

...AND YET ANOTHER PECTORAL OF PYAY

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ABSTRACT: In 2011, Claude Laroche was able to establish relation between three pectorals of Pyay kept in the collections of three different European museums. He proved that the objects served in the modern times as patterns for one another and established a sequence in which they were made. Another copy belonging to the group was identified in the collections of the Buchlov Castle, South Moravian Region in the Czech Republic. The Buchlov piece is significantly diverging from the others in its form and decoration of the recto. The text of the initial parts of Chapter 30B of the *Book of the Dead* on the verso of the Buchlov specimen was compared with corresponding texts from the other pieces by the means of paleographic analysis. Based on its results, it was possible to ascertain its position in Laroche's sequence of the copies of the pectoral of Pyay.

KEYWORDS: pectoral of Pyay – Buchlov Castle – collecting – copying of antiquities – *Book of the Dead* – paleography

Peut-être aurons-nous la surprise de découvrir, lors d'études ultérieures, un quatrième pectoral de Pyay dans un musée européen ou américain.²

Introduction

In his study titled *Les destinées des pectoraux de Pyay, scribe du Livre du dieu et scribe de la Maison de vie*, Claude Laroche assembled information on three pectorals inscribed for the scribe named Pyay kept in the collections of the British Museum in London (Inv. No. EA 7858), Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (Inv. No. ÄS 2002), and Le Louvre in Paris (unknown Inv. No.), and established mutual relations among them.³

The British Museum acquired its specimen [Fig. 3a] from William Hamilton (1730–1803), the British envoy to the Kingdom of Naples and the Two Sicilies between 1764–1798, together with a set of Greek vases in 1772.⁴ The Viennese pectoral [Fig. 3b] was first published in 1824 in the catalogue of scarabs kept in the Austrian imperial collections titled *Scarabées égyptiens figurés du Musée des Antiques de Sa Majesté l'Empereur* by Anton von Steinbüchel (1790–1883).⁵ Hence, the year 1824 represents the date *ante quem* for the presence of the piece in the imperial collections. Details concerning the

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2 Laroche 2011, p. 31.

3 Laroche 2011.

4 Cf. Jenkins and Sloane 1996, p. 204, no. 102.

5 von Steinbüchel 1824, Pl. I, 2.b.

piece's arrival in Vienna are unknown. No provenance information is available about the pectoral [Fig. 3c] in the collections of Le Louvre.⁶

Relying mainly on paleographic analyses, Laroche managed to arrange the three pectorals into a sequence in which they were copied from one another. He identified the London piece as a genuine ancient Egyptian object which served as a pattern to produce the Vienna piece. Indeed, they are a close match to each other. According to Laroche, the Vienna piece later served as a pattern for the Paris pectoral, which shows significant paleographic divergences from both the London and Vienna pieces.⁷

The present writers are inclined to dispute the genuineness of the London piece which itself could well be a copy of a yet unknown and unidentified original. Their assumption is based on the rendering of figures of the goddesses Isis and Nephthys on the recto of the pectoral, as well as the rather cursive, stylised, and imperfect hieroglyphic inscriptions on the recto.

Claude Laroche has recently managed to prove the above-mentioned prediction to be correct by identifying another, fourth, copy belonging to the group.⁸ It was not the last one and yet another pectoral of Pyay [Figs. 1–2] was indeed discovered in the collections of the State Castle Buchlov, South Moravian region in the Czech Republic. The piece forms one part of extensive collections assembled by the Counts of Berchtold which *inter alia* contained genuine Egyptian antiquities, their imitations, Egypt-inspired freemasonry objects, and other antiquities.⁹

The Buchlov plaque

The Buchlov copy (Inv. No. BU04624) of the pectoral was first identified in the Buchlov collections by Pavel Onderka in the early 2002. The piece was then published by Hana Navrátilová along with other pseudo-Egyptian antiquities kept in the castle's collections in 2003.¹⁰ The piece was re-analyzed within the preparation of the publication of Egyptian and pseudo-Egyptian antiquities kept in the collections of the Buchlov castle carried out by the present authors.

In Egyptian archaeology, pectorals were objects in the form of smaller-sized plaques worn over the chest and suspended by a string or a chain around one's neck. Their iconographical representations have been recognised since the very beginning of the pharaonic history. Since the New Kingdom, pectorals were also found placed on the mummies of the deceased as funerary amulets associated with the belief of resurrection.¹¹

The Buchlov specimen significantly differs from the other three pectorals, as its form was reduced to a flat plaque made from black stone and engraved in the low relief on both sides. While the size of the tablet roughly corresponds to the other three specimens, the ratio of its sides differs.

