

Stephen Butler

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Additional photographs are available on request.

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Stephen Butler



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I Large Syriac Liturgical Manuscript Leaf on Paper
[Northern Mesopotamia or Syria, 16th–17th century]

Origin
Northern Mesopotamia or
Syria

Date
16th–17th century

Medium
Ink and rubrication on laid
paper

Dimensions
420 × 220 mm

Description
Substantial manuscript
leaf from a Syriac
liturgical codex, written
on rough laid paper in
a clear and confident
Syriac ecclesiastical
bookhand in brown ink,
with rubricated headings,
sectional divisions, and
liturgical markers in red.
The text is arranged in two
columns of approximately
24–28 lines per column,
preserving a formal and
carefully structured layout
characteristic of liturgical
manuscripts intended for
ecclesiastical use. The
leaf survives in its original
large format, with visible
folds and handling wear
consistent with sustained
liturgical function.

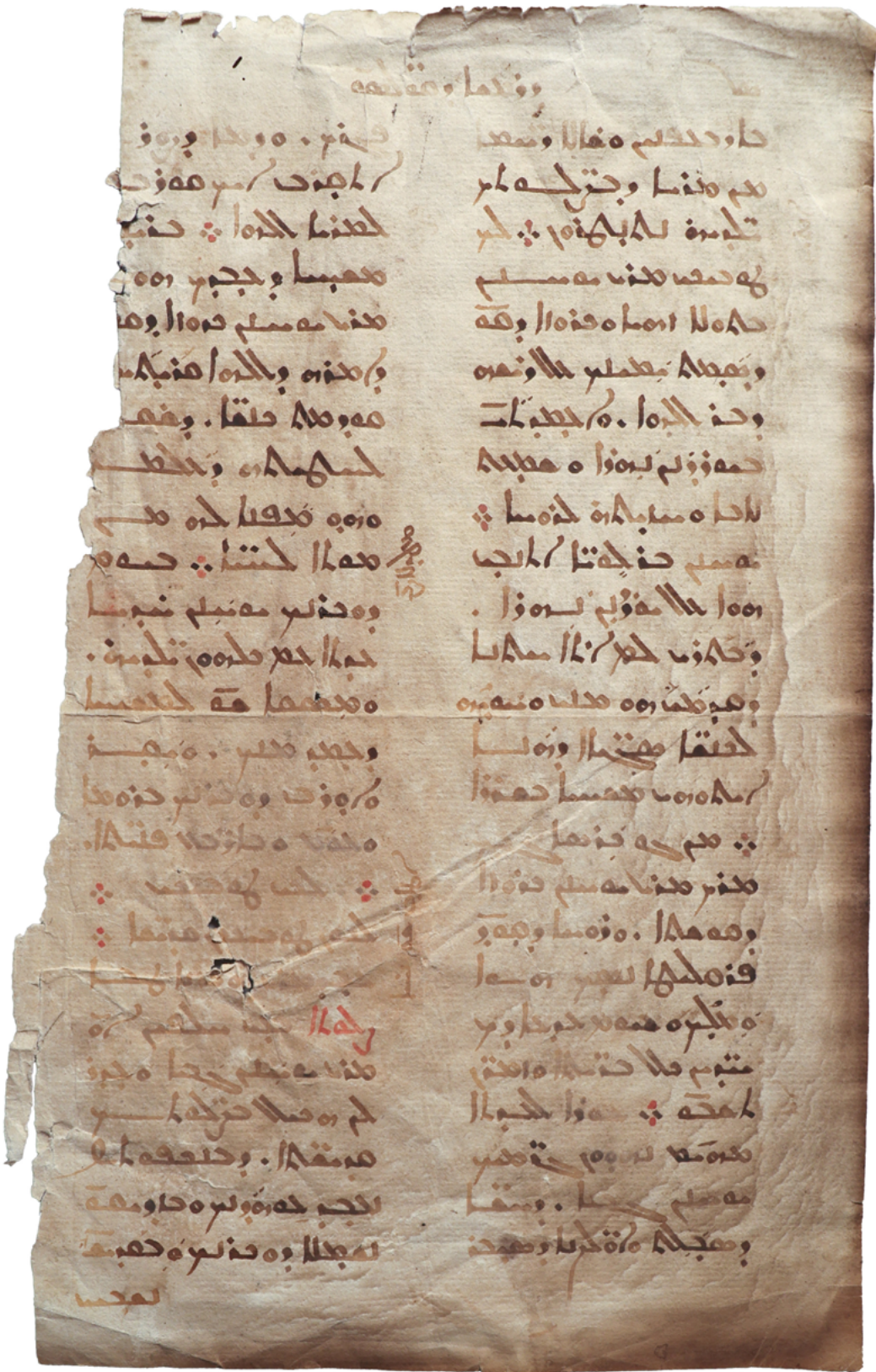
The manuscript derives from the rich liturgical tradition of the Syriac-speaking Christian communities of the Near East, most likely produced in Northern Mesopotamia or Syria, where Syriac remained a principal language of worship and theological transmission well into the early modern period. The script corresponds to a formal Syriac bookhand associated with ecclesiastical manuscripts of the Church of the East or related Syriac Christian traditions. The use of rubrication serves to mark liturgical divisions, readings, and structural elements essential for public recitation.

The unusually large size of the leaf indicates that it originated from a substantial lectern manuscript, intended to be read aloud during communal worship. Manuscripts of this scale were typically produced for church use rather than private devotion, and their survival reflects their central role in the liturgical life of Syriac Christian communities.

Syriac manuscripts represent one of the most important textual traditions of Eastern Christianity, preserving biblical, liturgical, and theological works in a language closely related to the Aramaic spoken in the early Christian period. Leaves of this size and clarity are increasingly scarce on the market, particularly examples retaining clear rubrication and strong legibility.

A visually striking and historically important example of the Syriac manuscript tradition, notable for its large format, excellent legibility, and clear evidence of ecclesiastical use.

Provenance
I. Mr C. Saba, Beirut, Lebanon; sold by him in London.



£1,500

2 Six Fragments from a Coptic Papyrus Lectionary in Bohairic Dialect
[Egypt, 7th–8th century]

Origin	The Bohairic dialect, originating in the Nile Delta, emerged as the principal liturgical dialect of the Coptic Church and remains in use to the present day. Manuscripts of this type formed part of lectionaries—liturgical books containing selections from scripture arranged according to the ecclesiastical calendar—used during church services. The present fragments likely derive from a papyrus codex produced during a formative period in Egyptian Christian manuscript culture, following the transition from late antique to early medieval book production under early Islamic rule. Coptic papyrus manuscripts of this period are of particular importance in the history of the Christian book, representing a direct continuation of late antique scribal traditions and preserving biblical and liturgical texts in one of the earliest Christian vernacular languages. The Bohairic dialect would later become the dominant liturgical language of Egyptian Christianity, and early papyrus witnesses such as the present fragments provide valuable insight into the transmission and use of Christian texts in Egypt during this period. Fragments of Coptic biblical and liturgical papyri are increasingly scarce on the market, particularly examples with secure provenance and clear institutional sale history. The present group is especially desirable for its early date, legibility, and documented provenance through Bonhams and Westminster Rare Books. An important and attractive group of early Christian manuscript fragments, representing the enduring manuscript culture of early medieval Egypt.
Egypt	
Date	
7th–8th century	
Medium	
Ink on papyrus	
Dimensions	
Largest Fragment: 76 × 57 mm	
Description	
Six manuscript fragments from a Coptic lectionary codex, written on papyrus in the Bohairic dialect, in brown ink in a clear and disciplined biblical majuscule hand. The fragments preserve portions of liturgical readings arranged in continuous script, reflecting their origin within a formal ecclesiastical manuscript used in the public reading of scripture. The papyrus fibres are clearly visible, and the ink remains well preserved and legible, with characteristic letterforms consistent with Coptic biblical and liturgical manuscripts of the early medieval period.	
Provenance	
1. Bonhams, London, 7 June 2011, lot 108 (part).	
2. Chris Wells, Westminster Rare Books, London.	



