The Strange Cult of Queen Dagmar

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Abstract: In 1205, the Danish king Valdemar II married a Bohemian princess, known in her new country as Dagmar. Little contemporary information exists concerning this queen, who died only seven years after her arrival. Nonetheless, Dagmar is one of very few figures from medieval Danish history whose names are familiar to a general Danish public in the present. Over the centuries, a narrative of her life has emerged, based largely on a group of ballad texts first written down in the sixteenth century, that Queen Dagmar was so exceptionally beautiful and kind that Danes (particularly common people) remained devoted to her memory through the generations. Moreover, several texts, and a remarkable early twentieth-century painting in St Bendt’s Church in Ringsted posit her as an intercessor on behalf of Denmark, in ways that come very close to portraying her as a saint, so much that one twentieth-century ballad scholar concludes that the Benedictine monks of Ringsted launched a canonization process on her behalf. This article investigates the image of Queen Dagmar as it has developed over the centuries with a particular eye toward implications or claims of sanctity, toward Dagmar’s purported role as an intercessor during and after her lifetime, and her perceived (and at times seemingly prescribed) role in the constitution of Danish identity.

Keywords: Dagmar (queen consort of Denmark 1205–1212); saints; intercessor; ballads; identity; invented traditions

In the nave of the twelfth-century Benedictine church in Ringsted, now commonly known as Sanct Bendts Kirke, there is a strange and remarkable painting (Figure 1). It depicts a young woman with braided hair, kneeling in prayer. At the neckline of her gown, the figure wears a cross-shaped pendant or jewel, and a close examination reveals that the sleeves of her gown are held together with lacing, where they are visible at the opening of her cloak. Behind the young woman is a throne-like seat, and on its cushions rests a golden crown. Above and below the kneeling figure, an inscription reads:

Your sunshine soul returned whence it had come, and here among us your grave was broken and plundered, God’s angel, Dagmar, pray to Our Savior to heal what is broken in the land of Denmark, 1916, Thor Lange.¹

Its vaguely medieval appearance notwithstanding, the painting is revealed by its inscription as a work of the twentieth century. Although the piece is not signed, it was painted by Joakim Skovgaard (1856–1933), who is known for his frescoes in the reconstructed cathedral of Viborg (1899–1907), among other works (Andreasen and Dumreicher 2011). The text clearly posits the figure depicted in the painting as a kind of saint, asking for her intercession on behalf of a threatened or damaged Danish nation. This young woman, addressed as “Dagmar”, is not a figment of the artist’s imagination, but a known medieval queen of Denmark.

Queen Dagmar, whose baptismal name was Margaret, was a daughter of the Bohemian king, Ottokar I (c. 1198–1230), and his first wife, Adela (or Adelheid) of Meissen. She came to Denmark to marry King Valdemar II Sejr (“the victorious”) in about 1205, gave birth to at least one known son (Valdemar “the young”), and died in or about the year 1212. As is the case with many medieval queens, relatively few specifics are known about Dagmar as an individual, but at least one medieval chronicle, the presumably late thirteenth-century
*Annales Ryenses* (and its Danish translations from c. 1400) mentions her beauty and connects this quality with her nickname. A later tradition, that she also had a particularly kind character, likely arises, according to John H. Lind, from the fact that one version of the Danish translation uses two different words for “beauty” in the same line—and one of these words later undergoes a shift in meaning (Lind 2012, p. 34). The only major historical event with which Queen Dagmar is specifically connected in any source is the release from prison of Valdemar, bishop of Slesvig, who, as a potential claimant to the Danish throne, precipitated a major international crisis during the late twelfth and early thirteenth century.

*Figure 1.* Queen Dagmar in Ringsted. Photo Martin Wångsgaard Jürgensen.
During a turbulent period of the mid-twelfth century, three closely related contenders had each claimed the right to rule Denmark and, for a brief period, they agreed to be co-regents. These three were Knud Magnussen (grandson of King Niels Svendsen, who had reigned from 1104–1134); Svend Eriksen (son of King Erik II, “the memorable”); and Valdemar, later known as “the Great,” whose father, Knud, had been the only legitimate son of King Erik I (king of Denmark 1095–1103, and older brother of King Niels). To complicate matters, Knud’s father, Magnus, had famously murdered his cousin, Valdemar’s father Knud, who would later become the second Danish saint to receive papal canonization. Bishop Valdemar claimed to be (and was recognized as) a posthumous, illegitimate son of Knud Magnussen’s. After the deaths of his two co-regents, Valdemar I emerged as the sole king of Denmark, and he was later succeeded by two of his own sons. The younger Valdemar was raised at the court of King Valdemar I, who sought to neutralize his potential claim to the throne by educating him for an ecclesiastical career and having him declared bishop presumptive of Slesvig even before he was old enough to be ordained. In spite of his status as a prelate of the church, Bishop Valdemar pressed his claim upon the Danish kingdom with such persistence that the Danish King Knud VI (the elder son of Valdemar I) felt it necessary to imprison him in 1193. The bishop remained in prison until 1206, when he was finally released after many years of strong pressure from two different popes (Celestine III and Innocent III), the archbishop of Lund, and many other prelates. The main rationale for the church’s insistence on this point was not the innocence or guilt of the bishop, but the problem of a secular ruler asserting authority over a member of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Queen Dagmar is specifically mentioned in a Danish translation of the *Annales Ryenses* dating to c. 1400 as having urged the bishop’s release, and this motif is also found in the ballad texts that will be discussed below. John Lind’s examination of the circumstances surrounding the imprisonment and eventual release of Bishop Valdemar, and of the marriage of Queen Dagmar and Valdemar Sejr, however, concludes that Dagmar’s involvement was less direct than these sources claim. In fact, negotiations between the Danish throne and the papacy concerning the rebellious bishop’s release had begun before Dagmar’s arrival in Denmark in 1205. The second of the two popes involved in this case, Innocent III, recognized the potential danger that the bishop, with his German connections, posed to the Danish rulers. Thus, as a condition of the bishop’s release, the pope promised in 1203 to bring him to Italy, where he could no longer pose a threat to King Valdemar II (who had by now succeeded to the throne following his brother’s death). The problem was how to convey Bishop Valdemar to Italy without crossing through German territory, where the bishop had allies and the Danish king had enemies. A solution was instead to convey the bishop through Polish and Hungarian territory, where King Valdemar had reliable allies. The one portion of the route that was not controlled by an ally was the kingdom of Bohemia. Thus, as Lind demonstrates, the marriage of the king of Denmark to a daughter of the king of Bohemia was likely arranged in order to facilitate a solution to a long-lived and thorny political dispute, which for many years had undermined relations between Denmark and the papacy, even as the latter supported and benefitted from the Danish military campaigns (“crusades”) on the eastern Baltic seaboard. While there was a connection between Dagmar’s arrival in Denmark and the bishop’s release, Dagmar was not personally responsible for it (Lind 2012).

Thor Lange, the signatory and probable author of the remarkable inscription in Ringsted, was a Danish author, translator, teacher, and sometime diplomat who spent much of his adult life in Russia, but nonetheless dreamed of a glorious Danish past. Lange had for some years used the proceeds of his Danish publications to fund monuments to various figures from medieval Danish history, among them kings such as Valdemar I and Svend Grathe, Knud Lavard (father of Valdemar I, and also one of Denmark’s canonized saints, the center of whose cult was in Ringsted), and earlier monuments to Dagmar herself. Lange’s aristocratic Russian widow financed the painting in Ringsted as a memorial to her husband shortly after he died in 1915 (see Wivel n.d., accessed on 10 February 2013; Andreasen and Dumreicher 2011).
The Dagmar painting in Ringsted forms an interesting centerpiece for a discussion of attitudes toward Queen Dagmar from the medieval period into the present. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Dagmar is often discussed and represented as a figure of profound importance for the construction of Danish identity, and as the object of the devotion of the Danish people, particularly the peasantry, both during her brief lifetime and during the many centuries following her death. This phenomenon, possibly in relation to the Lange/Skovgaard painting, even leads one late twentieth-century scholar to conclude that Queen Dagmar was actually venerated as a saint by medieval Danes, and that there was an effort by the Benedictine monks of Ringsted to promote her canonization. This study will examine depictions of Dagmar in a variety of different texts and media, which would eventually lead to a reputation and fame for this early thirteenth-century queen that she could hardly have achieved in her own lifetime or in the centuries most closely following her death. Like the Lange/Skovgaard painting in Ringsted, other representations of Dagmar tend to imply or assume deep medieval roots for Danish devotion to her. How does this purported devotion relate to concepts of sanctity or reflect evidence of an actual cult in which this short-lived Danish queen was venerated as a saint? Whether or not such evidence can be found, the reception of Queen Dagmar brings up interesting questions concerning the ways in which Danes, even into the present, continue to define their own identities in relation to their medieval past.

