

Dorota Hartman

A Hebrew Signature in a Latin Manuscript of Galen

Manuscript VIII D 30 in the National Library of Naples was part of the famous Farnese library and art collection, formerly at Rome, then transferred to Naples in 1736 as part of the inheritance of Charles III of Bourbon.¹ The codex (ff. I+90, 265 × 190 mm) is written entirely on parchment in minuscule gothic script on two columns, 46 lines per page. It has been unanimously dated to the late 13th – early 14th century and contains Latin versions of some of Galen's medical treatises.²

As is known, Galen's works were not widely read in the Middle Ages until the last quarter of 13th century, when the movement designated by Luis García-Ballester as "New Galenic" spread among physicians a program based on the theory of complexion. From then on, these texts became fundamental in medieval Western medicine. All the Galenic treatises included in the manuscript of Naples belong within the "New Galenic" canon, as they have clearly been translated from Arabic.³

While the importance of this manuscript is widely acknowledged, apparently the existence of a Hebrew signature in it has so far escaped

¹ On the Farnese library see Guerrieri 1974: 3-12, 140-146; De Grazia 1977; Romano 1993: 13-18.

² *Liber de Complexionibus* (ff. 1-17v); *De Malitia Complexionis Diverse* (ff. 18-19v, incomplete); *Liber de Criticis Diebus* (ff. 21-40v); *Liber Primus de Cognitione Directionis Signorum* (ff. 41-68); *De Accidenti et Morbo* (ff. 69-90v). The manuscript and its content have been described, among others, in Diels 1905: 65, 84, 90, 91; Kristeller 1977: 425; Fossier 1982: 369; García Novo 2010: 58.

³ García-Ballester 1982. Among the New Galenic treatises there were texts on physiology and pathology, but not on anatomy, as *De Accidenti et Morbo*, *De Complexionibus*, *De Malitia Complexionis Diverse*, *De Crisi*, and *De Creticis*. Peter of Spain was already acquainted with some of these treatises, so they were known before the 13th century (Asúa 1999: 199).

notice.⁴ This signature can be seen in the middle of f. Iv, *verso* of the first leaf (figs. 1-2), which precedes f. 1r, where the first Galenic text begins. It is just a name, probably of the owner of the manuscript, written in an easily readable small (*yod* 2 mm, final *nun* 10 mm high) and semi-cursive Hebrew script:

יעקב בכ"ר שמשון

i.e. *Ya'aqov ben k^evod rabbî Šimšon*, «Ya'aqov son of the honoured R. Šimšon».

No further testimonies of this name in Hebrew (and non-Hebrew) manuscripts are known, at least in this period, with the conspicuous exception of a Ya'aqov ben Šimšon who allegedly copied the *Ruah Hen* (The Spirit of Grace), an anonymous introduction to Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*. This work enjoyed great popularity in the Late Middle Ages and has been variously attributed, among others, to Šemu'el ibn Tibbon and his son-in-law Ya'aqov Anaṭoli (Marseille 1194 - Naples? before 1247).⁵

Ya'aqov Anaṭoli – whose complete name was Ya'aqov ben Abba Mari ben Šimšon Anaṭoli – came to Naples in 1231, on the invitation of emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, to work at his court for some years as a translator and a physician. He was locally known as magister *Iacob de Massilia*.⁶ In Naples, Anaṭoli made many Arabic-Hebrew translations, especially of Averroes' commentaries on Aristotle, probably in collaboration with the mathematician and translator Michael Scot.⁷ A scientist and philosopher himself, Anaṭoli is also well remembered for his collection of philosophical sermons entitled *Malmad ha-Talmidim* (The Goad of Students).⁸ Moreover, he was among the first Jewish translators to use Latin sources, for example for his translation from the Arabic of Al-Farghani's *Elements of*

⁴ The signature was first noticed by Dr. Vito Lorusso, to whom I express my gratitude for having allowed me to publish it here.

⁵ On the treatise, Sirat 1977; Smilévitch 1994; Elior 2011.

⁶ On the life and works of Ya'aqov Anaṭoli, see Pepi 2004, I: 8-44 and 2005 (with previous bibliography). On the documents concerning Anaṭoli's family and activities in Naples, see Lacerenza 2007: 71-73 and the new data provided by Schwarz-Ricci 2013 (in this volume).

