

# Encoding Gruerie Accounts (14th-15th c.)

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**MEDEA Workshop**
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**Encoding *Gruerie* Accounts (14th—15th c.)**
**Christelle Balouzat-Loubet**

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Before I get started, I want to thank the managers of this workshop who have extended me a warm welcome. I'm delighted to be here to present my first research results and I'm hoping my very French accent will not make me too difficult to understand.

Since last year, I'm working on a personal project on the medieval management of the forest area as a mirror for princely power. If the forest — whose role is still essential in the economy and landscape of several French regions today— is the subject of many works in geography, archaeology and history of law for the modern and contemporary periods, its medieval past is still very poorly understood. Indeed, the medievalists' work on the forest has been for a long time confused with the history of great clearing of forests during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Other medievalists reduced forest areas to a set of rights, without considering its spatial dimension. The most recent works on the history of principalities during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries speak little or not at all of the forest.

Yet, the exertion of sovereign power over the forest area, the establishment of administrative and human resources dedicated to the management, exploitation and protection of this space are proof of the assertion of princely power and of the awareness, since the Middle Ages, of the need to ensure the sustainability of natural resources.

This research is principally based on the analysis of the accountancy of the dukes of Lorraine (14th-15th c.) whose richness and diversity enable the issue to be addressed in all its dimensions: anthropological, political, economic, territorial and environmental. The accounts of these dukes have never been studied systematically. Yet they are abundant and several are related to the forest, especially *gruerie* accounts, which are numerous from the fifteenth century.

If the digital publication of princely charters is a scientific field formerly and widely invested by historians, it is not the same for the online medieval accounts, especially in France. The new interest in the accounting records is

perceptible but it is still on the fringe of the digital revolution affecting the Humanities and Social Sciences.

The aim of my project is to contribute to the digital valorisation of accounting material in an online database. The aim of the development of the database will be twofold:

1. **To make available to the scientific community some accounting sources hitherto unknown**. The abundance of accounting series in Lorraine for the fifteenth century (general accounts and various accounts of bailiwicks) has so far discouraged any systematic study of these funds. Indeed, it makes it physically impossible to take them all into account and to provide a full transcript. The choice was therefore made to consider only accounts of *gruerie*. The combination of photographs with transcripts will be accomplished in partnership with the relevant archives.
2. **To make the exploitation of this corpus easier thanks to the computerised treatment of data.** As the transcriptions proceed, the documents will be encoded to allow cross-searching in the corpus. The goal is to enable diversified operations on the corpus: codicology, lexicometric analysis, prosopography, statistics. It will therefore be necessary to combine technical and scientific perspectives to provide a tool for historians' work. The issues of the encoding scheme, of the implementation of a search engine, of the hosting of the site, of the rights to use the images, of the rules for a gradual increment of the base are all aspects on which will have to be thought about upstream of a technical implementation.

This presentation is based on the example of an accounting register concerning the *gruerie* of Châtenois and Neufchâteau (FRAD054 — B 4623, 1488-1501). After a quick presentation of the document, I'll explain why I've chosen an XML-TEI markup considering the aim of my research. Second, I'll propose my encoding scheme to illustrate my choices in adapting the TEI model and to show the difficulties or questioning I've met in my work, which is just there in its early stages.