The character of Queen Dagmar, as it has come to be understood in the last several centuries, is entirely based on a handful of ballads that were written down and shared in a series of hand-written ballad books belonging to members of the Danish aristocracy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Ballad scholarship for well over a century has sought to determine whether the poems in these manuscripts are transcriptions of songs that were (or had been) current in oral tradition at the time of their recording, whether they are spontaneously composed works of individual authorship, or something in between. As yet, there is no fully conclusive answer to this question regarding the genre as a whole, though there have been some convincing discussions of individual ballad types. Still, there has been a widely held view since the sixteenth century that the Danish ballads are an important source of information concerning Danish history (see, for example, Eskildsen 2012, p. 71). This is not an accident. In 1591, Anders Sørensen Vedel published his Et hundrede udvalgte danske viser, a collection of Danish ballads that was intended to be viewed as a work on Danish history. In this collection of one hundred ballads, five texts are related to Dagmar, four directly through their content, and one through Vedel’s introduction. All of the Dagmar ballads are published in the second section, which includes a number of ballads with supernatural themes. The first of Vedel’s ballads about Queen Dagmar appears under the title “King Valdemar Sends his Delegates for Queen Dagmar”. Vedel introduces the ballad with the following statement:

King Valdemar Valdemarsøn, who was called Valdemar the Victorious, was married three times. First he had to wife Queen Ingeborg, the sister of Henry the Lion of Saxony, with whom he had no children. Then he asked for a daughter of the king of Bohemia, Margaret, who, because of her loveliness and virtue went by the nickname Dagmar, and she was also praised for this, as we shall hear soon, as is fitting (DgF, vol. 3, p. 194).

The ballad itself begins with the wooing of the young princess of Bohemia in the name of the Danish king. It describes the delegation’s preparations and their reception in Bohemia, as well as their return to Denmark with the princess. Upon her arrival in Denmark, Dagmar is horrified to see the one-eyed king she is to marry. An advisor nonetheless extols the king’s many virtues, and the wedding is celebrated. The last three verses tell of Dagmar’s reputation among her new people:

V. 38: Both great and small rejoiced at this, /the poor man with the rich:/ Both farmer and burgher rejoiced /from the bottom of their hearts.
V. 39: She came without demands, she came with peace, /she came to relieve the good farmer: /If Denmark always had such flowers, they would be honored and praised. 

V. 40: All those who were in Denmark, /they would please Queen Dagmar:/as long as she lived here upon the earth, /they had such good days (DgF, vol. 3, p. 196).

In Vedel’s second ballad about Dagmar, the young princess receives advice from her mother: she must not allow the farmers to be taxed. Moreover, she must ask her new husband to free from prison “Bishop Valdemar, his dearest uncle!” (DgF vol. 3, p. 204). Dagmar sails for Denmark, arrives, and is welcomed and brought to Ribe Castle. The following morning she demands her morning gift, asking first for the release of the rebellious bishop, then “That you release everyone from the plow tax, and the prisoners from their irons!” When the king refuses to release the bishop, noting that if he did so, Dagmar would find herself “a widow this year,” the queen removes her crown, puts it on the table, and expresses her disapproval. Finally, the king accedes to her demand and releases the bishop. As the penultimate stanza of the ballad proclaims:

v. 20: There was great joy all over Denmark, /that Dagmar had come to the Land:/Both farmers and burghers lived in peace, without tax and plow tax’s suffering” (DgF vol. 3, p. 205).

Vedel published yet another ballad about Dagmar under the title “Droning Dagmars dødelig Afgang,” commonly known by the title assigned it by Svend Grundtvig in his comprehensive edition of Danish ballads, “Queen Dagmar’s Death.” Following Vedel’s publication, and especially from the nineteenth century and onward, this narrative would become one of the most anthologized and admired of all Danish folksongs, and as we will see, it would play a central role in the later understandings and reception of this medieval queen (e.g., Laub and Olrik 1899–1904). In his introduction, Vedel attempts to provide some guidance for our understanding of the strange events that occur in this ballad:

As has been said before, that those who created the Danish ballads have used great poetic freedom in their rendering of strange and quite unbelievable things, so the same can also be seen in this poem before us, strangely about this fine queen, who is said to have been prayed back to life, after she was dead, and to have spoken once again with her lord, King Valdemar; which may be compared with what is often heard about the children that are said to be wept up again by their parents. Nothing is to be won by speaking of such miracles, which no longer occur in our own time. Rather, it was so that she has lain in a dead faint (a Heltraa, or Danetraa, as we call it in our Danish tongue), and has come to life and spoken again, after having lain speechless for quite a time. Queen Dagmar died in Ribe on 24 May in the year 1213, and her body was conveyed to Ringsted; she lies buried on the left side of King Valdemar, and Berngerd on the right side.

The final ballad in Vedel’s Hundredevisbog to feature Queen Dagmar is “Queen Berngerd”, which tells of King Valdemar’s final marriage. Vedel’s introduction tells us:

Reputation, they say, follows a man home. Thus it is with Dagmar and Berngerd: the one behaved herself well and left an honest/honored name after herself; the other, for her lack of virtue, is also not forgotten, but hardly to her advantage. Thus it is held up as an example both for high and low, rich and poor, etc. The beginning of this ballad has not come to our hands; that which we have obtained, we have also shared; it may also be enough of this, without more goodness and virtue to speak of (DgF, vol. 3, p. 215).

In contrast to Dagmar, Queen Berngerd (commonly known in ballad and popular tradition as “Bengerd”) is portrayed as a paragon of greed. While Dagmar, and other exemplary queens in ballads published by Vedel (and later printed by Grundtvig as DgF 153 “Erik Menveds Bryllup 1296”, and DgF–166, “Kong Hanses Bryllup 1478”) ask for their subjects
to be relieved from taxes, Berngerd thinks up a range of new taxes to impose and demands their implementation as her morning gift. The king resists her demands, and that night he has a vision of Queen Dagmar. This dream version of his previous wife advises him to take Berngerd with him next time he goes to war. The king loses no time in calling up his troops and invites Berngerd to join him. Berngerd is struck by the first arrow shot by the troops, and, we are told, no one wept for her (DgF, vol. 3, pp. 277–82).

Aside from the few brief mentions of her in the medieval sources, nearly everything known or told about Queen Dagmar comes from these ballad texts. Although these ballads, particularly “Queen Dagmar’s Death,” have become among the most admired, studied, and anthologized texts of the entire Danish ballad corpus, this interest does not appear to reflect their popularity before they were published by Vedel. Not one of these ballads, for example, falls among the “Top Eighteen” ballads that Hanne Ruus has identified in a survey of all the known ballad manuscripts that predate Vedel’s 1591 publication (Ruus 1999–2002, pp. 11–38). In fact, it might be said that the various Dagmar ballads are among the least-frequently occurring texts in the early ballad books kept and shared by the nobility at the Danish royal court. Moreover, although much has been made (see below) of the Danish peasantry’s deep love for Dagmar, none of the ballads about her was widely collected from oral tradition during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (see Piø 1985, pp. 245–46).

Although (as we will see below) Dagmar has come in later times to be regarded as the paragon of queenly virtue, the traits attributed to her in the ballads are attributed to other queens as well. In fact, the ballad Vedel published (2: p. 37) as “Droning Ingeborg Erick Mendueds” (“Erick Mendued’s Queen Ingeborg”), which Grundtvig called “Erik Menveds Bryllup” (DgF 153; “Erik Menved’s wedding”) is nearly identical in structure and content to “Dronning Dagmar i Danmark” (DgF 133), the second of the Dagmar ballads. This is true both of the two early manuscript versions, and of Vedel’s published version. The major differences in the texts involve the identity of the young princess and her mother, and the identity of the prisoner(s) whose release the young bride demands. The most popular of the so-called “marriage ballads” in the early manuscripts is “Kong Hanses Bryllup” (DgF 166, “The wedding of King Hans”), Vedel’s 2: p. 47, “Koning Hans Fester Froiken Kirstine” (“King Hans Betrothes Lady Kirstine”). This ballad closely follows the structure and content of DgF 132, though one version (from Karen Brahe’s folio, DgF 166 C, inserts a passage in which the princess demands the release of “Maarstis døtter aff iaarnn” (“Marsk Stig’s daughters from their irons”), a demand otherwise associated with “Erik Menveds Bryllup.”

As their prevalence in the ballads makes clear, promises to avoid taxing peasants and to release prisoners (in the ballads, often prisoners who represent or are related to a particular threat to the king) are representative of the behavior expected, at least symbolically, of every good queen, whether in ballad tradition or in real life. Queens should be merciful. They should intercede with their royal husbands on behalf of their subjects. They should not seek to exploit the peasantry but should prevent their husbands from doing so. Interestingly, the term used for this important aspect of medieval (and possibly later) queenship is precisely the same one used for one of the most important functions of a saint: intercession. As Kristen Geaman points out,

Intercession was expected of queens, particularly because it played a variety of useful roles for a king. Intercession not only affirmed the gender hierarchy, it also allowed men to change their minds without appearing weak. In addition, female intercession could supply a ‘male lack’ by exemplifying mercy in the face of a king’s stern justice. While intercession thus gave queens an acceptable avenue of power, it also promoted kings’ power by emphasizing their masculine strength that could only be mitigated by womanly pleas. (Geaman 2010, pp. 10–11)

It might be argued that much of the attention paid to the figure of Dagmar as depicted in and derived from the ballads—so much of which emphasizes her exemplary and exceptional goodness—misses the point (whether intentionally or not) that queenly intercession is an entirely stereotypical motif. The fact that the same more or less formulaic language is seen
in all three of the ballads discussed above, in which foreign-born queens arrive in Denmark, underscores the point that this intercessory behavior is expected—and might even be called characteristic—of all good queens.