⁷ Haskins 1927: 266-298; De Vaux 1933.

⁸ For the Hebrew text, see Anaṭoli 1866. Only an Italian translation exists: Pepi 2004.

Astronomy, which he compared with Gerard of Cremona's Latin version.⁹ Ya'aqov's son, Anaṭoli ben Ya'aqov (called Anatolio and *magister Antonius* in coeval sources) continued to live in Naples, carrying on his father's legacy. He was a friend and teacher of Mošeh of Salerno (d. 1279), the author, with Dominican friar Niccolò da Giovinazzo, of a Hebrew-Latin translation of philosophical texts. Anaṭoli ben Ya'aqov authored, among other works, a commentary to Maimonides' *Guide*.¹⁰

In the above-mentioned colophon of the *Ruah Hen* manuscript, Ya'aqov ben Šimšon stresses his descentance from Ya'aqov Anaṭoli, whom he claims to have been his grandfather:

... כמה"ר יעקב בכמה"ר שמשון בכמה"ר אנטולי בן החכם כמה"ה יעקב
בעל ספר מלמד התלמידים ז"ל

... our honoured teacher R. Ya'aqov, son of our honoured teacher R. Šimšon, son of our honoured teacher Anaṭoli, son of our honoured sage Ya'aqov, author of the book *Malmad ha-Talmidim*, be his memory of blessing.

Of course, we cannot rule out that there existed two distinct people, both called Ya'aqov ben Šimšon, one the descendant of a renowned house of physicians, philosophers and translators, the other the owner of a collection of Galenic texts, and that this is a mere case of homonymy and coincidence. Nevertheless, one would be tempted to connect the two figures, especially because if the Hebrew signature in the Naples manuscript does indeed date from the end of the 13th or the early 14th century, two generations would fit very well within the time span between Ya'aqov Anaṭoli's death and the supposed copying of the Naples Galenic manuscript. The connection between the two names should be, however, assumed very cautiously, particularly because the colophon by Ya'aqov ben Šimšon in the *Ruah Hen* manuscript has been considered highly problematic, and still is today.

Indeed, the owner and only describer of this codex was the well-known scholar, collector – and sometimes, it seems, forger of texts –

⁹ Campani 1910; De Vaux 1933; Grant 1974: 35; Zonta 1993. Usually the Jews do not translate from Latin until the second half of the 13th century, and these translations flourished mainly in Italy. Some Latin-Hebrew translations appeared however in Provence, e.g., a text by Avicenna translated in 1250 by Šelomoh ben Mošeh of Melgueil: Steinschneider 1893: 334, § 189; Shatzmiller 1994: 52.

¹⁰ Sermoneta 1969: 43-44, 51.

Abraham Firkovitch.¹¹ As a scholar pursuing many research paths, especially Karaite and Jewish East-European origins, Firkovitch was interested in *Ruah Hen* and collected various manuscripts containing this work, which are still preserved in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg.¹² According to Dr. Ofer Elinor – who has worked a lot both on *Ruah Hen* and on Firkovitch's interest in this treatise – no signature or colophons of a Ya'aqov ben Šimšon can be seen in any of the various manuscripts of *Ruah Hen* which passed through Firkovitch's hands, including the one Firkovitch referred to.¹³ Indeed, the reading of that signature had already questioned by Moritz Steinschneider,¹⁴ although only implicitly, but his doubts were overlooked; thus, Umberto Cassuto uncritically quotes Firkovitch in his discussion of Ya'aqov Anaṭoli.¹⁵ Moreover, as Elinor has pointed out, according to the IMHM catalogue, the Firkovitch mss. of *Ruah Hen* are all approximately dated to the 15th century: a bit too late for having been written, at least one of them, by a grandson of Ya'aqov Anaṭoli.¹⁶ Still, this dating is merely tentative.

The fact remains that, if the colophon in the Firkovitch manuscript is not mistaken, or a forgery, we are dealing with two separate mentions, possibly of the same period, of a Jew called Ya'aqov ben Šimšon with a deep interest in medicine living in southern Italy. Moreover, the existence of the Hebrew signature on the Naples manuscript, a signature whose authenticity is not in question, would grant more reliability to Firkovitch's testimony about Ya'aqov ben Šimšon being the son of Anaṭoli ben Ya'aqov and grandson of Ya'aqov ben Abba Mari Anaṭoli. This would also shed some new light on the late stages of this outstanding family of translators, physicians and philosophers, who may have moved from Naples to Benevento, in the

¹¹ On Firkovitch, see most recently the synthesis by Ben-Shammai 2007 and the annotated bibliography in Walfish - Kizilov 2011: 193-202.

