

MAGISTER MAURUS

THE “GALENIENUS SALERNITANUS” OF THE MEDICAL SCHOOL OF SALERNO

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INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

Magister Maurus of Salerno (ca 1130-1214 A.D.), hailing from Calabria of Southern Italy, taught Medicine in the renowned “Scuola Medica Salernitana” during the period of its flourishing. The aim of the present study was to highlight his significant contribution in the medical perception of uroscopy.

METHODS

We studied Magister Maurus treatise “Tractatus de urinis” and relevant bibliography.

RESULTS

Magister Maurus wrote treatises about the urinary tract diseases based in uroscopy. His work includes “De syntomatibus urinarum”, “Urinae abbreviatae”, possibly “Sinthomata magistri Mauri” and the most important and renowned “Tractatus de urinis” or “Regulae urinarum”. The latter influenced strongly Gilles de Corbeil, who wrote the Carmina de Urinarum Judiciis, a composition in verse that dominated European medical practice for the next five to six centuries. “Tractatus de urinis” collected all the urological knowledge of that era.

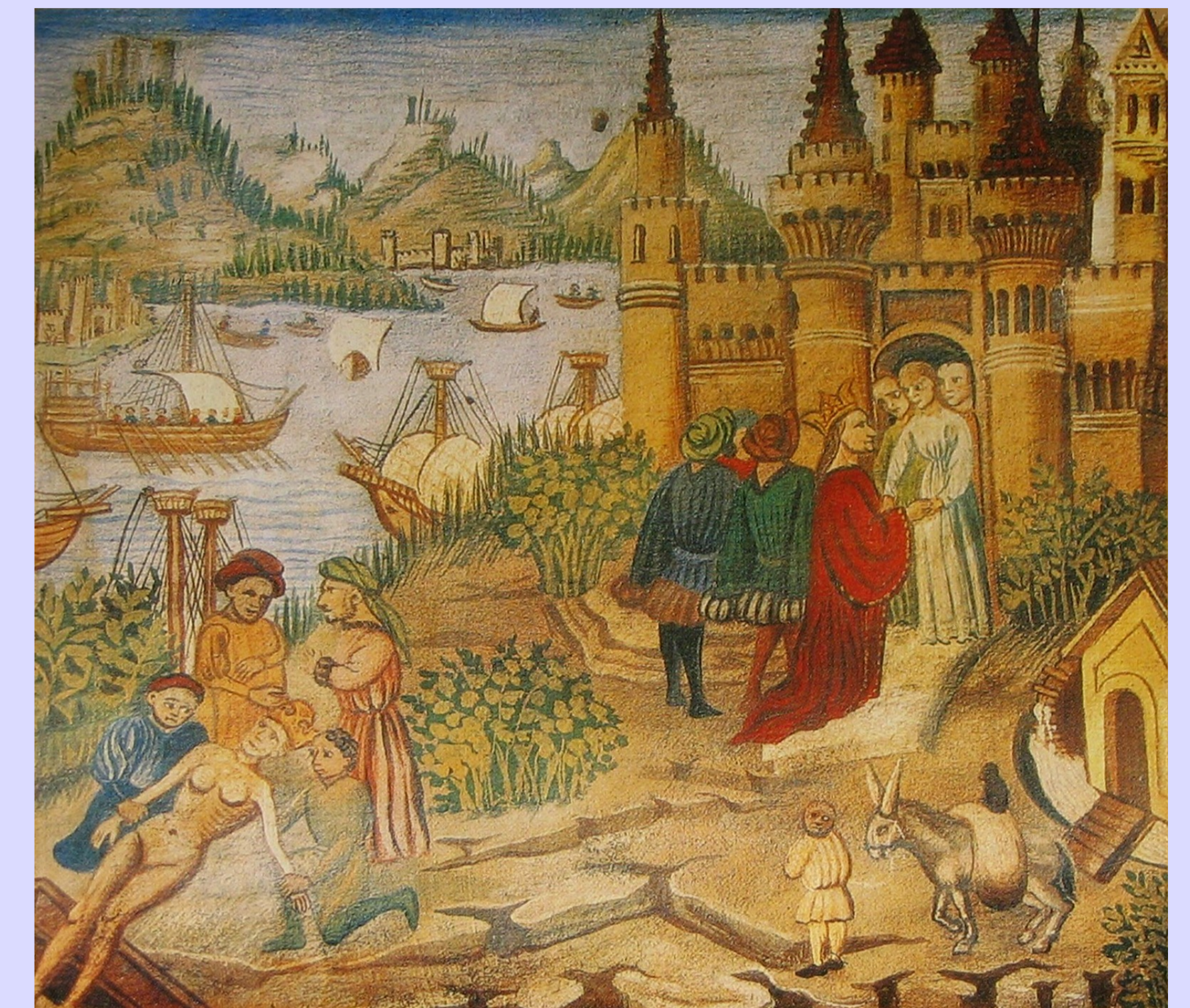
There was clear distinction between the *color* and the *substantia* of the urine and it was thought that the appropriate combination of them unmasked the disease. The *color* of the urine, correlating with the humor theory (four temperaments: choleric, melancholic, phlegmatic and sanguine), was distinguished as white (alba) or red (rubea), while the *substantia* was classified as dense (pinguedo), light (tenuitas) or medium (mediocritas) and influenced the later uroscopic approach of the alchemists of the Renaissance.

