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► To cite this version:

Alexei Lavrentiev, Elena Markova. From the Holy Grail to the Good Health: a Digital Edition of a 15th Century French Medical Treatise on the BFM Web Portal. Victor Baranov; Veselka Zhelyazkova; Alexei Lavrentiev. Textual Heritage and Information Technologies. El'Manuscript - 2014, Sep 2014, Varna, Bulgaria. Cyrillo-Methodian Research Center and Izhevsk University, pp.164-166, 2014. <halshs-01071459>

HAL Id: halshs-01071459

<https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01071459>

Submitted on 5 Oct 2014

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From the Holy Grail to Good Health: A Digital Edition of a 15th-century French Medical Treatise on the BFM Web Portal

Alexey Lavrentiev, Elena Markova

Medieval French, digital editing, XML-TEI, TXM, BFM digital library

В докладе представлен проект электронного издания медицинского трактата “L’enseignement ou la manière de garder et conserver la santé” (“Трактат о сохранении здоровья”), представляющего собой перевод на среднефранцузский язык латинского произведения Гвидо Парато “*Libellus de sanitate conservanda*” (1459). Издание готовится на основе рукописи СПб., РНБ, Fr.Q.v.VI.1. Методологические принципы и технологические решения, используемые в издании, разработаны в рамках проекта издания “Поиска святого Грааля”, а в перспективе издание должно войти в коллекцию электронных текстов Базы средневекового французского (BFM, <http://txm.bfm-corpus.org>).

In this paper we present a project to create a digital edition of the French translation of Guido Parato’s *Libellus de sanitate conservanda* (1459) in the framework of the *Base de Français Médiéval* (BFM) digital library.

Guido Parato (“Guy Parat” in the French tradition) was the personal physician of Francesco Sforza (1401–1466), the Duke of Milan. He offered his treatise (or rather a handbook of good advice on nutrition, hygiene, and mental health, as well as on preventing and treating some diseases) to Philippe the Good, the Duke of Burgundy, and the treatise was almost immediately translated into French. The manuscript Fr.Q.v.VI.1 held in St. Petersburg at the Russian National Library has been proved to be the first French translation of the treatise [Markova 2009]. It was written no later than in 1462, at most a few years after the Latin original.

The text is interesting from many points of view, inasmuch as nonliterary Middle French works are still underrepresented in scholarly editions and *a fortiori* in digital text corpora. It can not only serve a valuable data source on medieval medicine, health-keeping practices and associated vocabulary but can also contribute to the study of translation practices. The French version of the treatise remains unpublished, and to the best of our knowledge, there is only one article dedicated to the study of this work produced by previous scholarship [Wickersheimer 1913]. We have already obtained some interesting results in the study of the graphic system of this text [Markova 2011; 2013] but its digitization and exploitation with corpus query tools will foster various kinds of new research on it.

The edition we are undertaking follows the model elaborated by the *Queste del saint Graal* project [Marchello-Nizia and Lavrentiev 2013] and currently generalized in the BFM digital library. In this framework, the editing cycle includes primary editing using some special characters and conventions with standard word-processing software (like Microsoft Word or Open Office Writer), automated conversion to TEI XML, further edit-

ing and tagging in TEI XML and publishing on the BFM web portal, which is built on the TXM platform. This platform provides HTML and PDF versions of the text for online and offline reading, as well as powerful tools for corpus search and analysis [Heiden 2010].

One of the peculiarities of the BFM editing rules is that they require at least two layers of transcription of the primary sources. In the “diplomatic” layer, no punctuation marks are added to that of the manuscript, the scribal use of *i/j* and *u/v* letters is preserved, and the supplied letters in the expansions of abbreviations are clearly marked (e.g., by using italics). The “normalized” layer applies most of the rules adopted in traditional editions of Old French texts. These include modernized punctuation, “phonetic” (or “ramist”) use of *i/j* and *u/v*, use of capitals in proper names and some disambiguating diacritics. The full reference of the transcription layer features can be found in Lavrentiev [2008].

A few pages of the manuscript will have the third, “facsimile”, layer of transcription, where medieval allographs (like the long *s* or the round *r*), abbreviation marks and scribal punctuation are represented. Depending on the agreement with the Russian National Library, we will also provide facsimile images of more or less high quality that will allow every reader to check the exactitude of our transcription.

This multi-layer transcription technique makes the BFM editions suitable for various kinds of research usage. The normalized layer is suitable for reading by non-linguists and for processing with NLP tools, and the diplomatic layer contains accurate data representation for linguistic research since it respects the original graphical ambiguity and makes distinction between the letters present in the primary source and the resolutions of abbreviations. This distinction is crucial, for instance, in research on verbal or nominal morphology. The “facsimile” layer is useful for paleographers, as well as for linguists working on the history of writing systems.

Even though the edition of *L'enseignement ou la manière de garder et conserver la santé* that we are undertaking is not particularly innovative from a methodological and technological point of view, it improves previously developed routines and makes them more reliable and ergonomic.

The current version of the edition in progress can be found at the following URL: <http://txm.bfm-corpus.org/?command=documentation&path=/SANTE>.

To have an idea of a fully functional digital edition published on the BFM portal; one can visit the homepage of the *Queste del saint Graal* available at the following URL: <http://txm.bfm-corpus.org/?command=documentation&path=/GRAAL>.

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