£ 2,950

3 Early Coptic Vellum Manuscript Fragment with Theological Text
[Egypt, 7th–8th century]

Origin Egypt	The use of vellum rather than papyrus indicates a manuscript of higher status and durability, reflecting the transition in Egyptian book production during the late antique and early medieval period toward parchment codices intended for long-term ecclesiastical use. Manuscripts of this type were typically produced in monastic or ecclesiastical scriptoria and formed part of theological, biblical, or liturgical codices serving the intellectual and devotional needs of Coptic Christian communities.
Date 7th–8th century	
Medium Ink on vellum	
Dimensions 101 × 30 mm	
Description Fragment from a Coptic manuscript codex, written on fine vellum in brown ink in a clear and practiced biblical hand. The fragment preserves portions of a theological text in the Coptic language, arranged in continuous script and executed with confident letterforms characteristic of early medieval Coptic manuscript production. The vellum is of fine quality, with well-preserved ink and clearly visible script despite the fragmentary state.	Coptic manuscripts of the 7th and 8th centuries represent an important phase in the history of Christian book production in Egypt, preserving theological and doctrinal traditions in the native language of Egyptian Christianity. These manuscripts were produced during a period of cultural and religious continuity following the Arab conquest of Egypt, and their survival provides valuable evidence for the persistence of Christian literary traditions during this transformative era. Fragments on vellum from this early period are considerably scarcer than papyrus examples and are especially prized by collectors for their durability, clarity of script, and direct connection to the early codex tradition. The present fragment is particularly desirable for its early date, fine vellum support, and secure provenance through Bonhams and Westminster Rare Books. An attractive and historically important early Christian manuscript fragment, representing the theological manuscript tradition of early medieval Egypt. Provenance 1. Bonhams, London, 7 June 2011, Lot 108 (part). 2. Chris Wells, Westminster Rare Books, London.

£ 2,450



4 Early Coptic Vellum Manuscript Leaf with Literary Text in Two Scribal Hands
[Egypt, 7th–8th century]

Origin	The primary hand is executed in a practiced Coptic biblical majuscule typical of early medieval Egyptian codices, with clear and disciplined letterforms consistent with manuscript production of the 7th–8th century.
Egypt	
Date	The secondary hand appears more informal and may represent either later reuse of the vellum or scribal testing of ink and pen. Such reused or trial leaves provide valuable insight into scribal practices and manuscript production techniques in early Christian Egypt.
7th–8th century	
Medium	
Ink on vellum	
Dimensions	The use of vellum reflects the transition from papyrus to parchment as the preferred writing material for durable codices intended for ecclesiastical and scholarly use. Manuscripts of this type were produced in monastic scriptoria, where theological, biblical, and literary works were copied for study, instruction, and liturgical reading.
120 × 100 mm	
Description	Coptic vellum manuscripts from this early period are significantly scarcer than papyrus examples, and fragments preserving multiple scribal hands are particularly desirable for the study of manuscript production and scribal culture. The present fragment is especially notable for its size, clear script, and unusual evidence of multiple stages of scribal activity.
Substantial fragment from a Coptic manuscript codex, written on fine vellum in brown ink, preserving portions of a literary or theological text. The fragment measures approximately 12 × 10 cm and is notable for preserving writing on both sides, with the verso executed in a distinct secondary hand differing in ductus, ink tone, and letterform from the recto. This suggests reuse, scribal correction, or possibly a trial or practice leaf associated with manuscript production.	An important and visually striking early Christian manuscript fragment, illustrating the working practices of Coptic scribes during a formative period in the history of the Christian book.
	Provenance
	1. Bonhams, London, 7 June 2011, Lot 108 (part).
	2. Chris Wells, Westminster Rare Books, London.



£ 3,250

5

Early Arabic Business Letter Fragment on Vellum with Greek Insertion
[Egypt or Syria, 7th–8th century]

Origin
Egypt or Syria

Date
7th–8th century

Medium
Ink on vellum

Dimensions
70 × 50 mm

Description
Rare fragment from an early Arabic documentary manuscript, written on fine vellum in brown ink in a clear early Arabic cursive hand. The fragment preserves portions of a commercial or administrative letter, and is notable for containing a Greek word inserted within the Arabic text, written in a distinct hand and ink, reflecting multilingual administrative and commercial practices during the formative period of early Islamic governance. The reverse is blank.

The script corresponds to an early Arabic documentary hand of the Umayyad or early Abbasid period, prior to the full standardization of later cursive scripts. The presence of Greek alongside Arabic reflects the transitional administrative environment of the eastern Mediterranean and Egypt in the 7th–8th centuries, when Greek remained widely used alongside Arabic in official, commercial, and bureaucratic contexts following the Arab conquests. Greek had served as the principal administrative language of the Byzantine Empire in the region, and its continued presence in early Arabic documentary manuscripts provides important evidence for the gradual linguistic transition that accompanied the development of Islamic administrative systems.

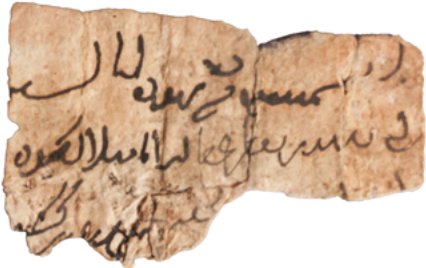
The use of vellum, rather than papyrus, suggests a document of relative importance or durability, and vellum documentary fragments of this early period are significantly scarcer than papyrus examples. Early Arabic documentary vellum fragments are highly prized for their historical importance, representing some of the earliest surviving written evidence of Arabic in practical administrative and commercial use.

Fragments combining Arabic and Greek are particularly rare and provide valuable insight into the cultural and administrative continuity of the eastern Mediterranean during the early Islamic period.

An important and highly desirable early Islamic documentary manuscript fragment, illustrating the linguistic and administrative transition of the early Islamic Near East.

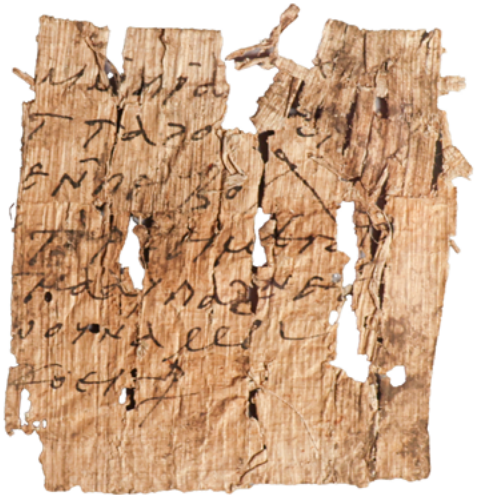
Provenance
1. Bonhams, London, 7 June 2011, Lot 108 (part).
2. Chris Wells, Westminster Rare Books, London.

£ 3,500



6 Early Coptic Documentary Letter Fragment with Chi-Rho Christogram
[Egypt, 7th–8th century]

Origin Egypt	The script is a practiced documentary Coptic hand typical of early medieval Egypt, written across the horizontal fibres of the papyrus in a clear and legible cursive. The presence of the chi-rho symbol reflects the integration of Christian devotional elements into everyday documentary and administrative practice, illustrating the pervasive role of Christian identity in the social and commercial life of Coptic Egypt during the early Islamic period.
Date 7th–8th century	
Medium Ink on papyrus	
Dimensions 90 × 80 mm	Papyrus letters such as this provide rare and direct insight into the daily life, economic activity, and personal relationships of early Christian communities in Egypt. The survival of both textual content relating to financial transactions and the Christogram adds particular historical interest, demonstrating the intersection of practical and religious concerns in early medieval written communication.
Description Fragment from a Coptic documentary letter written on papyrus in brown ink, preserving the right-hand portion of a personal or administrative communication. The surviving text refers to financial matters, including mention of “the payments” and concludes with a clearly executed chi-rho Christogram, the early Christian symbol formed from the Greek letters X and P, representing the name of Christ. The reverse preserves part of the address to the recipient, confirming its function as a folded and transmitted letter.	Documentary papyri from this period are highly valued for their immediacy and authenticity, and examples preserving explicit Christian symbols are especially sought after by collectors of early Christian manuscripts and documentary antiquities. A rare and evocative early Christian documentary papyrus, preserving both economic correspondence and explicit Christian symbolism from the formative centuries of Egyptian Christianity. Provenance 1. Bonhams, London, 7 June 2011, Lot 108 (part). 2. Chris Wells, Westminster Rare Books, London.



