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Anna Ridovics and Peter Davey

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Ottoman tobacco pipes from The National Museum of History in Sofia

by Vladislav Todorov and Nikolay Markov

With a few exceptions, we can say that tobacco smoking is common among the Ottomans and they have developed this practice beyond all measures. Wedded to this habit since childhood, there is almost no Muslim who does not smoke six, ten and even twenty pipes of tobacco in a day. Combining luxury and pleasure, they strive for the beauty of the pipes and the quality of tobacco. The stems of the pipes are usually made from jasmine, rose- and hazelbush, cherry branches etc. Their entire length is decorated in gold and silver and they always terminate in mouthpieces of white or yellow amber or coral, very beautifully worked out. Those used by distinguished ladies are additionally encrusted with precious stones. Some of the high-ranking persons use a kind of Persian pipe called a hookah. The ordinary people avail themselves of the simplest clay pipes, which can be either longer or shorter. Not a single class of the society makes use of the white clay pipes so much popular among sailors and in most of the European countries. The bowl-shaped heads of the pipes where the tobacco burns are called "lüle" by the Turks. They are made of the finest clay with extraordinary dexterity; some are even gilt.

With the Turks, offering a pipe as a gift to every guest of the house is considered a sign of respect - one can see twenty, thirty, forty of these long pipes, arranged vertically in small nests scooped in supports, specially made for the purpose and placed in the antechamber of the house or even in the salons of the distinguished rich families. Guests sit on the sofa that runs along the walls of the room, each smoking a pipe which he places on the carpet or the mat covering the floor. Still, a small round copper or bronze plate is set under the pipe head intended to gather the ash that remains from smoking. When pipe smoking is exercised in a small room, the pipes cross in such a way that smokers should be extremely careful in order to avoid receiving a hit in the teeth. Even if only two smokers share one room which happens fairly often in winter, the smoke spreads and hangs like thick fog. Upper clothes, leather garments, all kinds of apparel, furniture, in a word, everything in the house, reek of stale tobacco smoke.

Smoking is so spread and so frequent as a habit that the most inveterate smokers never walk out of the house without taking with them a pipe and tobacco. They stuff up a silk or satin pouch with tobacco; the

pipe they disassemble in two or three parts that can easily be put together again with the help of silver screws and tuck the pieces away in a cloth case attached to the belt under overcoat. These objects of pleasure have become such a necessity, that no one ever goes for a walk in a public place or in the town neighbourhood particularly in summer, without securing a pipe and tobacco for himself. Servants ordered to carry about their master's pipes humbly follow behind him. Having relaxed contentedly under the tree or on the grass, the Muslim smokes his pipe, drinks his coffee and pronouncing the Almighty's name with respect, delivers his destiny to the heavenly benevolence, truly convinced that at this moment he is the happiest man among the mortals (d'Ohsson 1791, 88-91).

At the time Mouradgea d'Ohsson, the acknowledged authority on the Ottoman Empire wrote his narrative, tobacco smoking was practised in such a great extent mostly by Muslims all over the empire (including the present day Bulgarian lands), that it had practically become part of the local culture - as is seen from the above vivid description. It is not, however, quite clear when this tradition began. According to Mouradgea d'Ohsson, the practice of tobacco smoking had developed since 1605, when western merchants imported the first tobacco in Constantinople. However, a clay pipe, unearthed during the excavations in the old Moldavian capital Suceava and chronologically attributed by the engraved date '1571' (Romstorfer 1913, 76), seems to suggest an earlier penetration of tobacco smoking at least in the Balkans. Without further entering into this disputable matter, we target this work only as representing some more interesting examples of Ottoman pipes that have survived to this day and built the collection of the National Museum of History in Sofia.

The Ottoman tobacco pipes collection of the National Museum of History in Sofia numbers 127 items, in their greater part with missing larger or smaller fragments. They were purchased by the museum and recorded as a collection in the inventories. Attribution was made for each object individually according to the archaeological context and the chronological attribution of similar exemplars found both in Bulgaria and out of the country. They generally originate between the seventeenth and nineteenth century. Although the entire collection of tobacco pipes has not been published till now we choose to introduce only nine comparatively well preserved objects from the collection. We also consider it necessary to give some theory on the matter in order that the identification of the represented tobacco pipes can be better supported and their description better understood and most helpful.

Typology and chronology

In modern archaeology, description and typology of objects tend to be carried out using precisely defined geometric shapes. In Bulgarian historiography an attempt was made to establish a typology of the ceramic pipes from Bulgaria according to their geometric shapes (Fig.

