

THE BUCHLOV COPY OF THE RELIEF OF NECTANEBO FROM BOLOGNA

Pavel Onderka – Jiří Honzl¹

ABSTRACT: The Buchlov Castle holds in its collection several stone tablets decorated with pseudo-Egyptian scenes and pseudo-hieroglyphic texts. The largest piece represents a simplified and supplemented copy of the relief of King Nectanebo I of the Thirtieth Dynasty (380–343 BCE) from the collections of the Municipal Archaeological Museum in Bologna. The Bologna relief served as the primary model, complemented by antiquarian works such as Kircher's *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* and Herwart's *Thesaurus Hieroglyphicorum*. The tablets exemplify early modern engagement with Egyptian monuments, combining faithful copying with creative reinterpretation and speculative attempts at deciphering hieroglyphs.

KEYWORDS: pseudo-hieroglyphic texts – Bologna – relief of Nectanebo I – Buchlov – Leopold I Berchtold – Athanasius Kirchner – Hans Georg Herwart von Hohenburg

Introduction

The Buchlov State Castle, located in the Chřiby Hills of eastern Moravia, was owned between 1798 and 1945 by the Counts of Berchtold von und zu Ungarschitz. The castle houses an intriguing collection of Egyptian antiquities and pseudo-Egyptian objects.

The Egyptian antiquities were donated to Sigismund I von Berchtold (1799–1869) by his uncle, university professor Friedrich von Berchtold (1781–1876), and his brother-in-law Josef Wratislav von Mitrowitz (1810–1869) following their return from a journey to Egypt and the Middle East in 1841–1842. The collection currently includes the mummy of Nefersobek in her coffin from the Late Period, a shabti of the High Priest of Ptah Pahemnetjer from the reign of Ramesses II, and several minor antiquities.

Apart from genuine antiquities the castle also hosts an extraordinary collection of stone tablets decorated with pseudo-Egyptian depictions and pseudo-hieroglyphic texts.² In at least two instances, the tablets replicate contents of known original ancient Egyptian antiquities, whilst in at least two other cases, such a method appears highly probable; however, the masters from which they were copied have not yet been identified. Their compositions in general, and the texts in particular, clearly demonstrate adherence to a single principal model.

Little is known about the provenance of the pieces. It is, however, well established that Leopold I, Count Berchtold (1759–1809), developed an interest in ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs and travelled to Egypt in the early 1790s. His younger stepbrother, Bedřich Všemír Berchtold (1781–1870), followed in his footsteps almost fifty years later, undertaking a journey to Egypt in 1841–1842 as part of a group of Bohemian and Moravian noblemen, amongst whom was Josef Wratislav von Mitrowitz (1810–1869).

¹ Contacts: Pavel Onderka & Jiří Honzl, National Museum – Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Ancient Near East and Africa Collection, Prague, Czech Republic; e-mail: pavel.underka@nm.cz, jiri.honzl@nm.cz. The present work was financially supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic (DKRVO 2024–2028/18.I.b). The authors would like to thank Dr. Daniela Picchi for her assistance with preparation of this paper.

² Navrátilová 2003.

The objects in question, however, appear to have been produced in Europe – most likely in Italy – where the manufacture of such imitations is well documented. The Counts of Berchtold were also active collectors of antiquities and works of art in both Central and Western Europe, which may explain how the pieces entered their collection. These objects are often associated with the fact that the Counts of Berchtold were Freemasons.

The first identified replica in the collection is the tablet Inv. No. BU 4624, verso, which represents an artless copy of the lower side of the pectoral of Pyay.³ The other instance is the biggest tablet in the set, Inv. No. BU 4621 (referred to as β),⁴ which represents a simplified copy of the famous relief of King Nectanebo I (Greek version of the name; Egyptian names: King of Upper and Lower Egypt Kheperkare, Son of Re Nakhtnebef; the founder of the Thirtieth Dynasty, who reigned 380–361 BCE), currently kept in the Municipal Archaeological Museum of Bologna, Inv. No. EG 1870 (referred to as α).⁵ For both pieces mentioned, more replicas are known. For example, the Municipal Archaeological Museum of Bologna itself keeps an interesting replica of the Nectanebo I relief (Inv. No. EG 3707).⁶

The Nectanebo relief originates from an inter-columnar screen wall (*sbḥ.t* in ancient Egyptian) of a temple of the solar god Atum at Heliopolis. It was made of dolerite, a material close to basalt and gabbro.⁷ The piece had already left Egypt in ancient times. It was taken to Rome sometime during the Roman Imperial Period (27 BCE – 476 CE). It was rediscovered on the Aventine Hill in 1709. In the mid-18th century, Pope Benedict XIV (1675–1758; pontiff 1740–1758) donated the piece to the Institute of Science in Bologna, as part of a larger set of antiquities.⁸

Description of the original (Bologna, Inv. No. EG 1870) [Figs. 1–2]

The decoration of the Bologna relief may be divided into three parts: [1] the upper horizontal line of a hieroglyphic text running from left to right, [2] four (preserved) scenes of King Nectanebo bringing an offering to demons,⁹ accompanied by hieroglyphic texts above the scenes organised into columns with the king's titulary on the left and description of reciprocal performances on the part of the demons on the right, and [3] the bottom edge decorated with palace façade patterns, the so-called *serekhs*.

Upper horizontal line (α.1)

The upper horizontal line is only fragmentarily preserved and has been taken out of a broader context. The text itself refers to the gatekeepers depicted in the scenes at the centre of the relief. It further mentions the Great Temple (*ḥw.t-ꜥꜣ.t*), i.e., the temple of the god Atum in Heliopolis, thereby clearly indicating the provenance of the relief.

[...] *m bḥn ḏj.n nsw.t jr.jw-ꜥꜣ=s n-ḥr=sn wꜥ-nb ḥr zꜣ.w=f m ḥw.t-ꜥꜣ(t)* [...]