£ 3,450

7 Demotic Egyptian Documentary Papyrus Recording Contributions and Totals
[Egypt, 3rd–4th century]

Origin
Egypt

Date
3rd–4th century

Medium
Ink on papyrus

Dimensions
146 × 127 mm

Description
Substantial documentary papyrus preserving a list of contributions and calculated totals, written in Demotic Egyptian script in dark ink. The text appears on both sides of the papyrus, with the verso written in inverted orientation relative to the recto, indicating reuse of the writing surface, a common practice in documentary manuscripts of the period. The papyrus retains clearly visible fibres and well-preserved ink, with multiple entries arranged in columnar format consistent with accounting or administrative record-keeping.

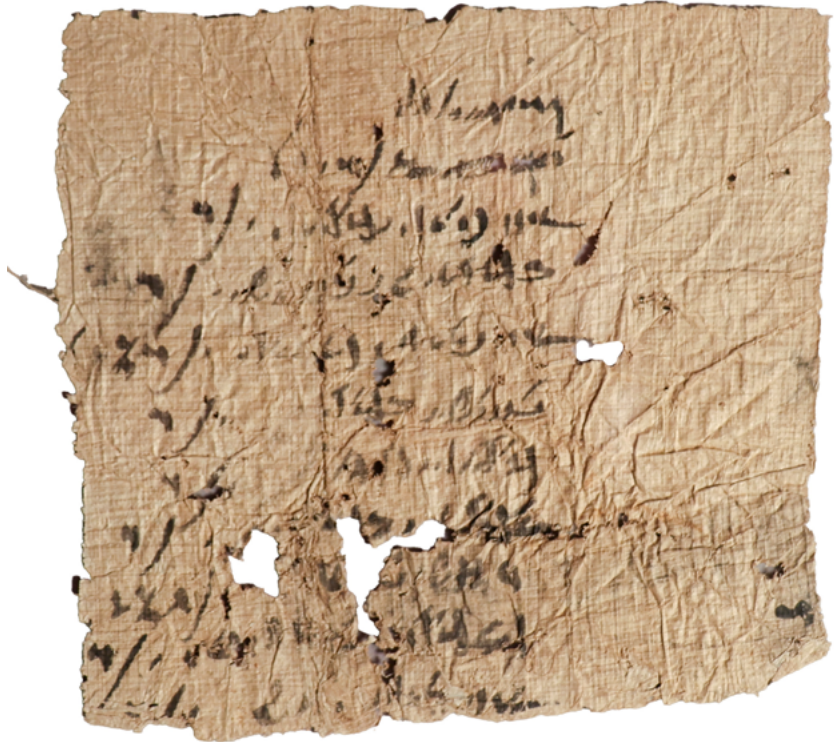
The Demotic script represents the final developmental stage of the indigenous Egyptian writing system, used extensively for documentary, legal, and commercial purposes from the late first millennium BC through the Roman period. Documents of this type were used to record financial transactions, contributions, tax payments, or institutional accounting, providing valuable evidence for the economic and administrative life of late antique Egypt.

The reuse of the papyrus and the presence of totals suggest practical administrative use rather than formal archival copying, offering direct insight into the working practices of Egyptian scribes during the late Roman period. Demotic documentary papyri represent one of the last surviving expressions of native Egyptian written culture before its eventual replacement by Coptic and Greek in administrative and literary contexts.

Documentary papyri of this size and legibility are increasingly scarce on the market, and examples preserving clear accounting structures and multiple entries are especially desirable for collectors of ancient manuscripts and documentary antiquities.

An important and historically evocative administrative papyrus, illustrating the continuity of indigenous Egyptian scribal traditions into late antiquity.

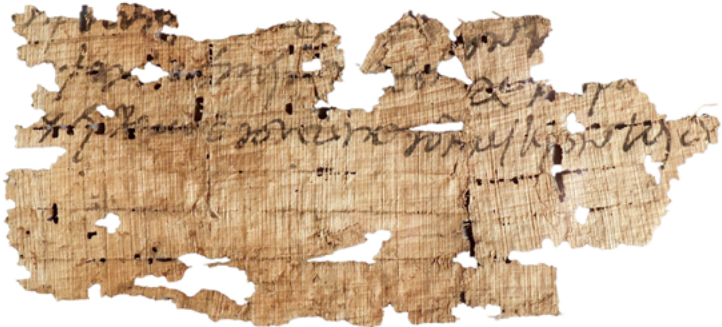
Provenance
I. Artemission, London, sold 11 June 2012.



£ 2,750

8 Byzantine Greek Documentary Letter Fragment on Papyrus
[Egypt, 7th–8th century]

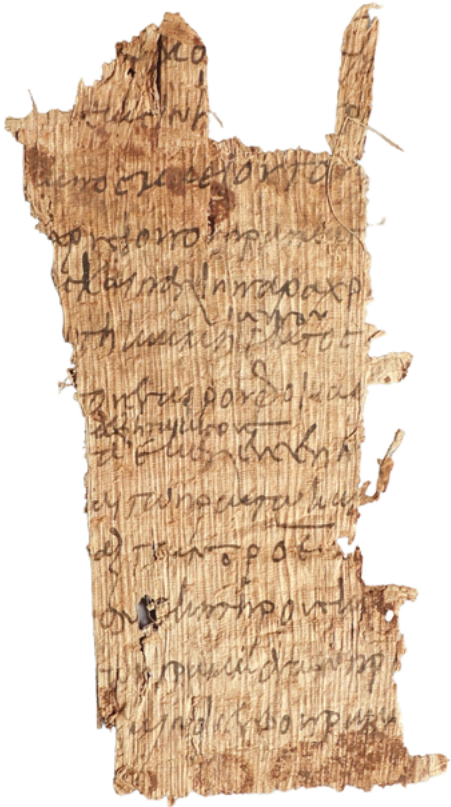
Origin Egypt	The script represents a practiced documentary hand typical of late Byzantine Egypt, when Greek remained the principal language of administration, commerce, and written communication. Even following the Arab conquest of Egypt in the mid-7th century, Greek continued to be widely used alongside emerging Arabic administrative practice. Documents such as the present example illustrate this transitional period in the linguistic and administrative history of the eastern Mediterranean.
Date 7th–8th century	
Medium Ink on papyrus	
Dimensions 63 x 140 mm	The preserved margin and column structure confirm its origin within a formal written communication, most likely a private letter or administrative document. Greek documentary papyri provide invaluable evidence for everyday life, administrative organization, and economic activity in late antique and early medieval Egypt.
Description Documentary papyrus fragment preserving part of a Greek letter written during the Byzantine or early Islamic period in Egypt. The surviving portion includes the lower section of a text column with adjacent margin, written in a clear Greek cursive documentary hand in brown ink. The papyrus preserves the original horizontal fibre structure and column format characteristic of administrative or personal correspondence of the period.	Fragments of Greek documentary papyri from this period are increasingly scarce on the market, particularly examples with clear script and preserved structural features such as margins and column alignment. The present fragment is especially desirable for its early date, legibility, and secure provenance. An important and attractive example of Byzantine documentary manuscript culture, illustrating the continued use of Greek in Egypt during the early Islamic period.
	Provenance 1. Bonhams, London, 7 June 2011, Lot 108 (part). 2. Chris Wells, Westminster Rare Books, London.



