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Wollheims' Rosequist Galleries

2843 North Campbell Avenue • Tucson, Arizona 85719 • (602) 327-5729

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

EGYPTIAN MANUSCRIPT AND PAINTED LEAVES OF ANTIQ-
UITY. A group of eleven Leaves *displaying Coptic Script, musical nota-
tion, portraiture, and other written impressions.* Together 11 pieces of
irregular measurements, engrossed on parchment.

Egypt, attributed to the V to XIV Centuries

LEAF 1. A COPTIC MUSICAL MANUSCRIPT

Leaf size - 11" x 11"

285 x 280 mm

The manuscript is one of the very few remnants in existence of graphic description of Ptolemy's *Harmonia Mundi*, containing the graphic coordination of the early Egyptian-Christian conception of the gnostic period, thus placing the date of the manuscript as of the fifth to the seventh century A.D.

Two such manuscripts are known to exist, and 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 colors and their assignment to the planets shown on the leaves are described in communications furnished by Dr. Pahor Labib, Director of the Coptic Museum, Old Cairo, Egypt, dated 17/7/53 and 3/7/54, and by Dr. P. E. Kahle Jr. of Oxford, England, dated 10, August 1953.

Of the two manuscripts, one is in the possession of the Arizona State University Music Library, Tempe, Arizona. (see newspaper items).

The manuscript in the Wollheims' Rosequist Galleries, is a palimpsest, and is identical to that owned by the Arizona State University Music Library.

See last page of brochure regarding data important and essential to scholars or Collectors.

LEAF 2. A COPTIC MEDICAL MANUSCRIPT

Leaf size - 15" x 15"

The manuscript refers to medical culture, describing a formula purporting to have been beneficial during Pharaonic times in the treatment of heart ailment. The Copts were the direct lineal descendants of the Pharaonic Egyptians. (See 6 page printed article accompanying the manuscript.)

NOTE: Although the manuscript is for sale, the formula as revealed cannot be protected or exploited under United States Patent Laws, since the owner of the manuscript cannot claim to have been the inventor or discoverer.

LEAF 3. KING ARA OF ARMENIA

LEAF 3 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 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.*

Leaf size - 6" x 4 1/2"

LEAF 4. DESCENDANT OF JENGIS KHAN

LEAF 4 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 size - 4" x 4 1/2"

LEAF 5. KING ARDASHERES OF ARMENIA

LEAF 5 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 641 A.D. This Leaf bears a resemblance to representations of the ancient Armenian King Ardasheser.

Leaf size - 5" x 5 1/2"

LEAF 6. EGYPTIAN ROYALTY
(fragment is facing to right)

LEAF 6 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.

Leaf size - 8" x 4 1/2"

LEAF 7. EGYPTIAN ROYALTY
(fragment is facing to left)

LEAF 7. Egyptian symbolism is portrayed upon this small but fascinating piece. The figure appears to be holding the *ankh*.

Leaf size - 6" x 5"

LEAF 8. PERSIAN WARRIOR

LEAF 8. This Leaf illustrates the influence of Persia. The portraiture is that of a Persian warrior. The Coptic script reads "might warrior".

Leaf size - 6" x 4 1/2"

LEAF 9. EUCHARIST MANUSCRIPT

LEAF 9. 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 size - 5 1/2" x 5"

LEAF 10. SACRIFICIAL EGYPTIAN SCENE

LEAF 10. 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 size - 4" x 6"

LEAF 11. PORTRAITURE OF EGYPTIAN ART

LEAF 11. This leaf displays the keen interest in portraiture so characteristic of Egyptian art.

Leaf size - 4 1/2" x 6"

RE:

LEAF 1. A COPTIC MUSICAL MANUSCRIPT (Continued)

We quote from Dr. Eric Werner's reports as follows:

"Dr. Eric Werner, Professor of Liturgical Music at the Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati, Ohio, and Chairman of the Hebrew Union School of Sacred Music, New York City, has specialized in musical research of antiquity. He reports as follows concerning the present Coptic documents: "The manuscripts have certainly a musical significance, but it is not for the purpose of a practical application of music; the scale of circles is a graphic representation of Ptolemy's *Harmonia Mundi*. Claudius Ptolemaeus of Alexandria was the celebrated mathematician, astronomer and geographer of the second century, A.D.

"The Ptolemaic cycles and epicycles are clearly visible on the manuscripts, and the 7+5 spheres, which appear on leaf 1, indicate the Zodiac in a musical interpretation. In the early Middle Ages, following Greek and Babylonian tradition, every attempt was made to coordinate the planets, their constellations and conjunctions with definite musical modes. The manuscripts, therefore, are among the very few remnants of graphic description of that theory, coordinating Ptolemaic cosmological-musical ideas with Egyptian-Christian conceptions of the Gnostic period during the fifth and sixth centuries." (Dr. Werner refers to the collection of the Oxyrynchus Papyri, edited by Grenfell and Hunt where a few similar, although non-musical counterparts may be found.)

"A study of the Ikhwan es-Safa (the Brotherhood of Purity, a famous Islamic theological work) and the identification of the colors of each sphere with certain celestial bodies, musical modes and seasons, might establish this early musico-cosmologic theory. The manuscripts are of most unique value since they show that the Ptolemaic conception did not only spread Westward as hitherto imagined, but influenced the entire Near and Middle East, so that similar Arabic ideas of the harmony of the spheres, as expressed by Al Farabi, Ibn Sina, Al Kindi, and other writers, including the Ikhwan es-Safa, were not necessarily the product of their familiarity with ancient Greek theories, but might have come to them *directly* through such manuscripts as are described here."

"Closely related to the ethos doctrine is the venerable principle of the harmony of the spheres. This ancient and beautiful conception was, as we know, one of the keystones of Pythagorean cosmology. *But today, it has begun to appear that the idea of sounding spheres originated much earlier, in Egyptian, perhaps also in Babylonian culture.* Apparently, it belonged to the esoteric doctrines of the priestly classes. . . . Ptolemy and Aristides Quintilianus fashioned very concrete and mathematically elaborate systems of cosmic harmony, developing some of the ideas of Nicomachus of Gerasa . . . Philo is the most vigorous advocate of the Pythagorean idea; to him, the heavens are the archetype for all musical instruments. The purpose of the musical structure of the cosmos is to provide the accompaniment for hymns of praise. The seven planets are compared to the seven strings of the lyre . . ."

"As to chords and harmony; this much disputed question can be answered briefly — we have indubitable proof of the existence of chords — the inhabitants of the Near East used this species of primitive harmony, the simultaneous striking of two different tones, with a chord as the result. Going far beyond this, Farmer quotes a passage of Ibn Sina which can hardly be understood as other than a description of the early *organum*. Our passage likewise adds to the evidence, already convincing, that chords were known and utilized in the Near East, but they are rather an exception than a common feature."

Prof. Jacques Handschin, Director of the Institute of Musicology of Basel University, Basel, Switzerland, an eminent international musicologist, who has made a special study of this early Ptolemaic theory, suggests a slightly different interpretation of the manuscripts. While not excluding the possibility of reference to Ptolemy's *Harmonia Mundi*, he is much more inclined to consider the various colors of the circles as a literal implementation of the *chromatic* music, since *chroma* in Greek means color. He, therefore, assumes that the manuscripts represent tunes that correspond with the chromatic scale, or at least contain many chromatic elements.