It seems apparent in any case that the view of Queen Dagmar that has developed over the centuries since the publication of Vedel’s ballad collection, and particularly since the nineteenth century, is largely a response to assessments of the Dagmar ballads and statements concerning them made by ballad scholars and other figures who wielded cultural authority and influence. Moreover, in many cases, assessments or assumptions about the age and worth of individual ballads were clearly made on an aesthetic basis—a ballad that is more aesthetically pleasing must almost by definition be older and more “authentic” (a deeply problematic concept in any discussion of traditional narrative) than texts that are less aesthetically pleasing. Svend Grundtvig’s comments in the headnotes to *DgF* 166 (“The Wedding of King Hans”) are an early example. He traces this ballad to:

> ... the Iron Age of our folk ballads ... [in which] what is good is not new and what is new is not good, where one instead of poetry must make do with just prose, which nonetheless manages to wrap itself in a poetic dress inherited from better times ... In the good old days of balladry, there was something new and special about every ballad ... but when the spirit had disappeared, people still continued yet a while to hum the old ballad, but then it was a good deal duller (*DgF*, vol. 3, p. 616).

Grundtvig identifies the ballads of Dagmar’s arrival in Denmark as the earliest of the bridal ballads; of these, he considers *DgF* 133 to be the ancestor of the other examples of the genre (*DgF*, vol. 3, p. 616). The importance accorded the various Dagmar ballads by generations of scholars gave the narratives a central position in the ballad corpus in the minds of the scholarly community and the general public alike, and the respect accorded the texts came also to be shared by their main character. In fact, Grundtvig states categorically that the Dagmar ballads reflect the general feelings of the Danish people toward “the idolized Dagmar” as well as the “detested Bengerd”: “Dagmar is loved by the common people (“the Folk”) as the mother of the country, as the good angel of the king and the people, the one who loves Denmark and its people, most of all the humble and oppressed” (*DgF*, vol. 3, p. viii).

Of all the Dagmar ballads, the one most admired and praised by the scholarly community has been “Queen Dagmar’s Death.” One of many examples of the way this ballad has been viewed can be seen in a 1931 article by Sven Lunn, who would later become well known as a music librarian and radio personality:

> We must understand the special ethos that reigns in the folk ballads. For example, we should feel the sublime majesty in the ballad of Queen Dagmar’s Death, this lovely ballad that is so intensely Danish, and where the entire Danish middle ages appear so true to life before us,—this majesty that appears most strongly in the final verse (159) ...  

Like many commentators, Lunn assumes a medieval origin for this ballad, and he is well able to imagine how it must have been performed and understood in the medieval period:

> When the ballad of Queen Dagmar was sung in the middle ages, it was not like a modern short story, which was to be hurriedly consumed. —No, they all knew it. A hundred times it was sung, in the winter by the flickering glow of the fire in the servants’ hall, in the summer in the light nights under the pale sky,—each verse was known, each word, but even so they listened to it all. They were caught by the great feeling of community in that which bound them together: the memories that lived deeply in the peasantry, the legend of the good and beautiful queen, who came sailing from Bohemia, she who obtained peace for the outlaws, fed the hungry, shared with those who had nothing ... (*Lunn 1931*, 159–60).

This passage has a strongly romantic sense of nostalgia, an almost palpable longing for a bygone world in which collective memory created a powerful sense of community and
common identity. It is also an excellent example of the reassessment of the importance of the Dagmar ballads that occurs at some point between the creation of the early ballad manuscripts and the world imagined or created by Danish ballad scholars. In spite of the considerable rarity of every one of the Dagmar ballads in the ballad manuscripts of the Danish renaissance, which are the earliest recordings of the Danish ballads, Lunn has no difficulty describing a milieu in which “Queen Dagmar’s Death” is known to everyone, word for word, and is sung constantly by people who experience it as a defining element in their common identity. Moreover, in Lunn’s telling, the group of people whose deep and constant love for Queen Dagmar and for her ballad is a defining part of their identity is explicitly the peasantry, although the early ballad books are very much a product of the nobility, and in the case of the earliest manuscripts, the nobility gathered at the royal court (Sønderholm 1976). As we will see below, this notion of what might be termed ordinary people, regular people, country people, as the main nurturers of Queen Dagmar’s undying memory, is a recurrent theme in literature and scholarship.

At least one ballad scholar seeks to explain the presumed undying popularity of Queen Dagmar and her ballads through reference to a known medieval category—that of the saint. In his discussion of “Queen Dagmar’s Death,” Karl-Ivar Hildeman grapples with some of the problems of this approach. He acknowledges the rarity of the ballad in the early manuscript sources, but argues that this should not lead us to regard it, as we otherwise might, as “a marginal case of purely local character,” since versions of the ballad were collected in Sweden and the Faeroe Islands during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He also suggests, agreeing with Grüner-Nielsen, that the ballad’s rarity in the extant manuscripts might be explained because “precisely its papist characteristics made it less acceptable in the militant climate of the Reformation period” (Hildeman 1985, p. 43). The latter argument is not entirely convincing, both because Vedel, a Lutheran cleric himself, found the ballad appropriate to include in his edition with only minor revisions, and because none of the Dagmar ballads is found with any frequency in the manuscript sources. DgF 132 and 133 could hardly be described as Catholic propaganda, and while they were clearly not popular in ballad-recording circles, “Kung Hanses Bryllup,” with nearly the same plot and formulaic language as DgF 132, was quite popular. Hildeman tells us, in any case, that “Queen Dagmar’s Death” is “a saint’s legend in verse”. He takes some pains to make clear that he (like Vedel and Grundtvig) categorizes the poem as a historical one rather than a legendary ballad, but he nonetheless considers this ballad “without doubt a document worthy of a canonization process” (Hildeman 1985, p. 49). Noting that Skovgaard’s painting of Dagmar in Ringsted Church addresses her as a saint, Hildeman wonders how old this perception is in Denmark, and how it arose. He notes that the ballad has generally been interpreted as an expression of the people’s sense of loss following the death of a beloved queen, and wisely acknowledges the impossibility of drawing conclusions about what kind of memories of Queen Dagmar might have existed among the unknown, anonymous “folk.” After discussing the importance of Ringsted in the known texts of the ballad, he comes to the conclusion that this is indeed a ballad about a saint, composed by the Benedictine monks at Ringsted with the intention of promoting a cult of Dagmar, alongside the two other cults already centered there, those of Knud Lavard (canonized in 1169) and Erik Plovpenning (for whom a canonization process was begun, but never resulted in canonization) (Hildeman 1985, pp. 50–54).

Hildeman’s arguments for this thesis are not especially convincing. There is no documentary evidence whatsoever to suggest that the monks of Ringsted ever sought to promote a cult of Queen Dagmar. Promoting a saint for canonization was by the thirteenth century an arduous and expensive process. It involved collecting evidence of miracles (often in the form of testimony from individuals claiming to have experienced them), negotiations with the Holy See, and the composition not only of a legend of the saint (in Latin), but eventually a liturgical office. In the case of Erik Plovpenning, whose canonization was never granted, an extensive collection of miracles is preserved, though no actual legend or office appears to have been composed. For a Dagmar cult, the ballad
itself is the only evidence Hildeman can provide. It is also significant to consider that cults of royal saints in Denmark were typically dynastic in nature. They were promoted to a great degree in order to support the claim to the throne of one branch of the royal line over another. This is very much the case for the two cults associated with Ringsted. The cult of Knud Lavard (Duke Canute) played a role in supporting the kingship of Knud’s son, Valdemar I (“the Great”) after a period of destructive civil war (see above, discussion of Bishop Valdemar; also Petersen 2019, p. 120). In the case of Erik Plovpenning, who was killed by one of his brothers, his promotion as a saint, even though ultimately unsuccessful, helped to strengthen the claims to the throne of the descendants of the youngest brother, in opposition to those of the descendants of Abel, the brother held responsible for his death (Jensen 1982). In contrast, it is difficult to imagine who might have benefitted from promoting a cult of Saint Dagmar in medieval Denmark. Dagmar’s only known son was killed in a hunting accident, without leaving any children, and his lineage would in any case have been in competition with that of Valdemar Sejr’s surviving sons. Hildeman’s statement that the monks of Ringsted were aware that Dagmar’s sister had already been canonized during the thirteenth century is both not quite true and not likely to be relevant. Agnes of Bohemia was respected as a holy woman during her life, corresponded with St. Clare of Assisi, and founded the first house of the Poor Clares in central Europe; however, she was not officially canonized until 1989 (Klaniczay 2002, pp. 202–9). In any case, even the awareness of another saint in Dagmar’s family might have been flimsy grounds for promoting Dagmar as a saint, given the circumstances.