£ 2,850

9 Byzantine Greek Contract Fragment on Papyrus Naming Phoibamon
[Egypt, 7th–8th century]

Origin	The script is characteristic of Byzantine documentary hands used in Egypt during the late Byzantine and early Islamic periods, when Greek remained the principal language of legal, administrative, and commercial documentation. Contracts such as this governed business partnerships, financial obligations, property transactions, and commercial agreements, providing direct evidence of economic activity and legal practice in late antique Egypt.
Egypt	
Date	
7th–8th century	
Medium	Ink on papyrus
Dimensions	130 × 63 mm
Description	The mention of a named individual, Phoibamon—a well-attested Coptic personal name common in Byzantine Egypt—greatly enhances the historical importance of the fragment. Documents preserving named individuals allow for direct insight into the social and economic networks of early Christian Egyptian society. The use of the term <i>hetairos</i> (partner) confirms the contractual nature of the document, likely relating to a business partnership or financial arrangement.
Documentary papyrus fragment preserving part of a Greek legal contract written in a practiced documentary cursive hand. The surviving text includes a reference to “ἑταίρου Φοιβαμῶνος” (<i>hetairou Phoibamanos</i>), meaning “partner of Phoibamon,” identifying one of the named parties to the agreement. The fragment preserves multiple lines of continuous legal text written across the horizontal fibres of the papyrus. The reverse is blank, consistent with its function as part of a formal legal instrument.	
	Greek documentary papyri of this type are among the most important surviving sources for the study of Byzantine and early Islamic Egypt, preserving authentic records of legal and economic life. Examples preserving identifiable individuals and contractual terminology are especially sought after by collectors and scholars alike.
	An important and historically significant Byzantine legal document fragment, preserving evidence of a named commercial partnership from early medieval Egypt.
	Provenance
	1. Bonhams, London, 7 June 2011, Lot 108 (part).
	2. Chris Wells, Westminster Rare Books, London.



£ 4,250

10 Coptic Monastic Accounts on Papyrus
[Egypt, 6th–7th century]

Origin
Egypt

Date
6th–7th century

Medium
Ink on papyrus

Dimensions
155 x 115 mm

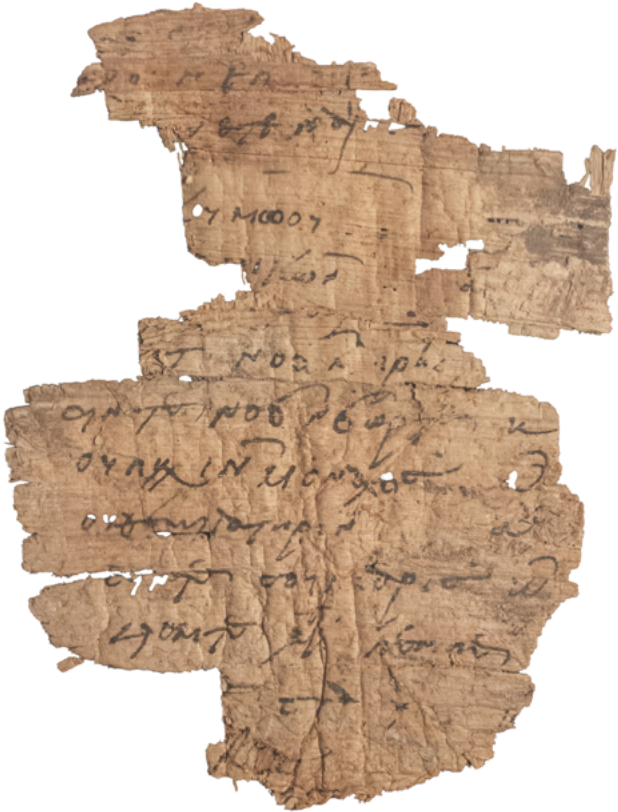
Description
Single irregular fragment preserving portions of a documentary account, written in dark brown ink along the horizontal fibres. The text is executed in a practiced documentary Coptic hand typical of late antique and early Byzantine Egypt, with rapid cursive ligatures and abbreviated forms characteristic of administrative usage rather than literary production. The surviving entries appear to record financial or material transactions associated with a monastic community, including references to named individuals identified as monks (“**πμοναχος**”, the monk), suggesting its origin within a monastery or affiliated ecclesiastical institution. Fragmentary, with losses and abrasions; mounted and framed for preservation.

Documents of this kind formed the administrative backbone of Egyptian monastic life, recording distributions of grain, oil, textiles, or monetary payments. Such accounts provide rare direct insight into the economic organisation of monasteries, which functioned not only as religious centres but also as major landholders and economic entities. The hand and format correspond closely with comparable Coptic documentary papyri of the 6th–7th centuries, a period marked by flourishing monastic networks across Middle and Upper Egypt.

The papyrus survives in fragmentary condition, with losses along the margins and surface abrasions consistent with its original use and subsequent burial environment. Nevertheless, multiple lines of legible text remain, preserving valuable prosopographical and economic data.

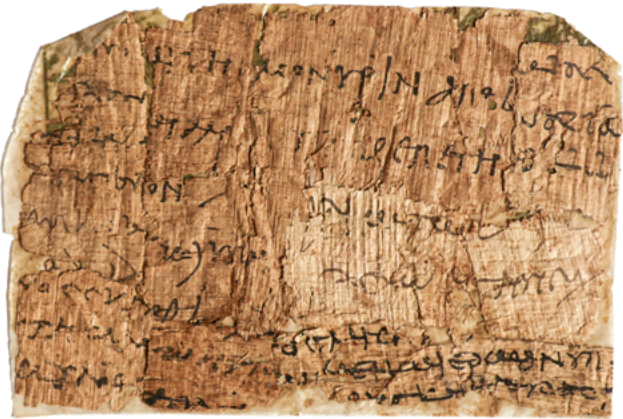
Provenance
1. Bonhams, London, Sale 18847, 7 June 2011, lot 108 (part).
2. Chris Wells, Westminster Rare Books, London.
3. Private collection, UK.

£1,850



II Bilingual Coptic and Greek Documentary Papyrus
[Egypt, 5th–6th century]

Origin	This type of bilingual document represents an important stage in Egyptian cultural history, when Greek remained the dominant administrative language inherited from the Hellenistic and Roman periods, while Coptic—representing the Egyptian language written in Greek-derived characters—was increasingly used in legal, ecclesiastical, and local documentary contexts. Documents combining both languages often reflect legal, commercial, or administrative transactions involving parties operating across linguistic and cultural boundaries.
Egypt	
Date	
5th–6th century	
Medium	Documents combining both languages often reflect legal, commercial, or administrative transactions involving parties operating across linguistic and cultural boundaries.
Ink on papyrus	
Dimensions	The handwriting is consistent with documentary cursive hands of the late Byzantine period, and the papyrus format confirms its origin as part of a formal written record, likely relating to legal, fiscal, or administrative matters. Bilingual papyri are of particular scholarly importance as they provide direct evidence of linguistic transition, administrative practice, and everyday life in late antique Egypt.
73 x 102 mm	
Description	Surviving documentary papyri from this early transitional period are scarce, and examples preserving both Greek and Coptic text are especially sought after by collectors and institutions. Such pieces provide rare and tangible evidence of the coexistence of classical and indigenous traditions in early Christian Egypt.
Rare documentary papyrus fragment preserving text written in both Greek and Coptic, dating to the transitional period of late antique Egypt. The fragment contains several lines of text written in dark brown ink across the horizontal fibres of the papyrus. The script includes both Greek documentary cursive and early Coptic script, reflecting the bilingual administrative and social environment of Byzantine Egypt.	An important and historically significant example of bilingual manuscript culture from late antique Egypt.
Provenance	
1. Bonhams, London, 7 June 2011, Lot 108 (part).	
2. Chris Wells, Westminster Rare Books, London.	