[...] in the *bekhen* stone (i.e., *greywacke*) which the king gave to its gatekeepers before them, each one, at his protection in the Great Temple (i.e., *the temple in Heliopolis*) [...]

³ Onderka – Honzl 2022.

⁴ Onderka 2024, pp. 28–29.

⁵ Bresciani 1975, pp. 71–72, Tav. 47; Kminek-Szedlo 1895, pp. 165–166; Roulet 1972, p. 59 (with further references).

⁶ Picchi 2022.

⁷ James 1988, pp. 11–13.

⁸ Bresciani 1975, p. 71.

⁹ Vuilleumier 2022, pp. 797–798.



Fig. 1. The Bologna relief of Nectanebo I; Municipal Archaeological Museum of Bologna, Inv. No. EG 1870.
(©Municipal Archaeological Museum of Bologna).

[...] *jw=sn jr.t hn.wt=sn m j3.t wd3.t j3.t* [...]

[...] while they do their service in the place of judgement and the place of [...]

*Titulary of Nectanebo I*¹⁰

In the second to fourth scenes (α.S2–α.S4), an extensive titulary of King Nectanebo I, including his Horus name, *nomen*, and *prenomen*, is repeatedly given. One may observe an alteration between two versions of the titulary in the scenes. Whilst in the second and fourth scenes (α.S2 and α.S4), the royal title ‘King of Upper and Lower Egypt’ followed by the king’s *prenomen* Kheperkare is inscribed into the gate of the *serekh*, the same royal title is followed by the king’s *nomen* Nakhtnebef in the third scene (α.S3). Another difference may be found in the epithets inscribed in the horizontal lines at the end of the titulary. Whilst the second and fourth scenes (α.2 and α.4) read ‘given life, stability, dominion and joy like Ra forever’; the word ‘joy’ is replaced by ‘health’ in the third scene (α.3).

¹⁰ Leprohon 2013, pp. 171–172.

It is provided here and will not be repeated in the individual scenes:

hrw tmz-ꜥ nswt-bjty hpr-k3-rꜥ (or *nht-nb=f*)

Horus, Tjemaa (*i.e.*, ‘The Sturdy-Armed One’)

King of Upper and Lower Egypt Kheperkare (or Nakhtnebef; *cf below*)

ntr-nfr nb t3.wy hpr-k3-rꜥ

The perfect god, Lord of Two Lands, Kheperkare (*i.e.*, ‘The Manifestation of the ka of Ra’)

s3 rꜥ nb ht.w nht-nb=f

Son of Ra, Lord of Appearances, Nakhtnebef (*i.e.*, ‘Strong is His Lord’)

dj ꜥnh dd w3s 3w.t-jb (or *snb*) *mj rꜥ d.t*

Given life, stability, dominion, and health like Ra forever.

Scene 1 (α.S1)

Only the left part of the scene is preserved. The scene probably originally depicted a kneeling King Nectanebo bringing an offering to the lion reclining on a pedestal. No caption giving the feline’s name, accompanies its depiction (at least in the preserved part of the scene). The three columns on the right of the original scene (α.2–4) read as follows:

α.2 *dj=j h3(.w)-nbw snd n šf.yt=k,*

I give (you) the islanders fearful of your majesty!

α.3 *nr=k phr t3.w h3s.wt*

The fear of you goes around lands and foreign lands!

α.4 *hr.yt=k m jb=sn*

The dread of you is in their heart!

Scene 2 (α.S2)

The kneeling King Nectanebo I presents a necklace to the guardian with three snakes in place of the head, who kneels on a pedestal and holds a knife. The caption in front of his heads gives the guardian’s name ‘numerous of Faces’ (ꜥš3-hr.w; α.S2).¹¹ Two columns of text above his heads (α.8–9) read as follows:

α.8 *dj.n(=j) n=k jmnt.t j3b.t h3b n b3.w=k*

I gave to you the West and the East, with them bowing before your power!

α.9 *jj=sn m ks(.w) r-hft hr=k*

They come in bowing in front of your face.

¹¹ LÄGG II, pp. 218–219; Vuilleumier 2022, p. 789.