While all the Dagmar ballads taken together paint a picture of a kind, humble and pious (if stereotypical) queen, whose concern for the welfare of her people might be expected to form the basis of a claim for her sanctity, the main focus of “Queen Dagmar’s Death” is that she dies in childbirth and returns from the dead in response to the prayers of others. Although the ballad does offer evidence of her exceptional goodness (the only reason she has been in Purgatory at all is that she laced her sleeves on Sunday, a minor act of vanity), it does not attribute a single miracle to her. Returning from the dead in response to the prayers of her husband and her ladies-in-waiting is not in itself a signifier of holiness. While there is thus no real evidence to support the assumption that the monks of Ringsted took the initiative to promote a cult of Saint Dagmar and to begin a process of canonization nor, indeed, any actual evidence to support the thesis that a monk from Ringsted was the original author of “Queen Dagmar’s Death”, Hildeman makes a good point regarding the prominence of Dagmar in present-day Ringsted:

If that [to promote Dagmar’s veneration] was his intention, he succeeded in the long run. If he stood today in St. Bendt’s Church and observed the crowds of tourists, he would note with satisfaction that the church’s third saint’s grave is the one that the visitors seem to pay most attention to. He did not get there, perhaps, in his own time. But with time, his poem gave Dagmar a reputation and provided her with characteristics without which she would have been one queen’s name out of the medieval hordes of more or less anonymous consorts, a name inscription on a gravestone, noted in passing. (Hildeman 1985, p. 54)

In the present, Dagmar really does seem to be more prominently remembered in Ringsted, within the church and outside of it, than either Knud Lavard or Erik Plovpenning. How should that be understood and how did it come to be so? In addition to the ballad tradition, a central aspect of what might, for lack of a more precise term, be called the later “cult” of Queen Dagmar was the discovery of the so-called Dagmar Cross at the end of the seventeenth century. The Dagmar Cross is a reliquary of Byzantine origin, made of enameled gold and dated to around A. D. 1000. Although the circumstances of its discovery are not precisely known, it is believed to have been found in one of the royal graves in St. Bendt’s Church in Ringsted, when a private family grave was constructed for Dean Blichfeldt in 1683. The cross was deposited at the kongelige Kunstkammer (royal museum/collection) in 1695 and is now housed at the National Museum. From the time of its discovery, this object was assumed to have belonged to Queen Dagmar. Although the
excavations led by H. B. Storck in 1901 revealed that the cross was just as likely to have come from another thirteenth-century royal grave, that of Valdemar Sejr’s sister, Richiza (Sw. Rikissa), widow of the Swedish king, Erik Knutsson, the traditions that associated it with Dagmar were by then far too strong to admit the possibility of correction (Bysted 2010, pp. 59–60).

By the time the graves of Richiza and Dagmar were broken up in 1683, Vedel’s ballad edition was more than ninety years old, and had been reprinted seven times. Thus, it is quite possible that by this time a general perception of Dagmar’s personality had been established through the popularity of the published ballad texts, making it natural to associate the cross with her. As we will see below, this cross would also become an important element in the construction of Queen Dagmar as an almost sacred symbol of ideal Danish national identity. It is quite clear that over the centuries following its discovery, the reliquary cross would come to be seen as a symbolic representation of Queen Dagmar and her perceived virtues—as a kind of contact relic, far more than as a vessel for a sacred relic (perhaps a splinter of the Holy Cross), which it certainly was for its medieval bearers. It is also interesting to speculate whether the Dagmar cross, and the skull reputed to have been hers, kept in the church until it was stolen in the 1750s (Bysted 2010, p. 60), might have provided the impetus for broadside versions of Vedel’s Dagmar ballads (DgF 133, “Queen Dagmar in Denmark” and DgF 135, “Queen Dagmar’s Death”) which were published throughout the eighteenth century (DgF vol. 3, pp. 201, 207).

Aside from the occasional broadside, the eighteenth century has little to add to the development of the image of Queen Dagmar as she is understood today; however, in the nineteenth century, Dagmar would prove to be an appealing subject. A particularly interesting depiction of Queen Dagmar appears in B. S. Ingemann’s historical novel, Valdemar Sejr, first published in 1826. As its title suggests, this novel depicts the life and thoughts of King Valdemar II, as well as those of people close to him. Ingemann draws on ballad texts and on the brief medieval references to Dagmar’s beauty (and later interpretation of one of those texts as suggesting kindness). He moreover gives her sole responsibility for the release of the dangerous Bishop Valdemar. As might be expected in a novel, his portrayal includes episodes and character traits not based on his sources, such as a tendency toward hysteria late in the young queen’s short life. In the novel, the unmarried King Valdemar first learns of Dagmar’s existence when the commander of the Teutonic Knights in Livonia, visiting his court, displays a miniature portrait of her, and it is passed to the court poet as inspiration for a new skaldic creation:

Never had the young skald seen such a lovely woman’s face; he therefore bowed reverently before it as if before a saint; his clear blue eyes shone mildly and peacefully; he felt happy and peaceful in his heart as before the pious image of the mother of God in church, and he forgot all concerns and began a lay in the oldest, simple meter of the poetic language, in which Völuspá and the oldest Nordic poetic lays are composed, in simple, artless words and with no other ornament than rhythm and strong simple rhymes, which seemed indeed to arise of themselves. Thus he sang with clear and pleasant voice, in deep pure tones, of the lovely woman he seemed to see, living, before his eyes. He described her golden-yellow curls and likened them to the ripe, waving grain on Denmark’s plains; in the blue, sky-clear eyes he saw the deep, calm love and the high, mysterious striving for the eternal and incorruptible that filled and moved his innermost soul when he saw the sky with all its stars reflected in the great sea or in Denmark’s quiet, clear lakes. He was no longer describing any single part of the wonderful picture: it stood complete and alive before his soul; but his love for the land of his birth and his enchantment over its quiet, pleasant loveliness thus mixed with his vision of pure womanly beauty, so that he, in this picture of the loveliest of women, saw a spirit and expression that reminded him of his mother’s lullaby, and the most beautiful dreams of his childhood. In the portrait of which he sang, he thus saw Denmark’s transfigured angel lift herself up from
the valleys and the green hills, from the light green forests and quiet lakes, and kneel with faith, hope and charity before the throne of the holy, merciful one. ‘Peace and blessings upon Denmark!’ he heard her pray, ‘peace and blessings upon the king and my people! Peace and blessings upon my faithful, loving sons and daughters for eternity!’ (Ingemann [1826] 1966, p. 89). 27

The king is deeply impressed by the image and is further told that the motivation for its creation was to serve as a model for a large altarpiece portraying the martyrdom of Saint Agnes. The fact that Ingemann chooses to represent Saint Agnes rather than the even more popular Saint Margaret of Antioch in this passage suggests that he was aware of the reputation of the real Queen Dagmar’s sister, Agnes of Prague, who was venerated as a saint during the middle ages, though only beatified and canonized decades after the publication of Valdemar Sejr. Saint Agnes of Prague was not a martyr, but the virgin martyr Saint Agnes, often portrayed with a lamb as her attribute, was a saint familiar to medieval Scandinavians and venerated throughout the region. More germane to the present discussion, however, is the implied connection between Dagmar of Bohemia and sanctity. The novel does not tell us that Dagmar herself was regarded or venerated as a saint; however, the young poet bows reverently before her image “as if before a saint” and posits her as an intercessor for the Danish land, king, and people. Thus, Ingemann at the very least considers and plays with the idea that Dagmar might be viewed as a saint.

Many of the themes in Ingemann’s early nineteenth-century novel would be seen again in later representations of Dagmar. The idea of Dagmar as an angel interceding with Christ on behalf of the Danish people—and even the Danish land—is also explicit in the Lange/Skovgaard painting in St. Bendt’s Church in Ringsted, and the notion of Dagmar as a kind of eternal national protectress, a beloved queen whose memory never fades among her faithful people, is a frequent theme among learned commentators of the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries. Although the familiar expectation that earthly queens should play an intercessory role may certainly inform portrayals of Dagmar as an intercessor for the Danish people and kingdom, it is notable that she is regularly posited as an intercessor not with an earthly king, but with “Our Lord.” Although more than one text explicitly calls her an “angel,” the role here attributed to her is very much that of a saint.