1). The typology is based primarily on a collection of 307 tobacco pipes from the regional museum of history in Silistra (Todorov 2006). For a more precise application of geometric criteria, the body of each pipe is divided in two, three or four segments depending on the particular shape (Fig. 2). The terminology we use in this short study is that of Rebecca Robinson (Robinson 1983, 267; 1985, 154), with a single addition. We group the *rim* and the *bowl* into a combined type-determining feature we call a *cup*. For example, type XIII comprises pipes with lens-shaped bowls and hyperboloidal rims (Fig. 4, Type XIII).

The cross-section of the *socket* and the thickened *socket end* combine into a second group of features and establish a subtype in the typology. For example, the subtype V.3 pipes have a shank with circular cross section and a torus-shaped socket end (Fig. 3, Type V.3). The decoration of the pipes creates a variant in the suggested typology.

Fourteen types of clay pipes (Todorov 2006, in press) were initially identified according to their geometric shape (Fig. 1) and the distinct type-determining features (Fig. 2). The proposed typology has been developed further with

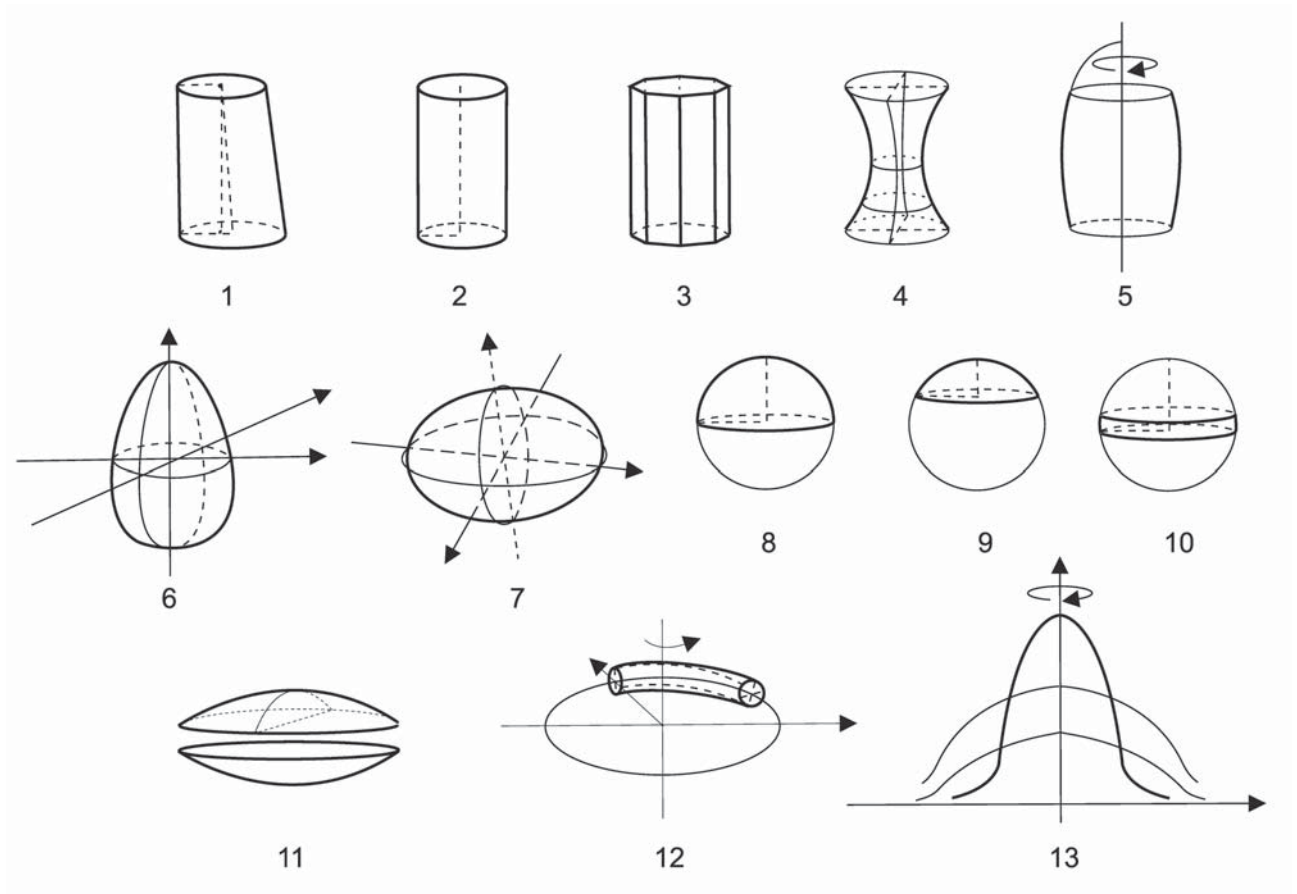


Figure 1: Geometric shapes - 1. right circular truncated cone; 2. cylinder; 3. prism; 4. one-sheet hyperboloid; 5. barrel; 6. ovoid; 7. ellipsoid; 8. hemisphere; 9. spherical cap; 10. spherical segment; 11. lens-shape; 12. torus; 13. bell shape (Drawing by Vladislav Todorov).

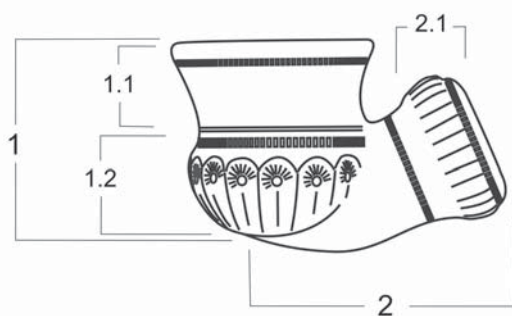


Figure 2: Terminology - 1. cup; 1.1 rim; 1.2; bowl; 2. socket; 2.1 socket end (drawing by Vladislav Todorov).

the study of new collections. For example, the published study on clay pipes from the excavations at the Roman castle Sessaginta Prista in Ruse introduced a new type VIII A (Todorov 2007, 212) from a layer dated to the second half of the eighteenth and nineteenth century and the new finds from Silistra added types VIII B, VIII C and X A (Todorov 2008, in press). The tobacco pipes from the National Museum of History (NMH) collection either belong to certain familiar types or enhance the existing typology with new types (VIII D), subtypes (I.2; VIII D) and variants (V.1.A; V.1.F, XI.B.2).

