each item unique. Nonetheless, certain common features may be discernible, potentially indicative of specific regions or workshops. Several attributes can assist in the dating process, i.e. the presence of a craftsman's mark, as well as the pipe's size, shape, colour, the angle between the bowl and shank, and the diameter of the aperture connecting these components. However, precise dating is often unattainable, largely due to the absence of secure archaeological contexts supplemented by datable materials such as ceramics or coins.

Comparison of pipes from sites in Egypt, Sudan, and Palestine reveals few clear parallels beyond minor nuances, which may reflect specific characteristics of regional production. In general, artefacts from Syro-Palestine, Africa, and the Arabian Peninsula can be relatively easily distinguished from those of Asia Minor and Balkan origins, since the contrasts between these two groups are much more striking than between individual regions of the southern provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

As noted above, no settlement remains of this period have been identified at Tell el-Retaba, apart from *sebbakhin* pits, two ovens, some fragments of pottery and a few tobacco pipes. These features may be connected with the activities of inhabitants from nearby settlements, who guided livestock through the area, travelled to markets or to daily prayers at local mosques, or exploited the ancient architectural remains, e.g. mudbricks for reuse. [49]

While analysing the general context of (tobacco) smoking in clay pipes on the site within a broader socio-economic context it should be mentioned that during Napoleon's campaign in Palestine, contemporary travellers recorded the practices of nomadic groups in the Sinai Peninsula, who constructed rudimentary pits in arid landscapes to provide shelter from adverse weather.[50] Moreover, Benjamin A. Saidel notes the frequent occurrence of pipes along the route linking the Nile Delta with Palestine, interpreting this distribution as indicative of sustained and recurrent migratory activity in the region.[51] Nineteenth-century historical records further corroborate this pattern of mobility; for instance, during the reign of Muhammad Aly, large numbers of Egyptian peasants sought to flee the country in order to evade conscription and pursue improved economic opportunities. [52]

THE HISTORY OF SMOKING AND PIPE USE IN OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND EGYPT

The introduction of tobacco and associated smoking paraphernalia into Egypt can be traced back to the early seventeenth century. Historical evidence suggests that these were brought

[49] Rzepka *et al*. 2015: 139.
[50] Simpson 2008: 65; Saidel 2014: 261.
[51] Saidel 2008: 63.
[52] Saidel 2008: 63.

by English merchants and sailors frequenting Ottoman ports between 1599[53] and 1606.[54] It may also be postulated that among those already familiar with the use of smoking pipes at the time were merchants from Venice and Genoa. Notably, smoking was already known in the Ottoman capital by 1576.[55] The earliest documented pipes in the region were modest and belonged to the so-called European type: short-stemmed, single-piece pipes made of white clay. Portuguese sailors, who were also navigating routes around the African continent to reach Yemen and beyond, may have further facilitated the spread of these pipes.[56] Nevertheless, it was primarily maritime traders from the Kingdom of England who disseminated them throughout the Mediterranean basin.[57] A diary entry by Thomas Dallam from 1599 records an encounter with a Turkish fleet in the Dardanelles, during which the admiral requested 'som tobacko and tobackco-pipes'. Dallam notes that the gift was provided before the fleet sailed on to Tenedos.[58]

This excerpt suggests that the practice of smoking may have been known in Istanbul prior to its proliferation in Egypt. Some other sources can reveal a date for the introduction of tobacco in the region. İbrahim Peçevi (1572–1650), a Bosnian historian of the Ottoman Empire, dates its emergence to around 1600,[59] while Mustafa Naima (1655–1716), a Turkish historian and official, cites 1606 in his chronicle *Tārīḫ-i Na'īmā*.[60] Most scholars currently accept a general timeframe between 1601 and 1603 for the advent of tobacco use.[61] The earliest documented guild engaged in the sale of tobacco in Cairo dates back to the mid-seventeenth century.[62]

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, tobacco was a luxury commodity, resulting in its consumption in minimal quantities. Consequently, early pipe bowls were considerably smaller than those produced in later periods. In the seventeenth century, smoking was banned on two separate occasions,[63] ostensibly for health and religious reasons. By the late seventeenth century, tobacco had become cheaper and more widely available, fostering significant changes in the mass production of smoking implements, although items made of costly materials remained inaccessible to the poorest strata of society.[64]

The evolution of the pipe, particularly towards the so-called Oriental or tripartite form, remains obscure owing to the paucity of detailed evidence. The development of this type may have been influenced by the lifestyle of the Ottoman Empire, especially in Egypt, where sedentary habits and a hot climate rendered the use of a more elaborate

