Bakalářská diplomová práce
Reliquary of saint Foy of Conques

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Čestne prehlasujem, že som bakalársku diplomovú prácu vypracovala samostatne s využitím uvedených prameňov a literatúry.
I would like to thank to my supervisor doc. Ivan Foletti for the time, the valuable advice, and for the patience with my chapters. I would also like to thank my family and friends for their endless support and encouragement.
De sainte Foy, patronne de Ruthènes,
Je veux chanter les trépas glorieux,
Sa renommée aux provinces lointaines,
Et son doux culte aimé des nos aïeux;

Je veux chanter ses miracles sans nombre,
Ses jeux divins, sublimes, gracieux,
Son nom enfin, astre sortant de l’ombre,
Pour resplendir plus brillant à nos yeux¹.

¹ Firminhac, 1879, pp. 11-12
1 Introduction

The Majesty of saint Foy happens to be the only Carolingian majesty preserved up to this day, and is said to be “the oldest surviving cultic image of a saint in the West outside of Rome”. From the beginning of its existence, the reliquary statue has been placed in the monastery in Conques (fig. 1) in Auvergne. Term “majesty” or “maiestas” indicates an anthropomorphic wooden reliquary, coated with precious metal, and usually enthroned. The saints are represented as rulers, sitting on their throne, or as protectors of their church or monastery. Reliquaries include two main aspects – spiritual and material. The relic is inserted into the reliquary, which then identifies as the saint himself or herself. In the case of the reliquary of saint Foy, this identification is confirmed by forty-nine stories about the miracles and the “joca”, practical jokes, mentioned in the text of Liber Miraculorum Sancte Fidis, written by a scholar Bernard of Angers in the 11th century.

Regarding the material aspect of the reliquary of saint Foy (fig. 2), the statue is made of yew wood core, which is one of the oldest part of the reliquary, and is dated back to the end of the 9th century, shortly after the relics were brought to the monastery in Conques in 883. The wooden core was subsequently coated in gold leaf. The head, originally a portrait of an unknown ruler from Late Antiquity, was placed on the gilded body. The first phase of the creation of the statue is called “ab antiquo fabricata”. The statue was completely transformed around year 1000, adjusted to a new throne, recoated in gold leaf, and adorned with precious stones and intaglios. These modifications are known as “de integro reformata”. Both terms were originally used by Bernard in Liber Miraculorum, however, for scientific reasons, they were reintroduced by Ernest Rupin in 1890.

The dimensions of the statue are 85 x 36 x 24 centimeters. The “maiestas” is seated on a throne, that is adorned with four crystal balls, as well as many gems and intaglios. The statue has a slightly tilted head, on which an imperial crown is placed, together

2 Fricke 2015, p. 15
3 Taralon, Taralon-Carlini 1997, p. 12
4 Ashley, Sheigorn 1992, p. 67
5 More on this subject in: Remensnyder 1990
6 Fricke 2015, p. 50
7 Ibidem, p. 32
8 see Rupin 1890
9 Fricke 2015, p. 153
10 Taralon, Taralon-Carlini 1997, p. 71
with two long earrings. In her stretched hands, dated back to the 15th century\textsuperscript{11}, saint Foy is holding two small golden scabbards, in which flowers are often placed (fig. 3). The whole statue is adorned with 63\textsuperscript{12} precious stones and intaglios.

The last complex work was published in year 2007\textsuperscript{13}, yet some questions about this statue are still not answered, for example the date of making of the crown. In the first chapter of this bachelor thesis, I will introduce the bibliography on this subject and summarize it, in order to identify the already answered questions. In the second chapter I will describe the gradual process of making of the statue and its transformations. Subsequently, I will discuss the cult of the saint Foy in Conques and its ritual practices; and in the end of this thesis, I will try to explain how a medieval viewer perceived the statue and compare it with the perception of a modern person.

2 State of research

The strangeness and unique nature of the golden statue of saint Foy have always been an object of interest of many authors over the last two centuries. The first mention of the reliquary dates back to the 11th century, when a scholar from Angers visited the monastery in Conques for the first time and was astonished by statue's appearance, comparing it to a pagan goddess. Eight centuries later, the reliquary had a similar effect on several historians. In the two last centuries, the main objective was to determine the time period of creation of the reliquary, whereas recently, historians have been studying the engagement of the reliquary in rituals and the significance of the statue in the context of medieval sculpture.

2.1 Primary sources and literature

The first to mention the reliquary statue of Sainte Foy was a scholar named Bernard of Angers in his work Liber Miraculorum Sancte Fidis\textsuperscript{14} (hereafter Liber Miraculorum) from 11th century. This text also contains the first known description of the statue. Bernard's description roughly corresponds to the statue's current looks\textsuperscript{15}. The text is

\textsuperscript{11} Fricke 2015, p. 32
\textsuperscript{12} Ibidem, p. 153
\textsuperscript{13} See Fricke 2007
\textsuperscript{14} see Bouillet (ed.) 1897
\textsuperscript{15} Taralon, Taralon-Carlini 1997, p. 14
divided into several parts which include Passio, the part about the life and martyrdom of the saint, Traslatio, in which the author discusses the theft of her relics from the city of Agen and their transportation to Conques, and the last part Liber Miraculorum, that focuses on the miracles which are associated to her. These three parts correspond to his three visits of the abbey in Conques. Liber Miraculorum is the core of any scientific research on the statue, the most important work for every author who wants to write about this topic.

The reliquary statue is briefly mentioned in the text of Translatio Metrica S. Fidis Virg. Et Mart. ad Monasterum Conchacense by anonymous author. The text is included in Acta Sanctorum Octobris from 1770.

Prosper Mérimée who found the statue in one of the cellars in 1838, was “not prepared to find so much wealth in such a desert,...” After centuries, he was the first to mention and shortly describe the reliquary in his work Notes d'un voyage en Auvergne from 1838, where he states that the golden statue of Sainte Foy reminds him of 11th century's work. According to him, the head of the statue is out of proportion to the body, and may be a result of a restauration in a later period. However, his notes are nothing but impressions and therefore, we can not consider this work as scientific.

Although the two resources mentioned above only contain brief descriptions and mere references to the statue, they are indeed fundamental for subsequent research of the reliquary in the 19th century.

2.2 Older literature and determining the date

The main subject of the scientific debate in the 19th century was to determine the date of creation of the reliquary. A number of authors addressed this problem by developing various theories which they believed provided them with the most accurate answer.

The first to tackle the issue was Alfréd Darcel in his work Trésor de l'église de Conques in 1861. According to Darcel, the golden reliquary statue was created in the time of the transfer of the relics from city of Agen to the monastery in Conques, during
the reign of Charles the Bald21. This attribution was based on several ornaments displayed on the chair, which to him resembled the pre-roman style. In his work, Darcel presented a detailed description of the reliquary, that included not only the appearance of the statue, but also the materials used and the technique22. Trésor de l'église de Conques contains the first illustrations of the head with the crown and the throne of Sainte Foy. Interestingly enough, despite the fact that Darcel was not aware of Bernard's Liber Miraculorum, the feelings that the statue evoked in him were almost identical to those described by Bernard d'Angers23.

In his article Observations critiques sur le Trésor de Conques et sur la description qu'en a donnée Monsieur Darcel24 published in Mémoires de la Société nationale des Antiquaires de France in 1864, Ferdinand de Lasteyrie criticized Darcel's conclusion. He states that if the crown recalls some imperial crowns from the 10th century, the face, on the other hand, does not resemble the work of this period. According to him, the statue was made under the abbot Bégon III, in 11th century25.

