The first discovery of Judaeo-Syriac: T-S K14.22

By Siam Sharyar (with the assistance of Ben Outhwaite)

The presence in the Cairo Genizah of manuscripts written in Syriac has been known since the earliest days of Genizah research, with the notable Agnes Lewis and Margaret Gibson publishing some of the first discoveries in their book, 'Palestinian Syriac texts from palm-leaf fragments in the Taylor-Schechter Collection' (Cambridge 1900). As the title indicated, Syriac had found its way into the synagogue storeroom as the undertext of palimpsests, the parchment having been reused to write papyrus, the Palestinian Talmud and other nebris works.

T-S K14.22, a small parchment leaf, is not among their Syriac fragments, and rightly so, since it is not in the Syriac script. The great scholar of Genizah medicine Haskell Isaacs originally catalogued it in his 'Medical and Para-Medical Manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah Collections', describing it as mater medica in Aramaic – a list of medicinal substances. And so it is. But when I examined the text, I read this phrase with great interest:

'ואנה וו' (ve'anan vav)

If you enjoyed this Fragment of the Month, you can find others here.

Contact us: genizah@lib.cam.ac.uk
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