

The Voynich Manuscript

An English reading guide and a preliminary decoding attempt

Prepared 3 October 2026 | Based on your 209-page PDF scan

Result: I did not decipher the main script. This guide gives English descriptions of the pictures, a map of your PDF, a limited translation of readable month annotations, and the results of reproducible text tests. It does not present invented sentences as translations.

What the book appears to be about

The images are consistent with a compendium of plants, celestial cycles, bathing or bodily processes, diagrams of an ordered world, and plant-based preparations. A therapeutic or natural-philosophical purpose is a plausible interpretation of the combination. Its exact purpose, original title, author, underlying language and verbal content remain unknown. [1]

Radiocarbon testing places sampled parchment in the early fifteenth century. This dates the material, rather than directly dating when the ink was applied. [9]

English synopsis inferred from the illustrations

This book depicts plants and their parts; circular arrangements of stars, celestial figures and zodiac signs; groups of mostly female figures in pools and channels; a large network of circular designs; and roots and leaves beside elaborate containers. Its final long section presents many separate text entries marked with stars.

That synopsis describes what is visible. It cannot tell us which diseases, ingredients, beliefs or procedures the writing specifies.



Plant: PDF 6



Zodiac: PDF 128



Pools: PDF 135



Roots: PDF 161

I inventoried every PDF page, reviewed all pages in contact sheets and examined representative pages at their extracted resolution. All 209 pages are images with no extractable text layer. The writing tests use published manuscript transliterations, rather than ordinary OCR of this scan. Foldout scans can contain several panels.

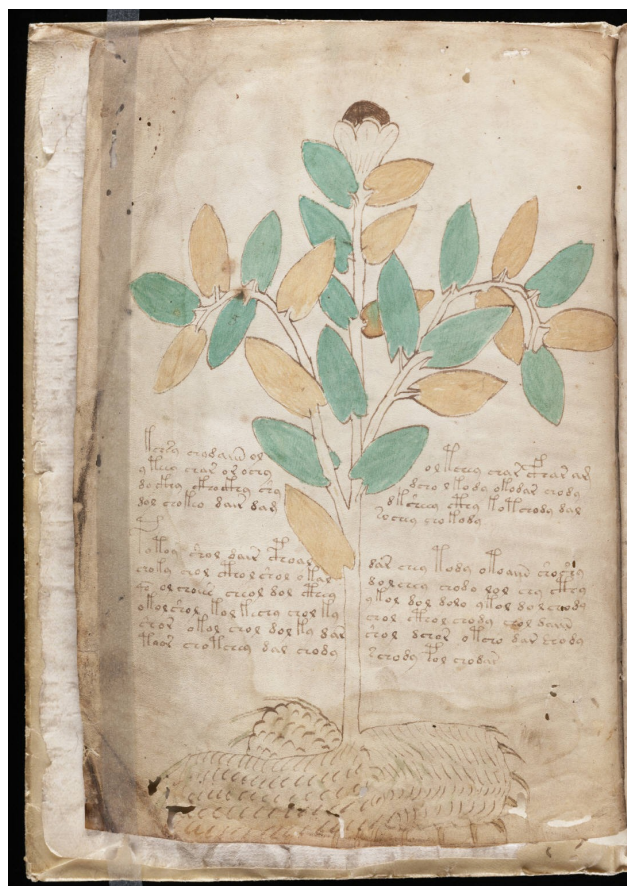
A map of your PDF

These are the page numbers in your PDF viewer, including the covers. They are not manuscript folio numbers. This table covers every scan page; the labels describe visible material and do not translate headings.