Gustave Desjardins mentions the reliquary in his Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Conques en Rouergue26 from 1879 and claims that the golden statue appears to be a 10th century's work of goldsmithing27. In the Essai sur le Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Conques en Rouergue (IXe-XIIe siècles) Desjardins attributed the making of the statue to the abbot Étienne II, between the years 942 and 98428.

Ernest Rupin in his work L'Oeuvre de Limoges29 from 1890 introduced two terms “ab antiquo fabricata” and “de integro reformata” which he translated as “entirely remade”. These terms were originally used by Bernard in Liber Miraculorum. Rupin claimed that at the time when Bernard visited the monastery in Conques, the statue might have been the original (thus the term “ab antiquo fabricata”), created in the time of the abbot Étienne II, with so many decorations and jewelery that made it seem transformed. The other option is that the statue had been already “entirely remade” (“de integro reformata”) before the first visit30. This theory was essential for further research and influenced all of the authors who followed after Rupin. L'Oeuvre de

21 Charles the Bald (later Charles II.), the king of the West Francia between 843-877.
22 Darcel 1861, p. 49
23 Rupin 1890, p. 63
24 see De Lasteyrie 1864
26 see Desjardins 1879
27 Ibidem, p. X
28 Desjardins 1872, p. 255
29 see Rupin 1890
30 Ibidem, p. 64
Limoges also contains illustrations of the crowned head and a number of ornaments displayed on the throne.

Like Desjardins before, Auguste Bouillet in his *L'Église et Le Trésor de Conques: Aveyron: Notice Descriptive* 31 published in 1892, attributed the making of the statue to the period of the abbacy of Étienne II, in the second half of the 10th century 32. Nevertheless, he claims that the state of the statue as we know it is a result of many transformations throughout the centuries, due to many gifts and offerings from the pilgrims which were used to adorn the reliquary 33. The text contains a detailed description of the statue, including a description of the materials and ornaments, as well as an illustration of the whole statue.

Émile Molinier thoroughly analyzed the golden statue in his work *Histoire générale des Arts appliqués à l'Industrie du Ve à la fin du XVIIIe siècle. L'Orfèvrerie religieuse et civile* 34 published in 1902. The author refused Alfréd Darcel's theory, which states that the reliquary was made in the 9th century as well as the theory of Ferdinand de Lasteyrie, who dated the statue back to the 11th or 12th century. By extensively quoting Bernard's *Liber Miraculorum*, Molinier claimed that the *Majestas sancte Fidis* had been indeed made in the time of Étienne II, between the years 942 and 984. Furthermore, he suggested that there had been de facto two statues, the first one being more modest, and the second statue, described by Bernard in *Liber Miraculorum*, that had been “entirely remade” in the time of Étienne II 35.

In the second part of the text, Moliner scrutinizingly described the golden reliquary as well as the throne. Additionally, he emphasized several details, such as hair, which he considered to be a “poorly understood” imitation of Byzantine hairstyle, the crown that had nothing in common with the works from the region of Conques, and several ornaments, that may have been of Spanish influence 36.

Another author, that is worth noting is Émile Mâle and his work *L'Art religieux du XIIe siècle en France. Étude sur les origines de l'iconographie du Moyen Age* 37 from 1922. In a chapter about “Majestés” from Auvergne, he noted that the statue of saint Foy was not the only majesty in that region and mentions some other examples like the

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31 see Bouillet 1892
32 Ibidem, p. 50
33 Ibidem, p. 50-54
34 see Molinier 1902
35 Ibidem, p. 109-111
36 Ibidem, p. 112
37 see Mâle 1922
Majesty of saint Marius from the monastery of Vabres, the Majesty of saint Amaud and
the Majesty of Saint Géraud from the abbey of Aurillac. He claimed, that these statues
were probably a work of monastic artists and suggested that here may have been an art
workshop in the monastery of Conques. In the matter of datation, he agreed with
Bouillet, and confirmed that the statue had been made in the 10\textsuperscript{th} century. He also
provided a short description of the reliquary statue, stating that it possessed a
“miraculous aureole”. Most importantly, Mâle was the first author since Bernard in
\textit{Liber Miraculorum}, to briefly describe a ritual, in which the reliquary was engaged.

After two decades, in 1944, Jean Hubert published a short article \textit{La Majesté de
sainte Foy de Conques} in \textit{Bulletin de la Société Nationale des antiquaires de France}\textsuperscript{38}.
This article is the first one to focus solely on the statue of saint Foy. Hubert's conclusion
is that the first statue “\textit{ab antiquo fabricata}” was made a long time before Étienne II.,
shortly after the transportation of the relics to the abbey. Regarding the transformation
of the statue (“\textit{de integro reformata}”), he expressed an opinion, that the statue had been
repaired so many times, that it was impossible to determine the time period of the
remaking\textsuperscript{39}.

The last one to mention and examine the golden reliquary before the restauration
works in 1954 was Paul Deschamps in his article \textit{L'orfèvrerie à Conques ver l'an mille}
, published in \textit{Bulletin Monumental} in 1948\textsuperscript{40}. Deschampes went back to the Rupin's
theory and the two terms “\textit{ab antiquo fabricata}” and “\textit{de integro reformata}”, and
suggested that the statue had not been entirely remade but only transformed, recoated
with even more magnificent layer of gold, and embellished with precious stones. He
also suggested that the original wooden head coated with thin metal had been replaced
by a new hollow head made of thick gold leaf\textsuperscript{41}.

All of these resources are very important for further research on the reliquary statue
of saint Foy. The authors mentioned above had delivered information and developed
theories, which were the basis for the most influential works about the Majesty of saint
Foy, and also helped many other authors to start or continue their research on this
subject. In addition, they indicate the state of the reliquary before the restoration works
of the treasury of Conques in 1954.

\textsuperscript{38} see Hubert 1944
\textsuperscript{39} Taralon, Taralon-Carlini, 1997, p. 17
\textsuperscript{40} see Deschamps 1948
\textsuperscript{41} Deschamps 1948, p. 90, in: Taralon, Taralon-Carlini 1997, p. 16-17
2.3 Modern literature

The restoration works in the treasury of Conques executed by Lucien and Jean-Claude Toulouse between years 1954 and 1955 made it possible to answer some of the questions about the statue of saint Foy. Jean Taralon, a true expert on the majesty of saint Foy, who was present at the restoration works, published the results in his treatise *La nouvelle présentation du Trésor de Conques*\(^{42}\) in 1955. Due to discovered facts, he was able to confirm the theory that the original statue was transformed into *maiestas*\(^{43}\), and write his next two articles, of which the second one is the most complex work on this subject yet.

A year later, in 1956, Raymond Rey published an article concerning the reliquary called *La Sainte Foy du Trésor de Conques et la Statuaire sacré avant l’an mille*\(^{44}\). Rey is the first one to whom the date of the fabrication of the statue is not a priority. Rather than focusing on that, he puts the statue into a context of sculpted representations of saints used in the medieval cult, and searches for the origins and causes of the figurative sculpture in the Middle Ages. Many examples show that this type of statue was usually a gift from a pope or a bishop to a church or an abbey. Rey claims that even if these statues may recall a pagan cult, we shouldn't confuse them with representations of gods placed in antique temples. According to him, the main cause of “the renaissance of the figurative sculpture in the Middle Ages” is the cult of relics, because the relic legitimizes the statue and recalls the presence of the saint\(^{45}\). He notes that in the 10\(^{th}\) century, most of the churches in Auvergne were in possession of relics of a saint that were exposed to the worshippers in a form of “majesty” or a bust, and proves, with the help of some examples, that the majesty of saint Foy had several “ancestors”\(^{46}\).

