*PROJECT WHITE PAPER*

# What the Libro Method Can Do to Voynich Linguistics

*A control protocol, not a crib*

28 August 2026

After the Book of the Knowledge reconstruction · Beinecke MS 408

**Abstract**

*The Castilian Libro del Conoscimiento does not decrypt the Voynich manuscript. There is no shared script, no shared cipher, and no evidence of common authorship. What the Libro project does give is a worked example of a late-medieval illustrated book that was misread for a century because readers demanded one genre, one voice, and one secret. Voynich studies repeat that error. This paper states the linguistic floor for Beinecke MS 408, lists the seven transfers that are legitimate, lists the claims that are not, and specifies a control protocol: tag Libro sentences and Voynich paragraphs by slot-grammar before any mapping of glyphs to sounds. The aim is a test that can fail cleanly.*

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## 1. The claim, limited

The Libro is a fourteenth-century Castilian world-file: kingdoms, painted signs, day-counts, two roads to Cathay, a named gate at Magot, a closed circuit at Seville. Voynich is an early-fifteenth-century parchment codex in an unidentified script, with plant, star, bath, jar, and starred-paragraph sections. They share a century-band and a job-shape suspicion — more than one book in one binding — and nothing else that has been shown.

A crib would mean: his Castilian, or his flag-list, or his circuit, unlocks Voynichese. That claim is false until someone produces a mapping that works on held-out pages and does not collapse when labels and running text are split. This paper does not offer that mapping. It offers a method for not wasting the next year on a unified translation.

## 2. Linguistic floor for Voynich

Parchment radiocarbon: 1404-1438 at 95 percent. Two statistical dialects, Currier A and B, visible especially in the herbal section. Illustration-defined sections behave like different books sewn together: herbal, astronomical, biological, pharmaceutical, recipes (starred paragraphs). Labels under drawings do not repeat like paragraph tokens. Character-level conditional entropy is low: glyphs are position-picky inside words. Word frequencies still follow a Zipf-like curve. Simple Cardan-grille gibberish and naive slot generators fail when asked to match several signatures at once. Word- and paragraph-level measures look more like encoded language than like noise. Glyph-level measures look unlike ordinary European prose.

> *That floor rules out cartoon positions. It is not a herbal in plaintext Latin. It is not proven Chinese. It is not proven a Naibbe homophonic decode of plant names. Those are bets published around the manuscript. The floor is: structured, sectioned, label-plus-prose, two dialects, language-like at word scale, strange at glyph scale.*

## 3. What the Libro actually taught us to see

For a hundred years the Libro was filed as Franciscan travel, then as imaginary travel, then as an armorial with a travel pretext. Each label was half right. The object is a kit wearing a romance. Captains in 1402 used the kit. Later scholarship kept the romance and deleted the job. The title demotes the I. The I is only the witness. Formulas mint the pages: I departed, place-list, river-knot, the lord's sign is this. Two hinges share one sentence: at Malsa and at Magot he saw and heard marvellous things every day. Measures come in two classes, working and sacred. Copies rewrite the signs (France, Navarre) while keeping the circuit. The useful half survives because it was hidden inside the half people would copy.

The error we are done making: one genre, one secret, one substitution.

## 4. Seven transfers

### 4.1 Two books in one binding

Force one translation over Voynich plants, stars, baths, and jars and you repeat Jimenez: a story the next reader can mock. Split the codex by illustration type first.

### 4.2 Labels are a second corpus

In the Libro the painted device and the written blazon can disagree across manuscripts. The picture is not a drawing of the sentence. Voynich labels almost never behave like paragraph words. Name-under-the-plant and paragraph-beside-the-plant stay separate until they prove they are one.

### 4.3 Formula before dictionary

The Libro's grammar is not its vocabulary. It is an engine that mints pages. Voynich almost certainly has a small set of paragraph engines (recipe skeleton, label skeleton, star-paragraph skeleton). Decrypt the engine or you will translate the same machine fifty times and call it fifty plants.

### 4.4 Count slots before phonemes

The honest hole in the Libro edition is that nobody tabulated I saw against they say. The Voynich analogue is: which glyph-slots are section-only, which ride the whole codex, which live only on labels. That census is the reliability gradient in another script.