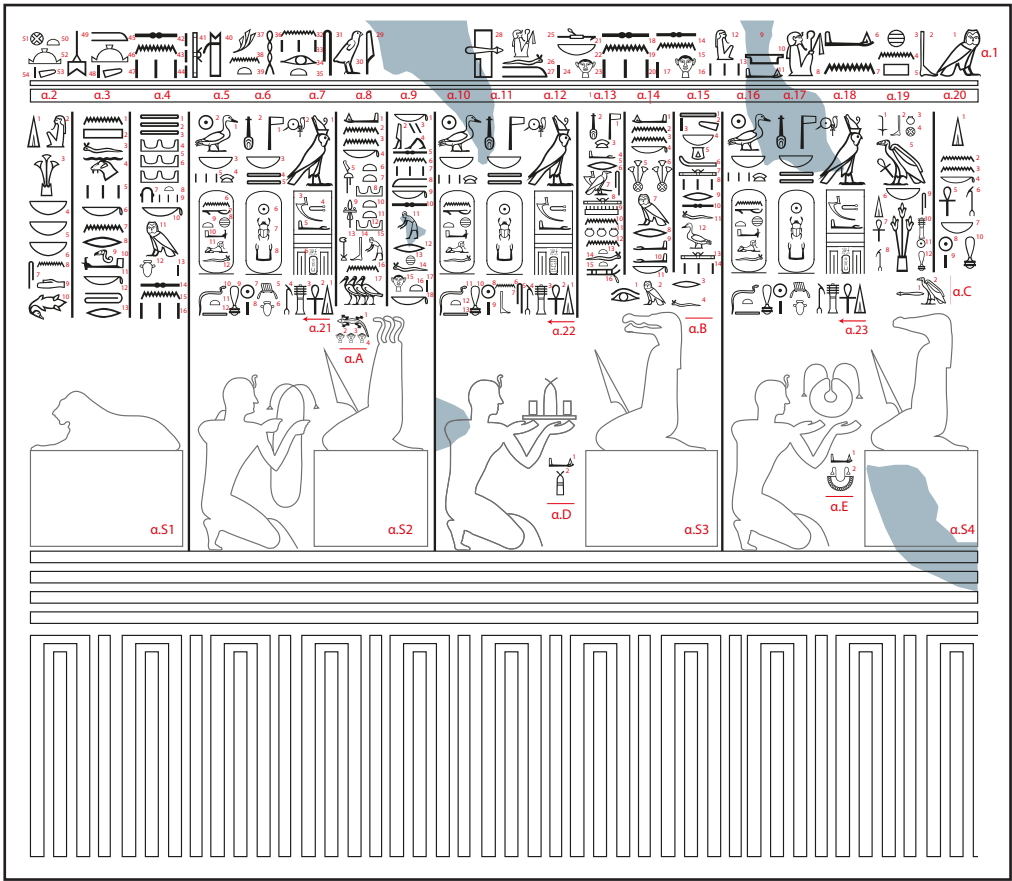


Fig. 2. The drawing and transcription of the Bologna relief of Nectanebo I. (Drawing: Pavel Onderka).

Scene 3 (α.S3)

The kneeling King Nectanebo ‘gives a cult object’ (*dj* ‘*pr*’) to the guardian with a crocodile head with open mouth who kneels on a pedestal and holds a knife. The caption above his head gives the guardian’s name ‘Who Is Nice with His Mouth’ (*n-m-r3=f*; α.S3).¹²

- α.13 *nṯr nfr ḥꜥ r sm3(wj) mnw n (j)t=(f) jtm*
The perfect god appeared to renew monuments for his father Atum
- α.14 *dj.n(=j) n=k šmꜥw mḥw m-r ꜥ.wj=k*
I gave to you the Upper and Lower Egypt into your hands!
- α.15 *t3 nb ḥr^{HH} ḥw.w rsf.w*
Every land has food and catch!

¹² LÄGG I, 426; Vuilleumier 2022, p. 790.

¹³ Two similar signs are interchanged here; jar stand sign (Gardiner’s list W11) is used instead of butcher’s block sign (T28).

Scene 4 (α.S4)

The kneeling King Nectanebo ‘gives a broad collar’ (*dj wsh*) to the guardian with a crocodile head with closed mouth who kneels on a pedestal and holds a knife. The caption above his head gives the guardian’s name ‘Great of Terror’ (*ʕz-nrw*; α.S4).¹⁴ Above the caption with the name of the demon are two columns of text. The first one (α.14) contains a representation of the vulture goddess Nekhbet, standing on a *neb*-sign located over a papyrus plant, with her given name epithets inscribed over her head and under her feet, respectively:

α.19 *nḥb.t dj ʕnh wʕs s(nb) dd mj rʕ*
Nekhbet, giving life, dominion, health, and stability like Re

α.20 *dj.n-j n-k ʕnh wʕs nb mj rʕ*
I gave to you all life and dominion like Re.

Description of the Buchlov Tablet [Figs. 3–4]

The Buchlov Tablet preserves the general structural concept and arrangement of the Bologna relief. In contrast to the original, however, it omits the lower border decorated with palace-façade motifs. In the Buchlov piece, the text columns are clearly set apart from the figural scenes by means of a vertical divider.

The newly created composition reveals a distinctly rigid division of the surface: each scene is accompanied by precisely three columns of text. The figures of King Nectanebo in the second to fourth scenes were deliberately omitted, most likely owing to spatial constraints and technical difficulty of the execution. The reclining lion motif was replaced by a pyramid set upon a rectangular base with a doorway.

In the pseudo-text, the royal titularies are largely absent. Nevertheless, a certain degree of regularity is observed in the recurrent placement of stylised cartouches and *serekhs* across the columns. The arrangement of (pseudo-)signs into square fields is, for the most part, consistently maintained.

Although a substantial portion of the Buchlov Tablet’s contents was derived directly from the Bologna relief, extensive segments of the text were clearly taken from other sources, as they lack any close – or even distant – parallels to the original. Publications reproducing Egyptian antiquities by Athanasius Kircher, in particular *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (hereafter OA) and *Obelesciscus Pamphilius* (hereafter OP), and Hans Georg Herwart von Hohenburg¹⁵ were identified as primary sources, whilst additional, as yet unidentified, works must have also been consulted.

Line (β.1)

The line of pseudo-text on the upper margin of the plaque was based closely on α.1. [β.1.1]: It begins with an incomplete basket sign (Gardiner’s list V30 or V31) unparalleled in the original. [β.1.2]: However, it is followed by a bird whose form is based on α.1.1 (G17: an owl). [β.1.3–9]: There follow seven signs organised into a single square containing α.1.2–7 (occupying two squares in the original: D58-Aa1-N35-O39-D37-N35) in mixed-up order and somewhat altered appearance and with an added reed sign (M17). [β.1.10–11]: Then there is a seated figure of

¹⁴ LÄGG II, pp. 30–31; Vuilleumier 2022, p. 787.

¹⁵ Herwart von Hohenburg 1610.



