

19th century clay Chibouks made in Tophane

The Tophane district in Istanbul, Turkey was known for its high quality pottery made from deep red clay which was often decorated with gold and silver paint. The Turkish name for these products is: “*Tophane lüle*” which literally means “Tophane pipe”. This fact is easily explained since these items are always made by clay pipe makers.

The term chibouk or chibouque means: “A Turkish tobacco pipe with a long stem and a red clay bowl.” Originally the Turkish dialectal term <*çibuk*> means shoot, twig or staff which referred to the long wooden stem of the pipe.

A brief history.

It is uncertain when tobacco was first introduced in turkey. Turkish historians state either 1600 or 1606 as the earliest date. Another source claims that it was Genoan and Venician sailors who first brought it to Turkey in 1580. It is also unclear when the first clay pipes were made in the region; before or after the introduction of tobacco. It is probable that clay pipes were used before 1600 for smoking hash and opium but there is no direct evidence to support either possibility. What is certain is that after the introduction of the tobacco the clay pipe industry flourished. The number of clay pipe makers in Turkish cities grows steadily and one of the most famous ones is Lüleburgaz which means “pipe-burg”. Although Lüleburgaz is know for its many pipe makers and its export to Europe, Tophane is known for its refined and high quality pipes. At the height of the production there were ca. 60 pipe makers active in Tophane.



The Turkish coffee houses (pic. 1) played a mayor role in the spreading of smoking tobacco. It was very common to see a person enjoy his coffee and his pipe while socializing, and many people indulged in it both in the coffee houses and at home. Since protocol was an important issue in Turkish social life, it was normal in the houses of the Turkish upper class and royalty to have personnel specifically assigned to tasks concerning smoking such as pipe-bearer and pipe-lighter.

Smoking was not always seen as a favourable and healthy past time and many sultans prohibited smoking, in some cases even upon pain of death. One famous story is of a sultan who would walk the street looking for smokers. Anyone he found smoking would be beheaded. None of this could stop smoking from spreading and in the 19th century smoking was fully accepted. Not only men smoked, it was normal and acceptable for a woman to smoke as well although in this case more in the privacy of the house.

Turkish pipe makers dominated the Turkish market for a long time. This changed in the 2nd quarter of the 19th century. People still smoked as much as before but fashion in smoking had changed. Smokers more and more often preferred European manufactured pipes since they were considered more fashionable. The Turkish pipe makers couldn't compete with the low prices of the imported pipes and to compensate they started to produce small pottery objects. These items were made with the same high quality as the chibouks but public opinion was against them. The people preferred European products and the death blow came with the introduction of the cigarette which completely altered the tobacco was smoked. As a last resort the pipe makers started to make cigarette pipes but to no avail. In 1928 closed the last Turkish pipe maker his doors.

The production and decoration.

Tophane pipes were made from a fine, red pipe clay that was found in the Istanbul region. The engobe used to make the finishing was produced from the same clay. In simplified form, the process would be as following: the clay was mixed with water and a deflocculant (e.g. soda ash) and then put to rest. After 20 hours there would be a layer of sediment on the bottom of the container. The liquid above the sediment holds the engobe. Through vaporisation the mixture would become denser until it reaches a usable state. When applied to the pottery the engobe would be blended with water to create a more liquid mixture. This process is identical to the production of terra sigillata used on ancient roman pottery.

The chibouk is made from 2, sometimes 3, separately produced parts: the bowl, the stem and in some cases the disk. The pipe maker would make these parts of the pipe on a potter's wheel or in moulds after which the pipe was assembled using clay paste as a type of glue. The leather dry pipe was first "polished" with an agate after which it was decorated with carvings or stamps and left to dry. Once bone dry, the next step would be brushing the engobe onto the bowl using a soft brush, after which the pipe was left to dry again. This step could have been repeated several times to ensure a completely opaque coating. A single layer would result in a transparent coating but would not affect the final glossiness. As a final step, the pipe was polished with a cotton cloth which resulted in the high gloss finish that Tophane pottery is known for. Some pipes have a white pattern on the bowl which was accomplished by filling deep stamp marks with white clay paste. After the actual baking the pipe was finished with gold and silver painted highlights. In some cases gold leaf was used. It is possible to find pipes that are completely covered in silver, or in copper with a gold coloured tombak finish.

