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THE WORDS $\tau\omicron\nu\acute{\alpha}\chi\iota\omicron\nu$ AND $\gamma\omicron\nu\acute{\alpha}\chi\iota\omicron\nu$ IN THE EGYPTIAN PAPYRI

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The Words *τονάχιον* and *γονάχιον* in the Egyptian Papyri

In a forthcoming *ZPE* article on the Saracens in the papyri this writer stumbled across the word *τονάχιον* in two documents (*BGU* II 366. 14,18; 403.6). Preisigke's *Wörterbuch* gave no clue to its meaning, stating: "(Sinn unklar). Sollte... *γονάχιον* zu lesen sein?" Under *γονάχιον* Preisigke offers "Gebetsteppich der Muhammedaner" and four citations from the seventh and eighth centuries. This definition is clearly owed to the interpretation of the editor of *P. Lond.* 1414 whose note to line 12 reads: *γονᾶχιον*: *γονάχια*; '*Pulvinus qui genubus substernitur*,' Ducange. Perhaps a prayer-carpet such as is used in Mohammedan countries." What the editor of *P. Lond.* had expressed as a possibility or a conjecture was taken as a fact by Preisigke and by the editor of *P. Apoll.* 49 and 50, dated to 703-715, who viewed the two documents as a "Demande de tapis de prière."

Although it is tempting to see in these several documents the earliest mention of the use of prayer rugs among Muslims—and I pursued it as such—a closer investigation shows that *γονάχιον* cannot mean a prayer rug. There is no evidence that prayer rugs were in general use in the early years of Islam, not before the ninth century (see art. *Sadjdjâda* in *Enc. of Islam*). More compelling is the fact that the entry of *γονάχιον* in Du Cange's *Glossarium* is quite confused and gives no specific citation for a prayer rug. His definition (*Pulvinus qui genubus substernitur*) appears to have been influenced by the Greek word *γόνο*. Apart from some completely unrelated meanings, Du Cange cites only *τάπις* and *πάλιον*.

Even more compelling is the citation of *γονάχιον* in Lampe, *Patr. Greek Lex.* in which reference is made to the *Vita Sancti Joannis Eleemosynarii* of Leontius Neapolitanus (d. 620/630, ed. H. Gelzer, *SAQ* 5 [1893]). In the ninth century, the life was translated into Latin by Athanasius. Leontius relates that when a certain wealthy man observed that John was covered with a torn and threadbare *γονάχιον*, he sent for a *γονάχιον* worth 36 *solidi* (p. 38.9-10). When John begins to consider this gift in terms of the poverty of his fellow monks, he refers to it with the word (p. 38.17) *παλλίν* (= *παλλίον*). The word *γονάχιον* is mentioned once again with its price (p. 39.14). Athanasius accordingly translates these words with Latin *opertorium*, *coopertorium*, *pallium*, and *coopertorium* (*PG* 93: col. 1631). It is obvious that in the above contexts, the word *γονάχιον* means a covering, a cloak, or a blanket-like wrap;¹ it may be a "rug" in the sense of a thick piece of cloth that is used as a wrap or a coverlet.²

¹ See also Ar. *ḥayk* in R. Dozy, ed., *Supplément aux dictionnaire arabes* (Beirut 1968) I, 345: "Afrique, grand manteau de laine ordinairement blanc, qui sert de vêtement pendant la jour et de couverture pendant la nuit."

² Although Leontius uses the word *παλλίον* in place of *γονάχιον* without any change in meaning, the scribe of *P. Lond.* 1414 does make a distinction between the two words. In line 112, he cites the cash equivalent (*ἀπαργυρισμός*) of 4 *γον(άχια)* at 2 $\frac{1}{3}$ *solidi* each and one *παλλί(ον)* at 2 *solidi*. What the precise difference is between the two is unclear, unless the material of a

But if the word γονάχιον means a wrap or a cloak or a cover of some sort, how did it get its meaning? It is apparent that the word is not rooted in Greek. I inquired of specialists in Arabic, Persian and Coptic but they reported that the word had no connection with these languages. It was a Semitist, Professor J. Greenfield of Hebrew University, who provided the answer. In an informal note, which I have edited slightly, he states as follows:

More fitting (than another word) is a word that is recorded twice in the Targum (Aramaic translation to the Minor Prophets). For "and she covered him with a blanket" (Heb. *śemīkā*), the Targum has *gunkha*. In 2 *Kings* 8, 15 "and he took a *makhber* and dipped it in water and spread it over his face and he died," the Targum has *gunkha*. The meaning of *makhber* is not known but it may be a net, a blanket, etc. Now J. Levy, *Chaldäisches Wörterbuch über die Targumim* (Leipzig 1867) 149 compared Latin *gaunaca*, *gaunaces*. The word appears in Syriac. C. Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacum* (Halle² 1928), 109 records two occurrences, but does not translate, but compares Greek *gaunakes*. There is a Late Babylonian word *gunaku*, a cloth or a garment, which is compared by the lexica with Greek *kaunakes* and Aramaic *gunkha* (which for all one knows should be vocalized *gunakka*). I should add that *gunkha* is taken by Rav Hai Gaon (939-1038) to be a robe or a blanket made of wool, with tufts and fringes and rather thick.

With this statement in hand, the resolution to the meaning and source of γονάχιον becomes crystal clear. Derived from the Semitic,³ it is an orthographic variant of Greek γωνάκη(ς) or κωνάκης. Citations and related compounds of these words are well supported in Preisigke and in Greek and Latin dictionaries as early as the third century B.C. The editor of *P. Cair. Masp.* 67288.5 adds that the word κωνάκης is frequently found in the Coptic papyri (Crum, *Copt. Dict.* 824a s.v. *κωνάκ*).

There remains the question of a connection between γονάχιον and τονάχιον. For this we turn to *BGU* II 366 (arab), a guarantee regarding the delivery (lines 12-14) "... for the account of the Saracens one τονάχιον and three στρώματα according to Saracen specifications." Because of the heavy penalty (3 *solidi* for each στρώμα and 6 for the τονάχιον) in the event of failure to deliver on the due date, I originally believed (*ZPE* forthcoming) that the στρώματα (mattresses or bed rolls) might have been something like "saddle blankets" and that τονάχιον had a connection with an Arab mount. However, in light of the clarification in the meaning of γονάχιον, and the close association of στρώμα with τονάχιον, the word τονάχιον is clearly a misspelling (if not a misreading) of γονάχιον, and like the latter means a cloak or a wrap that can either serve as an article of clothing or as a blanket.

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γονάχιον is heavier and thicker (v. *infra*) than a παλλίον. As for their function, both items can serve as a garment, a blanket, or a cover.

³ Since Aramaic was one of the two official languages of the Achaemenid empire, there is no need for the widely accepted derivation from Iranian **gauna-ka*; see B. Hemmerdinger, *Glotta* 48 (1970) 50f.