¹² See Elinor 2011.

¹³ Personal communication (April 2013). My deepest thanks are due to Dr. Elinor for his help and advice. The ms., in a cursive Sephardic script not very similar to the Hebrew script in the Naples ms., is in St. Petersburg, Russian National Library, Evr. I 488 (488-490 at the IMHM Catalogue, film F 51308).

¹⁴ Steinschneider 1864: 64.

¹⁵ Firkovitch 1861: 47; Cassuto 2007 (19721): 133.

¹⁶ Elinor 2011: 248.

Papal States, during the Angevine persecutions of the Jews, in the last quarter of the 13th century.¹⁷

Finally, it must be added that on the last leaf of the Naples manuscript, f. 90v, along the top right edge, some very small Hebrew letters (around 2 mm, figs. 3-4) can barely be made out. They show abbreviation or numerical marks and can be read, very uncertainly, as *šin* (?), *alef*, *dalet* or *reš*.

Whether or not this manuscript bears the signature of a grandson of Ya‘aqov Anaṭoli’s, at the very least it bears witness to an interest in Galen by a Jewish physician, possibly from southern Italy and living at the dawn of the 14th century, when Hebrew translations of Galenic treatises were still uncommon.¹⁸

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¹⁷ That the codex of Naples was held, at least at an early stage in its history, not far from Naples, can be argued in force of another ownership signature, in Latin this time, of a certain Johannes from a convent in Benevento. This Johannes left his name in barely readable cursive minuscule script at the lower edge of f. 1r, probably in the late Middle Ages.

¹⁸ On this point, see Lieber 1981.

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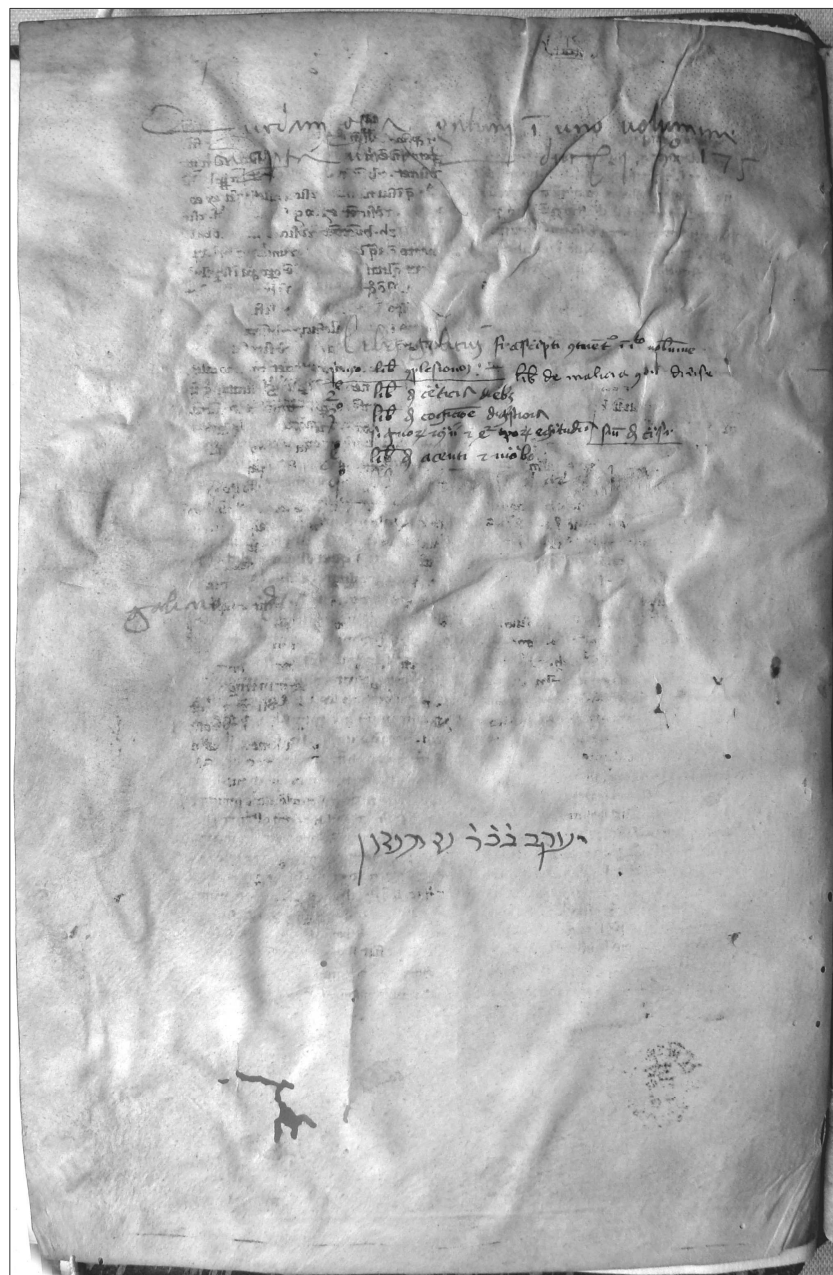