[53] Robinson 1985: 151; Grehan 2006: 1354.
[54] Simpson 1998: 15; Molga 2021: 75.
[55] Simpson 2011: 26.
[56] Shaw 1960: 276; Danys, Wyżgoł 2018: 200.
[57] Bent 1893: 49 ('Diary of Master Thomas Dallam'); Robinson 1985: 151.
[58] Bent 1893: 49.
[59] Simpson 1998: 15; Baram 1999: 142; de Vincenz 2011: 112; Molga 2021: 75.
[60] Molga 2021: 75.
[61] Robinson 1985: 152; Bavay 2010: 28; de Vincenz 2011: 112; Danys, Wyżgoł 2018: 200.
[62] Grehan 2006: 1355.
[63] Robinson 1985: 152; Simpson 1998: 2. In 1612 by Ahmad I and later in 1633–1646 by Murad IV.
[64] Grehan 2006: 1355.

pipe designed for leisure especially practical. According to the present author, its form facilitated comfortable use in a seated position, often with a saucer placed beneath to catch falling ash.

By the nineteenth century, pipe smoking had become widespread in Egypt, as evidenced by numerous textual and visual accounts from European travellers.[65] At the height of their popularity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Oriental pipes were not only prevalent throughout the Ottoman territories but also found favour in Europe. Oriental-style pipes were even manufactured outside the Ottoman Empire, including in France, which housed some of the last factories producing such pipes.[66] The practice began to decline during World War I, largely due to the advent of cigarettes, which were cheaper, more portable, and easier to store. The last major French factory closed in 1926, while the well-known pipe workshop and store in Tophane, Istanbul, ceased operations in 1929.[67]

TOBACCO SMOKING IN EVERYDAY LIFE AND THE ETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

A compelling dimension that enhances and complements the archaeological context of tobacco use in Ottoman Egypt is the ethnographic insight provided by contemporary travellers and artists. Particularly after Napoleon's expedition to Egypt between 1798 and 1801, there was a notable surge in interest among European and American travellers in the Nile Valley. Their observations offer valuable depictions of daily life during this period.[68]

Among the most recurrent motifs in both textual and visual accounts is the practice of tobacco smoking, which became an inseparable element of perceived Egyptian identity. This association was especially prominent in the nineteenth century, as evidenced by a wealth of written descriptions and iconographic representations that illustrate the local population's daily routines. Although a detailed analysis exceeds the scope of this section, a few illustrative examples underscore the significance of this practice.[69]

One of the most comprehensive ethnographic accounts is Edward William Lane's description of the customs of contemporary Egyptians, based on his observations in Cairo in the early 1830s. His work provides vivid depictions of everyday smoking practices.[70] He wrote: 'The pipe and the cup of coffee are enjoyed by almost all persons who can afford such luxuries, very early in the morning, and oftentimes during the day. There are many men who are scarcely ever seen without a pipe either in their hand or carried behind them by a servant. The smoker keeps his tobacco for daily use in a purse or bag made of shawl-stuff, or silk, or velvet, which is often accompanied with a small pouch containing a flint

[65] Bavay 2010: 28–31.
[66] Robinson 1985: 152.
[67] Robinson 1985: 152.
[68] For further insight, see Grehan 2006, which offers a comprehensive examination of various social, cultural, and political dimensions of tobacco consumption within the Ottoman Empire.
[69] Lane 1860; Randall 1868.
[70] Lane 1860.

and steel, and some agaric tinder, and is usually crammed into his bosom'.[71] Lane further elaborates on the social and material culture surrounding tobacco use. He provides detailed observations of pipe types and accessories, often characterising them in an idealised manner that reflects both admiration and cultural distance.

A particularly noteworthy aspect of Lane's account is his reference to the popular varieties of tobacco in use at the time. However, he provides no information regarding local tobacco cultivation, nor does he indicate whether such production existed in Egypt during that period – an omission that, if addressed, would contribute significantly to understanding the region's tobacco economy. The tobacco smoked by person of the higher orders, and some others, in Egypt, is of a very mild and delicious flavour.[72]

While Lane's descriptions offer a wealth of detail, it is important to recognise their limitations. As a relatively affluent European observer, his perspective centres primarily on the upper and middle classes – those with the means to acquire elaborately decorated pipes. The smoking habits of the lower social strata, who likely used mass-produced clay pipes and simple wooden stems, are only implicitly referenced. For these individuals, damaged components could be easily replaced from shops or bazaars.

Another valuable source is David A. Randall's book from 1862. During his travels, Randall depicted daily life in Egypt in a manner that was both romantic and perceptive. In his account, he observes that smoking constituted a prevalent practice on the city streets.[73] This phenomenon can be compared to the widespread use of cigarettes worldwide in the second half of the twentieth century.