In the same year, Robert Latouche published an article *Sainte-Foy de Conques et le problème de l’or aux temps carolingiens*\(^{47}\) in which he foremost searched for the cause of the shortage of gold in Carolingian times. Apart from that, Latouche searched for the origins of the gold and the golden jewellery that were used to adorn the statue of saint Foy, as well as the origins of the gifts that were presented to the statue by the pilgrims,

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42 see Taralon 1955  
43 Ibidem, pp. 121-141  
44 see Rey 1956  
45 Ibidem, p. 108  
46 Ibidem, p. 114  
47 see Latouche 1956
coming from all regions of France and abroad. By citing Bernard's Liber Miraculorum, he mentions several examples in the text when someone gave a piece of jewellery or gold to the statue as a votive gift, after the statue had appeared to them in a dream, demanding the particular piece 48. His conclusion is that the shortage of gold in Carolingian times was probably caused by religious institutions who used the golden gifts from the pilgrims for goldsmithing works or stored it in their treasuries 49 (as, for example, the monastery in Conques). A similar problem concerning the origin of the jewellery that adorns the reliquary, was adressed by Jean-François Fau in his short article Aveyron. Au sujet des objets d'origine islamique du trésor de Sainte-Foy, à Conques in 2002. Fau has found an intaglio of islamic origin, decorating the gown of the statue of saint Foy, that even bears an inscription in arabic 50.

In 1978, Ellert Dahl in his article Heavenly Images: the statue of saint Foy of Conques (Aveyron) and the signification of the medieval 'cult image' in the West in Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam pertinencia 51 discussed the power of the relics hidden in the statue, and the effect of the reliquary on medieval worshippers.

After several years, in 1990, another problem was adressed by Amy G. Remensnyder in her article Un problème de cultures ou de culture? La statue-reliquaire et le joca de sainte Foy de Conques dans le Liber miraculorum de Bernard d'Angers 52. Her main subject of interest is the medieval cult of the statue of saint Foy and the attitude of the two cultures, clerical and popular, towards it. The northern elite clerical culture, represented by Bernard of Angers, percieved this cult and the reliquary of saint Foy as a matter of the popular, illiterate cultre. The text of Liber Miraculorum is a proof that the opinion of Bernard of Angers on the statue of saint Foy has changed over time. Furthermore, representatives of the cleric culture in the south competed with each other to be patrons of the reliquary-statues of this type 53. With these arguments, Remensnyder proves that in the context of devotion to saint Foy, these two attitudes coexisted and even converged. Remensnyder mentioned the golden reliquary of saint Foy in her other article Legendary Treasure at Conques: Reliquaries and Imaginative Memory 54 in 1996.

Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheigorn, the author of the English translation of Liber

48 Ibidem, pp. 108-110
49 Ibidem, p. 110
50 Fau 2002, p. 187
51 see Dahl 1978
52 see Remensnyder 1990
53 Ibidem, pp. 351-368
54 see Remensnyder 1996
Miraculorum, discussed the cult of saint Foy, and the ritual in which the reliquary had been involved, in their article An Unsentimental View of Ritual in the Middle Ages or, Sainte Foy Was No Snow White published in 1992.

Jean Taralon presented the results of the restoration works three times, first in 1955, second time in 1978, in his article La Majesté d’or de Sainte-Foy du trésor de Conques published in Revue de l’art, and at last in 1997, in his extensive article La Majesté d'or de Sainte Foy de Conques. This last work was written with the help of Dominique Taralon-Carlini and appears to be the most complex work on this subject yet. Taralon summarized all existing theories about the date of creation of the reliquary and confirmed the theory of Jean Hubert, that the original statue was made in the 9th century, and underwent many modifications since then. He also found out that the head had been made a long time before the original statue and dated it back to the 4th or 5th century, claiming that the head belonged to a statue or a bust of an emperor. By examining all parts of the reliquary, Taralon was able to determine the time period of fabrication of each one of them. In addition, he discussed the origin of the maiestas statues and the importance and the role of the reliquary in the context of medieval sculpture and its direct descendants in the southwest of France. Regarding the discovered facts and accuracy of results, this work has not yet been surpassed and is recommended for all subsequent researchers.

2.4 Contemporary literature

The most recent works include an article Sainte Foy on the Loose or, the Possibilities of Procession from 2001, where the authors Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheigorn returned once more to the ritual which featured the reliquary of saint Foy, this time discussing the procession in which the statue was employed.

Danielle Gaborit-Chopin summarized the research on this subject in her short article La Majesté de sainte Foy de Conques published in Monumental in 2003, presenting

56 Ashley, Sheigorn 1992
57 see Taralon 1955
58 see Taralon 1978
59 see Taralon, Taralon-Carlini 1997
60 Ibidem, p. 52
61 see Ashley, Sheigorn 2001
mainly the findings of Jean Taralon.

An interesting opinion on this subject was presented by Wan-Chuan Kao in his article *The Tomboyism of Faith: Spiritual Tomboyism in the Cult of Sainte Foy*\(^62\) in 2011 who discussed the personality that was embodied in the reliquary statue, her tricks and jokes, as well as her function as protector of the monastery and of her devotees\(^63\).

One of the latest authors who discussed the reliquary is Beate Fricke in her work *Ecce fides. Die statue von Conques, Götzendienst und Bildkultur im Westen*\(^64\) from 2007, and its English translation *Fallen idols, risen saints: Sainte Foy of Conques and the revival of the monumental sculpture in medieval art*\(^65\) from 2015. Fricke, like Raymond Rey before her, examined the statue of saint Foy and searched for the causes of the renaissance of the figurative, three dimensional representations of saints in the Middle Ages. In the first part of the book, Beate Fricke discussed the role of liturgical statues in the Christian Cult, stating that “monumental sculpture experienced a major revival in the West beginning in the ninth century.”\(^66\) and claiming, that the revival of three-dimensional representations of saints “can be traced to a single region: Auvergne.”\(^67\) In the second part, Fricke introduced the saint and described the process of her martyrdom as well as the process of the making of the statue. Besides that, she posed a question: “...why should a single full figure statue of a female saint be created in the ninth century in remote Conques, when statues of saints (except for Madonnas) only appear to be widely disseminated after the middle of the eleventh century – a good two hundred years after?”\(^68\) By mentioning several examples such as the reliquary-statue of Saint Foy, or similar reliquaries in Nevers, Limoges or Tournus, Fricke emphasized the important role of the cult of local saints in Auvergne and their reliquaries in the renaissance of three-dimensional sculpture in the Middle Ages. Subsequently, the author suggested that before the actual reliquary statue, a bust or a half-figure reliquary had been made and the full body and the throne were attached later\(^69\). The head and the face of the statue were discussed in a significant part of the book. Fricke acknowledged the thesis of Jean Taralon, who claimed that the head was

\(^62\) see Kao 2011
\(^63\) Ibidem, p. 412
\(^64\) see Fricke 2007
\(^65\) see Fricke 2015
\(^66\) Ibidem, p. 7
\(^67\) Ibidem, p. 7
\(^68\) Ibidem p. 26
\(^69\) Ibidem, p. 35-37
originally a bust of a ruler from Late Antiquity\textsuperscript{70}. Rather than focusing on the origin of the golden head, Fricke discusses the golden face and the vivacity of the gaze and its effect on a viewer. Fricke noted that the eyes ...”capture the viewer's gaze with a magnetic force...”\textsuperscript{71} Her conclusion is that anthropomorphic reliquary statues, which include the reliquary statue of saint Foy, are just one important phase in the process of the revival of three-dimensional representations of saints in the Middle Ages, along with crucifixes and body-part reliquaries. Although Beata Fricke often agrees with Jean Taralon, she offers a critical approach to some of his arguments. Nevertheless, the work of Beate Fricke is, as was the work of Jean Taralon before her, one of the most complex and significant works on this subject yet and I strongly recommend it for future researchers.