£ 4,750

12 Arabic Documentary Fragment on Papyrus
[Egypt, 8th–10th century]

Origin

Egypt

Date

8th–10th century

Medium

Ink on papyrus

The script is a rapid administrative or documentary hand with elongated horizontal strokes and minimal diacritical pointing, typical of early Abbasid documentary writing. The fragment appears to preserve part of a personal name, probably including the common patronymic formula “Muḥammad ibn ...”, followed in the lower line by what may be a brief concluding phrase including the verb kataba (“wrote”), suggesting that the original document may have been a short memorandum, receipt, or personal note.

Dimensions

65 x 40 mm

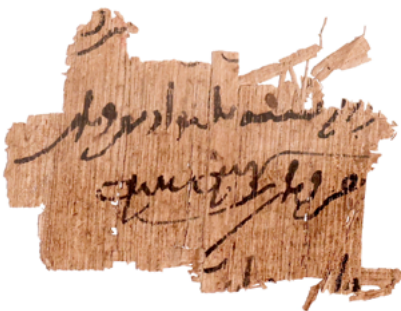
Description

Small fragment from a documentary text written in an early cursive Arabic hand, preserving portions of two lines. Fragmentary but legible, with some losses to the edges and small lacunae within the text.

Written across the horizontal papyrus fibres in dark brown ink. The papyrus shows the characteristic vertical fibre structure and irregular torn edges from its ancient fragmentation. Such Arabic documentary papyri are most frequently recovered from Egypt, particularly the region of Fustat, where the dry climate preserved large archives of administrative and commercial documents from the early Islamic period.

Provenance

1. Bonhams sale 18847 (7 June, 2011) lot 108.
2. Chris Wells, Westminster Rare Books, London.



£ 450

13 Greek Documentary Papyrus Fragment
[Roman Egypt, 3rd–4th century]

Origin
Roman Egypt

Date
3rd–4th century

Medium
Ink on papyrus

Dimensions
170 x 210mm

Description
Documentary papyrus fragment preserving part of a Greek administrative or commercial text written in a practiced cursive documentary hand. The fragment contains several lines of continuous Greek text written in dark ink along the horizontal fibres of the papyrus. The reverse preserves additional traces of writing, indicating reuse or continuation from a longer document.

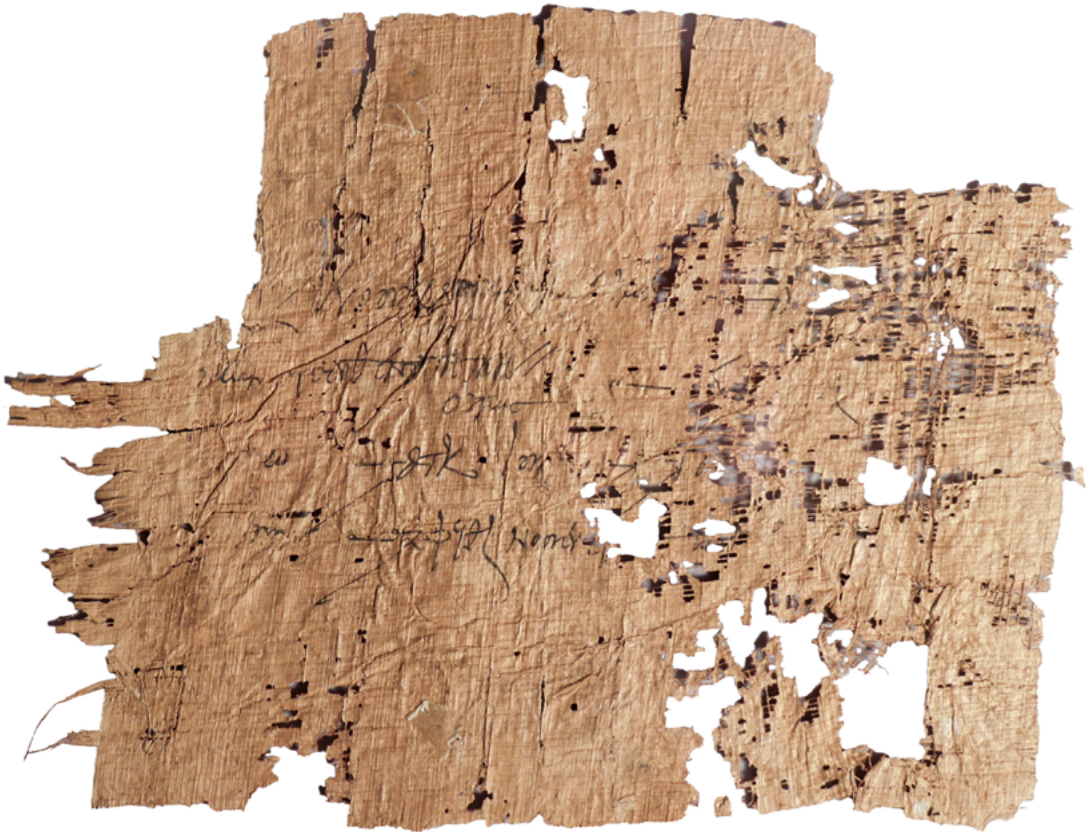
The handwriting is characteristic of Roman-period documentary cursive used throughout Egypt during the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. During this period, Greek functioned as the primary written language of administration, commerce, and private correspondence across Roman Egypt, serving a multilingual population under imperial governance.

The surviving text appears to preserve part of a formal written record, likely relating to administrative, fiscal, or commercial matters. Documents of this nature formed the essential infrastructure of daily life in Roman Egypt, recording contracts, financial transactions, official communications, and legal agreements.

Papyrus fragments from the Roman period are among the most important surviving witnesses to the administrative and economic life of antiquity. Even fragmentary examples preserve direct, contemporary evidence of written culture from nearly seventeen centuries ago. The present example is especially desirable for its early date, clear documentary hand, and secure provenance.

An important and authentic witness to the bureaucratic and commercial world of Roman Egypt.

Provenance
1. Bonhams, London, 7 June 2011, Lot 108 (part).
2. Chris Wells, Westminster Rare Books, London.



£ 2,750

14 Greek Documentary Papyrus Relating to Grain Accounts
[Egypt, 5th–7th century]

Origin

Egypt

Date

5th–7th century

Medium

Ink on papyrus

Documents of this type formed part of the administrative and fiscal systems of Byzantine Egypt, where grain constituted a primary medium of taxation and payment. Similar registers are widely attested among the papyri recovered from sites such as Oxyrhynchus and Hermopolis, recording deliveries of wheat, state requisitions, and local distribution accounts.

Dimensions

140 × 75 mm

Provenance

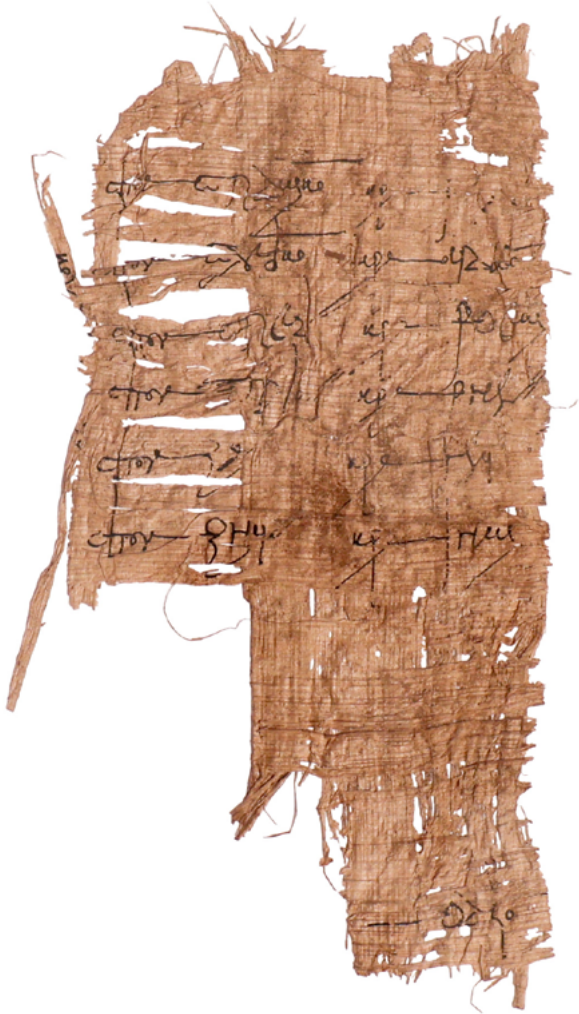
1. Bonhams, Sale 18847, 7 June 2011, lot 108.
2. Chris Wells, Westminster Rare Books, London.