In the case of the pectorals, the London, Vienna, and Paris specimens' recto was decorated with a scarab, symbolising the rising sun. On either side of the scarab

6 Laroche 2011, p. 26.

7 For the palaeographical analyses see Laroche 2011, pp. 26–30.

8 Claude Laroche, *personal communication*.

9 Onderka 2005.

10 Navrátilová 2003.

11 For more see Feucht 1971

representing the young sun god Khepri, figures of Isis and Nephthys in jubilation were placed. On the Buchlov plaque this motif is replaced on the recto by an engraving of a beast identified as a Chinese (or Japanese) dragon [Fig. 1].¹²

The decoration of the verso was dominated by the depiction of the oval-shaped bottom of a heart scarab, placed opposite the scarab on recto, inscribed with the initial parts of Chapter 30B of the *Book of the Dead*. The text is organised into five lines. Above the scarab base, pairs of *nefer*-signs and *udjat* eyes are depicted. The space under the base is filled with a large *dju*-sign, representing the Netherworld lands. Two columns and one line of hieroglyphic texts are placed on both sides and on the top of the object, respectively [Fig. 2].

The texts read:

Top: *wsjr sš md3.t ntr n nb t3.wy pyj3y m^c3-hrw*

Right: *htp b3=k m hr.t-ntr wsjr sš md3.t ntr pyj3y*

Left: *pr b3=k m ^cnh wsjr sš pr-^cnh pyj3y*

Scarab: *dd mdw jn wsjr*

pyi3y dd=fjb(=j)

n=j jb(=j) n mw.t(=j) h3ty(=j) n hpr.w(=j)

jmy(=k) ^ch^c r=j m mtrw

m hsf r(=j)

Top: Osiris, the scribe of the divine book of the lord of two lands, Pyay, justified.

Right: May your *ba* rest in the necropolis, O, Osiris, scribe of the divine book, Pyay.

Left: May your *ba* depart to life, O, Osiris, scribe of the house of life, Pyay.

Scarab: Speech uttered by Osiris

Pyay (who) says: My heart

for me! My heart from my mother! My heart of my different forms!

You should not stand in witness against me,

in hostility against me!

The pectorals in the three museums were generally considered as original objects. They were traditionally dated to the 19th Dynasty (ca. 1292–1189 BCE),¹³ based on similar looking parallels and the name of the deceased which is believed to have been in use primarily during the New Kingdom.¹⁴

12 Adéla Tůmová, *personal communication*. The depiction could be inspired by a Chinese (or Japanese) dragon. The dragon has a long serpentine body covered with simplified scales; it has only three limbs with four claws depicted; the head, highly detailed in Chinese works, is in this case very simplified. Such depictions of dragons of European origin took inspiration from Chinese textile, dragon robes in particular. See *inter alia* Heroldová 2016.

13 Satzinger 1994; Seipel 1994.

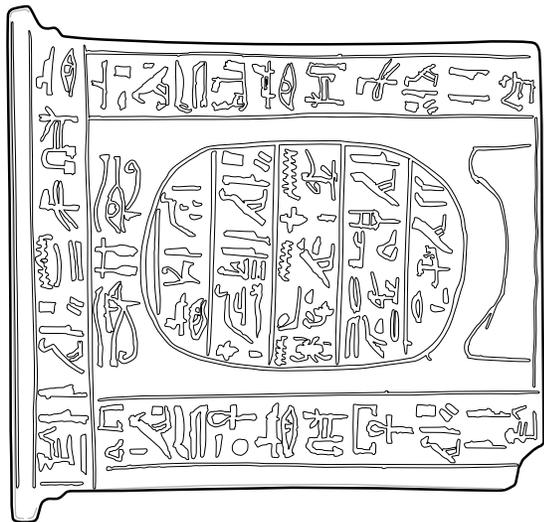
14 Ranke 1935, no. 129.25.

Fig. 1. Stone plaque from the collections of the Buchlov Castle, Inv. No. BU04624, recto.