Fig. 3. The Buchlov Tablet; The Buchlov State Castle. (Photo: Pavel Onderka).

a king based on α .1.8 (A42B) with a small angle sign in front (in this particular case likely replacing the royal insignia the king holds in his hands).¹⁶ [β .1.12]: It is followed by a large sign of uncertain meaning resembling the lung and windpipe sign (F36), perhaps trying to interpret the signs inscribed in the following square of the original text (damaged α .1.9–11). The sign might have been inspired by the *Mensa Isiaca*.¹⁷ [β .1.13–15]: Further, there are a couple of signs based on α .1.12–13 with an equilateral triangle (pyramid or ‘ Δ ’, i.e., Greek capital ‘Delta’ [?]) in front of a seated figure that holds a (royal) insignia likely showing influence of α .1.8 or α .1.25. [β .1.16–19]: The following signs replicate α .1.14–17. Notably, the face sign (D2) is misinterpreted as a double-handled vase and the single stroke sign (Z1) as a dot. [β .1.20–23]: The pseudo-text skips the following part of the original text and continues only after the two-square lacuna with α .1.29–30 (M17: a reed sign; G43: a quail chick). Two signs are inserted between them, namely a line-dot geometrising composition, probably inspired in symbols appearing in ancient glyptic¹⁸ and the unclassified sign Aa13, which appears in the original (α .1.27). [β .1.24–25]: What follows is probably an altered version of α .1.31 and an added angle sign with a dot (cf. above). [β .1.26]: Then there is a three-stemmed plant in a flowerpot which is apparently a version of α .1.37 altered under the influence of α .2.3 or another similar sign. [β .1.27–30]: The following square is occupied by twice repeated α .1.40, oriented horizontally, each in a different direction, with a dot added between them. Underneath is the eye sign (D4) adapted from α .1.34,

¹⁶ This and other small signs (e.g., β .5.2, β .7.5–6) added in various places of the pseudo-text could be inspired in ancient glyptic; cf. e.g., Macarius 1657, Tab. IX, no. 36; Tab. XVIII, no. 75, Tab. XIX, no. 77; Nagy et al. 2020, *passim*.

¹⁷ e.g., Herwart von Hohenburg 1610, *Tabula Hieroglyphica*.

¹⁸ See Macarius 1657, Tab. XXI, no. 88.

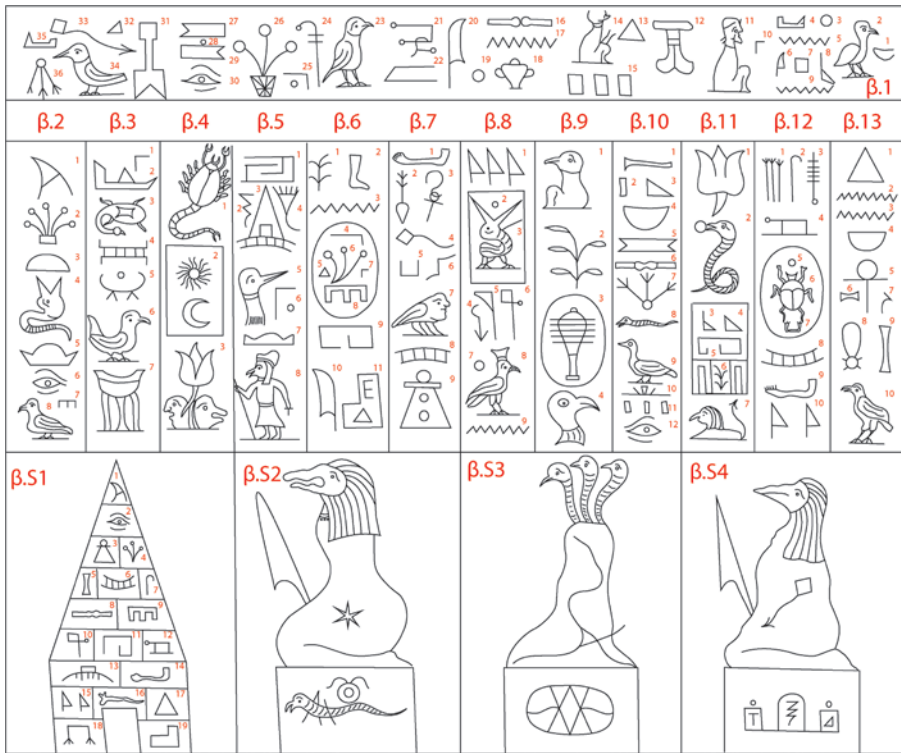


Fig. 4. The drawing of the Buchlov Tablet (Drawing: Pavel Onderka).

or perhaps rather from the eye with painted upper lid sign (D6) in Scene α.B.1. [β.1.31]: The next large sign is a reproduction of α.1.49. [β.1.32–36]: The remaining part of the line, in the extent of two squares, is filled with signs appearing elsewhere in the pseudo-text, particularly in Column β.10.

Column 1 (β.2)

The first column is inspired by α.2. [β.2.1–3]: In the upper half, α.2.1,3–4 is clearly recognised. Sign α.2.1, a cone-shaped bread hieroglyph (X8), was turned into a rotated hoe sign (U6), well-known from other inscriptions, including those on Roman obelisks and their circulating publications.¹⁹ α.2.3, a clump of papyrus sign (M16), had two more plant stems added to it, and α.2.4, a basket sign (V30), was turned upside down. [β.2.4]: There follows a large sign in the form of a snake with an upturned bird head. It could have been inspired by α.3.9 or an illustration in *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (hereafter 'OA') and *Obeliscus Pamphilius* (hereafter 'OP'; cf. β.8.3 reproducing more of exactly the same illustration).²⁰ [β.2.5–8]: The next four signs are likely based on

¹⁹ e.g., Herwart von Hohenburg 1610, eff. 5, 11, 20; also OP, 147.

²⁰ OA, III, p. 48; OP, p. 130. Some of the signs referred to appear several times in OE and OP. Usually only reference to one site in each is given, preferring the Kircher's table of hieroglyphic letters and its explanation in OE, III, pp. 47–55; OP, pp. 130–132. Many signs in the Buchlov plaque come apparently directly from this table. If other depictions from books serve as better parallels for the Buchlov pseudo-text, they are mentioned instead.

those appearing elsewhere in the Bolognese original (α) and the Buchlov Tablet (β). The hat-like sign (β .2.5) could perhaps be based on α .1.46 or α .1.52.²¹ The eye seems to have been copied from β .1.29. Both rotated 'E'-shaped signs²² and the bird could have been taken from other parts of the Buchlov Tablet (β).