While extensive material exists from the urban centres of the Ottoman Empire, ethnographic descriptions of rural Egypt remain scarce. No firsthand accounts have yet been identified that document pipe smoking in provincial or agrarian settings, though the practice undoubtedly persisted. Visual sources, however, consistently depict the pipe-smoking Egyptian in nineteenth-century art, providing strong evidence for the cultural significance of tobacco use (see **Fig. 12** after Catalogue).

CONCLUSIONS

The majority of the pipes from Tell el-Rateba date to the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries, when tobacco became increasingly affordable and accessible across wider social strata in Egypt. This research highlighted the significance of tobacco consumption in rural Egypt during the Ottoman period, drawing attention to communities that are only rarely represented in historical and archaeological sources. Therefore, the pipes provide insight into social groups with whom contemporary observers, such as Lane, by virtue of their social standing, had little direct interaction. The collection and publication of such artefacts are therefore essential, as they illuminate communities otherwise absent

[71] Lane 1860: 137–138.
[72] Lane 1860: 138.
[73] Randall 1868: 82–83.

from ethno-historical sources. Moreover, given the limited research on Ottoman-period remains in Egypt, the assemblage presented here provides an important contribution to reconstruction of aspects of daily life in this region.

Tell el-Retaba, located on a key route linking Egypt with Palestine and the Arabian Peninsula, holds considerable significance for understanding regional interactions in the Ottoman period. Studies on material culture as reflected in archaeological material from the site, among which smoking pipes take an important place, provide insight into patterns of mobility and cultural preferences in both a regional and a cross-regional perspective.

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CATALOGUE

All dimensions are in centimetres. Abbreviations: L – length; H – height; W – width; D – diameter; T – thickness; S – small find; SU – stratigraphic unit.

Inv. no. S1260
Fabric and surface: medium-fine Nile clay with small white non-organic or micaceous inclusions; reddish brown fabric and surfaces; intentionally slightly polished surface.
Dimensions: bore-hole D 1.60; shank D 1.50, L 4.38; bowl preserved H 4.30, W 3.75, L 3.75; rim D 2.60.
Description: a well-preserved pipe with a rounded bowl. Small fragments of the rim and one side of shank are missing. The entire surface of the bowl is decorated with vertical rows of moulded triangles pointing to the left. Below the rim, approximately at the midpoint on each side, traces of three nodular decoration (D 1.00 each) are visible. The rim is without decoration. The surface of the shank was probably decorated, but the considerable degree of destruction makes this impossible to determine. A stepped, stem-socket fitting is ornamented with a row of moulded triangles oriented towards the shank opening. Sooting traces inside the bowl.
Context: Area 9; SU 1. Chronology: end of eighteenth–first half of nineteenth century.
Comparisons: French 2001: 227, Fig.78, no. 12.2.

Inv. no. S1530
Fabric and surface: fine Nile clay with very fine and rare organic inclusions (less than 5/cm²); brown fabric; intentionally slightly polished surface.
Dimensions: bowl, preserved H 2.95, W 3.60, rim D 1.85.
Description: probably fragment of upper part of a bowl with rim. The exterior surface of bowl is decorated with moulded V-shaped motifs and a vertical line of impressed rectangles. The rim bears three incised horizontal lines, the central one filled with a row of impressed squares. The interior surface is sooted. A triangular cut, possibly secondary, is present on the bowl and rim.
Context: Area 9; SU 1. Chronology: end of eighteenth–first half of nineteenth century.
Comparisons: –

Inv. no. S1542
Fabric and surface: fine well-dredge Nile clay (probably local provenance) with very fine and occasional organic inclusions (less than 5/cm²); light greyish brown fabric; unintentionally slightly polished surface.
Dimensions: bore-hole D 1.20 narrowing to 0.45; shank opening/end D 1.80cm; wreath D 2.60 narrowing to 2.00; shank L 3.20; bowl preserved H 3.60, W 3.70.
Description: complete shank and a small fragment of a rounded bowl. The surface of shank is undecorated. Outer surfaces of the preserved bowl part are decorated with a moulded network or lattice motif and three hemispherical nodular applications (D *c*. 0.80). Sooting traces inside the bowl.
Context: Area 9; SU 1. Chronology: end of eighteenth–first half of nineteenth century.
Comparisons: French 2001: 227, Fig. 78, no. 12.2.