\section*{2.5 Summary}

To summarize, the restoration works in 1954 made it possible to confirm the theories of Alfred Darcel and Jean Hubert, who estimated that the oldest parts of the headless statue had been made in the second half of the 9\textsuperscript{th} century. The golden head is dated back to the 3\textsuperscript{rd} or 4\textsuperscript{th} century. In addition, the restoration works delivered information on the age of every part of the golden statue and therefore allowed to clarify the gradual evolution of the reliquary. Modern researchers agree on the process of making over the centuries and thus the question of the time period is more or less concluded.

Another question was discussed by several authors – the origin of the anthropomorphic reliquaries such as the statue of saint Foy. Several theories were developed, the first one stating that these statues originate in the pagan cult and its idols, other one claiming, that these statues are a result of the cult of relics and their veneration. However, this question is too general and it can not be answered by solely focusing on the reliquary of saint Foy.

The role of the golden majesty of saint Foy and other similar reliquaries in the revival of monumental sculpture in the Middle Ages is another issue, which has been discussed several times, first by Raymond Rey in 1956 and subsequently by Jean Taralon and Beate Fricke. For Jean Taralon, the golden reliquary is a predecessor of bust-reliquaries.

\textsuperscript{70} Ibidem, p. 149
\textsuperscript{71} Ibidem, p. 152
in southwestern France\textsuperscript{72}, for Beate Fricke, anthropomorphic reliquaries are just a phase of the revival.

Concerning the ritual, in which the statue used to be engaged, the first mention can be found in Bernard's \textit{Liber Miraculorum}. Émile Mâle is the next to shortly describe the ritual in 1922\textsuperscript{73}. This ritual was also the object of interest of Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheigorn, who published two articles on this subject, discussing the procession in which the relics in the reliquary used to be venerated.

The effect of the statue and of its uniqueness on medieval viewers and worshippers is relatively roughly described in the previous research. The authors often described their own impression, that the statue had on them, however, not enough attention has been given to the effect on a medieval viewer. I personally, consider this issue very interesting, and I would like it to be further developped in this bachelor thesis.

3 Process of making

The statue of Saint Foy as we know it today is a result of many modifications throughout the centuries. The restoration works in 1954 made it possible to determine the age of many parts of the golden reliquary, and thus partially reconstruct the gradual process of making of the statue. Over the years, the reliquary was, of course, damaged several times, whether it was the passage of time or frequent use of the reliquary for cultic purposes. Jean Taralon even noted that there were several cases of “larcenies”\textsuperscript{74}, when people ripped out and stole a number of plates of leaf gold, in which the statue had been covered. Consequently, the statue had to be repaired many times, covering the most damaged parts like the back, the chest and the knees of the statue in silver or in vermeil\textsuperscript{75}. Moreover, smaller and less damaged parts were fixed by inserting intaglios and gems to the ripped out areas. In this case, we can say that not all of the jewellery and intaglios adorning the statue were originally gifts from pilgrims\textsuperscript{76}. Despite numerous reparations and modifications, we are able to conclude, that the statue looks more or less the same than it did thousand years ago, when the intellectual and theologian Bernard visited the monastery in Conques and decribed the statue for the

\textsuperscript{72} Taralon, Taralon-Carlini 1997, p. 52
\textsuperscript{73} see Mâle 1922
\textsuperscript{74} Taralon, Taralon-Carlini 1997, p. 15 – (Fr.) “larcins”
\textsuperscript{75} Ibidem, p. 14
\textsuperscript{76} Ibidem, p. 14-15
first time.

In this chapter, I will describe parts of the statue from the oldest part to the very last modification, in order to present how the golden reliquary took form, which we know today.

3.1 Origin of the head

According to the agreement of modern researchers, the oldest part of the reliquary is the golden head. Prosper Merimée in his first “modern”77 description of the statue in 1838, noted that the head was “highly disproportionate to the body”78 and “inferior to the rest”, and it may have been a result of a restauration in a later period. More than sixty years later, in 1902, Émile Molinier stated that the face had “strongly accentuated features”79, and “a bizzare expression”80, and described the hair of the statue as poorly understood Byzantine hairstyle.

During the restoration works in years 1954 and 1955, researchers separated the golden head from the rest of the body, in order to closely examine it. The detachment made it possible to determine, how the head had been made, as well as to review the technique. In addition, they managed to make significant discoveries, which allowed them to propose the theory, that the head is Late Antique. Jean Taralon have pointed out several important details, such as “imperial” features of the face, and use of gold, which would not have been used, if it was not a portrait of an important person. Based on this details, he dated the head back to the 4th or 5th century, and claimed that, the head had been originally a part of a statue or a bust of an emperor81.

On account of the close examination, Jean Taralon was the first one to be able to describe the statue in a truly detailed manner. Due to him, we now know, that the head of the statue is hollow, made of two thin plates of gold (fig. 4). One plate forms the face and the neck of the statue, and also a sort of braid, which surrounds the head. The other one forms the back of the head, with engraved strands of hair. The two plates were welded together, and the welding is visible all around the head. Moreover, he discovered several small holes near the braid in the front part of the head, which were

77 Fricke, p. s. 50
78 Mérimée 1838, p. 190 – (Fr.) “fort disproportionné avec le corps” and “inférieure au rest”
79 Molinier 1902, p. 112 - (Fr.) “les traits fortement accentués”
80 Ibidem, p. 112 – (Fr.) “expression bizzarre”
81 Taralon, Taralon-Carlini 1997, p. 24
probably used to attach a laurel wreath on the head\footnote{Ibidem, p. 24} (fig.5). This discovery allowed him to affirm his theory, that the head had been originally a part of a bust or a statue of an emperor.

The features of the face, like the head itself, are displayed in a peculiar angle (fig.6). The statue is looking up, with the head tilted back. This strange position can be explained by the fact, that the head most likely had to be adjusted, in order to attach it to the rest of the statue. However, the interesting angle allows "the statue to make eye contact with a viewer standing in front of the statue.\footnote{Fricke 2015, p. 152}" The most striking feature of the face are its vivid eyes. After dismantling the head, Jean Taralon found out that they were made independently, on two different small plates, which were subsequently glued to the golden masque with wax, from the inside (fig. 7). Suprisingly, they are not made of enamel, like most of the previous researchers thought (except Émile Molinier\footnote{Taron, Taralon-Carlini 1997, p. 55}), but of glass. The iris and the pupil are made of dark blue glass, while the sclera is made of a white opaque pieces of glass\footnote{Ibidem, p. 27}. This interesting method of making of the eyes provided their distinctive vivacity. Jean Taralon was astonished by the fact that the eyes were made independently, immediately posing a question, whether the eyes were made at the same time as the rest of the head. He answered this question right away, noting that they were clearly made at the same time, because there are no visible traces of subsequent manipulation of the eye holes\footnote{Ibidem, p. 27-30}.

