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### The National Library published the online version of the 1000-year-old Theorica Pantegni

Theorica Pantegni, a mediaeval medical textbook and manual in Latin, is Finland's oldest bound manuscript and one of the gems of the National Library collections. This 420-page manuscript in pre-Gothic script has now been digitised and transcribed, in other words, written in modern Latin letters for the whole world to read.

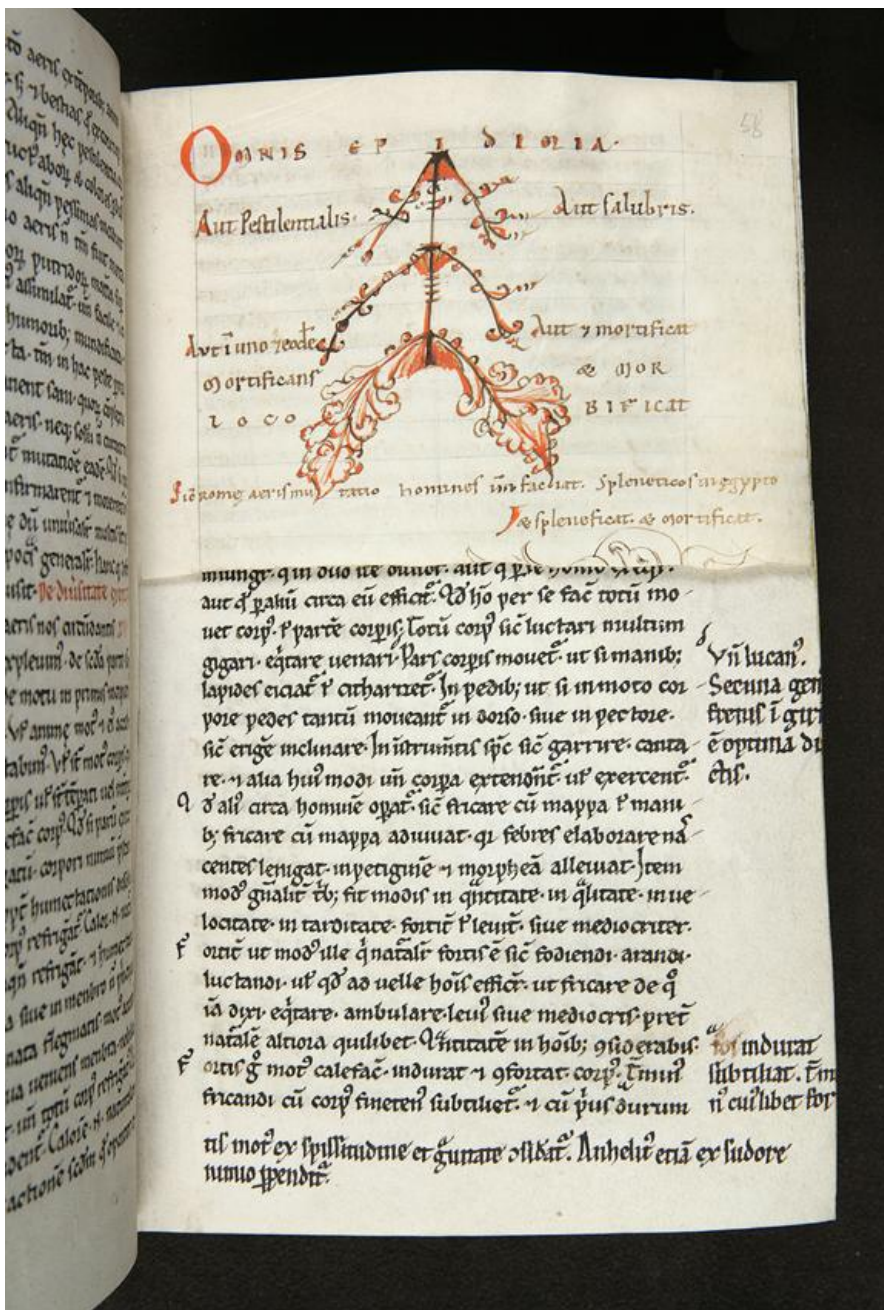
More than 70 manuscript versions of Theorica Pantegni exist in various parts of Europe, but none of them have ever been transcribed.

Outi Kaltio, MA, a scholar of Latin, transcribed the work over an 18-month period, and the result of her efforts was published online in June 2011 in both facsimile (i.e., photographs) and transcription (i.e., modern Latin text).

<http://www.doria.fi/handle/10024/69831>



*Outi Kaltio (center) transcribed Theorica Pantegni.*



420-page manuscript treasure was written on parchment.

Photo by Veikko Somerpuro

## Background

The *Theorica Pantegni* is part of *Liber Pantegni* by Constantine the African (d. prior to 1098/9), which is the first comprehensive medical compendium written in Latin. Born in North Africa, Constantine lived as a monk in the Monte Cassino monastery in Italy. His work is an adapted translation of the Arabic original *al-Malaki* by the Persian physician Ali ibn al-Abbas (Haly Abbas), c. 930–994. This work was based on the tradition of ancient Greek medicine and had become the leading medical textbook and manual of the time in the Islamic world. Constantine's translation achieved similar status in the first medical schools and universities in Europe. The work was a revelation in mediaeval Europe, taking European medicine to a whole new level.

The National Library's 420-page manuscript treasure, Codex EÖ.II.14, was written on parchment in pre-Gothic script in the late 12th century. The manuscript eventually ended up in Russia in the medical book collection of Joseph von Rehmann, the personal physician of Nicholas I of Russia. After von Rehmann's death, the Tsar claimed his book collection and donated it in 1832 to the Helsinki University Library, which is now the National Library of Finland. The manuscript was bound in the 19th century, and the text on the back cover claims that it is a compendium of the medical works of Galen. Events took a turn when Professor Paul Lehmann from Munich visited Finland in 1937 and identified the manuscript as the work of Constantine the African.

In 2004 Matti Haltia, Professor Emeritus of Neuropathology, came across Constantine's work in the course of his research. Studying the manuscript, he found that Codex EÖ.II.14 was one of the oldest remaining manuscripts of *Theorica Pantegni*. When he also discovered that no printed academic publication or translation into a modern language existed of this, the first medical textbook in Europe, he decided to launch a publication project in 2006 together with Heikki Solin, Professor Emeritus of Latin Philology, and Outi Kaltio, MA, a young Latin scholar. Other remaining manuscripts of *Theorica Pantegni* have also been used in the editing process. So far, Outi Kaltio has personally studied some 60 manuscripts, and the research group has collected digital or microfilm copies of the most important of them. The texts of different manuscripts are compared and contrasted in order to create a critical edition and translation of the text for publishing.



*The guests admired the online version of Theorica Pantegni published on June 16 2011.*

"The Theorica Pantegni stresses that health represents a state of balance in the body, while illness results when that balance is disturbed. Treating the state of imbalance is highly individual, which means that treatments do not have the same effect on all people," explains Outi Kaltio, as she describes the impact of this 1000-year-old work on modern medicine.

The chief funders of the Theorica Pantegni publication project have included the Signe and Ane Gyllenberg Foundation, the Finnish Society of Sciences and Letters, and the Academy of Europe.

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