SUMMARY

Niccolò da Reggio, who was active in the first half of the fourteenth century at the Angevin court of Naples, is renowned for the accuracy of his versions, which often allows the reconstruction of his original Greek. But less is known about his context, as a doctor and teacher as well as translator. This overview looks at his (and other translators’) role at the court, in the context of a deliberate royal cultural programme. It considers briefly the relation of his versions to earlier translators and to his Greek sources. His translations were created in a bilingual environment, and use formulations more intelligible to South Italians than to northern scholars. They were warmly received at first, but their hellenised language, together with the marginality to the medical curriculum of most of the works translated, may account for a general lack of interest among later-medieval doctors, trained in a more arabised Latin.

The wonderfully accurate Latin translations of Niccolò Ruperti Deoprepio da Reggio have been rightly praised by all who have ever studied them. Compared even with the achievements of Burgundio of Pisa, Niccolò gives an excellent sense of what Galen actually wrote, down even to particles and definite articles. We do not have, as we do with translations coming from the Arabic, the difficult task of having to decide frequently whether a potential reading is an expansion, or worse, a misunderstanding by the translator, for Niccolò’s glosses are usually obvious and his errors can often be traced back.
to a corruption in his underlying Greek text. Where the Greek still exists, it is possible to go so far as to define the manuscript or at least manuscript family to which his source belonged, and, where there remains little or no Greek, brave scholars have attempted, with a fair degree of success, to translate his Latin back into Greek. In short, Niccolò is an editor’s dream – and the relatively small number of codices containing his versions, compared with those for, say, De spermate or De motibus liquidis, means that the laborious task of collation is much reduced. But this familiarity has come at a price, for there is still much that needs to be done to understand fully what Niccolò was doing and the context in which he worked.

Niccolò, one should remember, was first and foremost a physician. He was examined and passed on May 28, 1307 to practise medicine in Calabria, the Terra di Lavoro, Molise, the Terra d’Otranto and the Terra di Bari. He appears first in the household of Philip of Taranto, before serving Robert of Anjou as a personal physician from early in his reign until its close in 1343, at a substantial salary of 200 ounces of gold a year. He accompanied him on embassies, not least during the King’s long stay in Avignon from 1322-1324, after which the Pope granted him a pension and the income from a canonry on Corfù. He was also a teacher at the university of Naples, where he took his doctorate in June 1319, being judged “suitable for the chair and the supreme honour of the doctorate”. Pezzi, relying on a comment in the archives, reports that students were attracted by his teaching away from Padua and Bologna, although no records survive of what he taught. But his preface to his translation of De diebus creticis, in Wellcome 286, stresses his affection for the university of Naples, hoping that his new translation will benefit the common good.

But it was as a translator that he gained his greatest reputation during his lifetime, as can be neatly demonstrated from a report of a Latin translation of a Greek inscription by several antiquarians. This inscription, which was preserved on the façade of the church of St. Paolo...
Maggiore in the centre of the city, was for long supposed to refer to the founding of Naples as a Roman city, and it was for that reason that it attracted the attention of the author of the *Cronaca di Partenope*, who was writing his history of Naples around 1350. Given the difficulty of decipherment, it is perhaps not surprising that a dedication of the temple to Castor and Pollux (Διοσκούροις) and to the city was interpreted as made by a certain Tiberius Julius Tarsus Dioscorus. The chronicler says that the translation was made "per uno maystro Nicola de Reggio de lo inclito signyore Roberto fisico greco." This formulation of Niccolò’s title fits with the subscription on some of his translations, and although the latest editor of the *Cronaca*, Samantha Kelly, does not believe that Niccolò was the translator, she argues at least that his reputation was such that it served to validate the translation made by someone else. Whether or not one agrees with her, this shows that Niccolò’s work as a translator was widely recognised in Naples, and that it took place within a cultural context that involved the translation of the Greek legacy of Naples into Latin.