As the nineteenth century continued, depictions of Dagmar or references to her as a symbol of Danish identity became more frequent. This was, of course, part of a larger trend. Reverence for the past, especially the national past, was a central theme of the Romantic movement. The medieval period, and especially the (at times) relatively stable reign of the Valdemars, when the kingdom was expanding its borders and recognized as an international power, was an attractive time to reflect upon. Seldom are these thoughts expressed more explicitly than in an article by N. M. Petersen, the first professor of Nordic Languages (“Nordiske Sprog”) at the University of Copenhagen:

It is one of the most beautiful qualities of a noble people, as in the individual man, that it is compelled to love; and a general expression of this condition of the soul is devotion to the royal house, so that kindness need only show itself upon or near the throne, to be praised. . . . And this happiness is eternal. Nearly 650 years have passed; but what Danish man can yet name, or hear Queen Dagmar’s name mentioned, without a gentle smile spreading over his countenance, a mild warmth coursing through his heart.

This feeling becomes so much more alive, since it arises not just at the thought of an individual amiable personality, but because this personality revealed herself in the context of a happy and honor-filled era, so that it is not only a single picture that paints itself for the observer, but a whole pleasant district, a collection of flower groups on sunny meadows, of waving barley fields in the glowing abundance of autumn, in which the picture appears, framed, beautified and emphasized by the whole (Petersen 1842–1843, p. 3). 28

He further notes:
The Danish relic (for we may certainly call it thus) that has given rise to these remarks, through which the memory of Queen Dagmar has been brought back to the reader’s recollection, is the golden cross which she is said to have worn, and which is a new proof of her piety (Petersen 1842–1843, p. 13).

Petersen’s undoubtedly prescriptive emphasis on the love of the people for the royal house, and in particular on the undying reverence of Danes for Valdemar Sejr and Dagmar, may very well prefigure or even inspire the later promotion of the memory and commemoration of Dagmar in connection with the royal family. It would be interesting to speculate about the influence of this discussion, and perhaps others like it, might have had at the highest levels of society.

Indeed, the royal family and their relationship to the Danish nation and its medieval history would become a topic of particular importance during the middle of the nineteenth century. By the later 1840s it was evident that the succession to the Danish throne should be a matter of concern. Although the aging King Christian VIII would be succeeded in 1848 by his son, who would reign as Frederik VII, there was no certainty that the twice-divorced Frederik would be able to continue the royal line. Thus, in 1847, a member of a junior branch of the royal family was chosen as heir presumptive, designated to inherit the Danish throne if Frederik VII did not produce a legitimate son. Given that his path to the throne was not a usual one, it is hardly surprising that the new heir presumptive should have taken steps to underscore his legitimacy in the eyes of the Danish people. Thus, although his older children were named according to family tradition and aristocratic custom, a new trend occurred in the names of those children of Prince Christian’s born after he was designated heir presumptive. The first of these children was a daughter, named Marie Sophie Frederikke Dagmar, born 26 November 1847, and generally known as Princess Dagmar (Müller 2011). The choice of Dagmar as a final name, the name by which the child became generally known, was an innovation. Although the thirteenth-century Dagmar’s baptismal name, Margaret, occurred frequently in the Danish royal line, “Dagmar” did not. By choosing this name, the presumptive heirs to the Danish throne may have been trying to emphasize the legitimacy of their claim, and the depth of their ties to Denmark. If we look at the names of the two youngest children of Christian and his consort, Louise, it is evident that they too were intended to evoke the glorious Danish royal past. The next daughter, born on 29 September 1853, was named Thyra Amalie Caroline Charlotte Anna, and known as Thyra (Bagge n.d.). Thyra (or Thyre) Danabót was a renowned Danish queen of the early tenth century, married to Gorm the Old, who is sometimes regarded as the founder of the Danish kingdom. Unusually for women of this period, she was memorialized on one, or possibly several runestones, including one of the famous Jelling Stones. At least two important early Danish histories (Sven Aggesen’s Brevis Historia Regum Dacie and the Gesta Danorum by Saxo Grammaticus), as well as two important Icelandic sagas (Snorri Sturluson’s Heimskringla and the anonymous Jómsvíkingasaga) mention Thyra and give examples of her exceptional wisdom and character. The youngest child of Christian and Louise, a boy born in 1858, was called Valdemar (Eller et al. n.d.). That name surely needs no explanation in the present context, but it is notable that the name had not been used in the royal line since the birth of Valdemar Christian of Slesvig-Holsten (1622), a son of King Christian IV and his morganatic wife, Kirsten Munk. Thus, like the names of his two older sisters, “Valdemar,” a name borne by three of Denmark’s most illustrious kings, was an innovation in the naming of members of the Danish royal family, clearly meant to evoke an honorable and happy period of Danish history.

The symbolic importance of Queen Dagmar to the Danish royal family would once again be highlighted in 1863. In September of 1862, the Danish Princess Alexandra, eldest daughter of the heir presumptive, became engaged to the Prince of Wales, Albert Edward, whom she would marry on 10 March 1863. Alexandra’s father, the future King Christian IX, would not ascend to the Danish throne until November 1863. Rather, it was King Frederik VII who would give Alexandra the most famous and important of her Danish wedding gifts, one which would in many ways define and frame her new role. Although other
members of Alexandra’s family did attend her wedding, Queen Victoria had explicitly banned the twice-divorced King Frederik VII, both for diplomatic reasons and “because she was genuinely shocked at his immoral past” (Mullen 1981). Nonetheless, King Frederik managed to play a prominent role in the preparations, in part by means of his gift to Alexandra. This was a remarkably rich and intricate necklace, whose centerpiece was a precise replica of the Dagmar Cross, the Byzantine reliquary by this time closely associated with Queen Dagmar.

In January of 1863, George Stephens published a pamphlet in English, aimed at the British public, which included color reproductions of the original cross and a discussion of its purported owner, Queen Dagmar. Stephens, by this time professor of English at the University of Copenhagen, was a well-known authority on Nordic folklore and medieval literature. He explains the importance of the cross as emanating to a great degree from the holiness of Dagmar herself. The point of King Frederik’s gift, he asserts, is not simply that it is a magnificent medieval jewel (surrounded by an even more sumptuous and fashionable setting), but also one of great historical significance. Alexandra, as a princess leaving her homeland to marry abroad—to belong to a new people—is given a powerful role model in Dagmar, who is by this time established in the Danish national consciousness as the epitome of the good queen, the blessing of her people, associated with a Danish golden age. Like all other commentators, Stephens derives his characterization of Dagmar from the accounts in the various ballads. His opening paragraph might easily have been derived from one of Vedel’s ballad introductions:

The world around us, ‘life as it is’, and the annals of the past in every age and clime, alike remind us of the vanity of earthly greatness, the frailty and deception of pomp and pride, the certainty that neither we nor our handiworks have here any abiding truism, that GOODNESS alone, blessing and being blest, shall never die,—that Birth and Rank can never create, albe [sic] they may illustrate, VIRTUE,—that GENTLE DEEDS alone constitute true Gentility. (Stephens 1863, p. 7)

Of the historical Dagmar, upon her arrival in Denmark, Stephens tells us: “Wedded with great state at Ribe, her life was a dance on roses. Beloved by her husband, she was the Darling of his people. Beauty, mildness, mercy drew every heart.” He continues:

As might be expected, she became and remains the idol of Denmark, worthy dividing the affections of the Commons with the redoubted Queen THYRE, ‘Danmarks Böt’, who built that Dane-wirke (the great wall against the Saxons) whose newly-strengthened winding-line is still a watchword and a battle cry—as afterwards with Queen MARGARET, ‘The Semiramis of the North’, that masculine heroine, a counterpart of our own ELISABETH . . . . (Stephens 1863, p. 8)

Nonetheless, as Stephens reminds us, Dagmar’s reputation did not prevent the breaking up of her grave when, in the late seventeenth century, a dean of St. Bendt’s church had his own family grave dug among the royal ones. “… It was probably in connection with the barbarous plundering of her tomb, that her Cross again saw the light of day. Certain it is, that this precious work of art was found in her grave, as generally exprest in the reign of Christian V” (Stephens 1863, p. 12). Stephens’ explanation of the importance of the cross is particularly interesting. He connects its popularity as a museum piece not to its beauty, its antiquity, or its Byzantine origin, but to its purported owner:

In the Museum it is a constant attraction; for if ever there was a woman regarded for centuries as Holy, it was Queen Dagmar. Even down to the beginning of this year-hundred, when the farmer went to his bench in Ringsted Church, he first aproacht the three graves where lie WALDEMAR and his two wives and said ‘DAGMAR hail! BENGERD fie!’ (Stephens 1863, p. 12).

Sadly, Stephens gives no indication of how he might have learned of the local Ringsted ritual he describes, and it is difficult to assess whether it is more reliable than his description of Dagmar’s life as a “dance upon roses.” However, it is clear that Stephens is making a
case for the central importance of Dagmar herself as he describes the role that the Dagmar Cross would play in Princess Alexandra’s wedding gift:

The Royal Antiquarian King FREDERICK VII, who has so long and so zealously studied and protected the national monuments of his country, took this cross as a memento for a jeweled ornament, which he gave Princess Alexandra on her leaving the shores of Denmark. He caused a facsimile of the Cross to be made, arranged so as to open, and placed within it a small bit of silk, a splint of wood, and a tiny slip of parchment.

