

Two undescribed states and their consequences

in Hans Sebald Beham's ex-libris woodcut
from 1525 "Coat of arms of Hector Pömer"

Maik Bindewald

Publiziert auf ART-Dok. Publikationsplattform Kunst- und Bildwissenschaften
Volltextserver von arthistoricum.net – Fachinformationsdienst Kunst, Fotografie und Design,
Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg 2025.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11588/artdok.00009889>

Two undescribed states and their consequences in Hans Sebald Beham's ex-libris woodcut from 1525 "Coat of arms of Hector Pömer"

Hans Sebald Beham (1500-1550) is one of Albrecht Dürer's most important successors and was one of the leading representatives of the so-called "*Kleinmeister*" group of German Renaissance artists. This group of artists specialised in the production of small, detailed prints. On 12 January 1525, Hans Sebald Beham was imprisoned together with two fellow painters from this group, his brother Bartel Beham (1502-1540) and Georg Pencz (1500-1550), and convicted of heresy in a spectacular trial. As a result, he was banished from Nuremberg together with the two aforementioned painters as the "*Three Godless Painters*". It was not until 16 November 1525 that the Nuremberg Council granted Hans Sebald Beham permission to return to the city.¹ In the same year, in the midst of the raging German Peasants' War (1524-1526), Hans Sebald Beham produced a woodcut bookplate for the provost of Nuremberg's St. Lawrence Church, Doctor Hector Pömer (1495-1541), entitled "*Coat of Arms of Hector Pömer*" (Fig. 1). Hector Pömer completed his academic training in Heidelberg and Wittenberg in the subjects of law and theology and was one of the most influential Nuremberg churchmen of the Reformation period. He was one of the key protagonists of the Reformation and played a major role in spreading Martin Luther's teachings in Nuremberg. In March 1525, the Reformation was introduced in the imperial city of Nuremberg, and St Lawrence's Church has been of the Evangelical-Lutheran faith ever since.

In the centre of the woodcut is the coat of arms of Doctor Hector Pömer, which shows a helmet with a helmet cover and a cloaked figure as a crest. Below this is the large coat of arms shield, which is divided into four fields. In the first and fourth field of the coat of arms, the grate is depicted, which is interpreted as the instrument of the martyrdom of Saint Lawrence of Rome (31 December 225-258). The other two fields show the actual "*Coat of arms of Hector Pömer*", which consists of four diagonal bars at the top and a black colour at the bottom. The inclusion of the saint in the coat of arms and the function of the owner of the coat of arms as provost of the then Nuremberg parish church of St Lawrence indicate the position of the owner of the coat of arms. To the left is the personified, standing figure of St Laurence, deacon of Rome, with his attributes, the gridiron and the palm of martyrdom. St Laurentius was the patron saint of Nuremberg's St Lawrence Church, where Hector Pömer worked from 1520 until his death. There is a high probability that the woodcut ex-libris shown here was commissioned by Hector Pömer in honour of the 1300th birthday of St. Lawrence and completed on 31 December 1525. This means that the artist Hans Sebald Beham only had a few weeks after his exile to complete this woodcut in the same year.

In each of the four corners of the woodcut, which is bordered by two columns and two vines tied together like arches, there are three further coats of arms of Pömer's ancestors in addition to the actual Pömer coat of arms at the top left. At the top right is that of his paternal grandmother "*Rummel*", at the bottom left that of his mother "*Schmidmayer*" and at the bottom right that of his maternal grandmother "*Bergmeister*". In the inscription field below the depiction, in addition to the name Doctor Hector Pömer, his ecclesiastical position as provost and his high level of linguistic understanding in Hebrew, Greek and Latin are referenced. The quote "To the pure all things are pure" is taken from the New Testament (Titus 1, verse 15).

The present woodcut is one of the few of its time on which the engraver has left his monogram and the date "RA 1525". Johann David Passavant has hypothesised that the "R" stands for the engraver "*Wolfgang Resch*" and the "A" for Anno. In addition, this woodcut was almost always found glued into

the book covers of Hector Pömer's library.² This woodcut ex libris is one of the oldest dated ex libris in Germany.