Description

Fragment from a documentary account register preserving portions of approximately seven lines written in a rapid cursive Greek documentary hand. Each entry begins with the word σίτου (sitou), the genitive of σῖτος, meaning “wheat” or “grain,” followed by abbreviated entries that likely recorded quantities, recipients, or accounting tallies. Diagonal strokes and numerical marks visible to the right of several entries are characteristic of late antique accounting notation. Written along the papyrus fibres in dark brown ink. The fragment preserves significant losses from ancient damage, with lacunae between several lines, but the repetitive accounting structure remains clearly legible.

£ 800

30



15 Greek Documentary Papyrus Fragment
[Egypt, 6th–7th century]

Origin

Egypt

Date

6th–7th century

Greek documentary papyri of this type formed part of the extensive administrative and private record-keeping of Byzantine Egypt, and similar texts are well known from papyrus archives discovered at sites such as Oxyrhynchus, Hermopolis, and Aphrodito.

Medium

Ink on papyrus

Provenance

1. Bonhams, Sale 18847, 7 June 2011, lot 108.
2. Chris Wells, Westminster Rare Books, London.

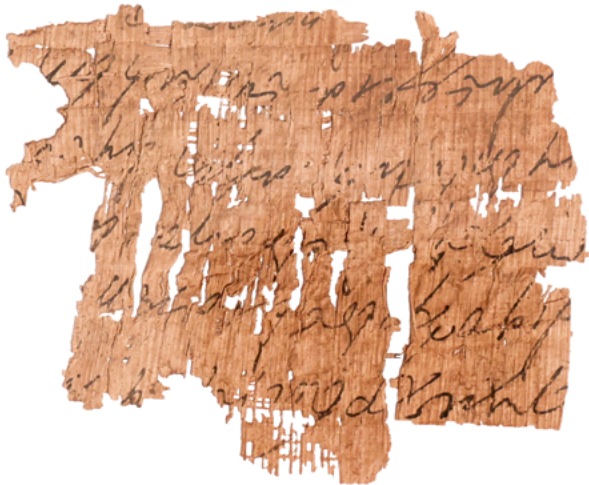
Dimensions

84 x 90 mm

Description

Fragment from a documentary text written in a rapid cursive Greek hand preserving portions of several lines of continuous prose. The script displays the characteristic ligatured forms and sweeping descenders typical of Byzantine administrative writing. Several connective particles and grammatical endings are visible, suggesting that the original document consisted of a short memorandum or letter rather than a tabulated account. Written along the papyrus fibres in dark brown ink. The fragment survives with irregular losses from ancient damage and lacunae between several lines, though the cursive documentary hand remains clearly visible.

£ 600



16 Leaf from an Armenian Psalter including Psalm 84
[Armenia, Eastern Anatolia or Persia, late 15th century]

Origin
Armenia, Eastern Anatolia or Persia

Date
15th century

Medium
Ink on laid paper

Dimensions
140 x 105 mm

Description
Single leaf from an Armenian manuscript Psalter, written on laid paper in a clear and elegant bolorgir bookhand in black ink, with rubricated initials and sectional divisions in red. The text is arranged in two columns of approximately 22–26 lines per column. Armenian numeral notation in the margin identifies the text as part of Psalm 84 (Septuagint numbering), confirming the leaf’s origin within the Psalter, the most widely used and frequently copied book of the Armenian biblical tradition. The leaf survives in excellent condition, with strong legibility, well-preserved rubrication, and only minor marginal toning consistent with its age.

£1,500

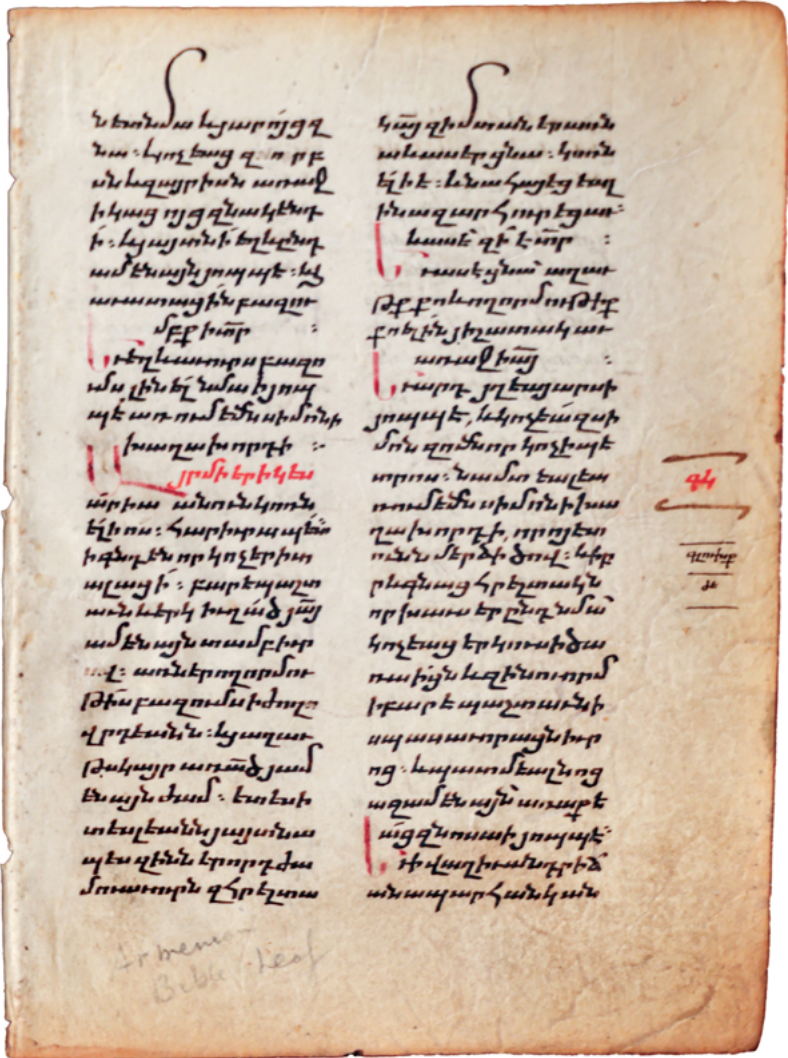
34

Text
The Armenian Psalter occupied a central role in the devotional and liturgical life of the Armenian Church. First translated into Armenian in the early fifth century following the creation of the Armenian alphabet by Mesrop Mashtots, the Armenian Bible became renowned for the accuracy and literary quality of its translation. The Psalms in particular formed the foundation of Armenian liturgical practice, monastic devotion, and private prayer, and were frequently copied both as part of complete biblical codices and as independent volumes. Manuscripts such as the present example were produced in Armenian ecclesiastical and scholarly centres throughout Eastern Anatolia, Persia, and the wider Armenian diaspora, preserving an unbroken textual tradition extending back over a millennium.

The manuscript is executed on fine laid paper, likely of Italian manufacture, reflecting the extensive importation of Venetian and Fabriano papers into Armenian scriptoria during the early modern period.

The present leaf is notable for the clarity and confidence of its script, the balanced proportions of its double-column format, and the attractive contrast between black ink and red rubrication. Armenian biblical manuscripts on paper of this period survive in comparatively limited numbers in the market, and individual leaves from Psalter manuscripts are especially sought after by collectors of biblical manuscripts, Eastern Christian textual traditions, and early vernacular scripture.

A fine and historically significant example of Armenian manuscript culture, combining devotional importance, scholarly value, and strong visual appeal.



