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*Together with*

FIFTEEN COPTO-EGYPTIAN LEAVES

*Attributed to the X-XIV Century • Property of*

H. ARAM GULEZYAN



*Public Auction Sale*

*Tuesday • April 10 at 1:45 p. m.*

PARKE-BERNET GALLERIES • INC

980 Madison Avenue • New York

1956

3/7/954.

Dear Dr. Director of the Coptic Museum.  
With reference to the letter of the  
19th June 1954 sent to you by Mr. Gulegion  
and forwarded to me, I am glad to tell you  
that the date of the Script of the leaves is  
approximately the 14th century. The script is  
regular hand. The Coptic words of the leaf  
are XWPE BAO, NIKOS probably proper nouns.  
With best regards.

Yours sincerely  
Y. Abd al-Masih

Dear Mr. Editor

Herewith is the answer of Fr. ... Abd al -  
Faith to your last letter.

With kind regards

Yours truly

Dr. Pahor Labib

2nd July 1954

Sinclair Coptic Museum  
Old Cairo

[NUMBER 127, Letter from Dr. Labib]

[28]

I have carefully examined the photos  
sent with the letter of the 19th June 1953 sent to  
Mr. Y. Abd al-Masih. The leaf contains names  
of some signs of the Zodiac (leaf 2 enlarged) contains names  
of some signs of the Zodiac (leaf 2 enlarged) and some planets  
names in Arabic written in Coptic letters which are as  
follows with English translation and in Arabic. The  
script was only the definite article in Coptic

a) Signs of Zodiac:  
1- THE CAPTAIN Cancer  
2- THE LION Lion  
3- THE SCORPION Scorpio  
4- THE SAGITTARIUS Sagittarius  
5- THE CAPRICORN Capricorn  
6- THE AQUARIUS Aquarius

b) Planets:  
1- MERCURY Mercury  
2- VENUS Venus  
3- MARS Mars  
4- JUPITER Jupiter  
5- SATURN Saturn

II The Photo No. 3 (enlarged) contains names  
in Coptic by a pupil which studies Coptic  
with best regards

Yours sincerely  
Y. Abd al-Masih  
Dr. Pahor Labib Librarian of the  
Coptic Museum.

17.7.35

17.7.53

[NUMBER 127, Letter to Dr. Labib]

[29]

A GROUP OF FIFTEEN ANCIENT COPTO-EGYPTIAN LEAVES  
IMPORTANT FROM MUSICAL, COSMOLOGICAL, RELIGIOUS,  
ARTISTIC, AND HISTORICAL VIEWPOINTS

THE FOLLOWING lot (no. 127) will be offered in two ways: *first*, as an entire lot, as catalogued; and *second*, with LEAVES 1-3 as one lot and LEAVES 4-15 as twelve single lots, making thirteen lots in all. The higher total realized from the two methods will determine the final sale.

127. EGYPTIAN MANUSCRIPT AND PAINTED LEAVES OF ANTIQUITY. A group of Fifteen Leaves displaying Coptic script, musical notation, portraiture, and other written impressions. Together 15 pieces of irregular measurements, engrossed on parchment. (H. Aram Gulezian)

Egypt, attributed to the X to XIV Centuries

In the presentation of the six Coptic Leaves offered for public sale by the Parke-Bernet Galleries in 1952, they were described as follows:

"A unique group of documents of Coptic notation, the positive recognition that the manuscripts are among the very few remnants in existence of graphic description of Ptolemy's *Harmonia Mundi* and that the manuscripts possess the graphic coordination of this early Egyptian-Christian conception of the gnostic period places the date as of the fifth to the seventh century A.D." Engaged in the fourteen years of research study leading to positive establishment of the six Coptic manuscripts, were Dr. Ludlow Bull, Associate Curator of the Department of Egyptian Art of The Metropolitan Museum of Art; the late great Egyptologist Dr. Georg Steindorff; Dr. Eric Werner of The Hebrew Union College and Dr. George Sobhy Bey of Cairo. The origin of the Leaves presented here have been placed between the *tenth* and *fourteenth* centuries. The following LEAVES numbered 1, 2 and 3 are allied to the above described group of six Coptic Leaves.