For a long time this woodcut was attributed to Albrecht Dürer and was first documented in 1618 by Paulus Behaim in his catalogue as a Dürer woodcut.³ Dürer's style was recognised early on due to the style of the Nuremberg helmet with helmet cover and the large coat of arms shield. Due to a pronounced enthusiasm for having secured Dürer as the designer of this Pömer woodcut, formulations by Hans Sebald Beham were not sufficiently recognised, although the depiction of the vine arch between the columns and the massive cross-hatching in the background are not characteristic of Dürer in this form. It was not until 1901 that Gustav Pauli attributed this woodcut to Hans Sebald Beham in his critical catalogue raisonné.⁴

A chronological sequence of the wear and conditions of the woodblock and when it was used by the printer over the years has not yet been described in any literature. The literature by Hollstein⁵ and Schoch/Mende/Scherbaum⁶ is limited exclusively to the description of the graphic representation of the woodblock. Furthermore, Adam von Bartsch⁷, Gustav Pauli⁴ and the latest Hollstein⁸ from the year 2024 only mention older prints and new prints from 1840 for the unveiling of the Dürer monument in Nuremberg, without any further details.

In the first state, the earliest edition after production from the wooden stick, there are no chipping or damage along the edge mouldings. One exception is the large quadripartite coat of arms, where the lower right grate has a small gap on its right side. The gap in question is located on the transverse lower bar (**Fig. 1**). Around 1530, the left margin at the bottom of the text is broken. The paper bears the watermark "*imperial orb with rod and star*" (Joseph Meder⁹: 56; Charles-Moïse Briquet¹⁰: 3067) (**Fig. 2**). On the right edge of the depiction, around 1615, at the top right in front of the small coat of arms with the two cockerels (coat of arms of the Rummel family), there is a break in the edge moulding with damage to the transverse shading of the depiction. There is also damage to the right edge moulding on the antique column below. In addition, there are five narrow gaps on the lower edge moulding on its right-hand side, as well as a gap on the edge moulding above the inscription field. The gap in the margin above the title block is located between the large coat of arms, divided into four fields, and the printed date 1525. The paper bears a watermark labelled "*letter A in a circle with C and Z*" (Joseph Meder⁹: 285; Gerhard Piccard¹¹: 26530) (**Fig. 3**). Around 1625, another large gap was noted on the lower margin under the word "PRAEPOS". This is a paper with a watermark showing a "*Nurnberg coat of arms*" (Gerhard Piccard¹¹: 25279) (**Fig. 4**). In the penultimate stage of preservation, the lower edge has two further significant gaps, while the upper edge has two small gaps and one large gap in the centre above the arch of the vine. In addition, a narrow gap at the height of the small Pömer coat of arms is recognisable at the top of the left-hand border. Furthermore, in the large four-part coat of arms, there is a small gap in the top diagonal bar of the lower left Pömer coat of arms. Similarly, two small gaps in the first and second transverse bars are recognisable on the lower right grid in the upper left quadrant (**Fig. 5**). In the final sequence, a further narrow gap manifests itself in the lower area of the edge bar, this is located under the letter "R" on the word "PRAEPOS" (**Fig. 6**).¹²

The second state shows a print with ten lines of German text under the woodcut. This print was published on 21 May 1840 by Dr. Friedrich Campe (1777-1846) as a jubilee print in honour of Albrecht Dürer for the opening of the Albrecht Dürer monument in Nuremberg (**Fig. 7**). At that time, the wooden block was in the private possession of Dr Friedrich Campe in Nuremberg. For this jubilee print from 1840, a revision and restoration of the damaged border strips as well as part of the depiction on the