Column 2 (β .3)

[β .3.1]: A large sign at the beginning of the column was possibly inspired by illustrations of ancient Egyptian objects available at the time of the copy's production.²³ [β .3.2]: It is followed by an angle sign (cf. above). [β .3.3]: There follows copy of α .2.10, i.e., a plucked bird sign (G54). [β .3.4]: The following sign – distantly resembling the sled sign (U15) – could have been inspired by the Mensa Isiaca, in particular, as drawn in Herwart's *Thesaurus Hieroglyphicorum*.²⁴ [β .3.5]: Then there is a sign of uncertain meaning and unknown origin, resembling the solar barque (e.g., P44 and its variants) in its general shape. [β .3.6]: Further down follows a bird which was possibly sourced from other parts of the Buchlov Tablet. [β .3.7]: The last sign is a large depiction of a tripod, a wide-spread and well-known iconographic motif of complex significance associated in particular with the oracular god Apollo, in the classical tradition.²⁵

Column 3 (β .4)

Only large signs completely unrelated to Egyptian hieroglyphic script are represented in this column. [β .4.1]: The first sign represents Scorpio of the Zodiac. Apart from other possibilities,²⁶ it could have been taken from the OA.²⁷ [β .4.2]: The following double sign representing the sun and the moon in a rectangle, representing a simplified *serekh* (cf. above), appear in this particular arrangement in the OA and OP.²⁸ [β .4.3]: The (lotus [?]) flower on a stem flanked by two heads, human and animal (?), so far could not be traced to its source. A similar flower appears separately as β .11.1.

Column 4 (β .5)

[β .5.1]: The first sign could have been inspired by α .3.12 (F46: the intestine sign). [β .5.2–4]: Next follows an altered α .2.1, a cone-shaped bread sign (X8), or a pyramid with a door (?), similar to the framing depiction of Scene β .S1. It is combined with what is apparently an altered α .13.16 (U15: the sled sign).²⁹ On both sides of this sign there is a vertical zig-zag line and simple flower, respectively. The former could be a representation of the Greek letter 'Ξ' ('Xi') taken from the OA and OP,³⁰ which apparently appears also in Scene β .S4 next to 'T' and possibly 'Δ'. The flower could be inspired in the hieroglyphic lotus flower sign (M9) which is however not represented anywhere in the original. [β .5.5–6]: A bird head, next to an angle sign and a dot, was inspired rather by a depiction in the OA and OP,³¹ than α .3.9. [β .5.7]: The next sign was inspired

²¹ Cf. also e.g., Casali 1644, p. 51.

²² Cf. also e.g., Casali 1644, p. 30.

²³ e.g., Herwart von Hohenburg 1610, eff. 57.

²⁴ Herwart von Hohenburg 1610, *Tabula Hieroglyphica*; cf. e.g., the different rendering of the same sign in the Mensa Isiaca illustration in Kircher 1652–1654, III, showing in overall drawing of much lesser quality.

²⁵ See e.g., Wissowa et al. 1894–1980, s.v. *Dreifuss*.

²⁶ e.g., Macarius 1657, Tab. XXI, no. 88 (the same image β .1.21 could have been sourced from; cf. above).

²⁷ OA, II/2, p. 166.

²⁸ OA, III, 49; OP, 132.

²⁹ Also cf. e.g., Herwart von Hohenburg 1610, eff. 57.

³⁰ OA, III, p. 49; OP, p. 132.

³¹ OA, III, p. 47; OP, p. 130.

by $\alpha.8.8$ (N25: the three hills sign) or rather $\alpha.4.2$. [**$\beta.5.8$**]: The large depiction of a standing figure was clearly based on the depiction of a theriocephalic falcon deity, probably Horus with the double crown. The source of this depiction remains unknown.

Column 5 ($\beta.6$)

[**$\beta.6.1-3$**]: The two signs in the first square represent copies of $\alpha.19.1-2$. They are followed by a ripple of water sign (N35). [**$\beta.6.4-8$**]: The column continues with a simplified cartouche with the depiction of a plant (M2), patterned after $\alpha.1.37$, in the centre. The plant is surrounded by other lesser signs, including a rotated 'E'-shaped sign, a triangle (pyramid or ' Δ ' [?]) and two angle signs. The content of the cartouche does not seem to be based on any of the royal names from the original. [**$\beta.5.9$**]: Under the cartouche, there is evidently a house/shelter sign (O1 or more likely O4) none of which appear in the original. The source of the sign is unknown [**$\beta.5.10-11$**]: In the end of the column, there is a reed sign (M17) possibly repeated from $\alpha.1.29$. The origin of the rectangular sign with 'E' (i.e., Greek letter 'Epsilon') and triangle (pyramid or ' Δ ' [?]) signs inside is unknown.

Column 6 ($\beta.7$)

[**$\beta.7.1$**]: The column begins with a copy of $\beta.8.1$ (D37: the forearm with bread cone sign) altered to lose the bread held by the hand. [**$\beta.7.2-3$**]: There follows $\alpha.6.1$ (F35: the heart and wind-pipe sign) together with altered nearby sun-disc with uraeus and an *ankh* (usually depicted above the Horus falcon). [**$\beta.7.4-6$**]: Next come three lesser geometric signs. The sperm-shaped sign ($\beta.7.4$) resembles the astronomical symbol for the asteroid Pallas. Although uncertain, this identification may provide a *terminus post quem* for the Buchlov Tablet, since the symbol for Pallas was not introduced until 1802.³² [**$\beta.7.7$**]: There follows a large sign depicting a fantastic Gryllus creature of an unknown source, depicted as a four-legged bird with a large human face, possibly referring to *ba* birds of ancient Egypt. [**$\beta.7.8$**]: Next there is an altered $\alpha.13.16$ (U15: the sled sign).³³ [**$\beta.7.9$**]: The column ends with a large sign possibly showing a pendant or a pectoral. One may not rule out that the depiction features an *ankh* sign.