Type I

No separate compositional elements are distinguished in

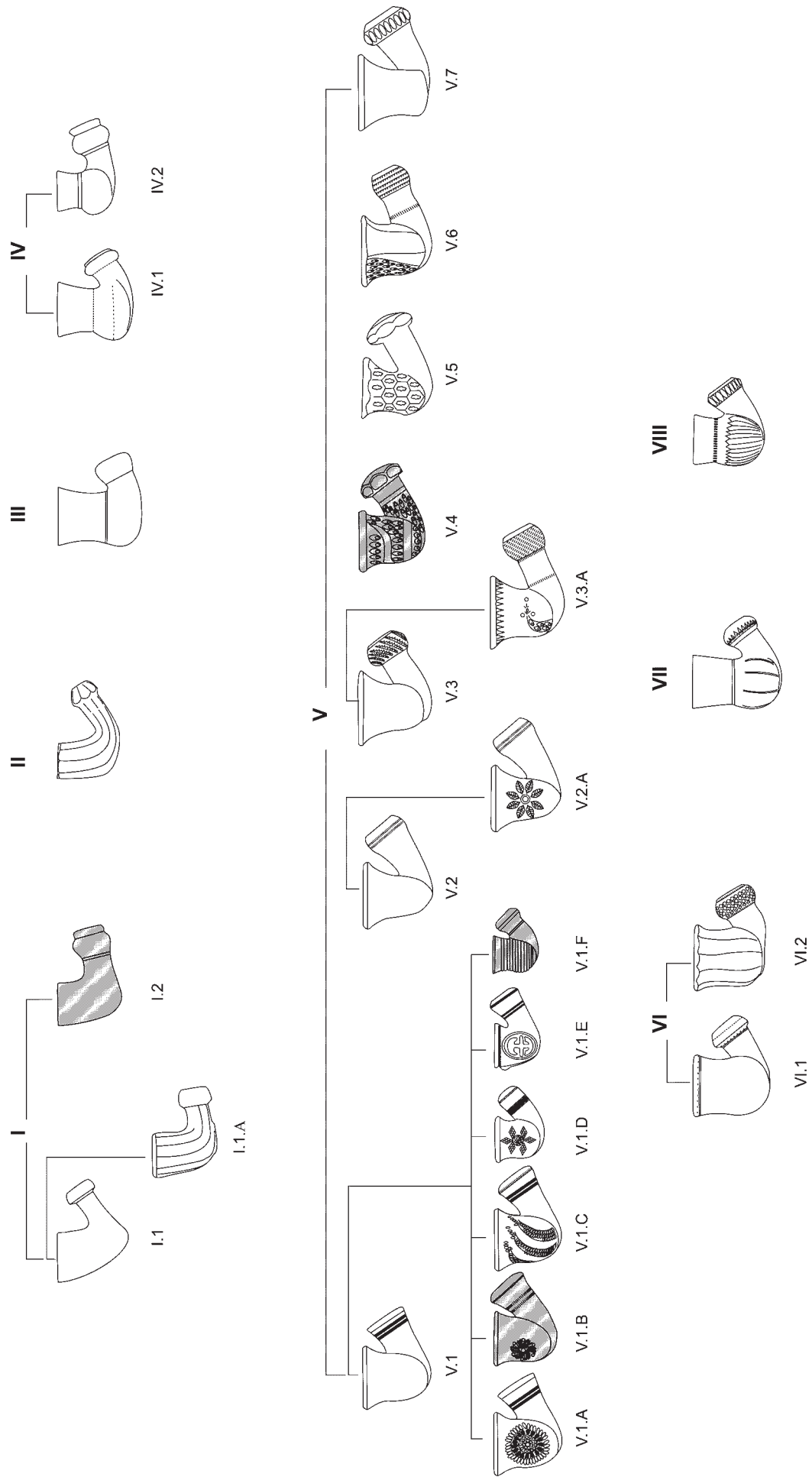


Figure 3: Typology by Vladislav Todorov i-viii (drawing by Vladislav Todorov).

the cup shape of this type. It is a one-piece pipe, its body representing a truncated cone. The socket has circular cross-section. Here, a subtype and a variant are identified. (Fig. 3, Type I). A pipe from the NMH collection adds another subtype (Fig. 3, Type I.2; Fig. 5, No. 1), which differs from the previous by its socket end. While I.1 subtype has a truncated cone shaped end, the socket end of I.2 subtype is a torus. The tobacco pipes of this type were made of white clay and were not decorated. The I.1.A subtype is an exception – it was made of grey-black clay and decorated with vertical flutes. We find pipes of this type represented in miniatures from the seventeenth century (Robinson 1985, Pl. 34 and 35). An exemplar similar in shape to the I.2 subtype is familiar from Belgrade; it is also attributed to the seventeenth century (Bikić 2003, 80, Tip XII/2).

Type IV

The bowl of the cup is an ellipsoid, the rim – a hyperboloid. The socket's cross-section is circular. The socket end forms a combination of a torus, on which a truncated cone sits. Pipes of this type were made of beige and greyish clay and were not decorated. A pipe from the NMH collections belongs to the IV.2 subtype (Fig. 3, Type IV; Fig. 5, No. 2). The pipe was made of greyish-black clay, its outer surface was polished and even now it possesses a smooth metallic shine. Tobacco pipes