

Ethnobotany lab 2.

Voynich manuscript and plant uses

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Background Voynich manuscript is a “the world’s most mysterious manuscript”. It was probably written in XV or XVI centuries by unknown author in unknown language. All attempts to decipher it were failed. Several theories of its origin exist (see Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voynich_manuscript) but no one has been proved.

Manuscript contains 240 vellum pages. In the first part of book, many pages displays one plant (sometimes two) and a few paragraphs of text—a format typical of European *herbals* (books contain descriptions of medicine plants) of the time. Some parts of these drawings are larger and cleaner copies of sketches seen in the other subsequent section: therefore, some plants were duplicated. None of the plants depicted are unambiguously identifiable.

Assignment Since the book is most probably about plant uses, you need to provide the ethnobotanical classification of plants listed in the book. Select minimally 20 plants, and separate them into different groups on the base of guessed use. Instead of plant name, use page number (which is the number of page in a computer file, do **not** use numbers visible on pages!). List all groups you created, provide a short description for each group. For every group, list all plants which you think belong here. It is desirable to provide short explanation—why you put this plant in this group?

Source Download computer file from a course Web page: http://ashipunov.info/shipunov/school/biol_310/voynich_manuscript.djvu. The file was created from archive.org source and converted to DjVu format because PDF is huge and too slow for these images. To view DjVu file, you need to follow instructions on the course Web page and install the appropriate viewer.