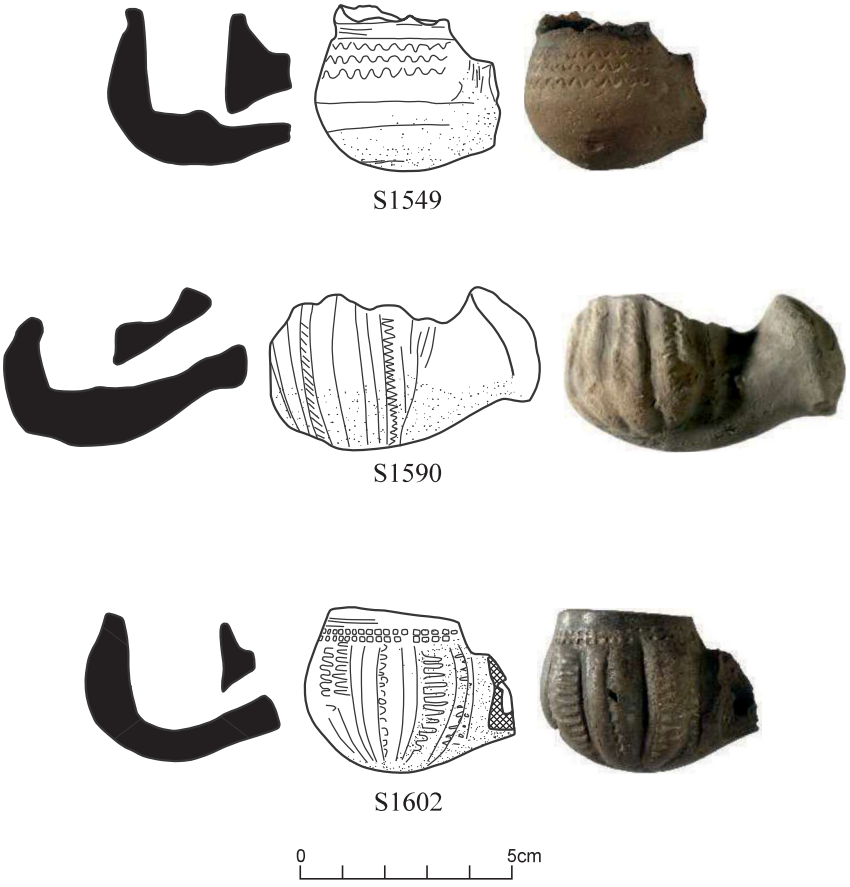


7. Clay smoking pipes from Tell el-Retaba (Drawing: B. Adamski, Ł. Jarmużek, A. Pawlikowska, P. Sójka, K. Trzcińska; Phot. L. Gidzińska-Pisz, S. Rzepka).

Inv. no. S1549
Fabric and surface: fine well-dredge Nile clay (probably local provenance) with very fine and occasional organic inclusions (less than 5/cm²); yellowish red fabric; brown surfaces; intentionally slightly polished surface.
Dimensions: bore-hole W 0.80, H 0.75 narrowing to 0.35; shank preserved L 0.70; bowl preserved H 3.80, W 4.00, L 4.00; rim H 0.80, D 2.70.
Description: a pipe with a rounded bowl and fragment of stem. The preserved part of the shank is undecorated. The upper part of the bowl is decorated with three incised horizontal zigzag lines. At the one end of these lines a few impressed triangles are visible, corresponding to the shape of the zigzag lines; it is presumed that similar triangles covered the entire bowl. The base of bowl is decorated with two impressed lines of triangles or zigzag motif.
Context: Area 9; SU 1. Chronology: end of eighteenth–first half of nineteenth century.
Comparisons: French 2001: 226, Figs 77–78, nos 10.2, 12.6.

Inv. no. S1590
Fabric and surface: fine well-dredge Nile clay (probably local provenance) with very fine and occasional organic inclusions (less than 5/cm²); dark brown fabric; intentionally slightly burnished surface.
Dimensions: bore-hole H 0.70, W 1.30 narrowing to 0.43; shank L 3.90, D 2.00 narrowing to 1.60; bowl preserved H 3.40, W 3.90, L 3.60; opening D 2.50.
Description: a pipe with rounded bowl and short stem. The rim is broken. The bowl's surface is decorated with vertical semi-circular convex ridges (gadroon motif). Three of them are further ornamented with an incised vertical zig-zag line and a row of oblique incisions. Part of the decoration on one side of the lower section is broken. Shank and keel are undecorated. The lumen outlet is not positioned at the centre of shank axis but is slightly displaced towards the left. Sooting traces inside the bowl.
Context: Area 9; SU 1. Chronology: end of eighteenth–first half of nineteenth century.
Comparisons: Ellabban 2021: 92, nos 7–8.