Several authors, for example Beate Fricke and Cyntia Hahn\footnote{Hahn 2010, p. 168}, acknowledged Taralon's theory about the Late Antique head. The latest author, who wrote a complex publication on this subject in 2007, Beate Fricke named it "an exceptional example of reuse.\footnote{Fricke 2015, p. 32}"

When looking at the head of the golden statue of saint Foy, an interesting question emerges in one's mind. Why has a male head of an unknown ruler been used to portray the young female saint\footnote{Ibidem, p. 149}? After many centuries, there was no preserved representation of saint Foy. In order to represent the saint, whose physical body had been dead for more than six centuries, the author had to portray "a fictive and imaginary likeness of
the saint”. In this case, instead of displaying a random appearance of saint Foy, the author decided to use the ancient head of an unknown ruler. The head was probably in possession of the monks, placed in the treasury of the abbey. Taralon suggested that “…the head was not made for the statue. It's the statue, that was made for the head.” While searching for the material that could have been used to create the reliquary, they decided to reuse the head. The author then made the wooden parts of the statue in order to fit the head. Beate Fricke called this reuse “a fundamental shift in how venerable persons were represented in three dimensions” in the high Middle Ages.

3.2 Theories on the original version of the reliquary

Based on the text of Bernard's Liber Miraculorum and his terms “ab antiquo fabricata” and “de integro reformata”, we now know that the statue we know today, is not in its original version. The golden reliquary-statue has been transformed or remade into its current version shortly after the miraculous recovery of the eyes of Guibert “the Illuminated” by the statue of saint Foy, which occurred around year 985. There are two existing theories about the original version of the statue, one developed by Jean Taralon, who suggested that the wooden torso had simply been adjusted to the new throne. On the contrary, Beata Fricke argued that the statue had been originally a bust-reliquary redesigned into a full figure reliquary several years after the miracle. Regarding the question, if the golden head was originally a part of the first version, or the second, transformed version, Taralon refuted the theory of Paul Déschampes, who thought, that the golden head had replaced the original wooden head, coated in gold.

One of the oldest parts of the statue is the wooden core. It is made of two pieces of yew wood, one for the neck and torso, and the other for legs. These two wooden parts are connected. There are other wooden parts added to the two main pieces, like forearms and feet, but these parts were made from a different tree trunk. The relic, a piece of skull of saint Foy, was placed in a cavity in the torso, through the back of the statue. The wooden core was made only as a fundamental support, and was never

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90 Ibidem, p. 183
91 Taralon, Taralon-Carlini 1997, p. 18 – (Fr.) “la tête n'a pas été faite pour la statue. C'est la statue qui a été faite pour la tête.”
92 Fricke 2015, p. 149
93 Taralon, Taralon-Carlini 1997, p. 32
94 Ibidem, p. 21
intended to be seen. From the beginning, the statue was meant to be coated in gold leaf. This is suggested by the simple and roughly carved wooden core (fig. 8), which, after the restorers had detached the golden coat, appeared brutal, but somehow powerful.

The fact, that the wooden core had been made from two different tree trunks, struck Beate Fricke, and based on this fact, she developed a theory, that the first version of the statue, had been originally a bust-reliquary. Fricke presented several arguments, such as the fact, that parts made from one tree trunk may not have been carved in the same time as the parts made from the other; and that the torso and the other parts were remade around year 1000, as well as the fact, that the old throne was never found. She suggested that the reliquary “was not originally an enthroned statue, but rather a half-figure statue...” In my opinion, Fricke's arguments are more convincing. The fact that the core of the statue is made of two tree trunks, one for the torso and the buttocks, and the other for legs indicates that the wooden parts were made separately. Unfortunately, there are no annual rings on yew wood, so the dendrochronological analysis is impossible. Taralon himself admitted that the torso was heavily reworked in the 10th century. But why would be a functional full-figure torso completely reworked only a century after its creation? The theory, that the half-figure or a bust-reliquary was transformed into a full-figure statue seated on a throne seems more probable. Many examples of these half-figure reliquaries are preserved up to this day in Maurs, St Nectaire and Le Monastier-sur-Gazeille (fig. 9). When we compare them to the reconstruction of the bust reliquary of saint Foy (fig. 10), the similarities are easy to see. Moreover, the term “de integro reformata” translates as “completely reworked”. I believe that this term would not have been used if the statue had only been given a new golden coat and a new throne. “De integro reformata” indicates a significant change in the appearance of the statue. These arguments and the fact, that full-figure representation of a saint had not appeared until the late eleventh century, which means that the statue would have been two centuries ahead of its time; validate the theory that the statue of saint Foy was originally a half-figure statue.

Regarding the first golden coating of the statue, some parts are still preserved today. During the restoration works, they were able to identify these parts by analyzing the

95 Ibidem, p. 22
96 Ibidem, p. 22
97 Fricke 2015, p. 36
98 Ibidem, p. 35
99 Ibidem, p. 36-37
100 Ibidem, p. 37
structure of the golden coating. The rest of the first coating include two pieces on the torso of the statue, and a piece covering the front part of the legs\footnote{Taralon, Taralon, Carlini 1997, p. 30}.

### 3.3 The statue “de integro reformata”

After the miracle of Guibert “the Illuminated”, around year 1000, the statue underwent several modifications. The transformation of the statue from the bust-reliquary to a full figure “de integro reformata” included an addition of a new throne, and more magnificent gold leaf coating. This transformation was already completed, when Bernard of Angers visited the monastery in Conques for the first time. The modifications also include enrichment of the dress with gems, intaglio\footnote{Ibidem, p. 34}es, and several filigree bands, which constitute the collar, the bottom hem of the dress and “armbands\footnote{Ibidem, p. 34}”; as well as the addition of a new throne. I will not include the crown among these modifications, because we still do not know, whether the crown had been a part of the first original version of the statue, or was added a century later.

Up to this day, the reason, why the statue has been transformed, is unknown. Was it simply because the monks wanted the statue to be more representative, since its popularity was growing so quickly; or was it some other reason? Beate Fricke associates the transformation of the statue with the construction of new abbey, which began in the middle of the 10\textsuperscript{th} century, under abbot Stephen I\footnote{Fricke 2015, p. 38} (942-984). The golden reliquary-statue was placed in the apse of the earlier building, but pilgrims probably could not see it from all sides\footnote{Ibidem, p. 38}. An ambulatory with several chapels was a part of the new building, in order to allow the ever increasing number of pilgrims to admire the statue from each side (fig. 11). According to Fricke: “after the completion of the building by Stephen, the statue may have been furnished with a new throne, extended into a full-figure with crown, and positioned in the choir of the abbey church.\footnote{Ibidem, p. 41} Therefore, it is possible that the statue was transformed, enthroned, and crowned, in order to fit the new choir.

Concerning the transformation of the statue, several filigree bands were added to the golden dress. Jean Taralon examined them during the restoration works in 1954,
and found out that the technique was identical on each of the bands on the statue and on the throne. All of these bands are made of yellow gold, and bordered on each side by a row of large embossed beads, which is surrounded on each side with an extra row of smaller beads. The surface of these bands is decorated with embedded gems and intaglios, as well as scrollwork, which surrounds these gems. The design of scrollwork is different on each band. A large carnelian intaglio with Caracalla is embedded to the filigree band in the bottom of the dress.