historical wooden block from 1525 was carried out, whereby the aforementioned damage to the large four-part coat of arms was not restored. In the upper right-hand corner, in front of the coat of arms showing two cockerels, the cross-hatching within the depiction was cut off to the lower centre of the coat of arms and recut in a newly inserted wooden wedge. A new border was then added to complete the depiction. The resulting wedge-shaped cut edge within the depiction clearly manifests itself as an unprinted and white border around the newly created pointed triangle (**Fig. 7a**). The edge moulding of the antique column on the right-hand side of the picture was also removed and replaced. (**Fig. 7b**). Furthermore, a narrow, unprinted white gap can be seen on the newly replaced frame on the left edge of the picture next to the grating of St Laurentius, down to the lower end of the small coat of arms (coat of arms of the Schmidmayer family). This white gap is due to the fact that the horizontal hatching of the pillar does not reach the frame exactly (**Fig. 7c**). This woodblock has been in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York since 1951 and is listed there under inventory number 51,563.

Maik Bindewald

NOTES:

1. Kurt Löcher, Bartel Beham: Ein Maler aus dem Dürerkreis, Deutscher Kunstverlag, München, 1999.
2. Johann David Passavant, Le peintre-graveur, Volume 3 (163), Leipsic, 1862.
3. Paulus Behaim (1592-1637), Handschriftliches Graphikverzeichnis von Paulus Beham, 1618, Berlin, SMPK ,Kupferstichkabinett, Sign. 79 C.32.
4. Gustav Pauli, Hans Sebald Beham: Ein kritisches Verzeichnis seiner Kupferstiche, Radirungen und Holzschnitte (1352), Studien zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte, Heft 33, Straßburg, 1901.
5. Hollstein F.W.H., German engravings, etchings, and woodcuts ca.1400-1700, Volume III, Hans Sebald Beham (1352), Amsterdam, 1954.
6. Schoch/Mende/Scherbaum, Albrecht Dürer: Das druckgraphische Werk, Band 2 (A27), Holzschnitte und Holzschnittfolgen (München: Prestel Verlag, 2002).
7. Adam von Bartsch, Le peintre graveur, Volume 7 (163), Vienna, 1808.
8. The new Hollstein: German engravings, etchings and woodcut 1400-1700 (Anne Röver-Kann), Sebald Beham (612), Part IV, Sound & Vision Publishers, Netherlands 2024.

9. Joseph Meder, Dürer-Katalog: Ein Handbuch über Albrecht Dürers Stiche, Radierungen, Holzschnitte, deren Zustände, Ausgaben und Wasserzeichen, Vienna: Verlag Gildhofer & Ranschberg, 1932.
10. Charles-Moïse Briquet, watermark collection, online.
11. Gerhard Piccard, watermark collection, online.
12. (a). Karl Emich Count zu Leiningen-Westerburg, German Book-plates (p.110): An Illustrated Handbook of German & Austrian Exlibris (London: George Bell & Sons, 1901).
(b). Karl Emrich Graf zu Leiningen-Westerburg, Deutsche und Oesterreichische Bibliothekzeichen Exlibris (p. 118): Ein Handbuch für Sammler Bücher und Kunstfreunde (Stuttgart: Julius Hoffmann Verlag, 1901).



Fig. 1. Hans Sebald Beham, *Coat of arms of Hector Pömer*, 1525, state Ia/2a, woodcut 29,4 x 19,6 cm (London, British Museum, inv.-Nr. 1895.0122.748), without watermark.



Fig. 2. Hans Sebald Beham, *Coat of arms of Hector Pömer*, 1525, state Ib/2a, woodcut 29,8 x 19,8 cm (Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art, inv.-Nr. 1943.3.3698), watermark "imperial orb with rod and star" (Joseph Meder: 56; Charles-Moïse Briquet: 3067), around 1530.



Fig. 3. Hans Sebald Beham, *Coat of arms of Hector Pömer*, 1525, state Ic/2a, woodcut 29,7 x 19,5 cm (New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, inv.-Nr. 1986.26), watermark “letter A in a circle with C and Z” (Joseph Meder: 285; Gerhard Piccard: 26530), around 1615.



Fig. 4. Hans Sebald Beham, *Coat of arms of Hector Pömer*, 1525, state Id/2a, woodcut 29,2 x 19,7 cm (Krakowie, Polska Akademia Umiejętności, inv.-Nr. BGR.010074), watermark “Nurnberg coat of arms” (Gerhard Piccard: 25279), around 1625.