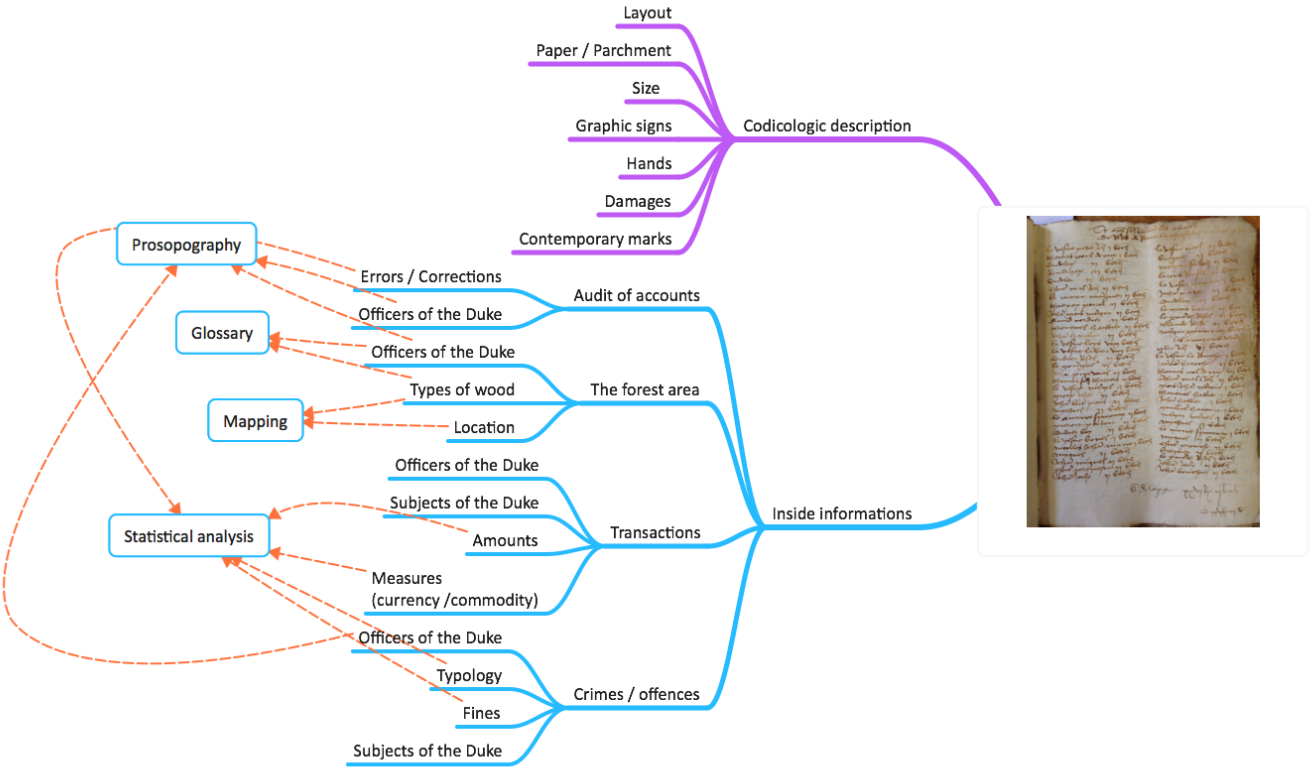
## 1- Overview of the source and operating objectives

The source I'm working on now is a paper register preserved in the archives of the Vosges, in Lorraine, France (bailliage de Vosges, Prévôté de Châtenois et de Neufchâteau, FRAD054 - **B 4623 1488-1501**, compte de la gruerie de Châtenois et de Neufchâteau). This register covers thirteen years of accounts of the 'gruerie' of Châtenois and Neufchâteau, that is to say the accounts of the institution that is in charge of the management of the forest.

The register is approximately twelve inches of top, nine comma five inches of wide and zero comma eight inches of thickness. It has hundred and one pages of whom some are very damaged. The ink is often paled.

The internal structure of the register is very classical: the accountant begins his account by the recipes and he continues with the expenses. The presentation is very different from one page to another: the writing of the accounts is the work of several persons, as show the different handwritings; some pages are organized in columns, other not.

I intend to use these register in different ways:



The codicological description of the registers is even more essential that it's still very difficult in France to obtain the legal authorization for online publication of photographs. The description of the registers' layout, of their format, of their size, of their decoration, etc. is surely valuable in understanding the context of production of these registers and useful to define the role which was assigned to these documents in the principality.

But, in the frame of my project, the main information are those which can be found inside the document. Indeed, the accounts contain numerous data on:

1- the forest area, its extension and its uses;
2- the princely institutions in charge of the management of the forests;
3- the transactions and the importance of the wood's incomes in the duke's financial resources;
4- the exercise of the justice in the forest's area.