[See illustration on the two preceding pages]

"The 15 fragments herein described, are possessed of exquisite jewel-like colors and their beauty cannot be fully appreciated as the illustrations shown here are in black-and-white." LEAVES 1, 2 and 3—These are believed to be the only known fragments which contain and describe the association of the colors and their assignment by name to the planets. The ardent mysticism which characterized the Copts is expressed in these Leaves. The magic symbols, rarely found on existing manuscripts of the same period, are depicted in the upper portion of Leaf 1. Leaf 2 is a palimpsest. The colors and their assignment to the planets shown in leaves 1, 2 and 3 are as follows:

[See illustration]

Light Blue—Cancer  
Red—Leo  
Black—Libra  
Green—Scorpio  
Ultramarine—Sagittarius  
Dark Brown—Capricorn

Gray—Mercury  
Orange—Venus  
Tan—Mars  
Reddish-Brown—Jupiter  
Pink—Saturn  
Yellow—Aquarius

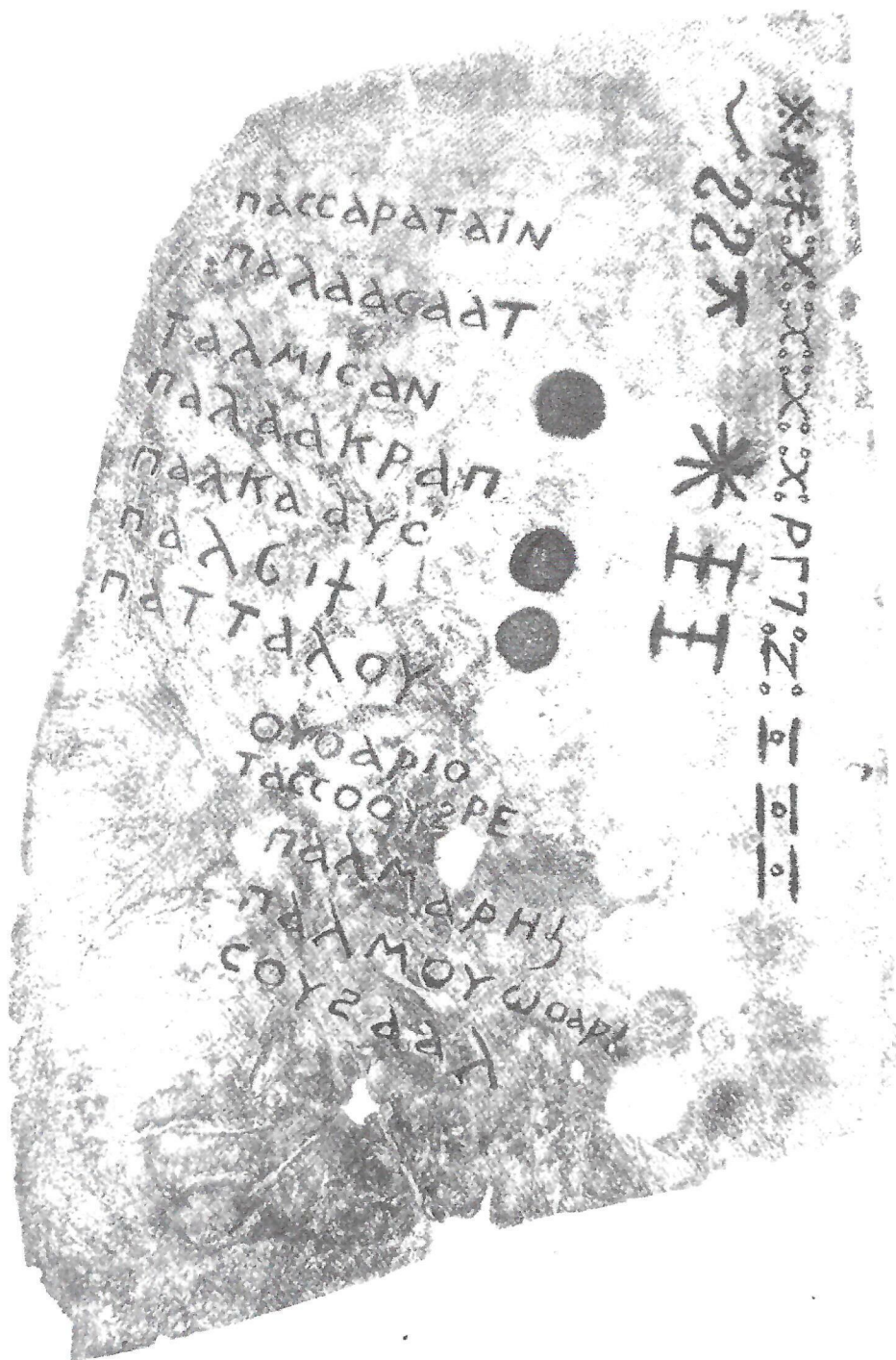
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[NUMBER 127, Leaf 1]