Fig. 1 - Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli, Ms. VIII D 30, f. Iv (figs. 1-4 courtesy Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali © Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli).

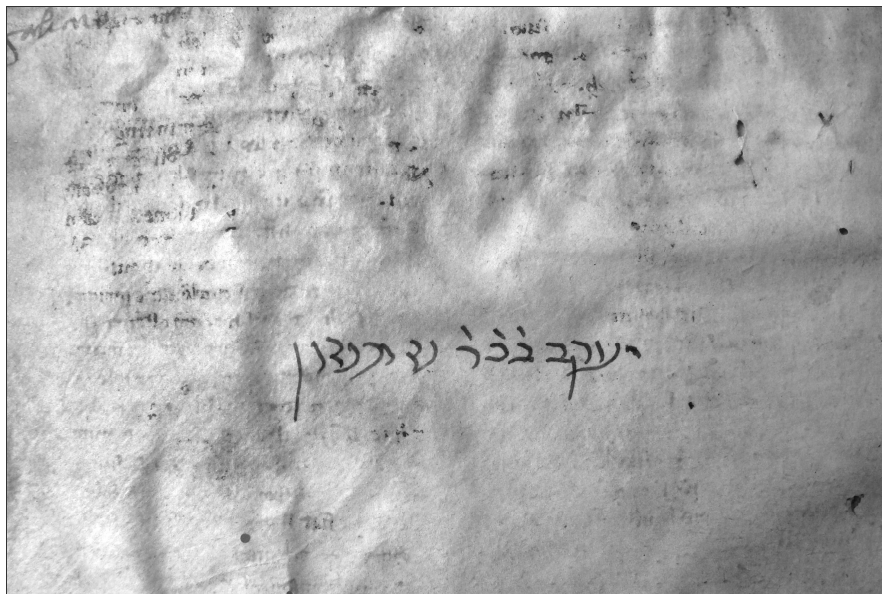


Fig. 2 - f. Iv, detail.