Column 7 ($\beta.8$)

[**$\beta.8.1$**]: There is a crudely rendered triple reed sign (M17) at the beginning of the column. It seems not to be inspired by $\alpha.1.29$, as this is reproduced more verily in $\beta.1.20$ and $\beta.5.10$.³⁴ They rather resemble the knives held by the demons in Scenes $\beta.S2$ and $\beta.S4$. [**$\beta.8.2-3$**]: Next follows a rectangle representing a *serekh*, with an upwards-facing bird with its beak open and a dot between the mandibles. The depiction was clearly taken from the OA and OP.³⁵ [**$\beta.8.4-6$**]: The following three tall signs and their composition likely sought inspiration in the title 'the perfect god' (*ntr nfr*; from the royal titulary of King Nectanebo on the original; $\alpha.13.1-2$, alternatively $\alpha.6.1-2$). The sign on the left seems to be possibly influenced by the appearance of the astronomical symbol for the asteroid Ceres. Whilst not certain, this identification, together with the above-mentioned symbol for Pallas ($\beta.7.4$ and $\beta.1.33$) could represent *termini post quem* for the dating of production of Buchlov Tablet as the symbols for both Ceres and Pallas

³² Bode 1802, p. 98.

³³ Also cf. e.g., Herwart von Hohenburg 1610, eff. 57.

³⁴ Cf. e.g., OA, III, p. 451.

³⁵ OA, III, p. 48; OP, p. 131.

were introduced only in 1802.³⁶ The other two signs suspiciously resemble the cloth on the pole sign (R8). [β.8.7–9]: The penultimate large depiction of a bird with a dot (or a circle behind its back) probably represents the Horus falcon and a sun-disc topping *serekhs* of royal titulary in the original. The column is concluded by the water sign (N35).

Column 8 (β.9)

Only four large signs are represented in this column. [β.9.1]: It begins with a depiction of a bird-headed seated demon, similar to those depicted in Scenes β.S2–S4. Such depictions appear in OA.³⁷ [β.9.2]: Then there is a plant with five leaves which might have been inspired by the sedge sign (M23) from the royal title of King of Upper and Lower Egypt (*nswt-hjty*); inscribed in the *serekhs* in the original). [β.9.3]: After that follows a cartouche with a sistrum inside. Various depictions could have served as source for this image, in particular ancient glyptic.³⁸ [β.9.4]: The final depiction of a bird's head is clearly taken from OA and OP.³⁹

Column 9 (β.10)

The whole column is closely based on α.15. [β.10.1–4]: The column starts with copies of α.15.1–4. [β.10.5]: Then, several signs from the original are substituted by a single rectangular piece, possibly inspired in α.1.41 or β.1.27 and β.1.29, respectively. [β.10.6–8]: There follows copies of α.15.10–11. In between them is a sign inspired by nearby α.14.5–6 is inserted. [β.10.9–11]: Next comes copies of α.15.10–14. [β.10.12]: The column ends with a copy of α.S3.1.

Column 10 (β.11)

There are only three large depictions in the column besides another *serekh*. [β.11.1]: The column begins with a flower resembling β.4.3. Similar flowers are to be found for example on the Mensa Isiaca.⁴⁰ [β.11.2]: There follows a snake with a dot right in front of its mouth. Similar positioned dots were described earlier (e.g., β.8.2). This image could have been inspired by snakes (or snake-like creatures) depicted in ancient glyptic,⁴¹ including the examples reproduced in OA.⁴² [β.11.3–6]: Next comes the *serekh* which, unlike the previous examples, is elaborately done with all iconographic details of the palace façade motif. In the original *serekh*, the king's Horus name (*imꜣ-ꜥ*; Strong of Arm) is written with three signs. On the Buchlov Tablet, a different set of three signs appears in a similar arrangement. These signs can be found elsewhere on the tablet. In the facade part of the *serekh*, the sedge sign (M23, short for 'king' represents the royal title and name from the original ('King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Kheperkara'). [β.11.7]: Parallels to the final depiction on the column, which shows a sphinx with the head of a bird, is found, for example, on the Mensa Isiaca.⁴³

³⁶ Bode 1802, pp. 97–98.

³⁷ OA, III, p. 49; OP, p. 132.

³⁸ e.g., Bricault 2020, Fig. 6.

³⁹ OA, III, p. 48; OP, p. 131.

⁴⁰ e.g., Herwart von Hohenburg 1610, *Tabula Hieroglyphica*.

⁴¹ e.g., Macarius 1657, Tab. XV, nos. 63–64, Tab. XVIII, nos. 71–75.

⁴² OA, III, pp. 523–524.

⁴³ e.g., Herwart von Hohenburg 1610, *Tabula Hieroglyphica*; OA, III.

Column 11 ($\beta.12$)

[$\beta.12.1-3$]: The column begins with an altered $\alpha.19.9-10$ and the papyrus plant depicted under the vulture next to them (R11 – a *djed*-pillar; S29: the folded cloth sign; M16: the clump of papyrus sign). [$\beta.12.4$]: There follows a line-dot composition similar to $\alpha.1.21$ (T21: the harpoon sign). [$\beta.12.5-7$]: Next is a nicely reproduced cartouche with the throne name of Nectanebo I, Kheperkare, copied from the original ($\alpha.6$, $\alpha.11$, and $\alpha.17$). [$\beta.12.8-10$]: It is followed by an altered $\alpha.13.16$ (cf. above),⁴⁴ a forearm sign (D36 or altered D37; both appear repeatedly throughout the original, as well as the Tablet), and the double reed sign (M17) of the same variant as $\beta.8.1$.