of this type were not mass produced and are comparatively rare items in the museum collections. In addition to the introduced pipe from the NMH collection which was found in Vidin, five other examples are known from Silistra (Todorov 2008, in press). All these pipes were purchased by the museum but there is no contextual database in Bulgaria for their precise chronological attribution. Considering the small cups and the short sockets of the IV type pipes, they date with great probability from the second half of the seventeenth century (Robinson 1985, 153).

Type V

The cup of the pipes is bell-shaped. The socket is of circular cross-section and the end usually lacks a wreath – when it does have a wreath, the latter is a torus (or a torus with ellipsoid cuttings). All finds of this type have polished surfaces or are coated with red or black slip. Most often the decoration was performed with the help of a small cogwheel and applied in one or two strips more frequently on the socket. Ornamental fields of stylized floral patterns are not so frequent (Fig. 3, Type V). Three pipes from the NMH collection representative sample belong to this type. Two items add new variants to V.1 subtype. The pipe represented in Figure 5 (No. 3) acquires a V.1.B serial number in the typology, and the exemplar in Figure 5 (No. 4) – V.1.F. The third exemplar (Fig. 5, No. 5) belongs to the V.4 subtype. The craftsman's stamp is placed on the bottom of the socket – it contains the Persian word **يکتا** [yekta] (Fig. 6, No. 1) meaning 'single', 'unique', 'unmatched'.