Inv. no. S1602
Fabric and surface: fine well-dredge clay (probably local provenance) with very fine and occasional organic inclusions (less than 5/cm²); dark brown fabric; intentionally slightly polished surface.
Dimensions: bore-hole D 0.65 narrowing to 0.40; shank preserved L 2.30; bowl preserved H 3.70, W 3.75, L 3.75; rim preserved H 0.70, D 2.70.
Description: fragment of a shank and rounded bowl. On the rim traces of sanding after damage are visible. Undecorated shank. The bowl's surface is covered with vertical semi-circular convex ridges (gadroon motif). Each of these is decorated with two vertical moulded bands filled in with short horizontal lines. Below the rim are two horizontal rows of impressed squares.
Context: Area 9; SU 1. Chronology: eighteenth–middle of nineteenth century. Comparisons: French 2001: 227, Fig. 78, no. 12.6. Previous publications: Rzepka *et al.* 2015: 138, Fig. 64.

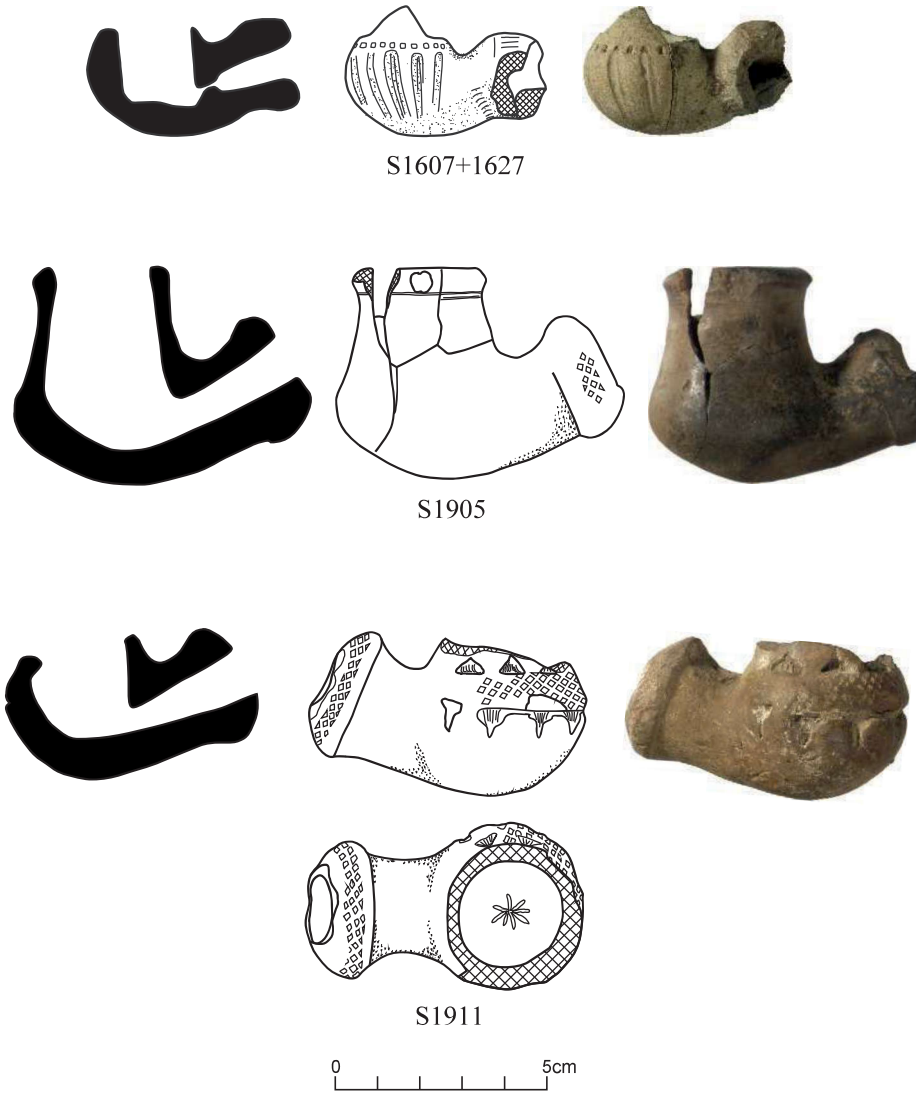


8. Clay smoking pipes from Tell el-Retaba (Drawing: B. Adamski, Ł. Jarmużek; Phot. S. Rzepka).

Inv. no. S1607+1627
Fabric and surface: fine marl clay with small white and micaceous inclusions (less than 5/cm²); pale yellowish white fabric; intentionally slightly polished surface.
Dimensions: bore-hole D 0.48 narrowing to 0.09; shank L 2.50, D 1.37 narrowing to 1.16; bowl preserved H 2.90, W 2.74, L 2.74; bowl opening: D 1.70.
Description: a pipe with a rounded bowl and short stem. The shank-end, encircled with a wreath, is decorated with short incised lines. The small rounded bowl is decorated with several impressed vertical lines. Almost the entire rim is broken off; below, horizontal line of impressed squares.
Context: Area 9; SU 1222. Chronology: end of seventeenth–first half of eighteenth century.
Comparisons: French 2001: 228, Fig. 79, no. 12.11. Previous publications: Rzepka *et al.* 2015: 137, Fig. 63.