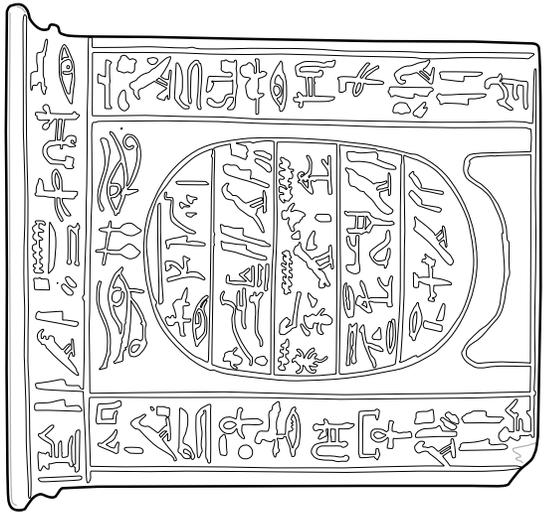


Fig. 2. Stone plaque from the collections of the Buchlov Castle, Inv. No. BU04624, verso.

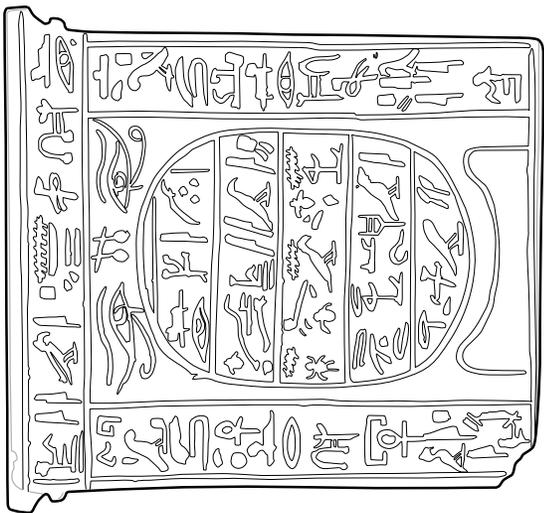




(a)



(b)



(c)

Fig. 3. Drawing of the verso of the pectorals kept in (a) the British Museum in London, Inv. No. EA 7858; (b) Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, Inv. No. ÄS 2002; (c) Le Louvre in Paris, unknown Inv. No. (Illustration: VlastimilVrtal).

Comparison to other pectorals

As to ascertain its relation to three other similar exemplars, the London, Vienna, and Paris pieces [Fig. 3],¹⁵ the Buchlov plaque was closely examined and compared to them. As the shape of the Buchlov object was simplified in comparison to the three other pieces, the individual features of its underside decoration needed to be more crammed, notably the *udjat* eyes had to be moved more to the corner between the upper line and the two columns of text. Such simplification and alteration of the original form and composition of the pectoral shows that the Buchlov piece could not have preceded any of the other pectorals in their hypothetical pedigree.

As elaborated by Laroche, the copies of the pectoral of Pyay originated not all from one master but from consecutive episodes of replication progressing from the London pectoral to the Vienna piece and only then to the Paris exemplar.¹⁶ Given that, it was desirable to determine the exact position of the Buchlov piece in the hypothetical pedigree of these pectorals. This was possible to achieve through the palaeographical analysis of the texts inscribed on the piece. Analogical features on the ones analysed by Laroche and several more were selected for close examination. Their likenesses were compared to the other specimens and to what degree was established. All selected features on the pieces from London, Vienna, and Paris were estimated as ‘similar’ (■), ‘dissimilar but possibly serving as pattern’ (□), or ‘dissimilar without the possibility of serving as pattern’ (×) to the Buchlov piece [Tab. 1].

| Feature | London | Vienna | Paris |
|---|--|--|--|
| Center, a pair of <i>udjat</i> eyes | □ | ■ | ■ |
| Center, line 2: sign Z4 | ■ | □ | □ |
| Center, line 3: sign F4 (<i>h3t</i>) | □ | ■ | × |
| Center, line 3: sign L1 (<i>hpr</i>) | □ | ■ | ■ |
| Center, line 4: sign P6 (<i>ʕhʕ</i>) | ■ | ■ | □ |
| Center, line 4: sign D54 (<i>jw</i>) | □ | ■ | × |
| Center, line 4: sign G17 (<i>m</i>) | □ | ■ | □ |
| Center, line 5: sign U35 (<i>hsf</i>) | □ | ■ | ■ |
| Right, sign G29 (<i>b3</i>) | ■ | □ | × |
| Right, sign V31 (<i>k</i>) | □ | ■ | × |
| Right, sign R10 (<i>hr.t ntr</i>) | □ | ■ | ■ |
| Left, sign G29 (<i>b3</i>) | □ | □ | □ |
| Left sign V31 (<i>k</i>) | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| Left, sign N35 (<i>n</i>) | □ | ■ | ■ |
| Summary | <p style="text-align: center;">■■■</p> <p style="text-align: center;">□□□□□□□□□□</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■</p> <p style="text-align: center;">□□□</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">■■■■■■■</p> <p style="text-align: center;">□□□□</p> <p style="text-align: center;">××××</p> |