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[Continued

Number 127—Continued]

An excerpt from a letter written to Mr. Gulezyan from Dr. P. E. Kahle Jr. Ranger's Lodge, Charlbury, Oxford, 10th August 1953, reads as follows:

"... As regards the two photographs which you sent to me, I find myself at rather a disadvantage. The letters are certainly Coptic but the words are Arabic. I have consulted my father, Professor P. Kahle about the Arabic, and he has been able to identify at least the majority of the words. Arabic words in Coptic are often extremely difficult to recognize, since the systems of transcription varied both in time and from locality to locality. Most of the words seem to be astronomical terms and this would seem to fit into your suggestion that they might be connected with musical notations. I am enclosing a transcription of the text with the Arabic words and meanings on a separate page. On page 1 the signs would at first sight seem to be magical, but perhaps there is some significance in them. I shall make further inquiries in Oxford to try to ascertain the unsolved names, but it will probably be difficult. ... I am also giving a transcription of the Coptic letters, which is perhaps a help. ... The date of the fragments is clearly later than the 8th century, but I should hesitate to assign a definite date to them: ca 10th century can hardly be far off the mark. ..."

[See illustration]

Note:—Dr. Pahor Labib's letter of July 15, 1953 to Mr. Gulezyan identified and furnished all the translated names *unsolved* in Dr. Kahle's above illustrated letter.)

"The texts in Leaves 1, 2 and 3 herewith described, confirm to an amazing extent, Dr. Eric Werner's interpretation of the original 6 Coptic illuminated manuscripts sold by the Parke-Bernet Galleries in 1952. Dr. Eric Werner, who is one of the world's most distinguished musicologists, states that while the original 6 Coptic manuscripts did not contain any text of decidedly astronomical nature, the *identity* now of the colored circles in LEAVES 1, 2 and 3 with those of the original 6 manuscripts, is verified by the added texts which have clearly astronomical, musical significance."

In Dr. Eric Werner's opinion, the present Leaves are of the same period as those of the original 6 Coptic manuscripts, viz. the 5th to the 7th century.

LEAF 4 is a palimpsest. The context is Coptic and the English translation is as follows: "Blessed Mother, behold the world and universe forever and ever. Child Lord, Harken, come behold the heavenly archangels and the blessed dove. The kingdom of the Lord has destroyed the demon to begin the blessed temple of the world. Lord Master, Lord of the world blessed Lord Child of Egypt, hear, hearken, behold the shepherds, praise, sing, hail Gabriel, sound the trumpet, voice praise, the miracle is revealed, this is the Lord's day. Lord Master, look and observe, the Lord of the world, Lord mighty in heaven, blessed Child of the kingdom of heaven, welcome. Archangels, angels, shepherds, behold the kingdom of heaven forever and ever. Harken blessed mother, behold the miracle, the Lord Child, King of Egypt, praise, sing, voice praise, Lord Gabriel."