The pipes under V.1.B and V.4 were among the most mass produced items. They are present in all published collections in Bulgaria (Fig. 7): Sofia (Stancheva and

Medarova 1968, 5), Varna (Stancheva 1972, 90) Veliko Tarnovo (Ilcheva 1975 Tables I.11 and 12, Tables II. 13, 14 and 24), Provadia (Haralambieva 1986, Tables V.33-36), Ruse (Sirakova 1987, Tables IV.1, 2 and 6), Shumen (Bojilova and Sirakova 1991, Table II.3), Nikopol (Asparuhov 1993, Table 3.29-31) and Lovech (Changova 2007, Fig. 185 and 224). According to the contextual data from Ruse (Todorov 2007, 188-217) and Plovdiv (Todorov and Topalilov 2009, 201-210) they date from the nineteenth century. A more precise attribution is hardly possible in the archaeological context in Bulgaria as the ever increasing city construction works at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century brought disturbance to a number of earlier structures. As is seen from a publication on clay pipes from Athens, items of similar shape are dated to the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century (Robinson 1985, 199-200, Pl. 63-64, A 30 and A 37).

The pipe under V.1.F from the NMH collection is rare. At present, the only known parallels to this pipe are two finds from the rescue excavations near the village of Golemo Buchino (Fig. 7) preceding the construction of Liulin highway in 2007. They were unearthed near a small building that was evidently used from the early eighteenth century to the third quarter of the nineteenth century. The materials from the excavations are not yet published. We owe the opportunity to see the finds to Assoc. Prof. Konstantin Rabadzhiev, director of the site investigating team and are extremely grateful for his kind collaboration.

Type VIII A

The pipes of this type are characterized by a hemispherical base of the cup and a hyperboloidal rim. The VIII A type is represented by two subtypes (Fig. 4, Type VIII A). The sockets are circular in cross-section and the socket ends are tori (subtype VIII A.1) and truncated cones (subtype VIII A.2). Both exemplars were made of yellow-brown clay. While the decoration of the first subtype is simple and limited to vertical fluting on the base, the second subtype is embellished with engraved geometric and stylized floral motifs.

Subtype VIII.A.1 should be attributed to the early nineteenth century (Robinson 1985, 182, Pl 53, C 64-65). Contextual support for such dating is found in a comparable tobacco pipe with a surface strongly washed away by the sea that was found in a sunken ship on the bottom of the Kiten cove (Fig. 7). Judging by the artefacts found on board the ship, the shipwreck would have happened at the beginning of the nineteenth century. We are greatly obliged to Assoc. Prof. Kalin Porozhanov, head of the underwater investigations, Hristina Angelova, director of the museum and Dr. Kalin Dimitrov, member of the research team for the opportunity to see the materials.

There is no contextual evidence for the precise dating of the typologically new pipe – subtype VIII A.2 (Fig. 4, subtype VIII A.2; Fig. 5, No. 6). The socket end bears the relief inscription '**№ 2**' (Fig. 6, No. 2) meaning 'number two', a non-characteristic feature of the Ottoman pipes.