It is important to remember that Niccolò, as this inscription shows, was not just a translator of Galen: he is credited with versions of the *Antidotarium* of Nicolaus Myrepsus, and of at least one theological work, the *Commemoratio Petri et Pauli* by the sixth-century patriarch Sophronius. One of the early payments made to him as a *translato regius* in 1310 mentions not only *libros medicinalis scientie* but also *libros philosophie*. Venice, Biblioteca Marciana 3460, names him as the translator of one work by Sextus Empiricus, and he may well have translated more. In other words, Niccolò, like Hunain before him and like some renaissance translators afterwards, was being used to push forward a cultural programme promoted by those at the top of the society, the king and other members of the court. It was supported by payments to scribes and illuminators, and involved more than new translations, since payment was made for at least one manuscript of older Galen versions.
It was a programme with a dual aspect, one internal, one external. The former is hard to pin down, but at the very least it was a way of binding the Greek-speaking parts of the Kingdom of Naples more closely to the Angevin regime: it was their culture that was being supported in a Latin environment, in contrast to the increasing Latinisation of the Mezzogiorno that had taken place under the Normans. It was also part of a deliberate attempt on the part of Robert in particular to create a new type of monarchy, to set himself up as a new Solomon, dispensing justice to all his citizens.

We are on firmer ground if we see some of this cultural activity as part of a political programme of diplomacy. Robert’s strong support for the Papacy put him at odds with the Emperor, while his possessions across the Adriatic and his long signoria of Genoa brought tension and even conflict with Venice. Nor did he ever give up his claims to Sicily, now under the rule of Aragon. Whether or not Niccolò presented his translations in person to the pope at Avignon when Robert of Anjou came there in 1322, the gift was made to a pontiff who would appreciate such a gift of rarities. Likewise, we are told that when the emperor of Byzantium, Andronicus III, presented Robert with some rare Galenica, it was at the request of the monarch, a move in a diplomatic game of chess that could be interpreted as acknowledging the cultural superiority of the Greeks, but which also might prove useful to both sides in the search for military alliances. A hostile emperor could cause damage to the Angevin rule over South Italy; a friendly one provide assistance against imperial domination or the Venetians, while the Byzantines could hope for support against hostile Latins. But there is, I suspect, much more that can be said about the political developments, particularly in the light of Samantha Kelly’s biography of Robert.

The support for Niccolò’s work came from the court, from Charles and Robert of Anjou, and from at least three court physicians. The Kings provided him with scribes and illuminators, as well as pur-
chasing volumes of *Galenaica* for the royal library, and they provided him with money. Of the doctors, the immensely wealthy Giacomo Pipino (d. before 1326), doctor to Philip of Taranto, may well have been his sponsor when he first came to court. In his preface to the translation of *De utilitate particularum* dedicated to Pipino he alludes to the medical instruction and to unspecified benefits he had received from him. It may be no coincidence that Niccolò himself came to own property at Casalvetere near Oria in Apulia, a town where Pipino had property and where his family were important politically. The other two doctors appear later and perhaps towards the end of his translating career: Marcolioni of Mantua was the recipient of the version of *De tyriaca ad Pamphilianum*, while *De die-bus creticis* was dedicated to the Neapolitan doctor Giovanni Della Penna, famous for a tract on the Black Death and who died himself in 1348. There may well have been others, whose names are not recorded in preambles, for what is striking about the lists assembled by Lo Parco and by Thorndike is the inconsistency in the titles and prescripts of the treatises as they appear in our manuscripts and printed editions. Some have long preambles, some do not; some mention the name of Niccolò, but others do not; for several tracts our only indication comes in the 1490 edition of Galen’s *Opera omnia*, as with *De praecognitione*.

Irmgard Wille’s thesis and her article of 1963 were for a long while the only large-scale surveys of Niccolò’s technique in a treatise where the Greek survives in full, and it would be a valuable exercise to extend her study and those of Nino Marinone and Stefania Fortuna, if only to prove or disprove the possibility that there were other translators working with Niccolò, or to put it another way, to see the extent to which Niccolò is consistent in his use of particles and similar *minutiae*. I am a little less sceptical than I was formerly about the trustworthiness of the ascriptions in the composite 1490 edition, but if one follows the methodology of Minio Paluello and
Durling, there are some obvious differences between translations of different treatises. Is this a sign that Niccolò had collaborators or merely that some of his preferences altered over some forty years of translating? We know for instance that Azzolino de Urbe, from the Terra d’Otranto, was paid to translate from the Greek from at least 1328 onwards, and that in 1334, and again in 1338, he was sent on a mission to Greek South Italy to collect and translate manuscripts. His initial work was on law books, but in 1338 he was paid from translating at least one medical book, as well as others in astronomy, fisica, and theology. Even more obscure is Leone de Scolis of Altamura, who was paid for some translations between 1337 and 1342.