### 4.5 Working numbers versus sacred numbers

Libro: 4, 25, 35, 125 navigate; 360 and a quarter of the earth classify. If Voynich tokens next to VII, XII, or star-counts are measures, they are the 125-class. If they only decorate, they are the 360-class. Mixing them invents a cosmology out of a dosage.

### 4.6 Parallel systems, not one language

He stacks seven eras on one birthday and names Paradise in Greek, Hebrew, and Latin on one page. An Alfonsine clerk thinks in parallel files. Currier A and B may be two registers or two encoding passes, not two tongues. Which language is it may be the wrong question, as travelogue or armorial was the wrong question.

### 4.7 Afterlife is a test

1402 proves the Libro was a kit. Voynich has no known operator afterlife. A book nobody used as rutter, pharmacopoeia, or computus is allowed to be a private system, a failed constructed language, or a beautiful dead end. Do not paste his captains onto Yale's shelf.

## 5. What does not transfer

| Temptation | Why it fails |
|---|---|
| His Castilian is the plaintext | No mapping has been shown. Script and morphology do not match Romance prose. |
| Same author or same workshop | Voynich vellum is 1404-1438. That overlaps late copies of the Libro, not a 1304 birth. |
| The seven-leg circuit sits under the rosettes folio | Drawn there by wish. Not evidenced. |
| Suppression supplies a key | Replacement explains why a kit becomes folklore. It does not emit phonemes. |
| One successful plant-name proves the system | Labels and paragraphs can be different encodings. A name can be right and the engine still unread. |
| Iberian milieu raises the prior a lot | It raises it a little. Alfonsine parallel-system culture is a setting, not a crib. |

## 6. Control protocol

Not a translation. A comparison of shape.

Step 1. Tag a sample of Libro sentences with one label each: MOVE, SIGN, MEASURE, REPORT, MARVEL, ASSET. Fifty sentences is enough to start. Malsa and Magot must both be in the sample.

Step 2. Tag a sample of Voynich paragraphs by illustration type only — herbal running text, herbal label, star-paragraph, jar-page, bath-page — using the same six labels as hypotheses about slot-function, not about meaning. No glyph-to-letter assignments allowed at this step.

Step 3. Compare distributions. If herbal pages are mostly engine-plus-list, the job-class is pharmacopoeia, not itinerary. If star-paragraphs behave like the Libro's know that blocks, they are filing entries, not narrative.

Step 4. Only inside one matching tag-class, and only after the distributions are published, attempt linguistic mapping. Never mix Guinea-style inventory pages with Magot-style stay pages. Never mix Voynich labels with Voynich paragraphs to save a theory.

Step 5. Require a held-out test. A mapping that works on folios 1-3 and dies on folio 20 is the fifty-plants error.

> *The protocol can conclude that the shapes do not match. That is a successful use of the Libro. It would mean Voynich is not the same job-class, and the comparison should stop.*

## 7. How you would know it failed

The method has failed if: glyph assignments are published before the slot-census; labels and paragraphs are merged to rescue a plant name; Currier A and B are collapsed to make a single language look inevitable; a circuit from Seville is drawn on the rosettes folio as evidence; or 1402 is cited as if Voynich had captains. The method has succeeded, even with no decryption, if the two tag-distributions exist in public and later linguistic work is confined to one class.

The sentence to keep: a medieval illustrated book can be a filing system that speaks in formulas and hides the kit in the pretty half. Voynich may be that, or a closed constructed register, or neither. You find out by doing to its pages what finally worked on his: split the encodings, count the engines, refuse a single genre, and let silence count as data.

## 8. Sources

Libro project, 28 August 2026: White Paper (revised), Master Volume, Complete Modern English Rendering. Jimenez 1877; Markham 1912; Marino 1999; Lacarra et al. 1999. Voynich: Beinecke MS 408; radiocarbon summary at voynich.nu; Currier A/B; Bowern and Lindemann, Annual Review of Linguistics overview of Voynich language metrics; Malta 2022 / Cryptologia 2024 discussion of text-creation hypotheses; work on positional signatures and grille/slot generators (2023-2026). Claims of full plaintext decode (plant-name glossaries, Chinese materia medica identifications) are noted as bets, not as floor.

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*End of the white paper.*