Tab. 1. Comparison of selected features of the three other copies of the pectoral of Pyay in regard to the Buchlov plaque; ■ - ‘similar’, □ - ‘dissimilar but possibly serving as pattern’, × - ‘dissimilar without the possibility of serving as pattern’.

15 The copy most recently identified by Laroche is excluded from the following analysis as in fact it has no bearing for its results.

16 Laroche 2011, pp. 29–31.

As noted by Laroche, the individual signs of the London pectoral are, in general, better executed – even though stylised in nature – featuring details missing from the following copies. The Buchlov piece does not preserve any of the details of the signs dropped by the Vienna and Paris pieces and the only notable similarity appearing exclusively between the London and Buchlov specimens is the rendering of the *ba*-bird sign in the right column, its head and beak in particular. On the Paris pectoral several signs are rendered in a form reduced in such a way that it would be virtually impossible for them to serve as patterns for those inscribed to the Buchlov piece. Moreover, there are no features on it there showing any closer likeness to Paris exemplar than to the piece from Vienna. On the whole, the features rendered in the closest degree of similarity to the Buchlov piece appeared most often in the Vienna exemplar.

The close relation of the Buchlov plaque to the Vienna piece seems certain and it could very well serve as the former's pattern. Less likely the Buchov pectoral could represent a closely related sister object to the Vienna pectoral (possibly inscribed by the same hand). However, the stark difference in shape and composition of the object suggest otherwise. On the other hand, it is certain that the Paris piece did not serve as a master to the pectoral from Buchlov.

Discussion and conclusions

The Buchlov copy of the pectoral of Pyay is one of a dozen of plaques bearing stylised depictions of Egyptian religious scenes and hieroglyphic text in the castle's collections. Like the pectoral of Pyay, some of the texts may be translated and scenes identified amongst the general repertoire found on pieces of funerary equipment, albeit with a degree of difficulty and uncertainty. The pectoral as well as other parts of the Buchlov collection attest to a wider scheme of reproducing ancient Egyptian monuments in the decades before and after the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs in 1822.

The distribution of different versions of the pectoral of Pyay around relatively distant parts of Europe point to a vivid cultural exchange amongst the intellectual elites in the given period.

Unfortunately, the records of the Buchlov castle do not provide information concerning the provenance of the pieces. One does not even know with which Count of Berchtold these pieces should be associated, as several members of the family visited Egypt personally or encountered the pharaonic antiquities on their travels across Europe and the Mediterranean: Leopold I (1759–1809) travelled extensively across Europe (including Naples, London, Vienna, and Paris) and North Africa (including Egypt) in the 1780s and 1790s. His younger step-brother, Bedřich Všemír (Friedrich; 1781–1876), visited Egypt in 1842. Both brothers were members of a number of learned societies across Europe and maintained international academic contracts. Sigismund I, son of Lepold I (1799–1869), established a museum at the Buchlov castle for which he and his family purchased antiquities at sales exhibitions and fairs and from dealers.

The present authors assume that the original pectoral of Pyay or its copy (*original master*) was present in Italy during the second half of the 18th century. A copy, or rather copies, of the master (*generation A*) was produced in Italy, where William Hamilton acquired his specimen, which he sold to the British Museum in 1772. Hamilton's piece or another replica belonging to *generation A* served as a master for production of the Vienna pectoral, belonging to *generation B*. The place of production is difficult

to confirm as the replicas had already begun to spread across Europe. A specimen belonging to *generation B* served as a master for another copying episodes (*generation C*) represented by the Paris piece. The examination of the Buchlov piece indicates that it belongs in all probability to *generation C* but represents another series of copies. However, considering only the texts it could also belong to *generation B* and could have possibly been produced by the same person or workshop as the Vienna piece. This assumption may be corroborated also by the close proximity of Buchlov castle to Vienna, as both collections could have similar sources. As also the other objects in the Buchlov collection came from Italy, it seems to be likely also in the case of the Pectoral of Pyay. This would suggest that at least some pectorals of *generation B* or *generation C* were still produced in Italy.

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