But if there was a development, was it one of style or of substance? Was there a change in the sort of tracts chosen to translate? Twenty years ago, Mario Grignaschi in three articles in the journal Medioevo suggested a possible means of distinguishing between early and late. In a treatise De vita et moribus philosophorum, the author, traditionally the Englishman Walter Burley, lists a series of works by Galen and Hippocrates, several of which were translated by Niccolò, including De disnia, dated to 1345. But Grignaschi and others have pointed to the fact that the work appears to have been in circulation before 1341, when Burley arrived in Italy. Indeed, he prefers a date around 1320 and a place of composition closer to Padua than to Bologna. In his favour also is the fact that this well-informed author does not seem to know any of the works that are dated after 1315, e.g. De virtutibus centaureae of 1341. Grignaschi’s solution is ingenious. He notes that although BN 6865 talks of 3 books of De disnia, no existing manuscript contains the three books, and all finish at the end of book 1. It is only the 1502 edition of the Latin Galen that contains three books and the colophon that gives the date 1345. Grignaschi suggests that there was an original version of the first book alone, and that this circulated for more than twenty years before being completed and capitulatus, divided into chapters. One
might also note that at the end of the tract in BN 6865 the text is simply described as a single Liber. More work is needed on De disnia, and particularly to see if there was a Greek manuscript in circulation that contained only the first book, before Grignaschi’s theory can be accepted, but he has put forward a strong case. Even if his speculation about the date and identity of Pseudo-Burley is wrong, some of his observations do fit with what can be gleaned from the lists in Lo Parco and Thorndike.

Several of Niccolò’s translations appear to be revisions or completions of the work of others; of Burgundio, for De sanitate tuenda and the Hippocratic Aphorisms, or Pietro d’Abano. Direct competition with existing translations is relatively unusual, and probably late. If one can talk of a standard university codex, along the lines suggested in my edition of De motibus, then only a handful of the works found there are translated afresh by Niccolò; De motibus dubiis, De utilitate particularum, De creticis diebus and, probably, De crisibus. He had good reason for two of them: De iuvamentis membrorum, the standard version of De usu partium, was a mixture of translation and paraphrase, as Niccolò complains in the preface to his translation; the two recensions of Mark’s De motibus liquidis were confusing. De creticis diebus was to a certain extent commissioned by Giovanni della Penna, and the same may go for De crisibus, although in Wellcome 286 this is simply called a nova translatio. Two of the four are certainly late in his career, and possibly all are to be placed after 1330. This suggests that Niccolò was much less concerned to duplicate existing versions than to provide new translations of works that had not previously been made available.

These were for the most part short, although the De passionibus uniuscuiusque particularum of 1335, a version of De compositione medicamentorum secundum locos, and De utilitate particularum were certainly very large undertakings. Grigmaschi stresses that pseudo-Burley does not seem to know any of the short philosophi-
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cal treatises on causes, the parts of medicine, or the sketch of empiricism, and suggests that these must have been among the later versions. But one might note that *De substantia virtutum*, the last portion of *De propriis placitis*, does appear in his list. Some of these rare works come, at least in part, from Constantinople rather than from South Italy. The version of *On prognosis* is closely related to Milan gr. Q 3 sup, and there are possible links also with Vlatadon 14. In *De constitutione artis*, and for at least the first book of *Du usu partium*, the type of Greek text underlying Niccolò’s versions was one that could be found in Constantinople and that was significantly different from the Iohannikios group of codices, represented by Laur. plut. 74, 18. In the later history of the Corpus Galenicum Iohannikios’ manuscripts and its descendants have taken pride of place in stemmata. But the agreement of Nic., Vlatadon 14 and Milan Q 3 sup, and possibly also the source of the abbreviated Paris, suppl. gr. 634, might suggest that in Constantinople at least Iohannikios had his rivals.

Niccolò is an aggressive translator from the Greek. By this I mean that from the very start of his translations, he uses Greek transcriptions, not universally provided with an explanatory gloss. *De disnia, De euechia, De euchimia et cacochimia* proclaim their greekness in their very titles, and in their opening words. Niccolò begins his version of *De euechia, De bona habitudine*, with *Exeos nomen*: representing τὸ τῆς ἑξεως ὄνομα, which a renaissance translator rendered simply as ‘Habitus nomen’. This cannot simply be because the words themselves were difficult to translate: in his version of *De motibus*, Niccolò uses a straight transcription, *colum*, for the Greek κῶλον, when *membrum* or *pars* would have fitted easily; he also used *crasis* instead of the common *temperamentum* or *complexio*. Nor can we assume that Niccolò was simply translating for himself without much concern for his readers. His prefaces emphasise how much he saw his translations as contributing to the *utilitas communis*, and that he hoped that they would be used in the Studio napoletano.
Niccolò in context