The silken stuff was cut from the silken cushion on which the head of HOLY CNUT, King and Patron Saint of Denmark, was found resting when his shrine was opened in Odense in 1833. This pillow is now preserved in the Old-Northern Museum.

The Splint was taken from a reliquary of the middle age, now in the Old-Northern Museum, in which it lay, accompanied by a bit of vellum, announcing (‘de ligno dñi’) that it was a bit of the Cross of Christ.

The slip of parchment bears the words ‘Sericum de pulvinari Sti Canuti, Regis et Patroni Daniae, manu Frederici VII Regis Daniae abcessum’ (‘Silk from the pillow of St. Cnut, King and Patron of Denmark, cut off by the hand of Frederick VII, King of Denmark’).

Thus King Frederick endeavored, in this respect also, to make the new Cross a copy of the original. Its greatest value in the eyes of DAGMAR doubtless was, that it contained costly relics. So also he wished the Princess Alexandra to commence her new career ‘with God’, with a symbol of His Blessing, and in her new home still to muse on her fatherland and its Patron Saint. (Stephens 1863, pp. 13–14)

While it could be argued that the main point of this wedding gift was to posit Alexandra as a kind of new Dagmar, Stephens’ description, including the emphatic statement that “if ever there was a woman regarded for centuries as Holy, it was Queen Dagmar,” seems to suggest that Alexandra’s cross should not be regarded only as a reliquary holding the relics of St. Knud and the Holy Cross, but also, perhaps even primarily, as an artifact commemorating Dagmar herself. Whether or not King Frederik VII intended to suggest any degree of equivalence between Queen Dagmar and St Knud the king, it was certainly implied by Stephens and may also be implicit in some of the later representations of Dagmar.

Although interest in Dagmar has often appeared to be a national phenomenon in Denmark, a number of locations claim special ties to her. A particularly notable example occurs in an apparently anonymous publication dated 1862, Røde-Ran, Folktradition fra det nordlige Sjælland, which claims to be a collection of narratives collected from the oral tradition of northern Sjælland (Zealand). The anonymous editor/narrator of this interesting work admits to having taken a degree of poetic license only in binding together the oral narratives he (we presume) has collected into a coherent whole, and also in the dialogues through which he has portrayed the various historical figures who appear in the narrative. However, he insists, he has made every effort to “preserve the historical character of the historical figures who appear herein”(6). According to Røde-Ran, Queen Dagmar first came to Asserbo, in northern Sjælland, shortly after her arrival to Denmark, in conjunction with a pilgrimage to the shrine of a local saint, Helene. During her visit, Dagmar experiences a miracle: when the saint’s relics are put into her hands, they become extremely heavy and exude salt water, which reflects the mode of the saint’s death. Dagmar also visits another local shrine, the chapel in Vinrød, which has a renowned image of the Virgin Mary. The narrative notes that the area around Asserbo and Arresø reminds the queen of her homeland, and that her husband thus built her a hunting lodge/private palace there, known as “Dronningholm” (Røde-Ran 1862, pp. 67–70). The text emphasizes the strong mutual regard that quickly arose between the queen and the population of the area:
The people of the district held the gracious Queen Dagmar in such love and tenderness that they competed at every opportunity to show her their regard and praise, and they once gave her, as the tradition tells, a moving proof of this, when they all, men, women, ancients and children, with their own hands planted and wove a high and shady passage of leaves, called “The Secret Passage,” which ran along the shore of Arre Lake, on the edge of the woods, all the way from Dronningholm to the chapel at Vinrød, which the pious, god-fearing queen and her favorite lady-in-waiting Kirsten, and a little lad or page visited nearly every day to hear prayers and mass. Only four summers of a short life did the blessed Queen Dagmar enjoy at her beloved pleasure palace, Dronningholm; but so beloved and dear to the people did she become in the region, both among the peasantry and the rest of the people, that her memory still lives and flowers on their tongues. And although it is over six hundred years since she visited these places, and three hundred since her palace was obliterated from the earth, the folk legend is still told, of how pious and lovely, how good and generous she was, when she rode out from Dronningholm, and when she, gamboling her white palfrey along the “Secret Passage” along the shore of Lake Arre toward Vinrød and Helene’s renowned and holy sites, showed herself among the people, who streamed after her, cheering all the while, or knelt alongside her path. The legend also tells of how she with gentle words and expressions comforted the sick and the sorrowing, distributed rich gifts to the poor, and in return received, everywhere, the warm and obedient blessings of her devoted people. (Røde-Ran 1862, p. 70)

A note to the paragraph above reads: “She was so holy, the legend adds, that she could hang her glove on a sunbeam.” Thus, without claiming that Dagmar was venerated as a saint, the narrative suggests that she was believed to possess a degree of holiness such that she could perform a miracle attributed to a number of recognized saints, among them the Swedish Saint David of Munktorp. In addition to its assertion of her intrinsic holiness and her deep piety, the passage above makes a particular point of the longevity of Dagmar’s special place in the hearts of the local people, in terms that to a degree echo the assertions of N. M. Petersen. Although it is by no means the only signifier of local identity, affection for the long-dead queen is presented as a characteristic of local tradition.

Still, while other areas may lay some claim to her, two sites in particular have become centers for the cultural memory and commemoration of Dagmar, particularly during and since the twentieth century. One of these, as we have already seen, is St. Bendt’s church in Ringsted, where Dagmar is buried, along with other Danish royalty from the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The interest in Dagmar evident from the Lange/Skovgaard painting did not cease with that work. In 1949, for example, a sculpture of Queen Dagmar, known as “Dronning Dagmars Mindebrønd” (“Queen Dagmar’s Memorial Well”), by sculptor Henrik Starcke (1899–1973), was installed in the exterior of the churchyard wall, facing the town hall (Rådhuset). Although the church is, as expected, the site most closely associated with Queen Dagmar, the association clearly extends to other parts of Ringsted as well. A number of businesses and institutions have been named for her, including a local school; a community organization for the support of socially vulnerable persons, including a café and thrift shops, all named after Dagmar; a society of quilters; and finally, a brewery also bearing her name. As might be expected, the Ringsted Medieval Festival (Ringsted middlealderfestival) for 2012 had “Dronning Dagmar!” as its central theme. Queen Dagmar is by no means the only historical figure associated with Ringsted, nor the only one represented in the local landscape (by street names, businesses, or institutions), but she is clearly an important signifier of local identity (see also Nielsen 2012 for a survey of sites and monuments associated with Dagmar).

If identification with Dagmar is characteristic of Ringsted, it is even more emphatically so for Ribe. As has frequently been remarked, the strong association between Queen Dagmar and Ribe in the ballad tradition can be traced to Anders Sørensen Vedel’s published
versions of the various ballads that depict her. Svend Grundtvig states directly in his headnotes to DgF 133 that “. . . he [Vedel] alone, and not the folk ballad, may be held responsible for the notion that Dagmar should have landed at Mando, and that the wedding should have been held in Vedel’s own beloved Ribe” (DgF vol. 3, p. 201). Among the indications of Dagmar’s importance there are the fact that the city’s oldest hotel, housed in a late sixteenth-century building just east of the cathedral, was renamed “Hotel Dagmar” in 1912, after a major renovation (see Hotel Dagmar n.d.). In the following year, a statue of Queen Dagmar was erected at the site of Riberhus Castle, which had been an important outpost on the Danish–German border during much of the medieval period. The statue was sculpted by the well-known Danish artist Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen and depicts Dagmar’s arrival in Denmark as described in the ballads. Along the base of the statue is a line from Vedel’s version of DgF 132 (“Dronning Dagmar og Junker Strange”): “Hun kom vden Tynge, hun kom met Fred . . . “ The plinth also has a depiction, in the form of a bronze relief, of the death of Queen Dagmar, with the text: “Dagmar Danmarks Dronning 1205–1212. Død paa Riberhus” (“Dagmar, queen of Denmark 1205–1212. Died at Riberhus”) (see also Nielsen 2012).

Like Ringsted, the oldest, central part of Ribe has a major street named for Queen Dagmar, though in both cities the street names are undoubtedly of relatively recent date. A particularly striking aspect of the promotion of Dagmar is her association with the cathedral. Since the carillon bells of Ribe Cathedral were automated in 1933, they play two tunes: Hans Adolph Brorson’s “Den yndigste rose er funden” and “Dronning Dagmars Død” (“Queen Dagmar’s Death”). Hans Adolph Brorson (1694–1764) was known as a writer of hymns and was bishop of Ribe from 1739 until his death. Thus, a hymn of his both honors the Protestant history of the Danish church and the memory of a prominent resident of Ribe. The choice of “Dronning Dagmars Død” is an especially interesting one, however. Certainly, the best-known version of the ballad begins with the statement that Queen Dagmar is ailing in Ribe, though the text of the famous refrain is “Queen Dagmar lies in Ringsted.” Is this tune meant to represent the medieval history of the cathedral, with Brorson’s hymn thus representative of its post-Reformation history?