Fig. 5. Hans Sebald Beham, *Coat of arms of Hector Pömer*, 1525, state Ie/2a, woodcut 30 x 20,3 cm (Seattle, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, inv.-Nr. FA 2017.82), without watermark.



Fig. 6. Hans Sebald Beham, *Coat of arms of Hector Pömer*, 1525, state If/2a, woodcut 30 x 19,5 cm (Musea Brugge, Prentenkabinet, artinflanders.be, inv.-Nr. 2014.GRO0328.III), without watermark. (photographer: Cedric Verhelst).



Fig. 7. Hans Sebald Beham, *Coat of arms of Hector Pömer*, 1525, state IIa/2a, woodcut 29,8 x 19,2 cm (Nürnberg, Germanisches National Museum, inv.-Nr. ST.N.2305Kaps27), **impression from 1840.**



Fig. 7a. Hans Sebald Beham, *Coat of arms of Hector Pömer* (detail), 1525, state IIa/2a, woodcut 29,8 x 19,2 cm (Nürnberg, Germanisches National Museum, inv.-Nr. ST.N.2305Kaps27), **impression from 1840.**

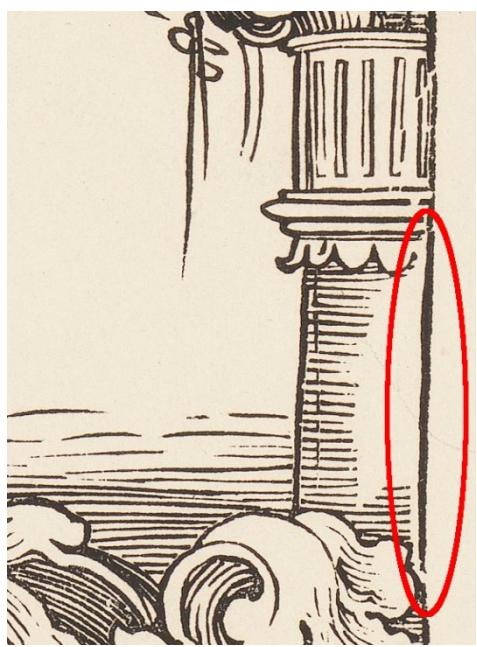


Fig. 7b. Hans Sebald Beham, *Coat of arms of Hector Pömer* (detail), 1525, state IIa/2a, woodcut 29,8 x 19,2 cm (Nürnberg, Germanisches National Museum, inv.-Nr. ST.N.2305Kaps27), **impression from 1840.**

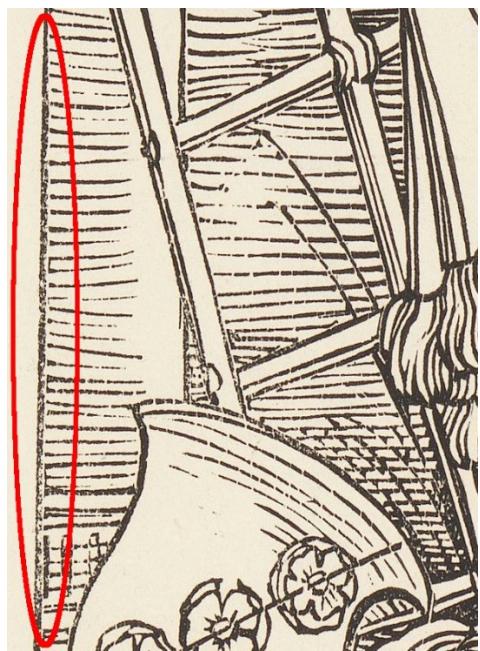


Fig. 7c. Hans Sebald Beham, *Coat of arms of Hector Pömer* (detail), 1525, state IIa/2a, woodcut 29,8 x 19,2 cm (Nürnberg, Germanisches National Museum, inv.-Nr. ST.N.2305Kaps27), **impression from 1840.**