

ABSTRACT

At the end of the 17th century, a small enameled cross was discovered in one of the royal graves in Saint Bendt's church in Danish Ringsted. According to the record of the administrator of the Danish Royal Treasury, the cross was found in the grave of the Danish Queen Dagmar – the daughter of the King of Bohemia, Ottokar I (+1230). Dagmar was married in 1205 to Valdemar II the Victorious, the King of Denmark.

The cross – today exhibited at the National Museum in Copenhagen – is undoubtedly a Byzantine work. Most probably, it was made in the first half of the 12th century. It is so-called enkolpion, i.e. the hanging cross (gr. Ἐγκόλπιον, on the chest). Both its sides are decorated with figurative scenes. The crucifixion of the Christ is depicted on one side. The Great Deēsis with St. Basil the Great and St. John Chrysostom is shown on the other side. There is a hollow in the body of the cross, in which a relic was deposited – most likely a particle of the wood of the True Cross.

Although the Queen Dagmar's Cross is considered a national treasure in Denmark, only a little attention has been paid to it so far. It is almost unknown to the Czech researchers (it is briefly mentioned by J. E. Wocel, A. B. Černý, J. Květ, K. Chytil and most recently P. Balcárek). Regrettably, the most of researchers only observe its Byzantine origin and date the cross rather vaguely (from 9th to 13th centuries). The circumstances of its origin or how the cross reached Denmark have not been satisfactorily answered yet. Also questions of its function, meaning or content have not been solved. Even detailed iconographical and formal analysis have not been made till now. Therefore, I am trying to offer some possible solutions to these unclear matters.