Although Dagmar’s remains are indeed interred in Ringsted, the fact that the ballad tune is played twice daily on the cathedral chimes certainly suggests a specific and close connection between Dagmar and the cathedral, just as the names of streets and businesses and the statue of the young queen at the site of Riberhus castle imply a close connection between Dagmar and the town of Ribe in general. The association of the queen with the cathedral, with the ruins of Riberhus Castle, and with Ribe more broadly would continue to be emphasized. As Bendt Viinholt Nielsen has noted, the ruins of Riberhus Castle underwent repairs during the early 1940s. Although by this time the Danish–German border had once again been moved far south of Ribe, all of Denmark was under German occupation from 1940 until the end of the Second World War. When the repairs to the Riberhus ruins and the attendant archeological excavations were completed in 1942, a service was held in Ribe Cathedral in commemoration of the site’s reopening. The cathedral’s organist and cantor, the well-known composer Rued Langgaard, composed a new organ prelude for this service, with the title Fantasi over “Dronning Dagmar ligger i Ribe syg” (Fantasy variations on “Dronning Dagmar ligger i Ribe syg”), based on the famous ballad played daily by the cathedral chimes. Langgaard would later go on to compose an entire symphony entitled Fra Dronning Dagmars By (From Queen Dagmar’s City), two of whose four movements are explicitly connected to ballads of Queen Dagmar (Nielsen 2020, pp. 1–4).

In the present, Dagmar continues to play a visible role both in Ringsted and in Ribe. Aside from her continued presence via the names of streets and businesses, statues, and the Ribe cathedral chimes, both cities held festivals in 2012, the 800-year anniversary of Dagmar’s death. In the case of Ribe, the festival, called Dagmar 800, ran for three days, from 24 to 26 May. The varied program included a service in the cathedral, a variety of concerts, puppet shows and other theatrical performances, as well as a “medieval” market. Of
particular interest was the Danish premiere of *Anorexia Sacra*, an opera by Danish composer Line Tjørnhøj (Line Tjørnehøj, *Anorexia Sacra* n.d.). This work offers a different view of Dagmar, and particularly her death, than the ballads and other accounts based on those texts. Tjørnhøj’s Dagmar starves herself, affected by the profound asceticism that characterized a number of holy women of the thirteenth century, among them St Clare of Assisi (https://www.tjrnhj.com/#/anorexiasacra/, accessed on 25 February 2022). Tjørnhøj’s reimagining of Dagmar’s life and death demonstrates the fluidity of this figure to adapt to the interests and concerns of different historical contexts and cultural circumstances, but even here, there is an association with a particular category of female saints. The happy young queen described by Petersen and Stephens, whose image King Frederik VII certainly intended to invoke in his wedding gift to Princess Alexandra, may have little in common with the image of Dagmar presented in *Anorexia Sacra*. It might be argued that an important aspect of the continued interest in Queen Dagmar in Ribe and Ringsted, even eight hundred years after her death, is the perception that she is a figure of national importance who is nonetheless most closely associated with these two locations. It is worth noting that evidence of particular interest in Dagmar in both of these towns, in spite of references to otherwise undocumented local traditions (as in Stephens’ description of local farmers greeting Dagmar’s grave in St. Bendt’s church in Ringsted) dates from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, following N. M. Petersen’s discussion of the background of the Dagmar Cross, the naming of Princess Dagmar and her younger siblings, and the marriage of Princess Alexandra. The prominence of Dagmar as a symbol of some aspects of Danish national identity may serve as a reminder that both Ribe and Ringsted were once important centers of Danish religious, cultural and, to a degree, political life.

A final example of the role that Queen Dagmar has come to play in the cultural and religious life of present-day Denmark can be found in a discussion that took place in 2008. In November of that year, the Danish Ministry of Justice (*Justitsministeriet*) proposed legislation concerning the way that judges should dress in the courtroom. In addition to stipulating that all judges should wear judicial robes while court is in session (including municipal judges, who, previously, had not been required to wear robes), the proposed legislation prohibited the wearing of any visible symbol or indication of religious or political affiliation:

The proposed prohibition concerns, among other things, occasions on which the judge, while court is in session, visibly wears a Christian cross, such as for example a so-called Dagmar Cross or a crucifix, in which the judge wears a Muslim head covering such as, for example, a hijab, or in which the judge wears a Jewish skullcap (kippa) (*Justitsministeriet* 2008, sct. 4.2, para. 3).

The significance of this proposal to the present discussion is that the Dagmar Cross is the first item listed as a religious symbol which may not be worn, at least so that it is visible, by a presiding judge in the courtroom. While it is by no means certain that every person who wears a Dagmar Cross associates it specifically with Queen Dagmar, it is notable that this cross in particular has attained such importance as a Christian symbol in Denmark. Indeed, a response to this proposed legislation by a Danish Supreme Court justice referred to the Dagmar Cross as “[likely] [t]he most common religious symbol worn in Denmark” (Pedersen 2008). When this circumstance is considered in conjunction with the degree of attention still accorded Dagmar in Ribe and Ringsted as recently as the summer of 2012, it seems natural to conclude that Dagmar remains a figure of considerable cultural significance in present-day Denmark, and that, moreover, there is a significant religious component to the way that she is understood, even if that component is seldom specifically described or defined.

The examples discussed above of engagement with Queen Dagmar as an idea suggest that conceptions of this medieval Danish queen consort, short-lived as she was, have played and may still continue to play some role in the constitution of Danish identity. The question is, what role, or roles has this figure fulfilled? Quite a number of the scholarly and literary discussions of Queen Dagmar engage in some way with the idea of sainthood. Sometimes
this takes the form of implying some connection to the veneration of a saint, without a
suggestion that Dagmar herself was ever actually venerated. This occurs, for example, in
the passage in Ingemann’s novel, Valdemar Sejr, in which a skald takes inspiration from
a portrait of Dagmar which had served as a sketch for an altarpiece dedicated to a saint
and depicts her as an “angel” who will intercede on behalf of the Danish people and realm.
This language lives again in the scholarly work of Svend Grundtvig, with his description of
Dagmar as “ . . . mother of the country, the good angel of the king and people, who loves
Denmark and its inhabitants, most of all the lowly and oppressed (DgF vol. 3, p. xviii),”
and also in the Lange/Skovgaard painting in the St. Bendt’s Church in Ringsted. The
mid-nineteenth-century text, Røde-Ran, which claims to be a collection of oral traditions
but feels more like a novel, makes a very specific claim of Dagmar’s holiness, including
the assertion that she could hang her gloves on a sunbeam, which is a miracle seen in a
number of saints’ legends. Even the unusual story of King Frederik VII’s wedding gift to
Princess Alexandra seems to imply (though never explicitly states) a role of national saint
for Dagmar, given the central importance of the so-called Dagmar Cross (by this time as
much understood as a contact relic of Dagmar’s as it was a container for other relics) in
the sumptuous necklace. The fact that the king placed into this reliquary a contact relic
of one of Denmark’s canonized saints, Saint Canutus Rex/King Knud, may suggest that
Dagmar should be seen as a saintly queen in parallel to a saintly king. Still, none of these
suggestions of Dagmar’s sanctity goes so far as to claim that Queen Dagmar was actively
venerated as a saint in medieval Denmark. Only the twentieth-century Swedish ballad
scholar takes that leap, and when he does, it is mostly an act of imagination based on
insufficient understanding of the general cult of saints in medieval Denmark.

Alongside the many implied connections between Dagmar and religiosity, there are the
several texts, some of them quite extensive, that portray Dagmar as a kind of eternal queen,
who remains an object of (sometimes quite intense) devotion for her loyal subjects, even
many centuries after her death. It does not seem unreasonable or hyperbolic to characterize
the relationship between Danes and the memory of Queen Dagmar as portrayed in the
work of N. M. Petersen, George Stephens, and Sven Lunn as something approaching a
secular saint’s cult. These texts do not posit Dagmar as an intercessor who does something
on behalf of the Danish people individually or collectively, but they do portray devotion
to her as an important component of Danish national identity (or even, in the case of
Stephens’ claim that farmers of the Ringsted parish express their respect for Dagmar and
their dislike of Bengerd as they enter the church, local identity). It is surely no coincidence
that Petersen’s depiction of devotion to Dagmar also makes the explicit point that love of
the royal family in general is an important virtue characteristic of “a noble people.” Indeed,
it is highly likely that Petersen’s text, or perhaps similar discussions of Dagmar and other
figures from the heroic Danish past played some role in the names chosen for the children
born to Prince Christian and his consort after Christian was named the heir presumptive.
In spite of the importance that the nineteenth- and twentieth-century constructions of
Dagmar’s image and reputation certainly came to play in those centuries, the one thing that
all of these have in common is that they have no documented medieval basis of any kind.
As Mikkel Kirkedahl Nielsen states in his discussion of the figure of Dagmar and various
traditions concerning her and monuments to her, those who engage with the figure of
Dagmar are forced to choose between two positions. On the one hand, there is the attitude
that the dearth of factual documentation of Dagmar’s life leaves room for the imagination
to bloom. “Alternatively, one may choose to stick strictly to absolute facts, and simply state
[that] Margaret Dagmar [was] queen of Denmark 1205–1212” (Nielsen 2012, p. 28).