Part of the answer must lie in the fact that the Angevin kingdom was a bilingual kingdom. We know a great deal about the Greek speakers of South Italy, about libraries, education, matters ecclesiastical, and even dialects. The Latinity of the region, by contrast, is less well known, and it is hard to decide how far Lo Parco was right in seeing a Calabrian Latinity in Niccolò’s versions. One can suspect traces of a South Italian pronunciation in some of his transcriptions and even in the inscription mentioned earlier, but the wider evidence is suggestive at best. A learned Neapolitan, writing to a learned cleric, slips in Greek words, not all of them titles of court officials, and it may be no coincidence that several of them appear in a letter bewailing the miseries of the human condition. More relevant may be Girolamo Caracausi’s review of the terminology for work, jobs and the professions as revealed in legal documents of the Middle Ages. The cultural and linguistic change imposed by the Normans was not only a question of latinisation, but it also allowed grecisms to play a role in what was developing as a regional language. In such a society, native speakers can happily switch codes for a word or even a sentence, confident that their interlocutor can understand. Niccolò’s Latinitas, even more than Burgundio’s, is a product of this bilingual society.

But this raises a further question about the spread and value of Niccolò’s translations. Michael McVaugh in a recent paper has shown how an initial interest in these versions in Montpellier soon flagged, and one could make a similar case for Paris. Petrus de Sancto Floro cited a variety of Niccolò versions in his dictionary of around 1370, and Jacobus De Partibus also quoted from them in his lectures in the next century, but French manuscripts with Niccolò texts are quite rare. The fate of the collection that became part of the Faculty library is instructive: it was the source, direct or indirect, for Petrus de Sancto Floro, but the volume became more and more dilapidated; it was brought out as the big volume on which the Dean took his oath; but was clearly not
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used. There is a slightly different pattern in Italy, where we do find, at least at first, translations *secundum novam translationem* introduced alongside older texts. In some Bologna manuscripts, for instance in Vatican, *lat.* 2376 and 2378, a Niccolò version is clearly added at the end of a commission as a sort of filler by the scribe or possibly the owner, almost as if this was the very latest news. But by the end of the fourteenth century a manuscript such as Cesena, S.XXVII.4, of 1392, which combines three versions by Niccolò with a variety of medical texts is unusual. Other similar manuscripts come from the Kingdom of Naples itself. Naples, VIII.D.25, which contains three translations ascribed to Niccolò, was copied in 1380 ‘*ad utilitatem mei*’ almost certainly by a doctor from the Naples region. Naples VIII.D.38, annotated by a South Italian, was later presented to a convent in the Abruzzi, while Wellcome 286 was written and annotated in Naples before, perhaps even in Niccolò’s lifetime, to judge from the references to Giovanni della Penna and other doctors in the region. At least one note, on fol. 94ra (cf. also fol. 160va), seems to have been based on a comment on a lecture by Giovanni della Penna, explaining a difficult phrase. By contrast, the great majority of manuscripts with translations by Niccolò are collectors’ items, such as Paris BN 6865, Madrid *lat.* 1978, and the two major collections in Cesena that belonged to Giovanni da Marco, Cesena, S.V.4 and S.XXVI.4. Two Parisian manuscripts, the beautifully illustrated Dresden Galen, Db 92-93 and its twin, Paris Académie nationale de médecine 51-54, are much later, around 1470. All of them were brought together for someone who wished to have what Tiziana Pesenti has called a ‘tutto Galeno’, very different from the typical university manuscript. They are valuable repositories, but not always used for study.