PDF pages	Visible material	How to read it
1-2	Front cover and inside cover	Binding and the Yale gift bookplate.
3-113	Opening text and large plants	Text around full plants, leaves, flowers and roots.
114	Circular diagram	A circular design interrupts the plant sequence.
115-116	Text entries	Dense writing with small marginal star-like marks.
117-120	Plants and text	More plants; PDF 119 is mostly text with small sketches.
121-134	Celestial and zodiac diagrams	Concentric circles, stars, zodiac emblems and small figures. Several scans show foldouts.
135-154	Pools, channels and human figures	Mostly female figures among green or blue pools and connecting structures.
155-158	Text and cosmological foldouts	Includes the large network of nine circular designs on PDF 158.
159-174	More plants and preparations	Large plants, plus jars and plant fragments on PDF 161-164.
175-182	Jars and plant fragments	Rows of roots, leaves, containers, labels and paragraphs.
183-205	Star-marked text entries	Long sequence of writing divided by marginal stars; conventionally called recipes.
206	Final annotations and sketches	Short writing in a partly familiar script, plus small drawings.
207-209	Rear blank material and cover	Blank or binding material and back cover.

Manuscript references such as **f2v** mean folio 2, verso (the back of a leaf); **r** means recto (the front). Additional digits can identify a foldout panel. Missing leaves and multi-panel photographs prevent a single arithmetic conversion between folios and PDF pages. [2]

Plants: what the pictures tell us



Left: PDF 6, f2v. Right: PDF 4, f1v. Images extracted from your supplied scan.

English description of PDF 6

A long stem rises from a horizontal root or rhizome. A large rounded green leaf has an opening at its base, and an unpainted flower stands above it. Two blocks of writing surround the plant. This is a description of a drawing; the species and the paragraph meanings are unresolved.

What can reasonably be inferred

The repeated whole-plant format looks like a catalogue or herbal. Many pages emphasise roots as much as leaves or flowers. In a medicinal context that could matter for identification or preparation, but a root drawing does not establish a remedy. The text could contain names, properties, instructions or something else.

A defensible English caption: "An illustrated plant entry showing its flower, leaf, stem and root, accompanied by two passages of unknown text."

No recovered translation: Nothing in this page establishes an instruction such as "boil this root" or a specific disease treated.

Plant-name guessing cannot provide a secure decoding key when the identification itself is disputed. A useful test would require the same proposed name and spelling rules to work on several independently identifiable plants and on their running text.

The small part we can translate

Several zodiac drawings contain month names in Roman letters, commonly treated as later annotations. Their Romance spellings can be rendered in English. Their exact dialect is debated; these additions do not establish the language of the main script. [3]

Manuscript folio	Zodiac emblem	Annotation reading	English
f70v2	Pisces	mars	March
f70v1 / f71r	Aries	aberil	April
f71v / f72r1	Taurus	may	May
f72r2	Gemini	jong	June
f72r3	Cancer	iollet	July
f72v3	Leo	augst	August
f72v2	Virgo	septe(m)b(r)	September
f72v1	Libra	octe(m)bre	October
f73r	Scorpius	nove(m)bre	November
f73v	Sagittarius	decebre	December

Readings follow Zandbergen [3]. Parentheses indicate editorially supplied letters in an abbreviation. Aries and Taurus each have two illustrated instances in the surviving sequence. Zodiac names here identify the pictures; they are not decoded Voynich words.



PDF 128: the ram diagram with the familiar-script month annotation below the central animal.

English description

A ram occupies the centre. Two rings contain people, many emerging from decorated tub-like forms and holding stars. Unknown writing follows the circular layout. The diagram belongs to a zodiac cycle; the function of each person and star remains uncertain.

Pools, channels and human figures



PDF 135, f75r: figures in a vertical green channel and in lower pools, surrounded by dense text.

English description

Several mostly female figures stand in or beside a branching green structure. More figures occupy a green enclosure at lower right. The writing fills the spaces around them. Similar pages use pools, tubes, vessels and connecting passages in green and blue.