Some of the rarest pipes and pottery have silver inlay, and even though most of these products are black, some are known that have the typical red colour. Some people speculate that molten silver is poured in a pre-made stamp pattern after the baking of the pipe. Since the silver inlay partly consists of hair thin braided silver wire this is impossible. The silver components were made of thin silver sheets from which the various shapes were stamped. This means that when the hollow shapes were pushed into the leather dry clay, the movement of the underlying clay was minimal and there would be no "crater" rim around the decorations. The next steps involve again the agate and finally the engobe after which the pipe was polished. Only then was the pipe fired.

The pipe was fired at 725°C (cone 018), well below the melting temperature of silver (961.78 °C), which in combination with the pipe being bone dry resulted in no shrinkage. This means that the clay wouldn't crack because of the silver inlay. Due to the heat the silver would have been oxidised. This would be cleaned and then polished with a piece of cloth.

Black pipe were not made from black clay, but got their colour through a special process. For these pipes, the next step would be to place it straight from the oven in a lidded, woodchip filled barrel. The wood chips would start smouldering which created a dense black smoke. The hot clay

would take in the coal particles which resulted in a black pipe with the same surface quality as the red pipes.

Apart from the most conventional stamp decorations such as leaves, flowers and various roll mark patterns, the pipe makers also stamped text marks. The craftsmen were proud of their work and it is therefore not strange that most of their products were marked with their name in a round or oval stamp. Many of the pipe makers worked in assignment for sultans and in these cases we find the seal of this sultan on the object. These imperial seals, usually the largest ones on the pipe, are called *tughra*.

Making the stamps was a craft in itself. Many of the more renowned stamp makers demanded that their own mark was used on items that were decorated using stamps of their manufacture. A good example of this are the cups and saucers shown in pic.13, where on the cup one can see the marks of the pipe maker and the owner of the cup, and on the saucer the mark of the stamp maker. A last type of text marks on *Tophane lüle* are longer phrases; usually poetry, texts from the Koran or a motto. These marks were applied with a wheel or roll stamp. An example of a motto is the following text used by Kasim Hüsnu: “*Your fortune shall not be lost by ordering a pipe, so enjoy yourself by smoking.*”

Chibouks.

Since there has been very little literature written on this subject, it is difficult to make a clear distinction between clay pipes made in Turkey and those made in other nearby countries. Therefore, the pipes described in the following section are divided in “Tophane lüle” pipes and “Other pipes”. The reason to call the first group “Tophane lüle” is that since the product was very popular it is almost certain that pipe makers outside Tophane made similar products. Therefore it is in most cases very difficult to determine where the pipe was made. The second group consists of the pipes made in Turkey and the surrounding countries, but not made of *Tophane lüle*.

The basic chibouk consisted of 3 segments: the bowl, the stem and the mouthpiece.

The mouthpiece was made of a solid piece of amber, imported from the Baltic. These mouthpieces were significantly thicker than the ones that were used in Europe. The Europeans had the tips of the mouthpieces between the lips and teeth, but the chibouk mouthpieces were too big for this, they would rather be put to the lips. The mouthpieces for chibouks were similar to the ones used on Nargilehs or huqqa’s (water pipes) although these were detachable; each smoker would have his or her own mouthpiece. The mouthpieces for the chibouk were attached to the stem.

Traditionally the stem would be made of jasmine wood and the demand for these stems was so big that whole families lived off the production of jasmine. The normal stem would be around 40 cm. long and made of a single, straight piece of wood. Stems of 2 meters length are known, but these were made of several wood sections put together. Occasionally a smoker would carry around his private stem – the filled bowl could be rented in local coffee houses – which would be segmented in 20-30 cm. pieces and kept in a carry-case. The decoration on both the mouthpiece as the stem could be as elaborate as the owner could afford.