Column 12 ($\beta.13$)

This column is closely inspired by $\alpha.20$ i.e., the corresponding last column of the original. [$\beta.13.1-4$]: The signs $\alpha.20.1-4$ may be clearly recognised in the three initial signs. The sign $\alpha.20.1$ is altered into the appearance of equilateral triangle (cf. above). The basket sign (V31, $\alpha.20.4$) lacks its original handle. [$\beta.13.5-7$]: There follows copies of $\alpha.20.5-6$ preceded by a short horizontal stroke, which may be inspired by $\alpha.20.9$. $\alpha.20.5$, an *ankh* sign (S34), appears in a (T-like) form found in OA and OP.⁴⁵ Beneath its right arm is a stylised, miniaturised *was* sceptre (S40)⁴⁶ based on $\alpha.20.6$. [$\beta.13.8-9$]: Signs from original $\alpha.20.6-7$ are omitted in the copy. The column continues with copies of $\alpha.20.9-10$. The order of the signs is mixed up and $\alpha.20.9$ (Z1: the single stroke sign), is elongated. [$\beta.13.10$]: The column ends with a sign from the fourth scene ($\alpha.C.2$) located right under the last column of the original.

Scene 1 ($\beta.S1$)

In the first scene, the lion of $\alpha.S1$ is replaced by a pyramid placed on a rectangular base with a door similar to the sign $\beta.5.3$. The pyramid is divided into block/brick-like compartments each inscribed with a different sign. With a single exception, all the signs represented are repeated from the main body of the pseudo-text on the Tablet.

From top and from the left these parallels are: $\beta.S1.1 = \beta.2.1$, $\beta.S1.2 = \beta.1.30/\beta.2.6/\beta.10.12$, $\beta.S1.3 = \beta.7.9$, $\beta.S1.4 = \beta.6.6/\beta.10.7$, $\beta.S1.5 = \beta.13.9$, $\beta.S1.6 = \beta.7.8/\beta.12.8$, $\beta.S1.7 = \beta.12.2$, $\beta.S1.8 = \beta.1.16/\beta.10.6$, $\beta.S1.9 = \beta.6.8$, $\beta.S1.10 = \beta.8.5$, $\beta.S1.11 = \beta.6.9$, $\beta.S1.12 = \beta.12.4$, $\beta.S1.13$ (see below), $\beta.S1.14 = \beta.7.1/\beta.12.9$, $\beta.S1.15 = \beta.12.10$, $\beta.S1.16 = \beta.10.8$, $\beta.S1.17 = \beta.1.13/\beta.6.11/\beta.13.1$, $\beta.S1.18 = \beta.12.7$, and $\beta.S1.19 = \beta.6.11$.

The only sign without a parallel in the pseudo-text, however, could have been taken from the original. It seems to be inspired by the spinal cord sign (F40) appearing as $\alpha.21.5$ and $\alpha.23.5$.

Scene 2 ($\beta.S2$)

The second scene copies the depiction of the crocodile-demon 'Who Is Nice with His Mouth', with his mouth open, from $\alpha.S3$. The figure is supplemented by the symbol of a star placed over his mummiform body. A snake, probably inspired by OA and OP, is shown over the pedestal on which the demon rests.⁴⁷ The depiction of the snake is accompanied by a sun-disc placed above the reptile and by several linear strokes drawn across its body. The inspiration for these additions remains uncertain. The strokes may perhaps represent small knives, intended to cut

⁴⁴ Also cf. e.g., Herwart von Hohenburg 1610, eff. 57.

⁴⁵ OA, III, p. 49; OP, pp. 132, 366.

⁴⁶ Cf. also OP, p. 511.

⁴⁷ OA, III, p. 49; OP, p. 131.

through hieroglyphs that depicted perilous beings and things, thereby neutralising the dangers they signified.⁴⁸ Just above the snake, there is a stylised *wesekh*-collar taken over from the Scene α.S4, where it is presented by the king to the demon ‘The Great of Terror’.

Scene 3 (β.S3)

The third scene copies the depiction of the demon ‘The One with Multiple Faces’ with a triple snake head from α.S2. The three heads of the demon resemble heads of birds rather than bodies of snakes, displaying avian rather than reptilian features. The form of the heads could have been inspired by various bird-signs appearing throughout the text.

The pedestal frames a symbol which is quite central to Kircher’s considerations in OA. It is the symbol of love (Φυλο [*sic!*]).⁴⁹ One may not rule out that the copyist perceived a resemblance between the ‘love’ symbol and the long necklace depicted in Scene α.S2, since it appears on each of the three pedestals shown on the Buchlov Tablet there is represented one of the offerings that King Nectanebo I presents to the demons in the Bologna original.

Scene 4 (β.S4)

The fourth scene copies the depiction of the crocodile demon ‘The Great of Terror’, with the mouth shut, from α.S4. The figure is supplemented with a symbol of uncertain meaning and unknown origin, which appears in several other places of the text. The pedestal depicts three framed symbols or rather Greek letters, namely from left ‘T’, ‘Ξ’, and possibly ‘Δ’.⁵⁰ All of these letters appear in the main text and in OA and OP.⁵¹ The composition seems to have been inspired by the tray loaded with offerings presented by the king to the demon in the third scene (α.S3).

Discussion and conclusions

The Buchlov Tablet is a remarkable example of early modern reception of Egyptian monuments. Its basic concept clearly derives from the Bologna relief of King Nectanebo I, yet it is not a faithful copy. Rather, it is a free adaptation that preserves the overall impression of the original – the compositional structure, the rhythm of cartouches and *serekhs*, the framing of scenes – while details are simplified, replaced, or newly invented.

Many signs can be directly traced to Kircher’s works (*Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, *Obeliscus Pamphilius*), others to Herwart’s *Thesaurus Hieroglyphicorum*. It is likely that the maker also drew on other publications, now difficult to identify, that circulated amongst scholars and collectors of the time. Some motifs originate in authentic Egyptian monuments, whilst others are rooted in the iconography and symbolism of classical antiquity, which was widely known amongst the educated classes.