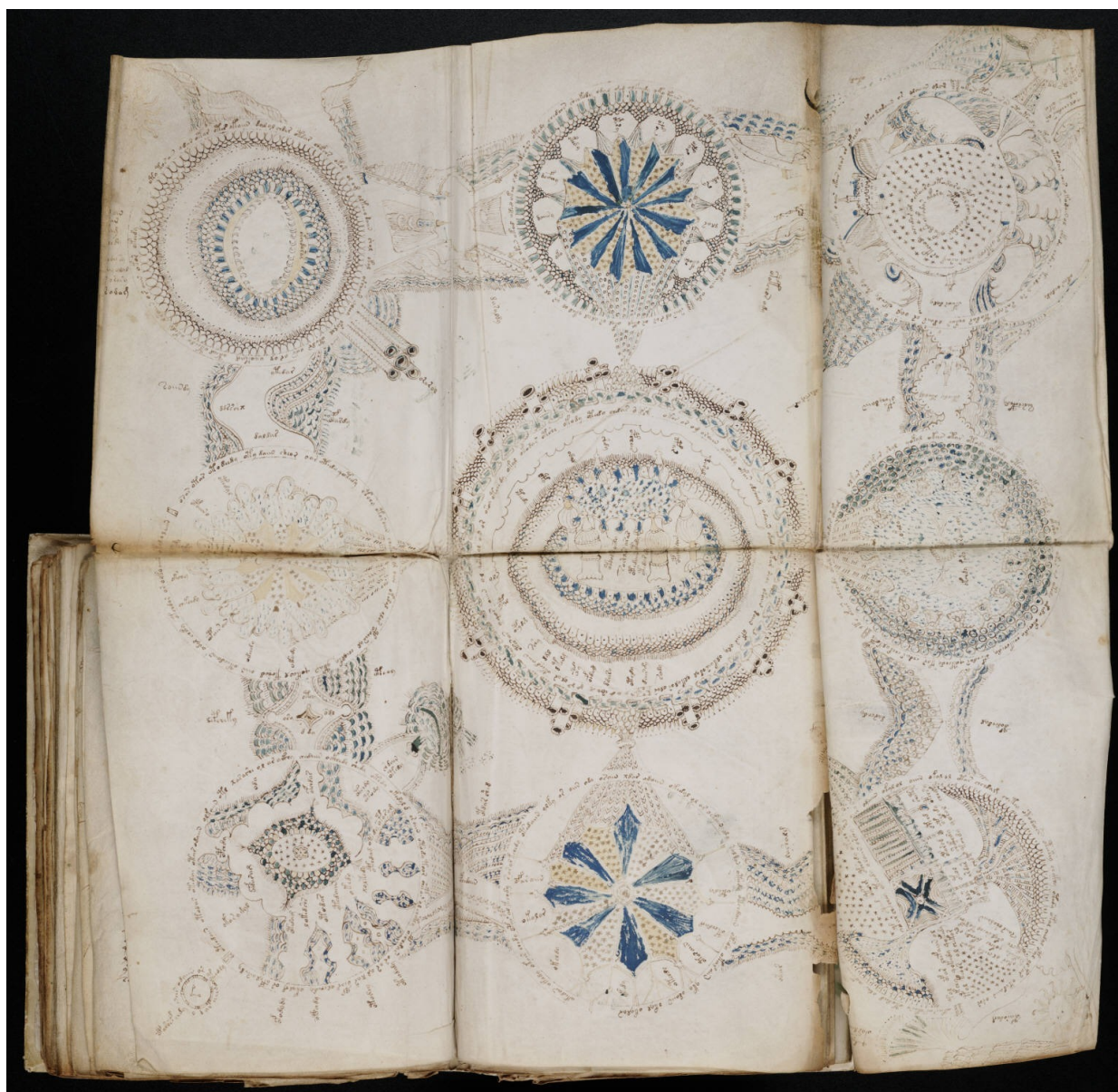
Interpretation and confidence

Bathing is a strong visual possibility, reflected in the conventional term *balneological*. Anatomical, reproductive and other bodily interpretations are also possible. The drawings do not securely identify specific organs, a pregnancy treatment or a sequence of clinical steps. [1]

A defensible English caption: "Human figures arranged in pools and connected channels, with surrounding explanatory-looking text."