17 Leaf from an Armenian Medical Manuscript
[Armenia, Eastern Anatolia or Persia, late 15th to early 16th century]

Origin
Armenia, Eastern Anatolia or Persia

Date
Late 15th to early 16th century

Medium
Ink on laid paper

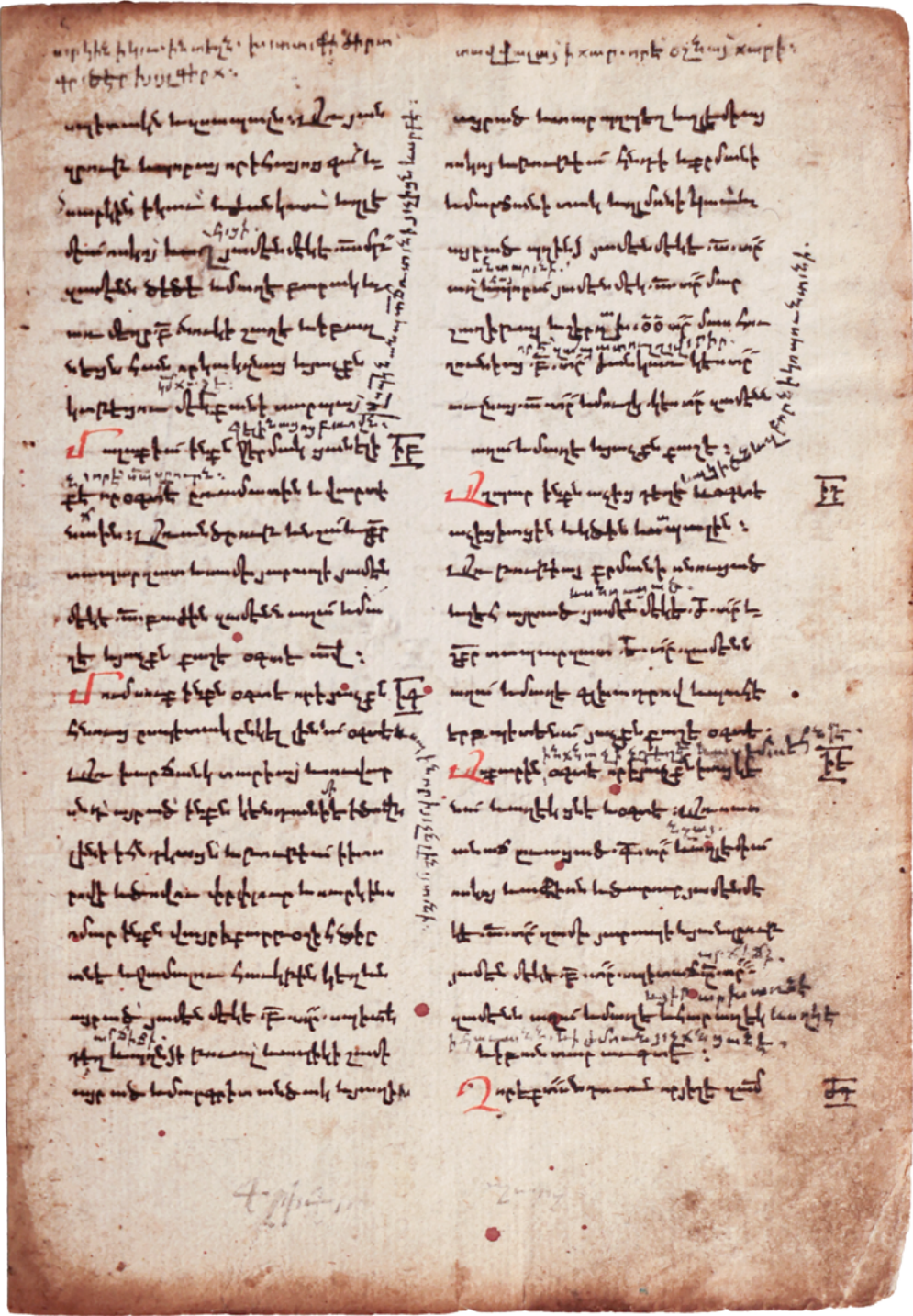
Dimensions
210 x 140 mm

Description
Single leaf on laid paper, written in a clear and practiced Armenian bolorgir bookhand in black ink, with rubricated initials and sectional markers in red, text arranged in two columns of approximately 20–24 lines per column. The paper bears a watermark in the form of a shield, probably of Italian origin, reflecting the extensive use of imported Venetian and Fabriano papers in Armenian manuscript production of the late medieval and early modern period. Minor marginal wear and age toning consistent with its age, but overall in excellent, legible, and highly presentable condition.

This leaf derives from a scientific and medical manuscript belonging to the rich Armenian tradition of practical medicine and herbal pharmacology. The text comprises a sequence of therapeutic prescriptions, each introduced by rubricated initials marking new remedies. These entries describe treatments for specific ailments—including disorders of the head, stomach, and humoral imbalance—and provide detailed instructions for the preparation and administration of medicines derived from herbs, roots, and compounded natural substances. Typical remedies include the grinding of plant materials, infusion in water or wine, and regulated oral administration, reflecting the sophisticated and methodical nature of Armenian medical practice.

Armenian medicine occupied an important position within the wider intellectual world of the Near East, synthesizing indigenous traditions with the authoritative medical systems of classical Greek and Arabic authors, particularly Galen and Avicenna. Medical manuscripts such as this were practical working documents, used by physicians and scholars, and copied for continued use across Armenian communities in Eastern Anatolia, Persia, and beyond. Their survival provides important evidence for the transmission of scientific knowledge and the continuity of learned medical traditions in the Armenian world.

Manuscripts of this type are considerably scarcer than liturgical Armenian texts and are especially prized by collectors interested in the history of medicine, scientific manuscripts, and the intellectual heritage of the Christian East. The present leaf is notable for its clarity of script, well-preserved rubrication, and attractive format, making it both an important historical witness and an aesthetically appealing example of Armenian scholarly manuscript culture.



18 Illuminated Leaf from a Cilician Armenian Gospel Lectionary
[Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, probably Hromkla, late 13th century (c. 1250–1300)]

Origin
Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, probably Hromkla

Date
Late 13th century (c. 1250–1300)