Along with decorative filigree bands, the new throne was given to the statue (fig. 12). The throne, which Darcel thought had been made in the 9th century, was supposedly made in the same time as the filigree bands, in the end of the 10th century. This can be proved by comparing the techniques of the bands on the statue, and these on the throne, which appear to be identical. The throne is made of an iron structure, on which plates of gilded silver are placed. These plates constitute the back of the throne, as well as the armrests. Some of these plates are original, the others are the result of restorations in later period. The throne is decorated with carvings on the inside, and with the filigree bands on the outside. Four crystal balls placed on the iron structure are also a part of the decoration, along with gems and intaglios. One of them, a large crystal at the top of the throne on the outside, depicts a scene of the Crucifixion.

The statue was thus transformed from a half-figure reliquary to a full-figure one shortly before year 1000. It was also seated on a throne, and recoated in a new golden coat, and adorned with several filigree bands, and more itaglios and precious stones. In my opinion, Fricke convincingly argues that the transformation of the statue was linked to the construction of the new abbey. The time period of the construction (second half of the 10th century) corresponds roughly to the time period of the transformation of the statue. It is also understandable that the monks, in order to enhance the prestige of their already known and popular representation of saint Foy, reworked the statue into a more magnificent, enthroned one. We can conclude that the statue was probably transformed into more representative “maestas” in order to fit the surroundings of newly built church.

106 Taralon, Taralon-Carlini 1997, p. 35
107 Ibidem, p. 35
108 Ibidem, p. 36
109 Darcel 1861, p. 55
110 Taralon, Taralon-Carlini 1997, p. 42
111 Ibidem, p. 38
112 Ibidem, p. 38
113 Ibidem, p. 40
3.4 The crown

The magnificent crown, adorning the head of saint Foy, emphasizes even more the
grandeur of the statue, giving it an appearance of a ruler (fig. 13). It is made of one
horizontal gold band, which encircles the head; and two vertical gold bands,
perpendicular to one another, which meet on the top of the head, constituting two
intersecting arches. Each one of the bands is decorated with a large number of intaglios,
pearls and enamels, as well as uncut polished precious stones. Between the two vertical
bands are four blank spaces, which are filled up with four “florets\textsuperscript{114}”. Except Jean
Taralon, none of the modern researchers discusses the golden crown in detail, and thus,
for this part, I worked mostly with his article \textit{La Majesté d’or de Sainte Foy de
Conques}, published in 1997. Beate Fricke only briefly mentioned the crown, suggesting
that it probably had been made in Carolingian or Ottonian period\textsuperscript{115}.

The restoration works in 1954 showed that the crown had also underwent several
modifications throughout the centuries\textsuperscript{116}. First thing that needs to be taken into account
is that, the crown was understandably damaged by frequent handling with the reliquary;
and subsequently repaired several times. On the other hand, the restorers discovered
several important modifications, which indicate that the crown had not been originally
in the form, in which we know it today. The restoration works showed that the crown
was adjusted to the head, which means that it was probably not originally made for the
statue\textsuperscript{117}.

Firstly, one of the vertical bands is narrower, and made from two separate plates of
yellow gold riveted on the top of the crown; and thus different than the other vertical
band and the horizontal band\textsuperscript{118}. Jean Taralon boldly called it “a less refined copy\textsuperscript{119}”. This,
and the fact that the decorations on the narrower band are slightly different, can
prove that the crown originally had had only one vertical band, and the other was added
later\textsuperscript{120}. We could, of course, speculate whether the narrower band simply did not
replace an older, damaged one. This question can be answered by the fact that there are
no visible traces showing that, there once was an older second vertical band\textsuperscript{121}.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibidem, p. 59 – (Fr.) “fleurons”
\textsuperscript{115} Fricke, p. 42
\textsuperscript{116} Taralon, Taralon-Carlini 1997, p. 59
\textsuperscript{117} Ibidem, p. 67
\textsuperscript{118} Ibidem, p. 61
\textsuperscript{119} Ibidem, p. 61 – (Fr.) “une copie moins raffinée”
\textsuperscript{120} Ibidem, p. 61
\textsuperscript{121} Ibidem, p. 62-64
Regarding the four florets, only two of them had originally adorned the crown. This can be proved by comparing the decorations on each piece. Two of them are identical with the decorations on the two original bands, while the other two are decorated differently\textsuperscript{122}. The original florets were not initially placed in the blank spaces between the two arches, as we can see it today. They were placed on each lower part of the original vertical band, as several traces on the two florets show us\textsuperscript{123}. From these observations, one can deduce that, since there was only one arch, there could only be two florets...\textsuperscript{124}

We still do not know whether the crown was part of the statue “\textit{ab antiquo fabricata}” or it was a part of the transformations “\textit{de integro reformata}”. But, we know that the crown was not initially made for the statue, which means that it could have been made before the statue. In addition, we now know the original form of the crown (fig. 14), we can compare it with other crowns from the 9\textsuperscript{th} and the 10\textsuperscript{th} century; and roughly date the making of the crown. Unfortunately, similar crowns existed in both Carolingian period and Ottonian period\textsuperscript{125}. Moreover, while comparing the filigree bands on the dress and the throne, with the decorations on the crown, it is impossible to overlook the resemblance. However, the decorations on the crown appear to be executed in a different way, with different tools\textsuperscript{126}, and more precisely. It is therefore probable, that the decorations on the crown served as a model for the filigree bands on the statue\textsuperscript{127}. Thence, we can conclude, that the crown had been made in the two centuries before the transformations known as “\textit{de integro reformata}”, which occurred shortly before year 1000.

4 Historical context

In this chapter I will try to clarify how the relics of saint Foy were transported from the city of Agen to the monastery in Conques; and how and under what circumstances her cult was born. My main objective is to show that the saint became popular because of the statue itself. Besides that I will describe the ritual practices and processions in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{122} Ibidem, p. 61
\item \textsuperscript{123} Ibidem, p. 65
\item \textsuperscript{124} Ibidem, p. 65 – (Fr.) “De ces constatations on déduit que, puisqu'il n'y avait qu'un seul arceau, il ne pouvait y avoir que deux fleurons,...”
\item \textsuperscript{125} Ibidem, p. 67
\item \textsuperscript{126} Ibidem, p. 68
\item \textsuperscript{127} Ibidem, p. 68
\end{itemize}
which the golden reliquary was engaged. In the last part of this chapter, I will try to describe how a medieval viewer perceived the statue when he approached it; and compare it with perception of a modern person.

4.1 Furtum sacrum and the legend of saint Foy

Furta sacra (Eng. “sacred thefts”), or thefts of relics were quite common in the Middle Ages. Whether there was a rivalry between abbeys, or monasteries simply wanted to increase their importance and prestige and attract more pilgrims, monks did not scruple to steal venerated remains of a saint from a different monastery. The abbey of Conques was situated on one of the paths to Compostela and many pilgrims passed through this place. These routes were also trade routes and the pilgrims usually brought many offerings and riches to the monasteries, where bodies of saints were preserved and venerated. According to Beate Fricke, the theft of the body of saint Foy from Agen occurred in 883, and she described it as follows: “...the monks from Conques sought to acquire the relics of Ste Foy after an earlier attempt had failed. … A monk from Conques named Ariviscus then went to the monastery in Agen, where, after he earned the trust if the monks and was appointed as the guard of the relics, he broke open the grave, seized the relics of Ste Foy, and took them to Conques.” The stolen relics, except for a fragment of the skull, were placed in a different reliquary – theca, discovered in 1871. The golden statue “ab antiquo fabricata” was created to receive and protect a fragment of the skull of saint Foy. The relic has been given an artificial body which was supposed to indicate the “bodily presence of the represented saint.”