The frequent female figures are evidence about the imagery. They cannot by themselves tell us that the writing concerns fertility, menstruation or a particular medical procedure.

The large network of circles



PDF 158: the unfolded design commonly called the nine-rosette or nine-medallion diagram.

English description

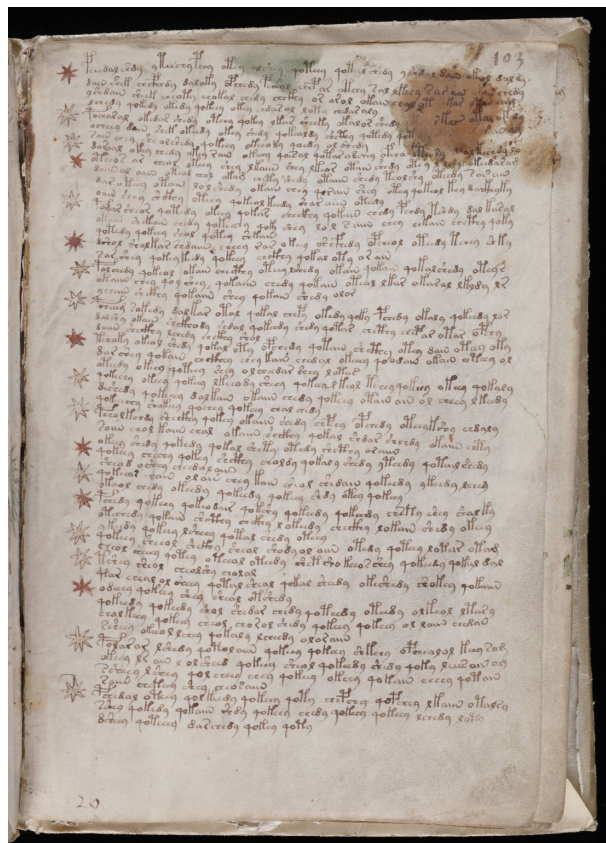
Nine large circular forms are joined by curved bands and patterned passages. Several contain star-like marks, radial patterns or tube-like structures. Some outer details resemble buildings or fortifications. Short labels and curved writing form part of the drawing.

What it may represent

The design could organise regions, stages, celestial structures, processes or a symbolic world. "Cosmological" is a conventional description of this part of the book, rather than a translated title. The visible castle-like form is insufficient to identify a real location or turn the entire design into a geographical map. [1]

Its connections show visual organisation. Without a key to the labels, assigning names to the nine circles would be conjecture.

Roots, containers and possible recipes



Left: PDF 161, f88r. Right: PDF 183, f103r.

English description of PDF 161

Three tall decorated containers stand along the left margin. Rows of individual roots and leaves extend across the page, with short labels near many specimens. Longer passages divide the rows. The format resembles an ingredient or preparation reference, but the plants and uses cannot be read.

English description of PDF 183

A succession of text blocks runs down the page. Red and uncoloured stars in the left margin mark many entries. There are no clear illustrations of ingredients or numbered quantities. The stars act visually as entry markers; their exact role is unknown.

Plausible relationship: The plant-fragment pages may catalogue materials, while the final entries may describe preparations or other short records.

Unresolved: The script has not yielded a validated ingredient list, dosage, preparation time, application method or English recipe.

The conventional label "recipes" is a hypothesis about format and context. It does not prove that the entries are recipes, and the earlier star-marked pages in your PDF show that this format is not confined to the final sequence. [1, 2]

What my decoding attempt found

Ordinary text extraction returned zero characters on every scan page. I therefore analysed the published IT/Takahashi transliteration and cross-checked key patterns against ZL version 3b. EVA letters name written shapes; they do not establish pronunciation or English meanings. [4]

Measure	IT sample	ZL sample
Retained paragraph tokens	32,222	28,159
Occurrences of daiin	738	707
EVA q at a token beginning	5,164 / 5,196 (99.38%)	4,854 / 4,881 (99.45%)
EVA q followed by EVA o	5,072 / 5,196 (97.61%)	4,782 / 4,881 (97.97%)
Immediate identical token pairs	270 / 27,545 eligible pairs	238 / 22,033 eligible pairs

These are measurements of filtered transliterations, not totals for the complete manuscript or counts of verified linguistic words. I retained paragraph loci, used periods as boundaries, excluded uncertain or non-basic-EVA tokens, and never joined neighbours across an exclusion or line break. The stricter filter removes more material from ZL.