LEAF 5 strongly illustrates influences of Persia and India. The Coptic words on the border read "Great and mighty warrior". The beautiful colors in the raiment are still discernible. Indian influence is apparent in the attractive headpiece. The portraiture displayed on this Leaf is strikingly similar to Plate 44, page 102 in *Studies in Indian Painting* by Nanalal Chamanlal Mehta, published in Bombay, 1926, illustrating Shah Taimur (13-14 century), the descendant of Jengis Khan.

LEAF 6, strongly illustrates Persian influence and origin. The Coptic words on the border read "mighty warrior". It will be observed that there is a marked resemblance to this portrait of Ara Kehrehtsik of Armenia (King Ara the Handsome). Legend tells us that

[Continued]

The text of the two pages

Leaf 1 first part = Leaf

|            |            |
|------------|------------|
| πασσαρταιν | P-as-sarat |
| παλασαδτ   | P-al-aasat |
| παλμικαν   | P-al-misan |
| παλακρην   | P-al-aakra |
| παλκαυς    | P-al-kaaus |
| παλβιτ     | P-al-ḡiti  |
| πατταλου   | P-at-talou |

Leaf 1 second part =

|             |           |
|-------------|-----------|
| ουοαριο     | Ouoario   |
| τασσοονερε  | T-as-soon |
| παλμαρη     | P-al-mar  |
| παλμουνοαρι | P-al-moun |
| συζααλ      | Souhaal   |

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[Continued]

Text.

The text of the two pages is identical.

Leaf 1 first part = Leaf 2 column 1

|            |               |         |         |                       |
|------------|---------------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| πασσαρταίν | P-as-saratain | السرطان | السرطان | Cancer                |
| παλαααατ   | P-al-aasaat   | الاسد   | الاسد   | Lion, Leo             |
| παλμικαν   | P-al-misan    | الميزان | الميزان | Libra                 |
| παλαακραπ  | P-al-aakrap   | العقرب  | العقرب  | Scorpion              |
| παλκααυε   | P-al-kaaus    | القوس   | القوس   | Sagittarius           |
| παλβιτι    | P-al-giti(i)  | الجدي   | الجدي   | Aries                 |
| πατταλου   | P-at-talou    | ?       | الطلوع  | Rise(of sun or stars) |

Leaf 1 second part = Leaf 2 column 2

|           |              |    |        |                          |
|-----------|--------------|----|--------|--------------------------|
| ουοαριο   | Ouoario      | ?? | أوار   | Southwind                |
| τασσοουρε | T-as-soouhre | ?  | ?      | ?                        |
| παλμαρη   | P-al-marēh   | ?  | المغرب | Setting(of sun or stars) |
| παλμσωαρι | P-al-mousari | ?? | ?      | ?                        |
| σουχαλ    | Souhaal      | ?  | سهيل   | Canopus(star)            |

The 'P' prefixed to most of the names and the 'T' in 'Tassouhre' is the Coptic article; the 'al', 'as', 'at' following is the Arabic article. Arabic words in Coptic texts are almost invariably found thus with the Coptic and Arabic articles prefixed.

P.E. Kahles

[NUMBER 127, Letter from Dr. Kahles]

Number 127—Continued]

the original whom this portrait resembles was slain by Semiramis (Queen of Persia) because of his refusal to marry her. The present fragment is indigenous to and characteristic of the period between the 12th and 15th centuries. The Leaf is a rare example of the Indo-Persian school and as an amalgam of the style and spirit of the twin off-shoots of this ancient aryan culture which was of short duration, *hence existing fragments are rare and valuable*. The existence of this distinct school of portraiture has long been known, *but hitherto very few specimens have been located*.

[See illustration]

LEAF 7 reveals the influence of Persia with features familiar to Sassanian art. Similar rare and beautiful fragments represent the dynasty of Persian kings who ruled from 226 A.D. to 651 A.D. This Leaf bears a resemblance to representations of the ancient Armenia: Ardasheses.

