

Ways to Savour Spring in the Middle Ages

When one wanted to learn healthy living in the 14th or 15th century, they would often turn to the *Theatrum Sanitatis* and *Tacuinum Sanitatis*. The aim of these treatises was to teach princes and powerful figures the rules of hygiene and rational medicine – those obtained by experiments rather than magical or religious beliefs. The author of the texts is Ububchasym de Baldach (Ibn Butlan), a Christian physician living in Baghdad in the 11th century.

The treatises focused on six elements necessary for maintaining one's daily health: food and drink, air and the atmosphere, movement and rest, sleep and wakefulness, secretions and excretions, changes and states of mind (happiness, shame). The author believed disease stemmed from alterations of these six elements. Each page features a miniature of one of these elements and a footnote stating its nature, characteristics of what is deemed to be better or preferable for human health, the benefit it offers, any adverse effects it may have and the remedy for such adverse effects.

Ububchasym de Baldach also taught us to enjoy each season of the year, the consequences of each type of climate and weather. He pointed out the importance of spiritual wellbeing and mentioned, for example, the benefits of listening to music, dancing or having a pleasant conversation.

Theatrum Sanitatis: f. CIV, Spring



Theatrum Sanitatis, 14th century, Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome
Spring (f. CIV)

SPRING. NATURE: moderately humid in the second degree. BEST in its central part. BENEFICIAL in general for animals and all things born of the earth. DETRIMENTAL to dirty bodies. REMEDY THE DETRIMENT by cleansing the bodies.

Tacuinum Sanitatis: f. 53v, Spring



Tacuinum Sanitatis, mid- 15th century, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris
Spring (f. 53v)

SPRING. Nature: hot, moderately wet in the second degree. Optimum: its middle part. Benefit: in general, useful for animals and what comes from the earth. Harm: it damages wet bodies because it causes them to rot. Remedy for harm: cleaning the bodies. It produces good humours and plentiful blood. Advisable for cold, dry and temperate [temperaments], youth and the rest, in temperate regions and in almost all.

Our thanks to Moleiro Editor for this article. They offer facsimile versions of the manuscripts of *Theatrum Sanitatis* and *Tacuinum Sanitatis*. You can visit their website at www.moleiro.com or follow them on Twitter @moleiroeditor