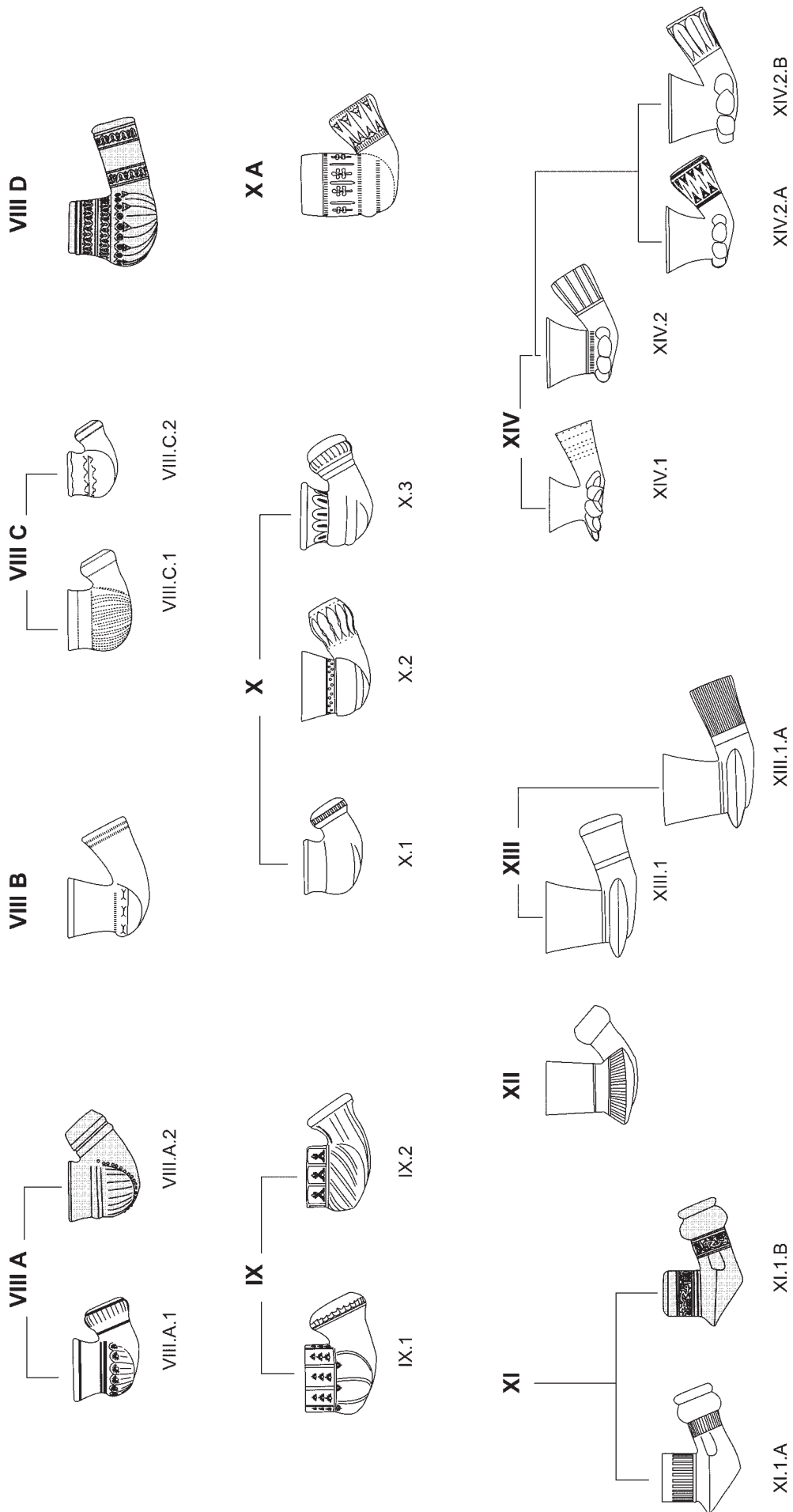


Figure 4: Typology by Vladislav Todorov viii-xiv (drawing by Vladislav Todorov).