[See illustration]

LEAF 8 is an old and beautiful fragment illustrating Egyptian royalty. The figure depicted is holding the ANKH, the ancient and sacred Egyptian symbol of *life and prosperity*. There is no script on the fragment to indicate the identity of the subject.

[See illustration]

LEAF 9 is exceedingly old. The religious significance and character is strongly emphasized in this iconographic type piece and it appears that a portraiture of the Lord was the original context. Much of the decorative composition of the border has vanished from the fragment. It can be discerned that the figure is in prayer or meditation. To His immediate rear a candelabrum can be discerned. For an excellent similar specimen see Asiatic Art in Private Collections of Holland and Belgium by H. F. E. Visser, Curator Museum of Asiatic Art & Municipal Museums, Amsterdam, Holland, plate 102, no. 199.

LEAF 10 displays Persian and Indian influence. The portraiture is that of a Persian warrior or Prince, in combat or hunting. The script is Arabic of the Persian tongue, although faded and difficult to translate. For a similar specimen see Vol. 5 of: *A Survey Of Persian Art* by Dr. Phyllis Ackerman and Dr. Arthur Upham Pope, pp. 870-71.

LEAF 11. Egyptian symbolism is portrayed upon this small but fascinating piece. The figure appears to be holding the *ankh*.

LEAF 12. This leaf displays the keen interest in portraiture so characteristic of Egyptian art.

LEAF 13. This piece shows two figures of angels holding a Chalice containing a wafer. The connection with the Eucharist is marked. The cup at the upper right of the Leaf offers a strong supposition that it has eucharistic significance. The monk or saint is also distinctly depicted holding a book or other text.

LEAF 14. This Leaf probably displays some sacrificial significance. The very old fragment shows two figures facing each other in what appears to be an offering to a deity.

LEAF 15. This Leaf illustrates the influence of Persia. The portraiture is that of a Persian warrior. The Coptic script reads "mighty warrior". Much of the color decoration has faded and vanished from this piece. The portraiture is almost identical to figures which appear in the Galen manuscript of the Seljuq School (1st half of the 13th Century), Staatsbibliothek, Vienna, Dedicatory page of "A Prince Surrounded By Servants", Vol. 5, p. 814 in "A Survey Of Persian Art".

[Continued]



[NUMBER 127, Leaf 6]



[NUMBER 127, Leaf 8]

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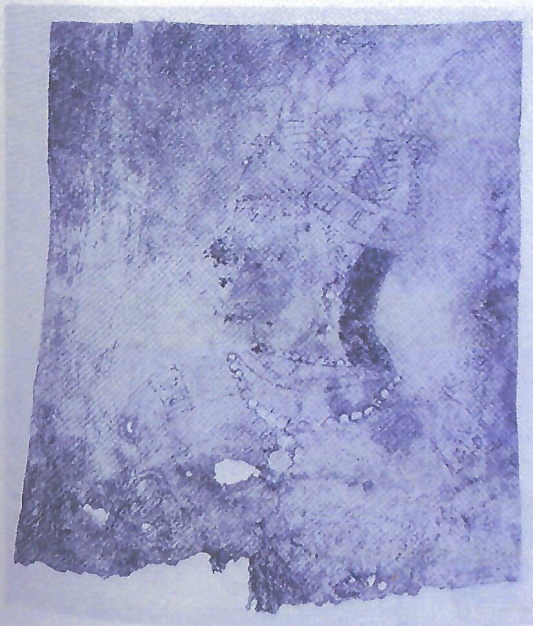
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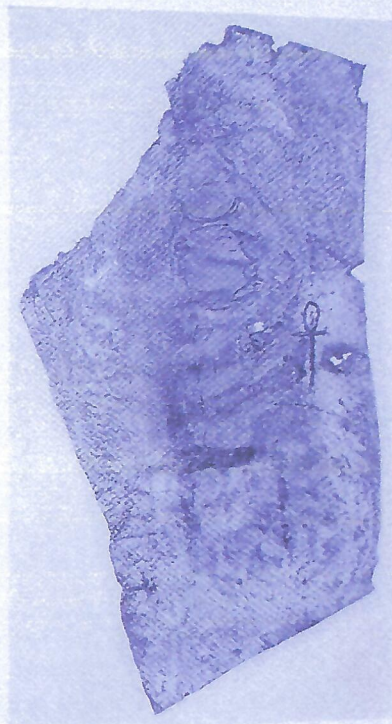
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[NUMBER 127, Leaf 6]