The analysis of all these information should provide several tools for historians:

1- a prosopographical study of the princely staff: *gruyer*, *grand gruyer*;
2- a map of the woods;
3- the different types of wood: beech (*foul* or *fouxe*), oak (*chasne*) are the first type of wood I have already identified in this register;
4- a glossary gathering all the specific terms mentioned in the documents: taxes (*admoinosemment*), forester (*frottey*)

In the frame of the project presented here, the scheme developed for encoding has to mix the description of the source and the semantic elements to convey the complexity of the document.

## 2- First encoding operations

Once it was decided that the edition of the accountings would be first and foremost a digital edition online, the choice quickly fell on XML-TEI encoding, a language that is necessary for a few years as a standard in the field of digital publishing scientific while being customizable.

My first idea was to build my own schema until I discovered the works and proposals born from the previous researches and meetings concerning

the theme of the present workshop. I then decided to try the "transactionography" schema available online.

Without considering the TEI Header and the layout's description, here are the elements and attributes that I've used until now:

1. For the persons whose appears among the register, I used the <persName> (personal name) element, with @key, @role.

```
<p> Receu de <persName key="Jehan Woillemenent">Jehan <unclear>
          Woillemenent</unclear></persName> de <rs type="person">
       <persName key="Jehan Perin Marechal">Jehan Perin Marechal</persName>
       demorant a <placeName key="Châtenois">Chastenoy</placeName>
   </rs> et de <persName key="Jehan Niclavin">Jehan<unclear>Niclavin</unclear></persName> demorant a<placeName key="Rouceux"> Rosseile</placeName>
   <!--transaction-->
   <transfer fra="Jehan Woillemenent Jehan Perin Maréchal Jehan Niclavin" til="Phillipin forestier de Neufeys"/>
   <!-- possibilité d'indiquer 3 noms à la suite ? -->
   <measure commodity="hêtre" quantity="8" type="commodity" unit="pièce"/>huits
   pieces de<term key="hêtre">foul</term> prinse es bois<gap extent="unknown" reason="papier détérioré" unit="words"/>
   <placeName key="Neufeys" type="woods">Heneuffay</placeName> a delivré par
       Phellepin<persName key="Phillipin" role="forestier"/><term key="forestier">
       frottey </term>
   <unclear>dudit boix</unclear> a eulx vandue comme illa part
       par<unclear>tesmoingtz de</unclear>
   <term key="tabellion">tabelion</term><gap extent="unknown" reason="papier détérioré" unit="words"/>
</p>
```

I sometimes used the <rs> (referring string) element when the composition of the name is particularly complex (with the indication of the residence's place and the function for example)

```
<p> Receu de <persName key="Jehan Woillemenent">Jehan <unclear>
          Woillemenent</unclear></persName> de <rs type="person">
       <persName key="Jehan Perin Marechal">Jehan Perin Marechal</persName>
       demorant a <placeName key="Châtenois">Chastenoy</placeName>
   </rs> et de <persName key="Jehan Niclavin">Jehan<unclear>Niclavin</unclear></persName> demorant a<placeName key="Rouceux"> Rosseile</placeName>
   <!--transaction-->
   <transfer fra="Jehan Woillemenent Jehan Perin Maréchal Jehan Niclavin" til="Phillipin forestier de Neufeys"/>
   <!-- possibilité d'indiquer 3 noms à la suite ? -->
   <measure commodity="hêtre" quantity="8" type="commodity" unit="pièce"/>huits
   pieces de<term key="hêtre">foul</term> prinse es bois<gap extent="unknown" reason="papier détérioré" unit="words"/>
   <placeName key="Neufeys" type="woods">Heneuffay</placeName> a delivré par
       Phellepin<persName key="Phillipin" role="forestier"/><term key="forestier">
       frottey </term>
   <unclear>dudit boix</unclear> a eulx vandue comme illa part
       par<unclear>tesmoingtz de</unclear>
   <term key="tabellion">tabelion</term><gap extent="unknown" reason="papier détérioré" unit="words"/>
</p>
```