The legend that validated the relics was usually recited and also sung. It tells that saint Foy or saint Faith was a young martyr from the city of Agen in the southwest of France. At the end of the 3rd century she was arrested during persecution of Christians and subsequently tortured by the Romans, after she had refused to participate in pagan ritual and sacrifices. She was martyred to death on a hot brazier. Allegedly, after her

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128 More on this subject in : Geary 1990
129 Taralon, Taralon-Carlini 1997, p. 11
130 Fricke 2015, p. 50
131 Ibidem, p. 25
132 Ibidem, p. 26
133 Palazzo, 2010, p. 99
134 Angenenndt 2010, p. 25
135 Schmitt 1996, p. 17
136 French: Sainte Foy, English: Saint Faith
death, her head was carried in the direction of Conques by two doves. We learn of her martyrdom from a Provencal poem *Cançô de Santa Fe* (Eng. The Song of Saint Faith) from the 11th century and also from the part *Passio* in Bernard's *Liber Miraculorum*. Her remains were conserved in the city of Agen. A century after her death, the bishop of Agen performed a translation of her relics and placed them in a basilica “*intra muros*”.

### 4.2 The cult of saint Foy and the ritual

The remains of saint Foy and their veneration brought wealth to the monastery. The statue became “a real character, familiar and feared at the same time” and its miraculous reputation was attracting more and more pilgrims. We learn of her numerous miracles, as well as the “*joca*”, practical jokes she performed, from *Liber Miraculorum*. The text mentions several times the appearance of the statue to a worshipper, most often in a dream. In these dreams, the saint, in a form of the golden statue, usually demanded gold, and threatened those who had disobeyed her or wished her bad. Jean Taralon boldly stated that “the statue has become the saint herself.” Pilgrims, in order to ensure her protection and favor, donated many gifts and offerings to the statue, usually gold and jewellery, most of which is was placed in the treasury of Conques.

Concerning the ritual, Bernard of Angers himself was astonished at first by the ritual practices, and called them idolatrous. The statue of saint Foy was considered to be the greatest manifestation of “divine power” in the region of Auvergne. According to Ashley and Sheigorn “harnessing the power that accrued to the statue, the monks of Conques created rituals to consolidate their economic and political status in the region. For example, when land had been donated to the monastery but kin of the donor disputed the monks' claim, the statue of Sainte Foy was ritually paraded to the land in question”. During the ritual, the statue used to be carried by a specially selected horse.

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137 Fricke 2015, pp. 25-26  
138 see Thomas (ed.) 1974  
139 Taralon, Taralon-Carlini 1997, p. 11  
140 Remensnyder 1990, p. 352  
141 Taralon, Taralon-Carlini 1997, p. 13 – (Fr.) “un véritable personnage, à la fois craint et familier”  
142 Ibidem, p. 12 – (Fr.) “La statue était devenue la sainte elle-même”  
143 Ashley, Sheigorn 1992, p. 67  
144 Ibidem, p. 70  
145 Ibidem, pp. 70-71
in a gentle pace and accompanied by young clerics\textsuperscript{146}. These processions were usually publicly announced in advance\textsuperscript{147}. The cult of saint Foy was a public phenomenon and required an audience\textsuperscript{148}. By engaging the reliquary in a procession, the clergy presented the powerful statue of the saint to the people. “When she was moved in this procession, the people thronged on her path. The sick and the disabled begged her. It was an opportunity for miracles\textsuperscript{149}.” Worshippers considered her to be a saviour and a healer. “The processional structure allowed access to the saint by the lower classes, in contrast to the upper classes who tended to interact with the saint at the monastery church through its sanctioned rituals.”\textsuperscript{150} When the statue was not engaged in a procession, it was displayed on an altar in the main apse of the monastery church surrounded by candles\textsuperscript{151}.

The miraculous reputation of the statue of the child saint was attracting more and more pilgrims. The faithful wanted to “meet” the saint, who often appeared in pilgrims' dreams, and who allegedly performed all those miracles and jokes. This naturally meant that the wealth was flowing to the monastery. The statue became a patron of Conques\textsuperscript{152}. Émile Molinier even noted that the cult of saint Foy may have been replaced by a cult of the statue of saint Foy\textsuperscript{153}.

The cult used to be practiced for more than five centuries. The reasons why the cult of saint Foy started to decline are unknown. One of the reasons may be the change in the taste of medieval population. As the time went by, the statue was beginning to lose its aesthetic power, as it was not able to compete with the aesthetic value of the statues from 14\textsuperscript{th} and 15\textsuperscript{th} century. In addition, in that time, the popularity of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela was also decreasing, which means less pilgrims passed through Conques. A lesser number of pilgrims meant a decrease in the monastic treasury. In the 14\textsuperscript{th} century, the monastery in Conques was already slowly beginning to decline and “the property was becoming increasingly neglected”\textsuperscript{154}. The rest of the monastic treasury, along with the statue, had been concealed in cellars of local people, until it was

\textsuperscript{146} Mâle 1928, p. 200-202
\textsuperscript{147} Ashley, Sheigorn 2001, p. 53
\textsuperscript{148} Abou-El-Hai 1991, p. 3
\textsuperscript{149} Taralon, Taralon-Carlini 1997, p. 12 – (Fr.) “Lorsqu'elle se déplaçait ainsi processionnellement, le peuple se pressait sur son passage. Les malades et les infirmes la suppliaient. C'était l'occasion de miracles.”
\textsuperscript{150} Ashley, Sheigorn 2001, p. 57
\textsuperscript{151} Fricke 2015, p. 41
\textsuperscript{152} Taralon, Taralon-Carlini, p. 12
\textsuperscript{153} Molinier 1902, p. 110
\textsuperscript{154} Fricke 2015, p. 50
4.3 Perception of a medieval viewer

Even today, the strangeness and the grandeur of the golden reliquary statue of saint Foy makes many people experience mixed feelings and impressions. At the first glance, the statue appears as something almost magical, something out of this world (fig. 15). Disproportion of body parts - large Late Antique head slightly tilted backwards, short stretched hands, a stiff posture, and large feet; together with the golden finery in which the saint is coated, create an impressive and memorable effect. In this part, I will try to explain how the reliquary affected medieval viewers and worshippers. Firstly, with the help of Bernard's Liber Miraculorum, I will illustrate how a medieval person perceived the miraculous golden statue. In the end, by comparing it with several impressions of modern researchers, I will show how the statue is perceived today.