Maurus’ novelty was his unique approach regarding the layering of turbidity of urine when examined in amida (a glass bottle used in uroscopy). He correlated the strata of urine with particular zones of the human body. When urine was turbid in the upper stratum of the sediment, it was thought that illness affected the head; if it was turbid in the second intermediate stratum, the parts affected were the heart and the lungs; the third stratum was correlated to the gastrointestinal system, whereas turbidity in the lower stratum implied urogenital diseases.

Moreover, it should be noted that, although there isn’t any specific reference on the kidney examination, anatomy and physiopathology itself, symptoms of various diseases that affected primarily the kidneys were mentioned thoroughly. Magister Maurus surpassed conventional nosology, combining symptomatology with uroscopy for a more efficient diagnosis.

CONCLUSIONS

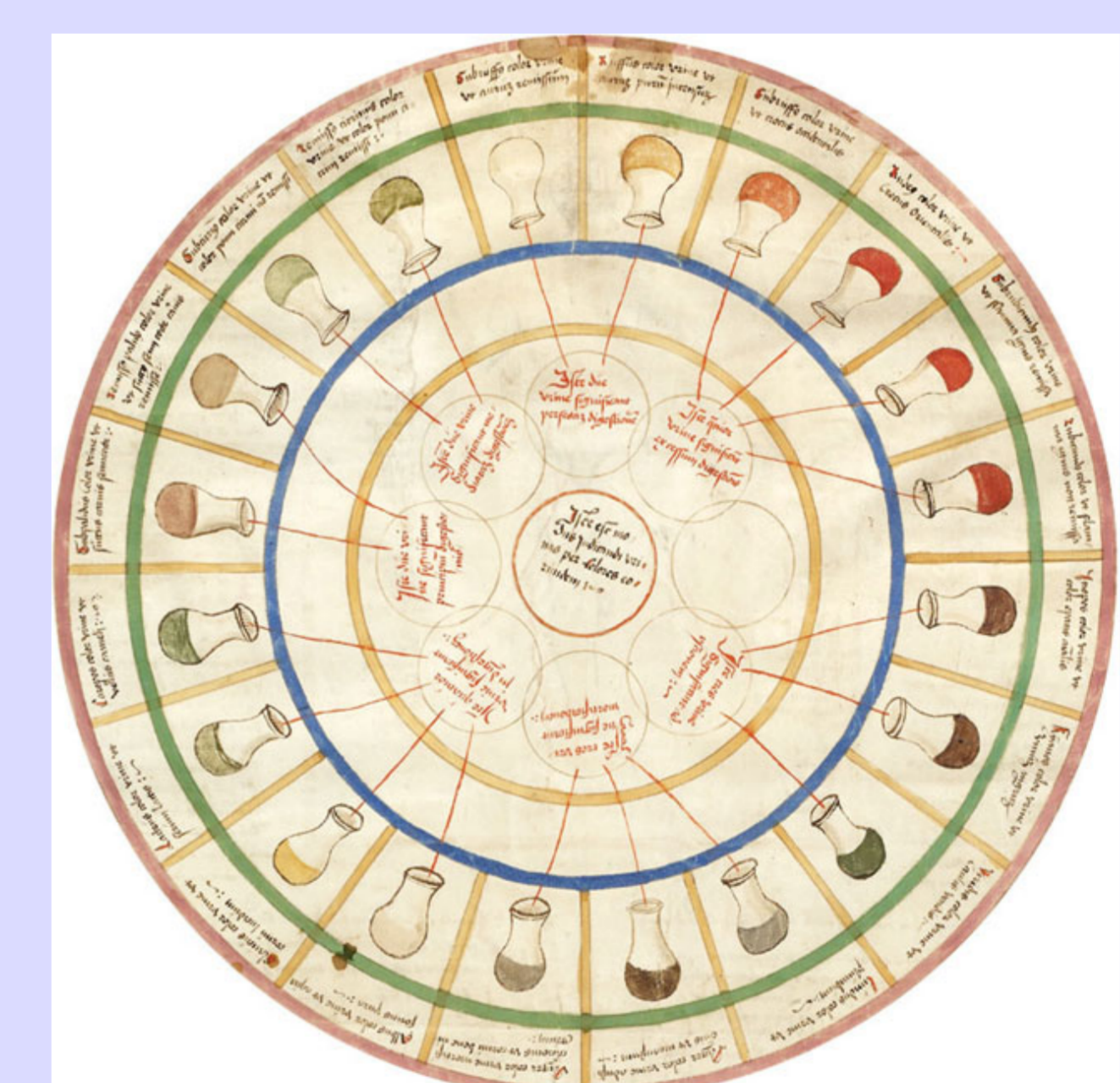
Maurus of Salerno was undoubtedly one of the most important scientific figures of the Mediterranean world during 12th century and he was widely respected, as it is depicted by the characteristic names, like “optimus physicus” and “Galenienus Salernitanus”. Based mainly on the Greek-Latin medical tradition, as well as in Arabian works, he collected, combined, codified and developed further the knowledge about uroscopy in his era, setting that way the foundations of monastic uroscopy in the Medical School of Salerno and having a major impact on the development of Western medicine.



The Medical School of Salerno in a miniature of Avicenna's “Canon Of Medicine”



Amida (uroscopy flask)



The Urine Wheel, from Epiphaniae Medicorum by Ullrich Pinder

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