The process of execution can be partially reconstructed: it probably began with the upper line, proceeded mostly from right to left, and gradually lost fidelity to the original. Scenes were repeated according to a formula, and in the case of more difficult motifs (such as the lion), the maker opted for substitution. Repetition and certain mechanical regularity suggest not only a loss of inventiveness, but also an effort to preserve the rhythm and visual effect of the model.

⁴⁸ Lacau 1914.

⁴⁹ OA, II/1, p. 115, III, pp. 49, 53; OP, p. 131; also Winand 2022, *passim*; Jean Winand, *pers. comm.*, 27 March 2025.

⁵⁰ Interpreted as numerals, the letters would give the number ‘364’ which is the number of days of the ancient Jewish Enoch/Qumran calendars, see e.g., Davies 1983.

⁵¹ OA III, pp. 47, 49; OP, pp. 130, 132.

Although today the tablet may appear as a ‘botched’ copy, in reality it was the work of a skilled professional who knew the antiquarian sources and understood what would appeal to potential patrons. His goal was not to produce a counterfeit of the original, but rather a new object imitating Egyptian production, tailored to the collecting culture and taste of the time.

A possible link between these objects and the Berchtolds’ involvement in the Freemasonic movement has been suggested by some scholars; however, this involvement has never been examined in detail, and the argument remains purely hypothetical.

The present study represents only the first stage in research of the object. Its fuller understanding may only be achieved in the context of analysing and better interpreting the other pieces from the Buchlov tablet set, as well as other replicas of the Bologna relief.

Literature:

Bode, J. (1802). Von der Einrichtungen und dem Gebrauch des astronomischen Jahrbuchs. *Astronomisches Jahrbuch für das Jahr 1805*, pp. 89–98.

Bresciani, E. (1975). *La collezione egizia nel Museo civico di Bologna*. Ravenna: Longo.

Bricault, L. (2020). L’Égypte des uns n’est pas Toujours l’Égypte des Autres. À Propos d’une Drachme de Myndos. In: Versluys, M. J., ed., *Beyond Egyptomania: Objects, Style and Agency*. Studien Aus Dem Warburg-Haus 21. Berlin – Boston: De Gruyter, pp. 87–95.

Casali, G. B. (1644). *De profanis et sacris veteribus ritibus*. Romae: Ex Typographia Andree Phaei.

Davies, P. R. (1983). Calendrical Change and Qumran Origins: An Assessment of VanderKam’s Theory. *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 45(1), pp. 80–89.

Herwart von Hohenburg, I. G. (1610). *Thesaurus Hieroglyphicorum*.

James, T. G. (1988). *Ancient Egypt. The Land and Its Legacy*. London: British Museum Publications.

Kminek-Szedlo, G. (1895). *Museo Civico di Bologna: Catalogo di Antichità Egizie*. Torino: Paravia.

Lacau, P. (1914). Suppressions et modifications de signes dans les textes funéraires, *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, 51, pp. 1–64.

LÄGG I = Leitz, C., ed. (2002). *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*. Band 1: ‘–3. *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 110. Leuven: Peeters.

LÄGG II = Leitz, C., ed. (2002). *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*. Band 2: b–p. *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 111. Leuven: Peeters.

Leprohon, R. J. (2013). *The Great Name. Ancient Egyptian Royal Titulary*. Writings from the Ancient World 33. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.

Macarius, I. (Jean L'Heureux; 1657). *Abraxas, seu Apistopistus: quae est Antiquaria de gemmis basilidianis disquisitio. Accedit Abraxas Proteus, seu Multiformis gemmae basilidianae portentosa varietas*. Antuerpiae: Ex officina plantiniana Balthasaris Moreti.

Nagy, Á. M., Bélyácz, K. and Endreffy, K., eds. (2020). *The Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database*. [online] Budapest: Museum of Fine Arts. Available at: <http://cbd.mfab.hu>. [Accessed 11 Sep. 2025].

Navrátilová, H. (2003). Egyptizující tabulky v buchlovských sbírkách. In: Onderka, P., ed., *Egypt za vlády faraonů*. Uherské Hradiště: Občanské Sdružení Aegyptus, pp. 121–126.

OE = Kircher, A. (1652–1654). *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*. Romae: Ex typographia Vitalis Mascardi.

Onderka, P. (2024). *Tajemná Nubie / Mysterious Nubia*. Praha: Národní muzeum.

Onderka, P., and Honzl, J. (2022). ...And Yet Another Pectoral of Pyay. *Annals of the Náprstek Museum*, 43(1), pp. 71–78.

OP = Kircher, A. (1650). *Obeliscus Pamphilius*. Romae: Typis Ludouici Grignani.

Picchi, D. (2022). From Cabinets of Curiosities to Public Museums. In: Regulski, I., ed., *Hieroglyphs. Unlocking Ancient Egypt*. London: British Museum, pp. 54–60.

Roulet, A. (1972). *The Egyptian and Egyptianizing Monuments of Imperial Rome*. Leiden: Brill.

Vuilleumier, S. (2022). On some Guardians of the Ptolemaic Temple of Deir el-Medina. A Preliminary Study. In: Greco, C., Töpfer, S., del Vesco, P. and Poole, F., eds., *Deir el-Medina Through the Kaleidoscope. Proceedings of the International Workshop Turin 8th-10th October 2018*, Torino: Franco Cosimo Panini Editore, pp. 783–807.

Winand, J. (2022). Athanasius Kircher et le déchiffrement des hiéroglyphes: réalité ou fiction? *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 2022(2), pp. 217–255.

Wissowa, G. et al., eds. (1894–1980). *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft: neue Bearbeitung*, 83 vols. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler – Alfred Druckenmüller.