In order to truly find out what the effect of the statue on a medieval viewer was, we need to analyze the ancient text of Liber Miraculorum. The impressions of Bernard of Angers are the ones, that are essential for answering this question. Liber Miraculorum indicates that Bernard firstly approached the statue with skepticism of a representative of northern clerical elite. After hearing about numerous miracles of the statue of saint Foy, in which he did not believe because they were narrated by common, illiterate people, and seemingly peculiar; he decided to undertake an investigation. Therefore, he arrived to Conques with a sceptical approach. In Liber, before describing the encounter with the maestas of saint Foy, he discussed the tradition of reliquary statues in the southern France, mentioned a few examples like the golden majesty of saint Gerald. He mocked it, and expressed an opinion, that “the veneration of such statues is, in reality, a continuation of worship of the pagan gods.” He considered their veneration to be a matter of the common people. However, he described the encounter with the statue of sainte Foy as follows: “Sainte Foy, whose part of the body rests in this image, help me to the last judgment. (...) I thought it was stupid and disagreeing with the right reason that so many rational beings are imploring a mute and insensitive object. In fact, my vain words and my narrow way of thinking did not proceed from

155 Ibidem, p. 50
156 Remensnyder 1990, p. 356
157 Ibidem, p. 358
158 Ginzburg 1991, p. 1227
faith when, without respect, I called the statue an image like that of Venus or Diana. On the contrary, we do not consult this sacred image as an idol by making sacrifices to it, but we have it in great consideration because of the remembrance of the venerated martyr and in honor of the Most High God. And indeed, I regretted having treated the saint of God so stupidly. 159 In this passage, we can already see the change in Bernard's opinion, as he recognizes his own mistakes. From this moment on, his opinion was gradually changing to the point where he started to treat the statue with great respect, acknowledged and believed in her miracles, as well as her ability to heal 161 and decided to record them.

On the other hand, from the clerical point of view, the common people treated the statue as a pagan idol. They considered her to be the embodiment of their saviour and healer. The statue was perceived as the saint herself. In addition, locals considered saint Foy to be their patron and protector, and the statue was solemnly paraded around by the monks in a procession, or in case her lands were invaded. Another thing was the wealth and offerings that were given to the statue in order to secure her favour and protection; just as votive gifts once used to be given to the pagan gods.

The appearance of the statue was also an important aspect, especially the vivid eyes. “The belief in the power of the saint's piercing gaze seems to have affected how people responded to sculptural images. 162 “An active relationship is established between all the forms of presence of the saint: the legenda, recited and sung, exalts her martyrdom; the relic, miraculously stolen from the monks of Agen, is the pledge of the physical presence of the saint; the golden effigy, with her glass eyes shining in the shadow of the sanctuary, establishes a kind of silent dialogue with the pilgrims; the dreamlike image of the saint, eternally young and alive, speaks to them in their sleep to claim her gifts, threatens them physically if they resist her... 163” By combining its

159 Liber 1.13, p. 48 and Remensyder 1990, p. 359 – (Lat.) “Sancta Fides, cujus pars corporis in presenti simulachro requiescit, sucurre mihi in die judicii. (...) respicio, ineptum quippe et a rationis linea longe remotum estimans, ut tôt rationales rem mutam insensatamque supplicarent. Verum istud vaniloquium sive parva conceptio non adeo ex bono corde procedebat, quando sacram imaginem que non ut idolum sacrificando consiluitur, sed ob memoriam révérende martyris in honore summi Dei habebatur despective tamquam Veneris vel Dianae appelaverim simulachrum. Et hoc ita stulte in sanctum Dei egisse valde me postea penituit.”
160 Bagnoli 2010, p. 140
161 Bynum, Gerson 1997, p. 5
162 Dale 2007, p. 111
163 Schmitt 1996, p. 17 – (Fr.) “Une relation active s'établie entre toutes le formes de présence de la sainte: la legenda, récitée et chantée, exalte son martyre; la relique, miraculeusement dérobée aux moines d'Agen, est le gage de la présence physique de la sainte, l'effigie en or, avec ses yeux de verre qui brillent dans la pénombre du sanctuaire, établit une sorte de dialogue muet avec les pelerins, l'image onirique de la sainte, éternellement jeune et vivante, s'adresse a eux dans leur sommeil pour la
magnificent golden appearance with her miraculous reputation of a patron, protector and healer, we can imagine how a medieval worshipper perceived the statue. He approached the golden statue with great respect and reverence, perhaps even fear, as if he was approaching the saint herself.

4.4 The modern point of view?

In order to define how the statue is perceived now, I present several opinions of modern authors who described the effect which the statue had had on them. Émile Mâle expressed an interesting opinion when he called it a “golden idol” and noted that “there was a miraculous aureole around her even more brilliant than the radiation of the gold.” Jean Taralon even wrote that “the impression, that it [the statue] gives, has an element of strangeness that is difficult to analyze; which places it outside of the usual standards of appreciation; and was also fascinated by its “obsessive and fixed gaze.” Beate Fricke noted that by “gazing into her open eyes, [a viewer] can penetrate the golden skin and look Ste Foy in the face. She used terms like “penetrating gaze” and “the vivid expression”, suggesting that by moving and changing lights sources, the statue comes alive. Fricke was apparently astonished by the golden reliquary statue, because, at the end of the book, she wrote: “The book that you know read can also be understood as a donum to Fides, for she is in my song.” According to this, we can safely say that the statue has left significantly deep impressions with many authors. Nevertheless, looking at the statue, a modern person can hardly experience the state, which used to be experienced by a medieval viewer, who sincerely believed that the magnificent statue in front of him was the embodiment of his beloved and feared patron.

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164 Mâle 1928, p. 201 - (Fr.) “idole dorée”
165 Ibidem, p. 201 – (Fr.) “il y avait autour d'elle une auréole de miracles plus éclatante encore que le rayonnement de l'or.”
166 Taralon, Taralon-Carlini 1997, p. 13 – (Fr.) “l'impression qu'elle donne comporte une part d'étrangeté difficile à analyser, qui la place en dehors des normes habituelles d'appréciation.”
167 Taralon, Taralon-Carlini 1997, p. 13 – (Fr.) “regard obsédant et fixe”
168 Fricke 2015, p. 152
169 Ibidem, p. 152
170 Ibidem, p. 268
5 Conclusion

In the first part of this bachelor thesis I summarized the bibliography on this subject and determined which questions are already answered and which, on the contrary, are still open. By summarizing the bibliography on this subject, I presented the discovered facts to the reader. The last complex work on the reliquary of saint Foy was written nine years ago, thus we can say that the research on this subject still continues.

In the second part, I described the gradual process of making of the statue from the oldest part to the latest. One of my key questions was the origin of the head - the reused Late Antique portrait of an unknown ruler. In addition, I discussed the transformations in the end of the 10th century called “de integro reformata”, which included the transformation of the original bust-reliquary into a full-figure, enthroned statue, as well as the addition of the throne and the decorative filigree bands on the dress. The decorations on the dress and on the throne were evidently made in the same time period, because they are alike. I also discussed the imperial crown placed on the head of the statue. Unfortunately, the exact date of making of the crown is unknown, for the crown could belong in both Carolingian and Ottonian period. By comparing the decorations on the crown with those on the dress and the throne, it is possible to conclude that the crown served as a model for the filigree bands and the decorations on the throne, which means that it was not a part of the transformations “de integro reformata”. This means we can date the making of the crown back to the two centuries before the transformations.

In the last chapter of this thesis, I described how the relics of saint Foy were transformed from the city of Agen to the monastery in Conques, “a sacred theft” by one of the monks. I also discussed the cult of saint Foy in Conques and its ritual practices. The statue was engaged in processions or displayed in the main apse of the monastery church. In the last part, by analyzing the text of Liber Miraculorum, I tried to illustrate how a medieval viewer perceived the statue. In the end, by quoting several modern researchers, I showed how the statue is perceived now.


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