Inv. no. S1905
Fabric and surface: Fine well-dredge clay (probably local provenance) with very fine and occasional organic inclusions (less than 5/cm²); brown fabric; intentionally slightly burnished and polished surface.
Dimensions: bore-hole D 0.90 narrowing to 0.75; shank L 4.0, D 1.75; wreath D 2.30 narrowing to 2.00; bowl H 4.80, W 4.00, L 4.00; bowl opening D 2.10.
Description: a well-preserved pipe with a rounded bowl. One side of the rim is missing. Rim is straight rounded. Most of the bowl is undecorated. Below the rim, two incised lines. One side of pipe bears some black traces, probably of sooting. Keel surface is decorated with two incised crossing lines. Shank mostly undecorated. Wreath with impressed motif of lattice network. Sooting traces inside the bowl.
Context: Area 9; SU 1499. Chronology: second half of eighteenth century.
Comparisons: Pradines 2004: Fig. 9, BARQ-509-431; Ward, Baram 2006: Fig. 4, no. S1; Simpson 2008: Fig. 369, no. 36; de Vincenz 2011: 50, B3011-2. Previous publications: Rzepka *et al.* 2015: 138, Fig. 65.

Inv. no. S1911
Fabric and surface: fine well-dredge clay (probably local provenance) with very fine and occasional organic inclusions (less than 5/cm²); light reddish-brown fabric; intentionally slightly polished surface.
Dimensions: bore-hole D 1.30 narrowing to 0.60; shank L 3.30, D 1.50; wreath D 3.00 narrowing to 2.5; bowl H 3.50, W 3.70, L 3.30; bowl opening D 2.20.
Description: a well-preserved pipe with a rounded bowl. One side of upper part of the bowl and a rim are missing. The central part of the bowl is decorated with two impressed rows of opposing triangles, separated by lattice/diamond network motif. The wreath is ornamented with an impressed lattice motif. No traces of sooting inside the bowl. At the bottom of a bowl a moulded rosette (D 0.80) is present.
Context: Area 9; SU 1497. Chronology: second half of eighteenth–first half of nineteenth century.
Comparisons: French 2001: 225, Fig. 76, no. 7.1; Simpson 2008: Fig. 268, nos 15–16; Bavay 2010: 35, no. 5; Ellabban 2021: 90, no. 3. Previous publications: Rzepka *et al.* 2015: 138, Fig. 65.