In general then, McVaugh’s argument for the relative lack of interest in Niccolò’s work seems well-founded, but one must then ask why. Language may have played its part. To a medieval western doctor brought upon on Gerard of Cremona and Constantine the African,
much of Niccolò’s Latin, both in vocabulary and syntax, must have appeared alien. His choice of texts may also have deterred: either pseudonymous or short, highly theoretical expositions that had little place in a *curriculum* that was relatively stable across European universities. I have suggested elsewhere that there were what one might term *standard codices* of Galen’s writings produced at Paris or Bologna, and *scriptoria* bosses and university teachers collaborated in deciding what was available. Niccolò’s versions came late into the established syllabus, and except at the level of the disputation, there was no reason why a student should bother to have his own copy. There was the occasional exception: the pharmacological tract *De virtutibus centaureae* appears to have had a different fortuna than, say, *De praecognitione*, and to have been copied along with other writings on therapy, but in general Niccolò’s versions were not studied. We know more about Niccolò’s work than about that of almost any translator, but, partly because his work has almost always been studied in connection with one treatise at a time, we still lack a good overall appreciation of what he was doing, both in the cultural context of the Angevin Kingdom of Naples, and in relation to the production and circulation of other medical manuscripts of the time. The loss of the Naples Archives in the last war was a serious handicap, but recent studies in provincial centres have allowed new insights, while we now have far more editions of the Greek for comparison with Niccolò’s Latin, although, unfortunately, few of the Greek editions have space for an edition of the Latin as well. In these days of the internet, editors who, perforce, have to establish at least roughly their own text of Niccolò might consider collaboration or at least posting a preliminary text, if necessary without a full *apparatus criticus*, as a way of enabling further study. Such a resource would be a useful further step towards putting this great translator into the context that he deserves.
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND NOTES


3. PEZZI, art. cit. note 1, p. 231. This would seem to exclude Thorndike’s suggestion that the volume of Galenic translations presented to the Pope had merely been sent from Naples.

4. Ibid., p. 230, rejecting Lo Parco’s date of 1309.


6. KELLY S., *The Cronaca di Partenope. An introduction to and critical edition of the first vernacular history of Naples (c. 1350)*. Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2011, pp. 171-2. She rejects the earlier theory that the chronicle was originally written in two parts and that the earlier, which includes the reference to Niccolò, was composed before 1326.

7. *Inscriptiones graecae* XIV.714 = I. Napoli, I.1: Τιβέριος Ἰούλιος Τάρσος Διοσκούροις καὶ τῇ Πόλει τὸν ναὸν καὶ τὰ ἐν τῷ ναῷ Πελάγων Σεβαστοῦ ἀπελεύθερος καὶ ἐπίτροπος συντελέσας ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων καθιέρωσεν. The Latin translation gives: *Tiberius Julius Tarsus et dyoscorus civitatem et templum et ea que sunt in templo domini peliani filius et distributor de propriis hedificavit*. I have marked the major divergences in bold.

8. KELLY, op. cit. note 6, p. 289, although it is not clear how far the mistakes derive from mistakes in the original transcription (by Niccolò or someone else): ‘filius’ for ἀπελεύθερος (= freedman) is the only definite translational
error. Had Niccolò originally written the abbreviation ‘l.’ (= libertus) which he later misread as ‘f.’?

9. Payment for Myrepsus and the Liber de omnibus passionibus, a total of ten tari was made in October 1335, LO PARCO, art. cit. note 1, p. 263. Niccolò’s name appears on the translation of Sophronius in Vatican, lat. 1204, ff. 1-18; PEZZI, art. cit. note 1, p. 233, suggests that he translated other works in the volume as well as other patristic writers.


11. In 1336 payments were made for copying a large volume containing at least five Galenic texts in older versions, which may or may not have included the ‘antiqua translatio’ paid for in 1335. In 1341 payment was made for paper for copying the (new?) works of Galen, LO PARCO, art. cit. note 1, pp. 263-4.


16. The phrase used by Guy De Chauliac to refer to the gift (Nicolaus… nobis transmisit) might imply that the volumes were sent, not handed over in person, but Niccolò’s presence, at least for a time, in Avignon, is against this.


25. For Pietro, see the article in this volume by Véronique Boudon-Millot.

It is not clear why COULTER C. C., *The library of the Angevin Kings of Naples*. Transactions of the American Philological Society 1944; 75: 141-55 [p. 154], should say that the important additions of medical works to the library all postdate the arrival of Paolo di Perugia as librarian in 1532. For a surviving copy of a translation by Niccolò from the royal library, see below, note 33.


NUTTON, op. cit. note 26, pp. 295-6. In the inscription, above, n. 7, the gamma in Πελάγων turns into a byzantine glide: peliani.


His scholarly father was an excellent connoisseur of the classics, PEZZI, art. cit. note 1, p. 229, citing a papal bull of 1524.

MCVAUGH, art. cit. note 1; confirmed by VENTURA, art. cit. note 13. Paris, BN Acq. 1365, a manuscript of *De compositione medicamentorum secundum locos*, was copied in 1336 for the Royal Library in Naples, since it bears the royal arms.


WEISS, *Ancora cretico*, cit. note 5, transcribes the *incipit*, but does not note the references to Giovanni in the marginal annotations.


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