

THE SEARCH FOR WELLBEING AND HEALTH BETWEEN
THE MIDDLE AGES AND EARLY MODERN PERIOD



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Edited by

Javier López Rider

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Foreword

Modern society pays a good deal of attention to body care, in terms of both appearance and personal health, which are closely interrelated. The need to look good and be healthy, however, is hardly new, and was especially apparent in the 15th and 16th centuries, when the written and archaeological records reflect widespread concern for personal appearance and healthy lifestyles.

This book is framed by research project 1381195-R. *Recetarios, Experimentación y Ciencia. Los cuidados del cuerpo en la Edad Media y su aplicación en el siglo XXI*, funded by the European Regional Development Fund and the Ministry of Economy and Knowledge of the Andalusian Regional Government. The book compiles several monographic studies about cosmetic and personal health practices from the early Middle Ages to the 19th century, with special emphasis in the Middle Ages and the early modern Age. The contributors include university and independent researchers from several countries (Spain, Italy, Germany, United Kingdom, and the USA).

Many of the chapters are based on the written sources, including medical treatises in Latin, Hebrew, and Arabic, most of which are dated to the Late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance. These manuscripts describe the vegetal, animal, and mineral ingredients used in medical and cosmetic concoctions, many of which were widely traded. The recipes compiled by these documents were prescribed to treat a wide array of bodily ailments and to improve personal health, but others were simply aesthetic recommendations. Other chapters adopt a more practical approach, with the archaeological interpretation of faunal remains, a direct indication of dietary practices.

The chapters included in this book present a useful section of ongoing international research. Several chapters address medical knowledge and cosmetic practices as reflected in the written sources, most notably concerning the influence of Galen's pharmacopeia in later periods (Manuela Marai); Andalusian pharmacological works (10th-13th centuries) (Ana Cabo); so-called *Tacunim Sanitatis* and their role in beauty and personal health practices (Francesca Stroppa); and cosmetic treatises targeted at women (Simona Gavinelli). Other chapters focus on medical and cosmetic practices, for instance concerning eye ailments in the 16th century (Wenrui Zhao); hair dyes, anti-aging creams, depilatories, and mouthwashes in medieval Jewish culture (Meritxell Blasco); and medieval eating disorders, such as the so-called "pica" (Victoria Recio). In turn, other chapters focus on dietary practices, such as the interesting study of faunal remains in the late medieval hamlet of Castro el Viejo (Torreparedones, Córdoba) (Alejandro Beltrán, José Antonio Riquelme, and Juan Manuel Garrido); physical and spiritual wellbeing in monastic institutions (Gabriele Archetti); and Mexican cookbooks dated to the 18th and 19th centuries (Susana Phelts). Nutrition was not everything, however, as reflected on the physician Paolo de Nicea's advocacy of physical exercise (Irene Calà). The book closes with two chapters that address the issue from a commercial perspective, including the accounts and prices of a 16th century apothecary (Efrén de la Peña); and the commercialisation of cosmetic ingredients between the Crown of Castile and Spanish America in the first half of the 16th century (Rafael M. Girón and Javier López).

The ultimate aim of this monograph is to emphasise the importance of beauty and personal health in the past, and the use past societies made of medical and cosmetic knowledge that remain valid today. Medieval and early modern recipe collections give detailed instructions to prepare certain products (ointments, creams, cordials, poultices, perfumes, etc.) or eat healthy. These results impact on many fields (history of medicine, aesthetics, everyday life, social history, economic history, the history of science and technology, and archaeozoology), and are first-rate contribution to the state of our knowledge. The book shares one of our forebears' concerns: the need to look good and be healthy. Certainly, in the 21st century, this has not gone out of fashion.

Javier López Rider
Córdoba, May 2023