[NUMBER 127, Leaf 8]



[NUMBER 127, Leaf 7]

Number 127—Concluded]

Before terminating the description with reference to Leaves 1, 2 and 3, we add some remarks by Dr. Egon Wellesz of Lincoln University, Oxford, Pa., an internationally famous authority on this subject, for their general interest. "These treatises were, in fact, not written for the use of the musician but for the students of the 'stepping-stones of wisdom'. For them, the term "music" had a threefold significance; the music of the spheres, the harmonious concord by which the parts of the soul correspond to the elements of the body, or lastly the music which is perceptible to our ears. These three kinds of music are governed by the same numerical ratios, the ratios by which the cosmos is harmoniously ordered (1) *musica mundana* (2) *musica humana* (3) *musica quae in quibusdam constituta est instrumentis*.

"Byzantine philosophers and theorists deal mainly with *musica mundana* and *musica humana*, and viz. the works of Gnostic authors on magic, and those of the Byzantine Alchemists. But only recently have attempts been made to connect certain magic formulae which are found in fragments of Greek papyri, and in speculations on music in passages of alchemical treatise *de magna et sacra arte* by Stephanos of Alexandria.

"From Oriental mystery rites it is known that single vowels or groups of vowels were uttered by the initiate to intensify the effect of the incantation. According to the Pythagorean doctrine, each tone of his scale represented the sound of one of the seven planets; therefore, Ruelle and his followers argued the seven Greek vowels 'were magical symbols of the spheres'.

"The treatise ascribed to Demetrius Phalereus, suggests that the Gnostics had adopted the *Egyptian magic ritual*. In Egypt too the priests celebrate the gods through the seven vowels, letting them sound one after the other.

"Developing the Pythagorean conception of the relation between the harmony of the world and that regulating the intervals in music—Nicomachus states that *the motion of each of the seven spheres produces a sound; the first sphere producing the first tone, the second sphere the second tone, and so on. To these tones the names of the seven vowels have been given. The vowels therefore are also symbols of the planets*.

"Since the Pythagoreans professed that the essence of all things was numbers, they attributed great importance to the correspondence of the seven Ionian vowels to the same number of planets, seeing in the equal number of both a *sacred manifestation* of the holy figure seven. Thus they came to use the seven vowels for the planets themselves, as well as for the sound of these celestial bodies.

"The transcriptions are not to be found in any music from which these melismata would be likely to derive, neither in Jewish, Syriac nor Greek music. . . .

"Musicologists have recently drawn attention to two sections on music; one in a treatise ascribed to *Zosimus of Panopolis*, an author of the third or fourth century A.D. the other in one ascribed to an anonymous writer of the seventh century, who was supposed to have given an augmented version of Zosimus's treatise. Speaking of the hymns to be sung at the service of the divine knowledge. Zosimus certainly does not refer to the Orthodox Office, but to the mystery cult of a Gnostic sect, *influenced by Iranian and Chaldean ideas*.

"The treatise of the 'anonymous philosopher' forms a link in the chain of other alchemical works of a similar character, extending from the earliest days of a Christian society existing in the midst of a pagan majority, to the time when Orthodox Christianity had been fully developed, and had given to the Eastern Empire the features characteristic of the new Byzantine civilization."

The research material used in the foregoing description was given to us by H. Aram Gulezian and considerably condensed into its present form. The letters and quotations from eminent scholars in this field has been accepted by the Galleries as sufficient evidence of the great importance and value of the fragments offered.

AFTERNOON

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LARGE PAPER

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backstrips.  
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