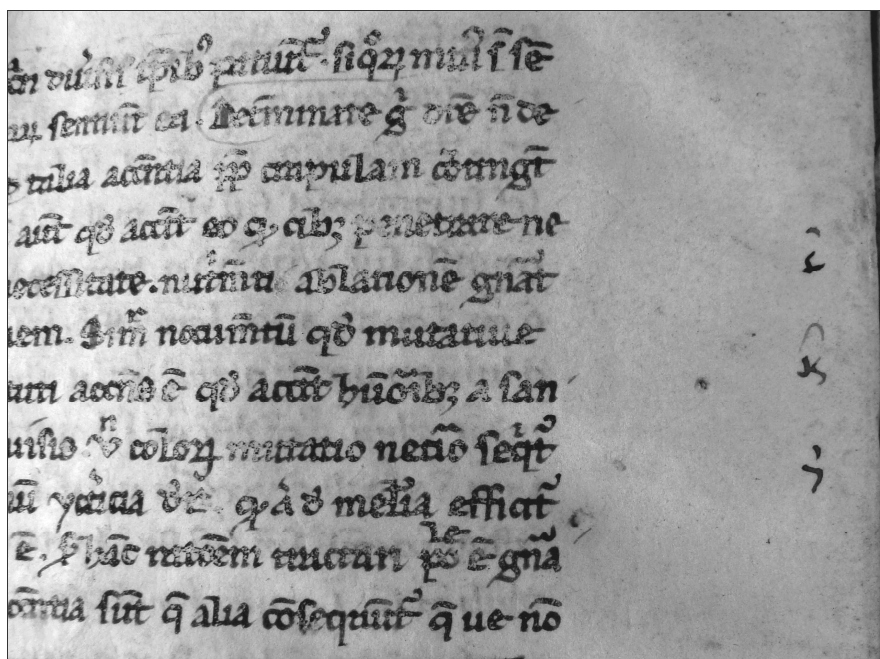


Fig. 3 - f. 90v, detail.

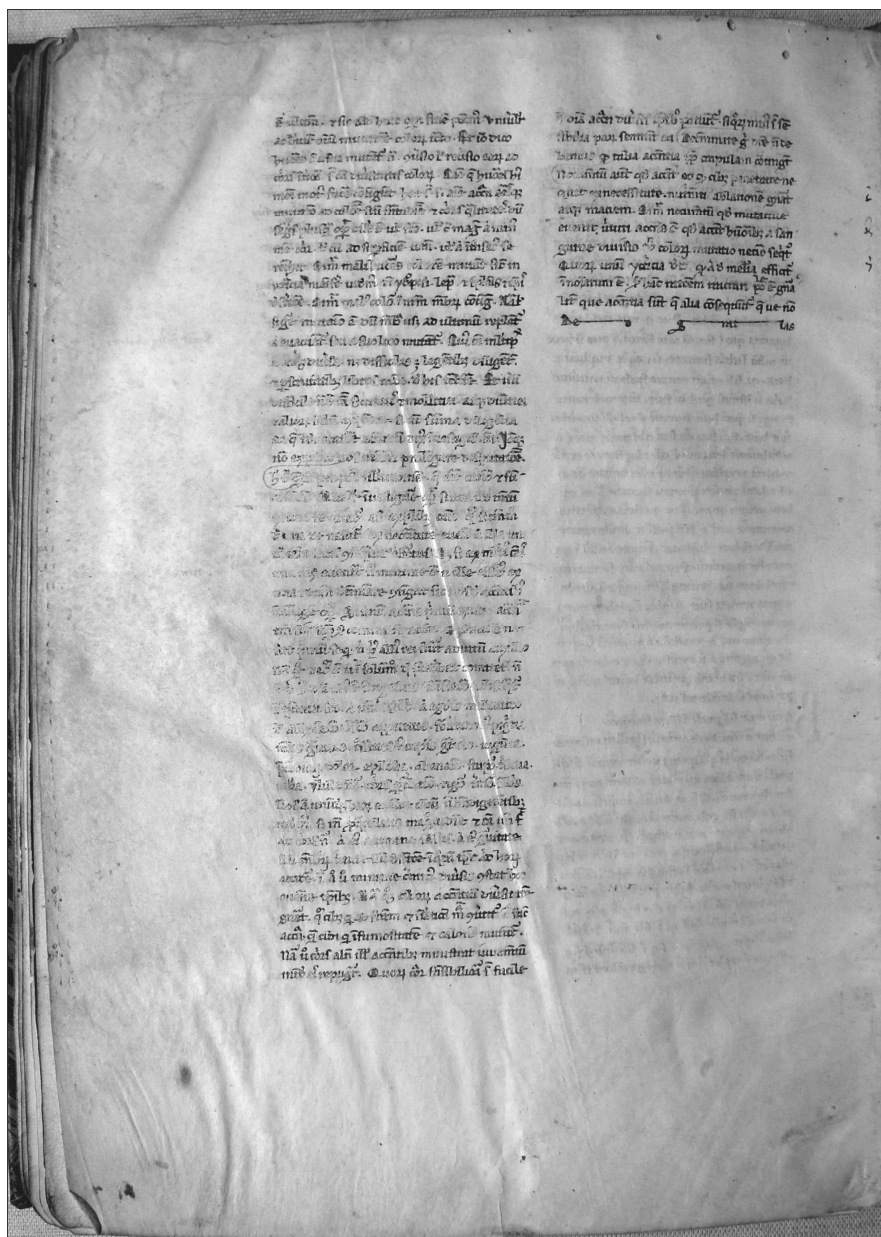


Fig. 4 - f. 90v.