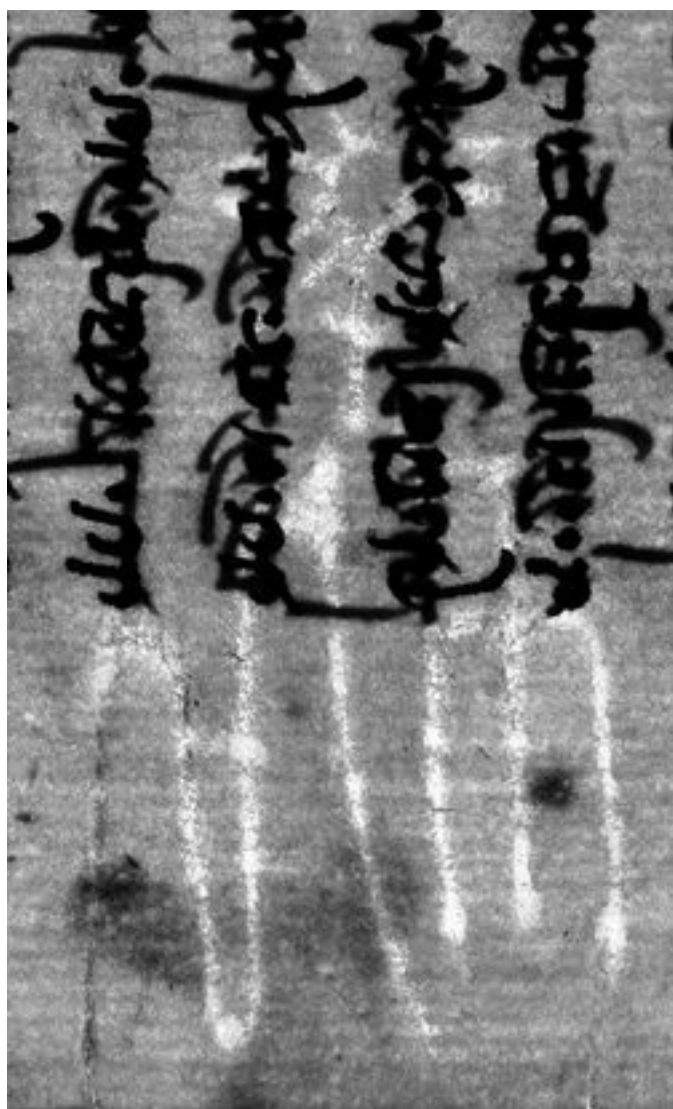


## Fragment of the Month: June 2007

Detail of upper part of watermark from the Tobit manuscript, T-S A45.25. The University Library's Imaging Services Department used backlit photography to capture the watermark



[http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/cgi-bin/GOLD/zoomer?image=T-S\\_A45.25-watermark](http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/cgi-bin/GOLD/zoomer?image=T-S_A45.25-watermark)

Enhanced greyscale image of the watermark from T-S A45.25, clearly showing the flower (Maltese cross? sun?) extending from the middle finger  
[http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/cgi-bin/GOLD/zoomer?image=T-S\\_A45.25-watermark](http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/cgi-bin/GOLD/zoomer?image=T-S_A45.25-watermark)

# Redating a leaf from a medieval Hebrew Book of Tobit (T-S A45.25)

Siam Bhayro

(<https://humanities.exeter.ac.uk/theology/staff/bhayro/biography/>) , Mila Ginsbursky (<http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/Taylor-Schechter/lg.html>), Ben Outhwaite (<http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/Taylor-Schechter/bo1.html>) (<http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/departments/taylor-schechter-genizah-research-unit/unit-staff/dr-ben-outhwaite>) and Esther-Miriam Wagner (<http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/departments/taylor-schechter-genizah-research-unit/unit-staff/dr-esther-miriam-wagner>).

The book of Tobit tells the story of an Israelite in exile in Assyria, a pious and honest man who suffers for his righteousness but who ultimately achieves the reward of a long and fruitful life. Belonging to the Septuagint and Vulgate Apocrypha, it was probably composed in Aramaic around the second century BCE, though early on it was translated into Hebrew, since both Aramaic and Hebrew versions have been discovered among the scrolls found at Qumran. Some later medieval versions in Hebrew exist, of which several leaves are found in the T-S Collection. These are clearly later translations, rather than authentic transmissions of the early Hebrew versions, yet testify to the continuing interest among Jews in this apocryphal work.

T-S A45.25, containing Tobit 5:9-6:8, was originally published by Simon Hopkins in his 'Miscellany' volume of the Genizah Series (Hopkins 1978: 96-97). Though Hopkins didn't suggest a date for the manuscript, a recent work on the book of Tobit by L. T. Stuckenbruck posits the thirteenth century onwards (Stuckenbruck 2005: 191). In fact, the handwriting looks to be much later than this.

In re-examining the work recently, members of the Unit were excited to see that the paper is watermarked, something that no previous study of it has mentioned. Thanks to C. M. Briquet's Historical Dictionary of Watermarks (a hefty four-volume work which contains tracings of thousands of watermarks classified according to shape and type), the origin of the paper can be narrowed down quite closely, in respect of both place and time.

The hard part was identifying what the image in the watermark is supposed to represent. Although clear in the backlit photos provided on this page, to the naked eye the thin white lines in the manuscript at first appeared to be a squiggled S or perhaps a serpent. It was only after considerable squinting by several pairs of eyes that its true form was established: a hand with a cuff, fingers closed together but thumb apart, with a stem protruding from the middle finger up to what resembles a flower. According to Briquet's classification (Briquet 1907: 562-578), this type occurs in the fifteenth century or the first half

of the sixteenth century, and, though it is quite widespread geographically, given that it turns up in an Egyptian collection, an origin in the western Mediterranean (Sicily perhaps) seems most likely.

*Readers are invited to send comments to [genizah@lib.cam.ac.uk](mailto:genizah@lib.cam.ac.uk) (<mailto:genizah@lib.cam.ac.uk>). The Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit is not under any obligation to acknowledge or to publish comments.*

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