The clay chibouk bowl comes in many variations and giving a proper description of all known models would require a separate article or perhaps even a complete book. Instead, this chapter presents a series of chibouks in picture and description, to give an idea of the variety in models and decorations. The dimensions are in centimetres as length x height of the bowl x max. diameter of the bowl(!).



Pic. 2. Highly conical bowl mounted on a round dish. The stem is conical. The dish is decorated with a relief pattern of leaves on a background of "pinpricks". The stem has a simple roll mark pattern around the stem. The thinly walled bowl is decorated with a very fine white clay inlay. Details are accentuated with gold paint. The pipe is marked in Persian on the stem. Dim.: 11.5 x 4.75 x 5



Pic. 3. Highly conical bowl with a thick knob at the end of the straight stem. Floral stamp decoration, highlighted with gold and silver paint, is visible on the bowl. The bottom is marked with Persian and Roman script. Dim.: 7.3 x 4.3 x 4.5



Pic. 4. Cylindrical bowl with spherical bottom. The stem is connected with "rattail" joint. Stem is mainly cylindrical with a widening towards the end. There is a large pearl rim around the middle of the bowl and a simple pattern of stamps and roll marks. Some highlights in gold paint. Marked on the bottom: "Housny, Consple" (pic. 14.). The mark is both in Persian and roman writing. Dim.: 6.7 x 4.4 x 3.5



Pic. 5. Ovoid bowl with conical stem. The bowl has a heel shaped like a parrot's beak. The stem is conical. Stamp and roll mark pattern on both the bowl and the stem. Highlights are in gold and silver paint. Marked on the stem: "C. Fuchnel, Constantinople" (pic. 15) and "XXX" (pic. 33.), the last mark being the stamp maker's. The first mark is both in Persian and roman writing, the second only in Persian. Dim.: 6.9 x 4.6 x 2.8



Pic. 6. Cylindrical bowl, rounded at the bottom. Cylindrical stem with a knob at the end. This pipe has a strong resemblance to European pipes. Decorated with stamps and roll marks, highlighted with gold and silver paint. Marked on the bottom in Persian writing. The oval mark is from the pipe maker, the round mark is from the stamp maker (pic. 16). Dim.: 5.8 x 4.2 x 3.8



Pic. 7. Conical bowl mounted on a round dish. The stem is first conical but ends in a thick, elongated knob. Both the dish and the knob are ribbed. The chibouk is decorated on the stem, dish and bowl with silver inlay in the shape of flowers, leaves, wire and small granules. Unmarked. Dim.: 8.3 x 4.1 x 5.2



Pic. 8. Conical bowl mounted on a round dish, The stem is conical. The dish is shaped like the petals of a flower. Decorated with floral stamps and roll marks. On the front of the bowl is the *tughra* of Abdul Aziz (1861-1876), but instead of a stamp the pipe maker used a coin which created a negative imprint. Picture 17 shows the re-mirrored imprint and picture 18 shows a coin from the reign of Abdul Aziz. The decoration is highlighted with gold and silver paint. Marked on bottom; "Fuchez, Constantinople." (pic. 19.). The mark is both in Persian and roman writing. Dim.: 7.8 x 3.3 x 4.8



Pic. 9. Conical bowl mounted on a flower shaped dish. The slightly conical stem has 5 lobes around the end. The pipe is decorated with simple stamps and roll marks. Some sections of the chibouk are highlighted with gold paint. The remarkable feature on this chibouk is its narrow bowl opening which indicates that it was made as a cigarette pipe. Unmarked. Dim. 6.7 x 3.3 x 3.4



Pic. 10. Stubby bowl with a spherical base and an extended rim. The stem is short and ends in a knob. The bowl is decorated with tiny stamp marks and a roll mark pattern. Highlights in gold paint. The relatively crude nature of this pipe could indicate that this is an early example of tophane ware pipes. This pipe is unmarked. Dim. 5.9 x 3.6 x 3.6