2. For the transactions, I tried the <transfer> element, with the @type, @fra, @til

```
<p> Receu de <persName key="Jehan Woillemenent">Jehan <unclear>
          Woillemenent</unclear></persName> de <rs type="person">
       <persName key="Jehan Perin Marechal">Jehan Perin Marechal</persName>
       demorant a <placeName key="Châtenois">Chastenoy</placeName>
   </rs> et de <persName key="Jehan Niclavin">Jehan<unclear>Niclavin</unclear></persName> demorant a<placeName key="Rouceux"> Rosseile</placeName>
   <!--transaction-->
   <transfer fra="Jehan Woillemenent Jehan Perin Maréchal Jehan Niclavin" til="Phillipin forestier de Neufeys"/>
   <!-- possibilité d'indiquer 3 noms à la suite ? -->
   <measure commodity="hêtre" quantity="8" type="commodity" unit="pièce"/>huits
   pieces de<term key="hêtre">foul</term> prinse es bois<gap extent="unknown" reason="papier détérioré" unit="words"/>
   <placeName key="Neufeys" type="woods">Heneuffay</placeName> a delivré par
       Phellepin<persName key="Phillipin" role="forestier"/><term key="forestier">
       frottey </term>
   <unclear>dudit boix</unclear> a eulx vandue comme illa part
       par<unclear>tesmoingtz de</unclear>
   <term key="tabellion">tabelion</term><gap extent="unknown" reason="papier détérioré" unit="words"/>
</p>
```

I combined this element with the <measure> element @commodity, @quantity, @ type, @unit

```
<p> Receu de <persName key="Jehan Woillemenent">Jehan <unclear>
          Woillemenent</unclear></persName> de <rs type="person">
       <persName key="Jehan Perin Marechal">Jehan Perin Marechal</persName>
       demorant a <placeName key="Châtenois">Chastenoy</placeName>
   </rs> et de <persName key="Jehan Niclavin">Jehan<unclear>Niclavin</unclear></persName> demorant a<placeName key="Rouceux"> Rosseile</placeName>
   <!--transaction-->
   <transfer fra="Jehan Woillemenent Jehan Perin Maréchal Jehan Niclavin" til="Phillipin forestier de Neufeys"/>
   <!-- possibilité d'indiquer 3 noms à la suite ? -->
   <measure commodity="hêtre" quantity="8" type="commodity" unit="pièce"/>huits
   pieces de<term key="hêtre">foul</term> prinse es bois<gap extent="unknown" reason="papier détérioré" unit="words"/>
   <placeName key="Neufeys" type="woods">Heneuffay</placeName> a delivré par
       Phellepin<persName key="Phillipin" role="forestier"/><term key="forestier">
       frottey </term>
   <unclear>dudit boix</unclear> a eulx vandue comme illa part
       par<unclear>tesmoingtz de</unclear>
   <term key="tabellion">tabelion</term><gap extent="unknown" reason="papier détérioré" unit="words"/>
</p>
```

3. For the glossary, I used the <term> element and the @key

```
<p> Receu de <persName key="Jehan Woillemenent">Jehan <unclear>
          Woillemenent</unclear></persName> de <rs type="person">
       <persName key="Jehan Perin Marechal">Jehan Perin Marechal</persName>
       demorant a <placeName key="Châtenois">Chastenoy</placeName>
   </rs> et de <persName key="Jehan Niclavin">Jehan<unclear>Niclavin</unclear></persName> demorant a<placeName key="Rouceux"> Rosseile</placeName>
   <!--transaction-->
   <transfer fra="Jehan Woillemenent Jehan Perin Maréchal Jehan Niclavin" til="Phillipin forestier de Neufeys"/>
   <!-- possibilité d'indiquer 3 noms à la suite ? -->
   <measure commodity="hêtre" quantity="8" type="commodity" unit="pièce"/>huits
   pieces de<term key="hêtre">foul</term> prinse es bois<gap extent="unknown" reason="papier détérioré" unit="words"/>
   <placeName key="Neufeys" type="woods">Heneuffay</placeName> a delivré par
       Phellepin<persName key="Phillipin" role="forestier"/><term key="forestier">
       frottey </term>
   <unclear>dudit boix</unclear> a eulx vandue comme illa part
       par<unclear>tesmoingtz de</unclear>
   <term key="tabellion">tabelion</term><gap extent="unknown" reason="papier détérioré" unit="words"/>
</p>
```

I've not encoded the geographical names yet. A precise work of identification will be necessary before that.