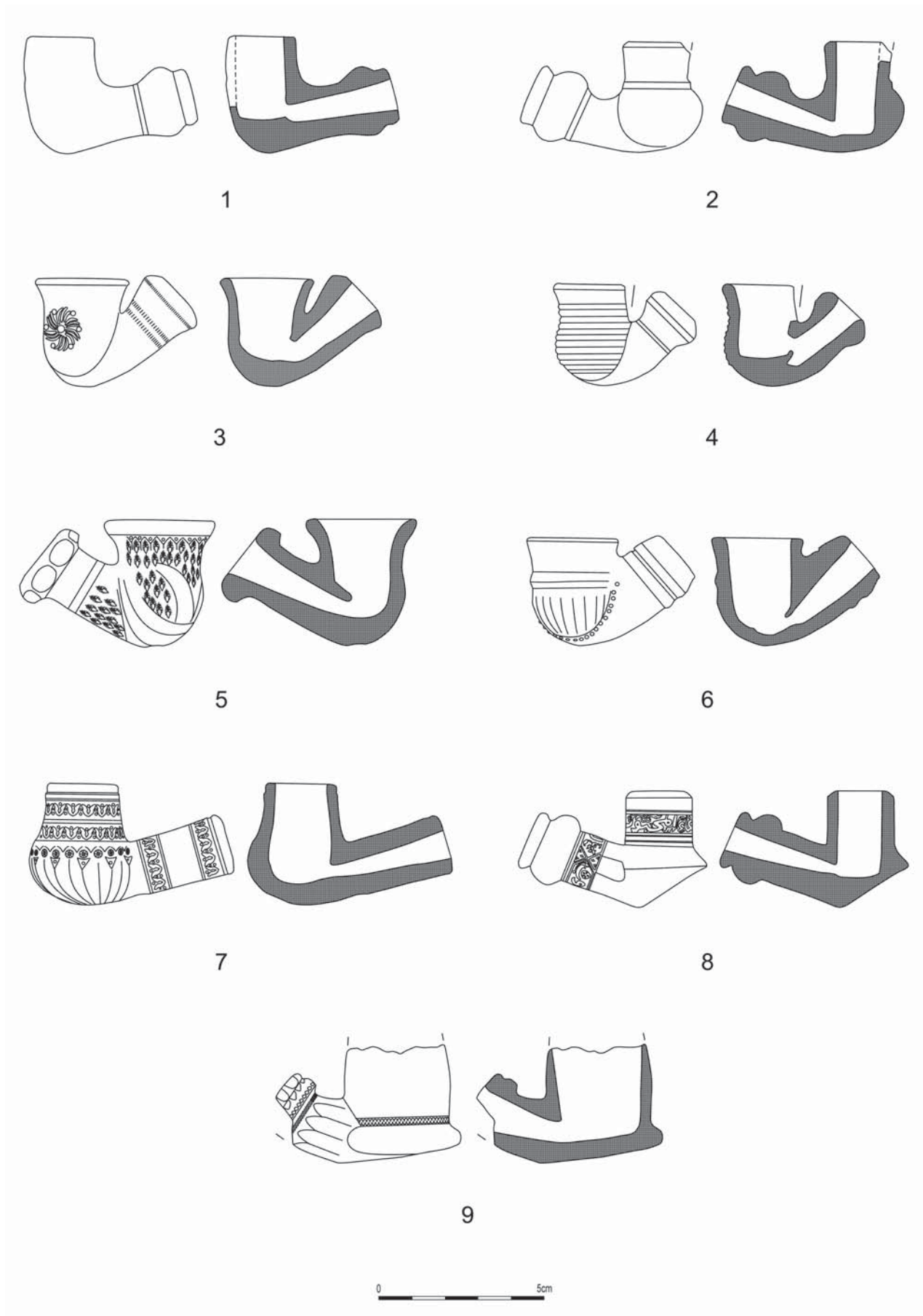


Figure 5: Ottoman tobacco pipes from the National Museum of History (drawing by Vladislav Todorov).

Having this in mind, it must be admitted that such items were produced around or after the liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottoman rule (1878).

Type VIII D

This type is distinguished by a hemispherical base of the cup and by a cylindrical rim. The socket has a circular cross-section and the socket end has no wreath. The pipes are made of red-brown clay and are abundantly decorated with engraved floral ornaments. At this stage of investigation, there is no comparable contextual information for reliably dating pipes of this type.

Type XI

The cup base of the pipes under this type represents a bi-conical body. The rim is cylindrical. The socket is octagonal in cross-section, the socket end is a combination of a torus and a bi-conical body. Pipes of this type were made of grey-black, white or beige clay. The decoration consists mainly of engraved geometric designs on the cup and the socket (Fig. 4, Type XI). An exception to this decorative pattern is the pipe from the NMH collection (Fig. 5, No. 8) – the pipe bears an inscription on its rim and socket. The

decorative inscription reads لقاء المحبوب وب [lika`u`l-mahhub vab] – ‘showing a beloved face’, which may be interpreted as “showing the face of God” (Fig. 6, No. 3).

Pipes of this type are found in the collection of the regional museum in Silistra (Todorov 2008, in press). As they were donated to the museum, there is no reliable context to facilitate precise dating. It should be mentioned that the example from the NMH collection also originates from Silistra. Another pipe with a similar shape and inscription is familiar from Belgrade, where it was dated from the second half of the seventeenth century (Bikić. 2003. 81, Tip XII/5).

The pipe represented in (Fig. 5, No. 9) is damaged and it does not enter the typology. Its outer surface is considerably damaged and its colour is non-descript. Nevertheless, it draws attention with its gold plating of which scarcely visible traces have been preserved. There is no contextual evidence to back up the precise dating of this example. A pipe of similar shape from Corinth was dated to the nineteenth century (Robinson 1985, Pl. 54, C 71). A scanty number of pipes with gilt, mostly Type XIV,

CATALOGUE – Figure 5 (opposite)

The tobacco pipes are arranged by the type they belong to. They are represented by the better preserved and undamaged side so that their shape and decoration are better seen. In order to avoid a certain subjectivity in describing the colours, the Munsell Soil Color Charts are used.