Pic. 11. Conical bowl mounted on a flat dish. The stem is slightly conical. The rim of the dish is ribbed and decorated with a roll mark pattern, as is the stem. Highlights are executed in gold paint. Strangely enough this very elegant and high quality pipe is unmarked. Dim. 7.3 x 4.1 x 3.9



Pic. 12. Conical bowl mounted on a rather thick dish. The stem is conical. The bowl and dish have a decoration that resembles ropes wound around the bowl. The stem has the traditional roll mark pattern with flowers and leaves. This pipe is marked with a small oval stamp with Persian writing. Dim. 9.4 x 4.4 x 5.3



Pic. 13. Nargileh or huqqa bowl made of tophane clay. The conical bowl is mounted on a flower shaped dish. The conical stem is aligned with the bowl. The bowl has a pearl-rim and stamp mark decorations. Sections of the bowl have been highlighted with gold paint. The stem has grooves which would accommodate the rope that would make the connection to the nargileh base air tight. The inside of the bowl is rather shallow. There are 6 smoke channels in the bottom of the bowl. Unmarked. Dim. 7 x 7



Pic. 14. Set of 2 cups and saucers made of lüle clay. These cups were part of a larger set which also contained a coffee pot, sugar bowl and tray. The cups have extremely thin walls and an elegant rounded shape. The saucer is rather thick in comparison. The colour of these cups is a reddish brown. The cups are marked with 3 stamps. The largest one is a *tughra* (Mahmud?, 1808-1839, pic. 20) with directly under it the stamp of the pipe maker (Housny Consple, pic. 14). The stamp maker has his mark (pic. 21) both on the bottom of the cup as well as the centre of the saucer. The cups and saucers have matching decorations of stamps and roll marks. Details are highlighted in gold and silver paint. Dim. H=4. D=6 (cup) H=1 D=8.5 (saucer).

Marks.

The pipe maker's marks we find on Tophane lüle can be divided in 2 groups; those who use only Persian writing and those who use bilingual -Turkish/French- marks. Pipe makers such as Hamdy, Hüsnu and Fucher used the second type of marks to make their pottery more recognizable for the French market which was their main export market. These pipe makers went so far as to put the French equivalent of their name on the mark: Hüsnu became Housny. Finding a mark of a pipe maker does not necessarily mean that the object is made by this person. Especially the mark "Foucher Constantinople" (Pic. 19) has a long history. The original Foucher worked in the 3rd quarter of the 19th century while the mark was used until the early 20th my pipe maker Ömer who was incidentally also the last master pipe maker in Tophane, he closed his shop in 1928. The result is that this mark has been in use for more then 60 years on products of various qualities.



Pic. 15. Pipe makers mark used by Kazim Hüsni. The text on the mark is “Housny Consple” and “Hüsni” in Persian writing.



Pic. 16. Pipe makers mark with the text: “G. Fucnel Constantinople” and the name in Persian writing.



Pic. 17. Marks from the pipe in picture 6. The larger oval mark is from the pipe maker while the smaller round mark is from the stamp maker. Both marks are in Persian writing.



Pic. 18. Inversed picture from the *tughra* on the pipe depicted in picture 8.



Pic. 19. Coin, Abdul Aziz (1861-1876) Qustantiniyah mint, 5 para.



Pic. 20. Pipe makers mark with the text: “Fouchez Constantinople” and the name in Persian writing.



Pic. 21. *Tughra* mark from the cups in pic. 13.



Pic. 22. Mark from the stamp maker found on the cups in pic. 13.

One of the biggest problems one encounters researching this subject is the language barrier since most of the few publications on *Tophane lüle* are written in Turkish. Although parts of the Tophane pipe history are known, it is clear that there are still many blank spots that leave plenty of room for research. Hopefully this article will incentivate other collectors to continue where this article stopped.

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