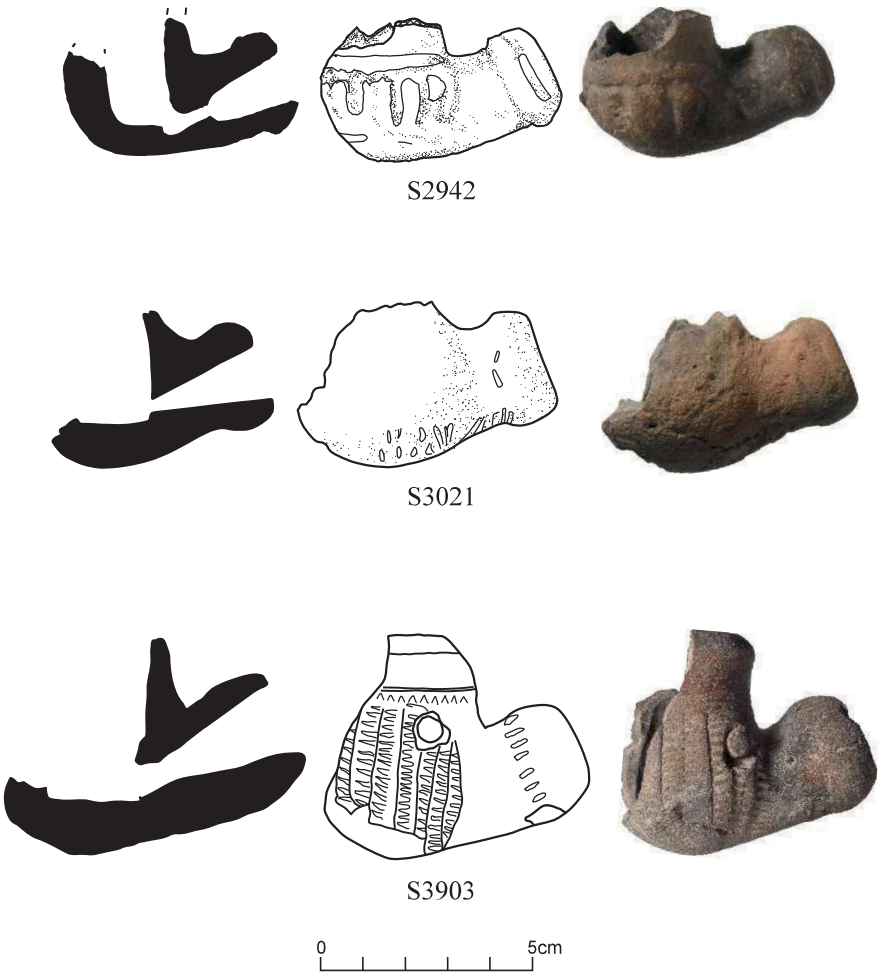


9. Clay smoking pipes from Tell el-Retaba (Drawing: B. Adamski, Ł. Jarmużek; Phot. S. Rzepka).

Inv. no. S2942
Fabric and surface: fine well-dredge clay (probably local provenance) with very fine and occasional organic inclusions (less than 5/cm²); light reddish-brown fabric; intentionally slightly polished surface.
Dimensions: bore-hole D 0.90 narrowing to 0.25; shank L 5, D 1.50; wreath D 2.10 narrowing to 1.9; bowl H 4.30, W 4.00, L 4.00; bowl opening D 2.7.
Description: a well-preserved pipe with rounded bowl. One side of upper part of bowl and a rim are missing. The well-preserved side of the shank is undecorated. The shank-end is rounded. The pipe does not have a separated keel. The central part of bowl is decorated with one horizontal ridge and several vertical ones going around a bowl. The upper part of the bowl was probably undecorated. Inside the bowl are visible traces of sooting and the remains of some organic substance.
Context: Area 9; SU 1. Chronology: second half of eighteenth–first half of nineteenth century.
Comparisons: French 2001: 230, Fig. 81, no. 12.22; Simpson 2008: 434, Fig. 268, nos 7–12.

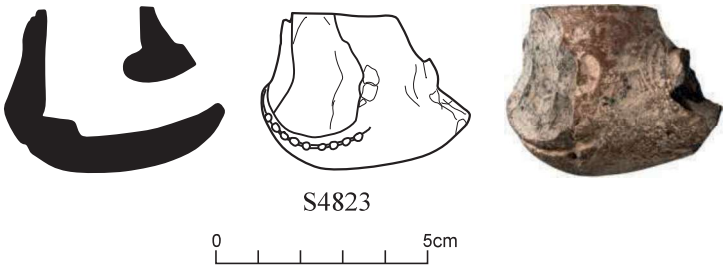
Inv. no. S3021
Fabric and surface: fine well-dredge Nile clay (probably local provenance) with very fine and occasional organic inclusions (less than 5/cm²); dark brown fabric; intentionally slightly burnished surface.
Dimensions: bore-hole H 1.20, W 0.90 narrowing to 0.30; shank L 3.00, D 1.53 narrowing to 1.38; bowl preserved H 3.50, W 3.84, L 3.60; bowl opening D 1.90.
Description: a pipe with a rounded bowl. One side of the upper part of the bowl and the rim are missing, while the remaining part of the bowl and the shank are fairly well preserved. The shank-end is rounded. The surface of the bowl is decorated with an irregular pattern composed of drop-like elements (points decoration?). The lumen outlet is positioned at the centre of the shank axis. Sooting traces were recorded inside the bowl.
Context: Area 9; SU 1. Chronology: end of eighteenth–first half of nineteenth century.
Comparisons: –

Inv. no. S3903
Fabric and surface: very fine well-dredge Nile clay (probably local provenance) without organic inclusions (less than 5/cm²); dark brown fabric; intentionally slightly burnished surface.
Dimensions: bore-hole H 1.30, W 1.20 narrowing to 0.20; shank L 4.20, D 1.90 narrowing to 1.80; bowl preserved H 5.10, W 3.85, L 3.85; bowl opening D 2.30.
Description: a fragmentary preserved pipe with a rounded bowl. A small fragment of the rim is preserved. Most of the bowl is missing. The preserved part is decorated with vertical moulded rows of triangles. A wreath is decorated with one row of incised shorth lines oriented towards shank opening. On the outer surface are two hemispherical nodular application. The lumen outlet is positioned at the centre of the shank axis. Sooting traces inside the bowl.
Context: Area 9; SU 1. Chronology: end of eighteenth–first half of nineteenth century.
Comparisons: French 2001: 227, Fig. 78, no. 12.2.