1. Inventory number 28039/30. Fragmented cup. Height 3.6cm. Length 5.2. Colour, non-descript. Type I. Found in Vidin. Seventeenth century.
2. Inventory number 28039/27. Fragmented cup. Height 3.4cm. Length 5.5. Colour GLEY 1, 4/N. Type IV. Found in Vidin. Most likely second half of the seventeenth century.
3. Inventory number 28039/45. Intact. Height 3.5cm. Length 4.9. Colour, non-descript. Type VIB. Found in Varna. Nineteenth century.
4. Inventory number 28039/39. Fragmented cup. Height 3.1cm. Length 4.3. Colour GLEY 1, 5/N. Type VIF. Found in Sofia. Most likely, nineteenth century.
5. Inventory number 28039/63. Intact. Height 3.9cm. Length 5.9. Colour Red (HUE 10R) 4/6. Stamp: يكتا [yekta] ‘single’, ‘unique’, ‘unmatched’. Type V4 Nineteenth century.
6. Inventory number 28039/33. Intact. Height 3.4cm. Length 5.1. Colour Reddish yellow (5YR) 7/8. Stamp: № 2. Type VIIIA. Found in Etropole. Most likely, late nineteenth century.
7. Inventory number 28039/71. Intact. Height 3.7cm. Length 6.1. Colour Red (HUE 2.5R) 5.8. Type VIIID. Found in Silistra.
8. Inventory number 28039/73. Fragmented cup. Height 3.6cm. Length 5.7. Colour GLAY 1, 7/10Y. Decoratively inscribed on the rim and the shank: لقاء المحبوب وب [lika`u`l-mahhub vab] – ‘showing a beloved face’. Type XI. Found in Silistra. Second half of the seventeenth century.
9. Inventory number 28039/75. Fragmented cup. Height 3.5cm. Length 5.6. Colour, non-descript. Traces of gilt on the cup. Unclassified. Most likely nineteenth century.

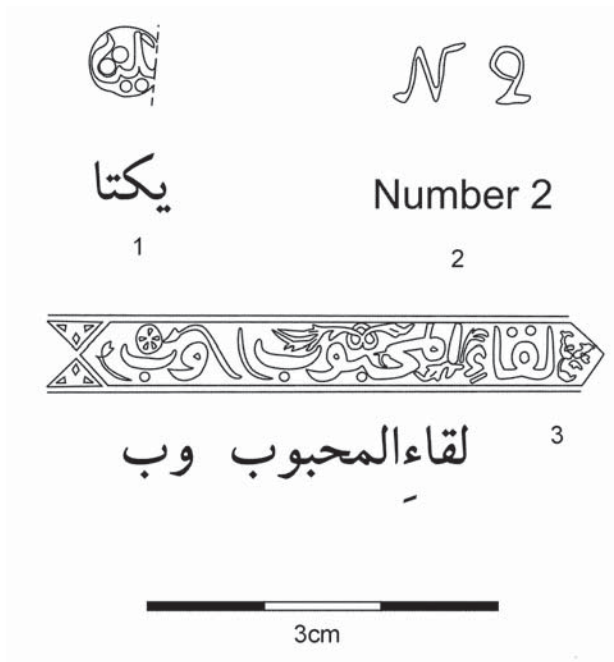


Figure 6: Stamps and inscriptions (drawing by Vladislav Todorov).

have been recorded in the museum collections in Varna and Silistra. They were dated from the nineteenth century.

Some of the tobacco pipes from the NMH collection discussed above allow not only to confirm the indications for a multitude of workshops in Sofia, Nish, Ruse, Odrin (Edirne), Lüle-Burgas where they were produced (Boué 1840, 108), they also suggest specific production apart from the traditional output of those ateliers. From this point of view particularly interesting are the pipes of type V.1.F, which up to now have been discovered in the Sofia region only and type XI, found mostly in the vicinity of Silistra. Other items, however, were obviously made in workshops, scattered all over the Ottoman Empire as exemplars of them have been found all over the territory of Bulgaria (types I and V, except V.1.F) and out of this country.

In conclusion, it should be said that the study of pipe production in the Bulgarian lands is only beginning, primarily because of a certain negligence concerning this kind of artefact. Collections of Ottoman tobacco pipes in Bulgaria have been established and enhanced for a couple of decades. Examining this specific material takes effort



Figure 7: Published clay pipe collections in Bulgaria (drawing by Vladislav Todorov).

and many years' work– the consequent target being a general concept on the production of clay pipes and the spread of this production within the present-day Bulgarian territories.

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