Medium
Ink and pigments on vellum

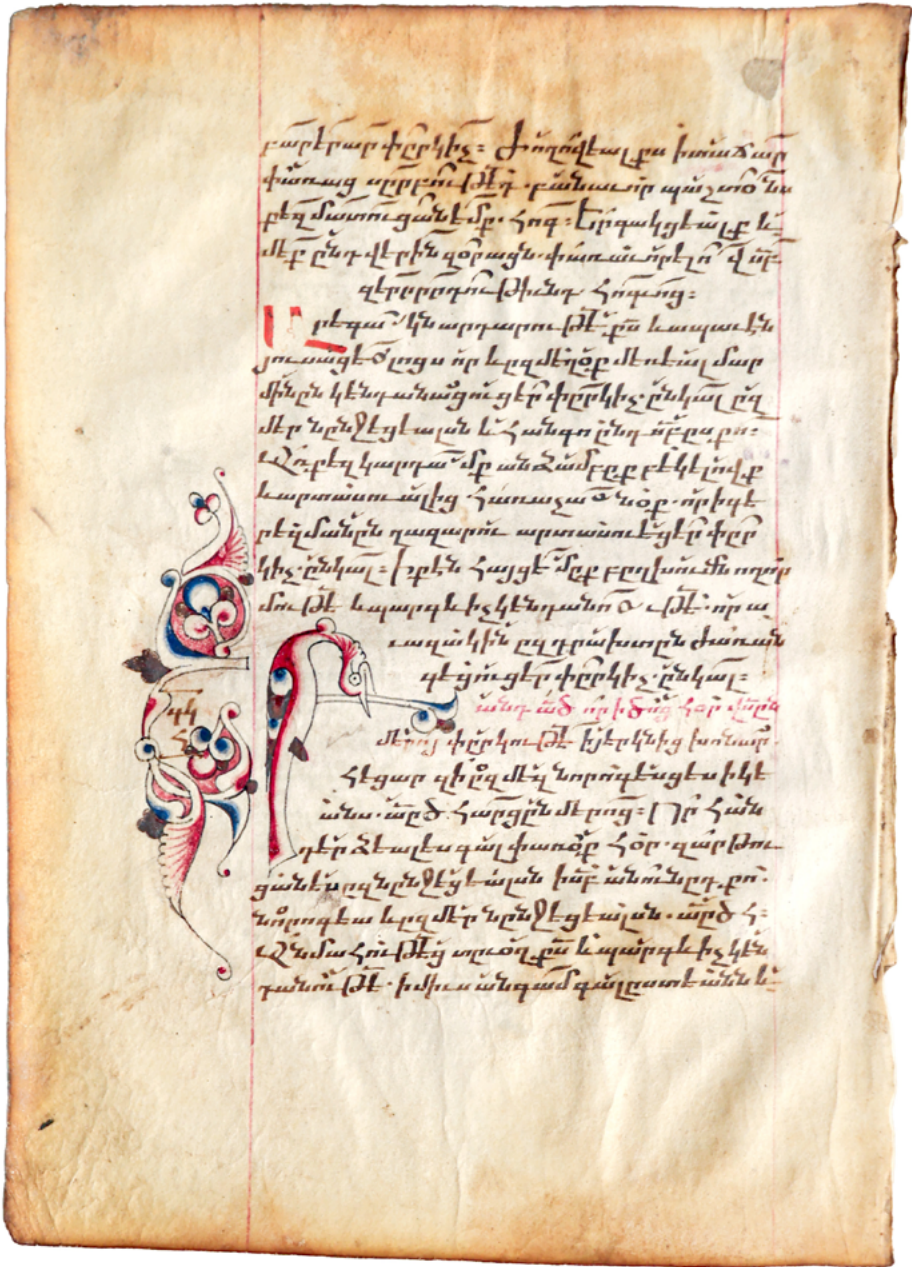
Dimensions
175 x 125 mm

Description
Single illuminated leaf from an Armenian Gospel lectionary, written on vellum in a fine and accomplished bolorgir bookhand in black ink, with rubricated initials and ornamental divisions in red. The text is arranged in a single column of approximately 24 lines, framed within red bounding lines. The recto is distinguished by a large illuminated initial executed in red and blue pigments with elegant penwork flourishes and foliate extensions, exemplifying the refined decorative vocabulary of Cilician Armenian manuscript illumination at its height.

The leaf was produced in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, most probably at the important ecclesiastical centre of Hromkla, seat of the Armenian Catholicos during the 12th and 13th centuries. Armenian scriptoria in Cilicia developed one of the most sophisticated manuscript traditions of the medieval Christian world, combining precise calligraphy with distinctive ornamental illumination. The present leaf derives from a liturgical Gospel lectionary (Evangelion), used for the public reading of Gospel passages throughout the liturgical year.

The style of illumination reflects the mature Cilician aesthetic, characterized by bold architectural letterforms, restrained colour palette, and refined pen-flourish ornamentation. Manuscripts produced in Cilicia during the 13th century represent the high point of Armenian manuscript production and are among the most sought-after examples of Eastern Christian book art.

Illuminated Armenian Gospel leaves of the Cilician period are rare on the market and highly prized for their artistic quality and historical importance. The present leaf is particularly desirable for its early date, excellent state of preservation, and the presence of a finely executed illuminated initial, representing a fine example of medieval Armenian manuscript illumination.



19 Complete Sahidic Coptic Monastic Letter on Papyrus
[Egypt, Monastery of Apa Victor (BiKtōr), 7th–8th century]

Origin
Egypt, Monastery of Apa
Victor (BiKtōr)

Date
7th–8th century

Medium
Ink on papyrus

Dimensions
114 × 267 mm

Description
Rare and complete
documentary letter
written in Sahidic Coptic
on papyrus, originating
from the monastery of Apa
Victor, one of the important
monastic communities
of early medieval Egypt.
The papyrus preserves a
continuous text written
in dark brown ink across
the horizontal fibres in
a practiced monastic
documentary hand.

The letter discusses matters relating to taxation and financial obligations, reflecting the administrative and economic responsibilities borne by monastic communities within the Byzantine and early Islamic fiscal system. Particularly significant is the preserved closing attestation, which includes a formal witness statement reading: “I am witness, I [...] brother Syriacus,” identifying a named monk associated with the monastery. Such attestations were essential components of formal documentary correspondence and provide valuable insight into the legal and administrative procedures of monastic institutions.

The reference to the monastery of Apa Victor firmly situates the document within the vibrant network of Egyptian Christian monasticism that flourished between the 6th and 9th centuries. Monasteries functioned not only as spiritual centers but also as major economic entities, maintaining landholdings, managing taxation, and participating in regional administrative systems.

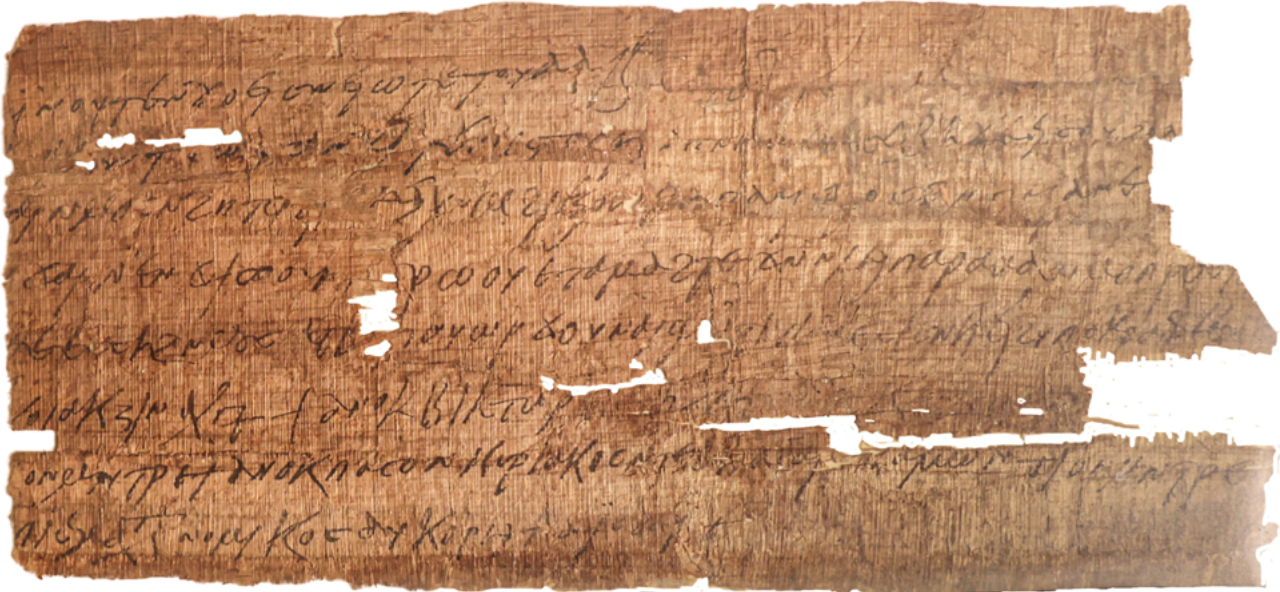
Complete Coptic documentary letters of this period are scarce, particularly those preserving both institutional attribution and named monastic individuals. Such documents provide exceptionally direct evidence of daily administrative, economic, and legal life within early Christian monastic communities.

The present letter is especially important for its completeness, identifiable institutional origin, and preserved witness formula, making it an outstanding example of early medieval Coptic documentary culture.

An exceptional and historically significant monastic document from Byzantine Egypt.

Provenance
1. Bonhams, London, 7 June 2011, Lot 108 (part).
2. Chris Wells, Westminster Rare Books, London.

£ 8,750



Stephen Butler

CURATED WORKS OF RARITY AND SIGNIFICANCE