## 3- Challenges and issues

This first attempt to encode the accounts of 'gruerie' has raised some reflections.

First my work has been slowed by technical questions, for example:

- since the medieval accountants didn't write in tables, I chose to use the <p> tag to mark each transaction. But I'm still asking if the <item> tag shouldn't have been preferred?
- what should be the degree of precision of the encoding of the visual aspects of the document (knowing the photographs will maybe not be available on line for the users of the database): for example, is it necessary to encode the line breaks (<lb>)?
- the medieval naming is a strong source of problem for encoding : the names have no orthography, they can then be written in very different ways all along the register. I hesitated between several ways to distinguish persons: should I use the @xml:id with a

number for each person? Or have I done the best choice in using the @key to name the person?

- is it necessary for place names to indicate the country, the region, the department, etc. or is it more relevant to indicate geographical coordinates?
- another interrogation emerged about the "transactionography" schema: how to proceed if the transaction involves more than two persons or more than two parts? I have assumed that I had to follow the TEI prescriptions, meaning I have put the names one after another separated by a space. However, I doubt that this choice is the good one, because it's impossible to create units of names. I suppose I have in this case to create one transaction for each participant but it still increases the encoding work.

Finally, the semantically enriched encoding appears to be a very hard and long operation: the nesting of tags makes the process very complex and could promote mistakes; in the same time it is necessary to watch that the content isn't betrayed by the contemporary historian's interpretation and references:

- concerning the transactions, the duke's officers ('gruyer', 'forestier') are in fact intermediaries between the prince and his subjects, not the beneficiaries of transactions. To use the @til and @fra is it a neutral action or does it imply that @til indicate the debtor and @fra the creditor? In this case, these attributes don't exactly fit to the medieval reality.
- the accounts give precious information about salaries, prices as shown in this extract of the register:

| | |
|---|---|
| Item vendui a Jehan Perrin et au grant Mengin Marchal demorant a Chastenoy **cinqz pieces de boix** affaire charbon prinsse en Neuffay a delivré par Phelipin Frottei comme illa paié par tesmongtz de taibelion la somme de **VII groix** | *Item* sold to Jehan Perrin and to the big Mengin Marchal living at Chastenoy **five pieces of wood** to do charcoal taken in Neuffay, was given by Phelipin forester as shown by notary's testimony the amount of **seven 'gros'** |
| Item vendui a Jehan Woillemen marchal de Chastenoy **troix pieces de boix** affaire charbon prinsse en Neuffay a delivré par Philippin frottei la somme de **six groix** | *Item* sold to Jehan Woillemen marshal of Chastenoy **three pieces of wood** to do charcoal taken in Neuffay was given by Phelipin forester the amount of **six 'gros'** |

This extract mentions that five pieces of wood cost seven ‘gros’ in one case and three pieces of wood cost six ‘gros’ in the other case. We can therefore deduce the price of a piece of wood: one point four ‘gros’ in one case, two ‘gros’ in the other. I still don’t know how to proceed with the XML-TEI in this specific case.

## Conclusions

I’m still convinced that the XML-TEI encoding is the best choice for my project, despite the high investment in time. I’ll be able to extract different types of information from the same file or to include them in an online database.

However, some questions remain on the treatment and on the analysis of the data. Once the accounts are encoded, how to be sure of a correct analysis of the data if we don’t dominate the XPATH and XSLT language? It seems to me that historians loose their leadership on this point for the benefit of computer scientists to whom it’s often difficult to explain the specific expectation of the historical work.