# William F. Friedman's Transcription of the Voynich Manuscript

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*ABSTRACT*

The Voynich Manuscript is a late medieval or early modern book written in an unknown cipher alphabet.  It has resisted the efforts of several of the century's best cryptanalysts to break its cipher.  One of them, William F. Friedman, prepared a machine readable transcription of this book half a century ago; this transcription has recently been unearthed from the archives and placed on line.

**Introduction**

For the better part of this century scholars have been puzzled by the mysterious, still-unread, Voynich cipher manuscript.*  Notable among these was the eminent American cryptologist William F. Friedman, who organized an effort to transcribe and decipher the VMS at the end of World War II.

One of the difficulties facing anyone attempting to read the Voynich manuscript is the tedium of preparing a transcription into conventional alphabetic or numerical symbols, in order to make possible frequency counts and concordances.  Such a transcription requires study of often unclear photocopies, and, if carried out with conscientious regard for accuracy, is very time

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*Hereafter abbreviated ''VMS.''

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