10. Clay smoking pipes from Tell el-Retaba (Drawing: P. Sójka, L. Hulková; Phot. S. Rzepka, P. Sójka).

Inv. no. S4823
Fabric and surface: fine well-dredge Nile clay (probably local provenance) with very fine and occasional organic inclusions (less than 5/cm²); brownish red fabric; intentionally slightly burnished surface.
Dimensions: bore-hole H 0.92, W 1.00 narrowing to 0.80; shank L 4.20; bowl preserved H 3.50, W 3.30. L 3.40; bowl opening: D 1.90.
Description: a pipe with rounded bowl and fragment of shank. The surface of the bowl is damaged. The rim is almost completely preserved and flat. The bottom of the bowl is decorated with two zig zag lines meeting each other just before the shank. The lumen outlet is positioned at the centre of the shank axis. Sooting traces were recorded inside the bowl.
Context: Area 9; SU 1. Chronology: end of eighteenth–first half of nineteenth century.
Comparisons: –



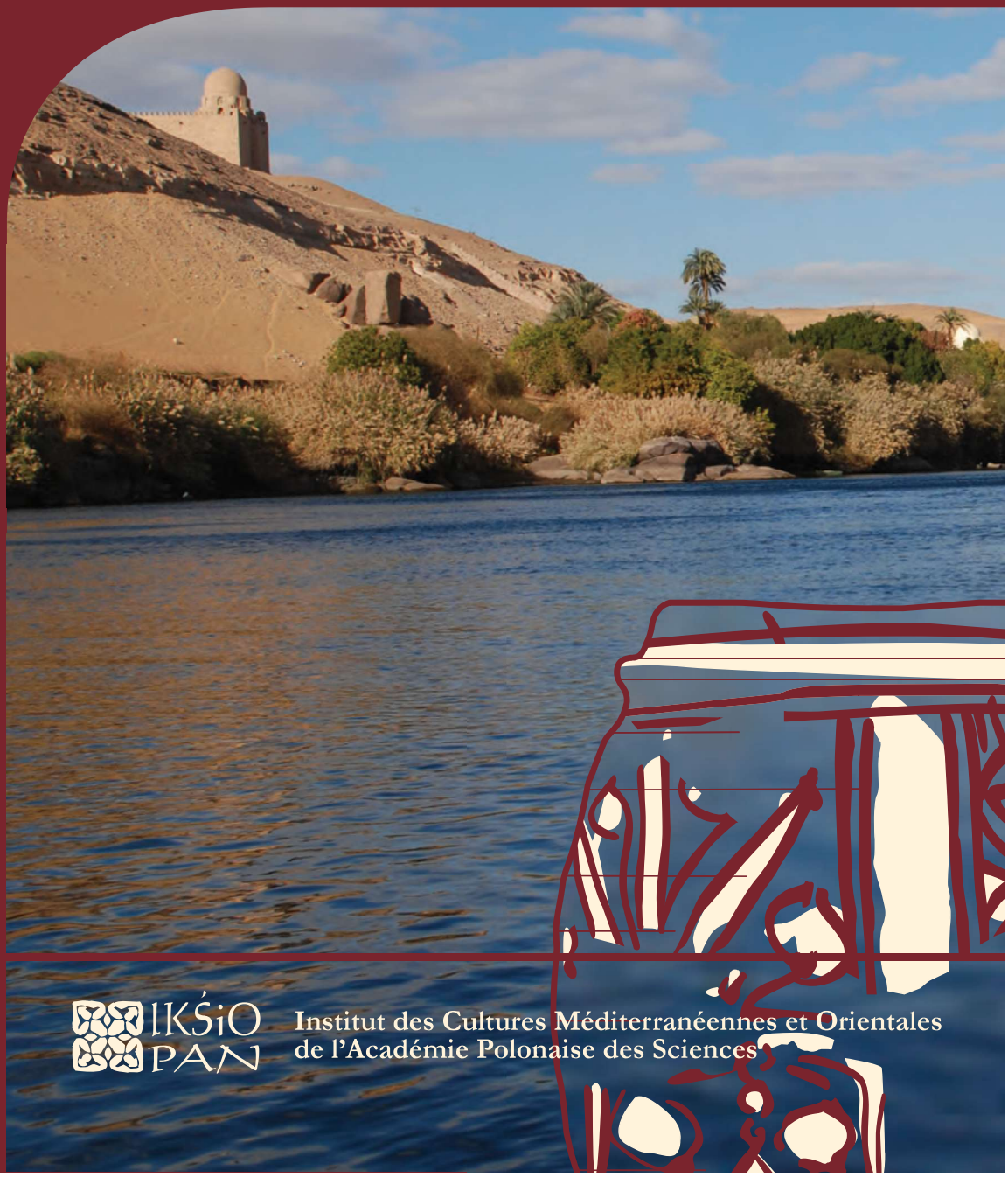
11. Clay smoking pipe from Tell el-Retaba (Drawing: M. Łapińska; Phot. P. Sójka).



12. Drawing of two men smoking pipes (*Description de L'Égypte 1823*: Pl. D).

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