Test 1: a simple frequency substitution

I ranked the IT sample's EVA letters by frequency and mapped them in order to a common English letter-frequency ranking. The first line of f1r became:

yinaoc orid il iuihhm caed caelo nualtc o rel caedso

This produced no intelligible English. It tests one crude mapping, not every substitution cipher. EVA can split a written shape into multiple letters, and the unknown text need not be English. A failure here is not proof that the book cannot be decoded.

Test 2: local repetition and section differences

Across 200 shuffles of IT tokens within each manuscript page/panel, while preserving line slots and exclusion slots, immediate duplicates averaged 197.99 (range 162-240), compared with 270 observed: about 1.36 times the shuffled mean. The text has local ordering beyond this baseline; the test cannot distinguish language from a copying or text-generation process.

The token qokedy occurs 152 times among 5,947 retained bathing-section tokens (2.56%), versus 36 among 9,590 herbal tokens (0.38%): about 6.8 times as often. ZL shows a similar contrast. This suggests section-related variation, but scribal and spelling differences also matter. It does not establish that qokedy means "water" or any other word.

What would count as a translation?

A successful decipherment needs fixed rules that generate coherent passages on pages not used to invent the rules. The same symbols and word families must behave consistently, uncertainty must be recorded, and another researcher must be able to reproduce the readings. A few familiar-looking words or a story that fits the pictures do not meet that test.

Where the research leaves us

Yale describes the main writing as undeciphered. Linguistic research finds unusual constraints on character placement and text clusters related to both illustrations and scribes. Those observations help narrow the problem without providing meanings. [1, 5, 6]

Greshko's 2025 Naibbe study demonstrates a hand-executable cipher that transforms Latin and Italian into text with several Voynich-like statistical properties. It is a proof of possibility, not a recovered key to this manuscript. [7]

The readable-looking final annotations on PDF 206 also remain difficult to interpret. Multispectral work improves their visibility, but does not supply an agreed translation or a demonstrated key. [8]

A productive next research step would be to choose one short illustrated passage, align at least two transliterations with the scan, state a specific encoding hypothesis, and test it blindly on comparable pages. A broad English rendering before that would depend on invented meanings.

Sources and reproducibility

[1] Yale Beinecke Library, current manuscript overview and undeciphered status.

[2] Yale, Beinecke MS 408 catalogue: physical structure, missing leaves and visual divisions. Some historical attributions in this older record are superseded.

[3] Rene Zandbergen, The Writing System: later-hand month annotations.

[4] Zandbergen, transliteration documentation and source-file index.

[5] Lindemann and Bower, Character Entropy in Modern and Historical Texts (2021 revision).

[6] Sterneck, Polish and Bower, Topic Modeling in the Voynich Manuscript (2021).

[7] Michael A. Greshko, The Naibbe Cipher; linked Cryptologia paper, 2025.

[8] Lisa Fagin Davis, Multispectral Imaging and the Voynich Manuscript (2024).

[9] Greg Hodgins, University of Arizona: report on dating Voynich parchment leaves, 17 February 2009.

Data acquisition: the IT 1a and ZL 3b files were downloaded from the public cache in noah-chelednik/voynich-data after direct file downloads failed. Their headers and opening lines were checked against Zandbergen's published versions; a full byte comparison with the originals was not possible. The mirror is used for data, not as a decipherment authority. Analysis code, input hashes and numerical results accompany this guide in the research notes.

Source images: Voynich_Manuscript.pdf, supplied by the user. All picture captions and English descriptions in this guide are observations or clearly marked interpretations.