Taken together, the totality of the image and reception of Queen Dagmar as she is
commonly constituted in the present day leads to one conclusion. What we see before us is
not an unbroken tradition of popular devotion to a beloved queen who may or may not
have been venerated as an actual saint, but in fact an invented tradition. As defined by Eric
Hobsbawm:
‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past . . . However, insofar as there is such reference to a historic past, the peculiarity of “invented’ traditions is that the continuity with it is largely facticious . . . It is the contrast between the constant change and invention of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some parts of social life within it as unchanging and invariant, that makes the ‘invention of tradition’ so interesting for historians of the last two centuries. (Hobsbawm 1983, pp. 1–2)

Hobsbawm identifies “three overlapping types” of invented traditions that post-date the industrial revolution:

“(a) those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities, (b) those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority, and (c) those whose main value was the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behavior. While traditions of types (b) and (c) were certainly devised . . . it may be tentatively suggested that type (a) was prevalent, the other functions being regarded as implicit in or flowing from a sense of identification with a ‘community’ and/or the institutions representing, expressing or symbolizing it such as a ‘nation’. (Hobsbawm 1983, p. 9)

The notably prescriptive aspects of the “cult” of Queen Dagmar, particularly the implication that all good Danes love their royalty and their land, square nicely with Hobsbawm’s comments. Likewise, the fact that concrete evidence of the “traditions” of devotion to Dagmar invoked by generations of scholars is never actually produced may justifiably lead us to conclude that it never existed. Still, the idea of Dagmar’s importance to the Danish collective identity as it was constructed from the nineteenth century onward has at times led to the assumption that her importance in the middle ages must have been as great, and the most available category for a recipient of such devotion in the medieval period is that of the saint. It is by no means unusual for saints’ cults to arise on the basis of apocryphal legends. The work of the Bollandists, and the official suppression of many old and popular saints’ cults in later twentieth-century reforms of the Roman Catholic Church demonstrate an ongoing effort toward verifying the historicity of venerated saints. In the case of the medieval Queen Dagmar, however, the invention is not just the aspects of her life and character that have been embellished over the centuries, but also the history of devotion to her. Thus, both “saint” and “cult”, in spite of the abundance of references to their existence, may be regarded as invented traditions. Even invented traditions can become relevant to the societies in which they arise, and that is also true of Dagmar.

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**Notes**

1. DIN-SOLSKINSSJÆL•STEG•DID•HVORFRA•DEN•KOM•OG•HER•HOS•OS•DIN•GRAV•BLEV•BRUDT•OG•PLYNDRET•GUDS•ENGEL•DAGMAR•BED•VOR•FRELSER•OM•AT•HELE•HVAD•DANMARKS•LAND•ERSØNDRET•1916•THOR•LANGE.

2. In the entry for the year 1206, Rydår bog (MS E don. Var. 3, 8:o) notes: “Kuning woldemar giordhæ brulop mæt dagmaar kunings datær af bemaen. ¶ Oc drauning dag maar bishop woldemær les af fængsæl. ¶ Mar svo daand welkor, at han skulda aldri thidaer komæ til danmarch. ¶ Sithæn word han erkebescop I breamæ. oc thær ælthær sattæ han seg aa mood kuning af danmarch. ¶ Kuningin screuæth pauæn til. oc. kierdæ hannum. ¶ Oc fordy sattæ pauæn hannum afs bisco dom oc
lyste hamnum i ban” (Rydårboegen) (King Valdemar wedded Dagmar, daughter of the king of Bohemia. And Queen Dagmar asked that Bishop Valdemar be released from prison, under the condition that he should never return to Denmark. Then he became archbishop in Bremen. And after that he went against the king of Denmark. The king wrote to the pope, and accused him. And because of this, the pope removed him from his bishopric and excommunicated him.) (Rydårboegen n.d., https://tekstnet.dk/rydaarboegen-edv3/123), accessed on 14 April 2020).

3 My discussion of Dagmar’s role in the release of Bishop Valdemar is based on Lind, “Dronning Dagmar, biskop Valdemar og dansk korstogspolitik.”

4 “Koning Valdemar Affferdiger sine Legater eftter Dronning Dagmar.” In Danmarks gamle Folkeviser (DgF), the main published edition of the Danish traditional ballad corpus, this ballad is assigned the number 132 and the title “Dronning Dagmar og Junker Strange” (“Queen Dagmar and Sir Strange”).

5 “Koning Valdemar Valdemarssøn, som kaldis Valdemar Seyer, vaar tre gange gifft. Først haffde hand til Ecte Droning Ingeborg, Hinrick Løwes aff Saxen Land Søster, Met huilcken hand afflede ingen Børn. Siden bades hand om Kongens Daatter aff Behemer Land, Margareta, som kaldits for sin deylighed oc dydighed med Tlnaaff Dagmar, Huorfaare hun ocseaa berømmes, som wi høre her efftter, som det sig bør. Huad som Historien vdi sig selff er anrørerdis, findis der om videligere beskeden vdi Kong Valdemars Historie”, DgF vol. 3.

6 v. 38: “Der gældedis ved baade store oc smaa, den fattige med den rige: Der gældedis Bonden oc Borger mest aff Hiertens grund til lige”, p. 196.

7 v. 39: “Hun kom vden Tyngte, hun kom met Fred, hun kom goden Bonde til lise: Haffde Danmarck altid saadane Blomster, mand skulde dem ære oc prísse”, p. 196.

8 v. 40: “Alle, saa mange i Danmarck vaare, de monne Droning Dagmar behage: Saa lenge hun leffuede paa Iorden her, de haffde saa gode Dage”, DgF vol. 3, pp. 194–96 (=DgF 132 C).

9 “Dronning Dagmars Hiemferd til Danmark” (“Queen Dagmar’s journey to Denmark”), published by Grundtvig as DgF 132, “Dronning Dagmar i Danmark’ (“Queen Dagmar in Denmark”).

10 “Biscop Valdemar . . . allerkiereste Morbroder sin!” (DgF 133 B, v. 3).

11 “I giffue alle de Plogpendinge til, oc Fangerne af Ierne!”, DgF 133 B, v. 10, p. 11.

12 v. 20: “Det vaar stor Glaede ofuier all Danmarck, Dægmar var komme til Lande: Der leffuede i Fred baade Borger oc Bonde, vden Skat oc Plogpendigs Vaande”.

13 "Dronning Dagmars Død;” Grundtvig’s edition, Danmarks gamle Folkeviser (DgF) 1853–1976, eventually extended to twelve volumes.

14 “Ligeruis som tilforn er omtalet, at de, som danske Viser haffue gjort, haffue brugt stor Poetiske Frihed med seldsom oc fast w트rolige ting faare at giffue, Saa sees det samme end ocsaa aff denne nestindis Dict, besynderlige om denne fine Droning, som wi kalde det paa vort Danske maal, oc er kommen til sig igien oc talede paa ny, effter at hun haffuer liggt Maaleløss tilforn en wi, og hun helforfets af nu snit almindelig hører om de Børn, der skulde grædis op igien aff Forælderne. Er intet beuent at tale om saadanne Mirackel, som nu icke skee mere vdi vdi tord. Vden saa vaar, at Droning Dagmar haffuer ligget vdi Heltraa eller Danetraa, som wi kalde det paa vort Danske maal, oc er kommen til sig igien oc talede paa ny, effter at hun huilcket hand afflede ingen Børn. Siden bades hand om Kongens Daatter af Behemer Land, Margareta, som kaldits for sin deylighed oc dydighed med Tlnaaff Dagmar, Huorfaare hun ocseaa berømmes, som wi høre her efftter, som det sig bør. Huad som Historien vdi sig selff er anrørerdis, findis der om videligere beskeden vdi Kong Valdemars Historie”, oc Børgerstuen, om Sommaren i de lyse Nætter under den bgle Himmel,—hvert Vers var kendt, hvert Ord, men alligivel lyttede it ærligt Naffn affter sig; Den anden for sin Wdydelighed er oc icke forgæt, men lidet til det beste. Derfaare settis det til Exempel Begyndelse aff denne Vise er oss icke kommen til Hende; Det, wi haffue ære oc prize”, p. 196.

15 “Rycjet, plejer mand at sige, følger Manden til Huset. Saa gaar det her met Dagmar oc Berngerd: Den ene skicket sig vel oc loed it ærligt Naffn effter sig; Den anden for sin Wdydelighed er oc icke forgæt, men lidet til det beste. Derfaare settis det til Exempel Begyndelse aff denne Vise er oss icke kommen til Hende; Det, wi haffue ære oc prize”, p. 196.

16 Vedel’s II: 37, “Droning Ingeborg Erick Menveds” (“Erik Menveds’s Queen Ingeborg”), DgF 153, vol. 3, pp. 454–58; and Vedel’s II: 47, “Koning Hans Fester Frøiken Kirstine,“ DgF 166, vol. 3, pp. 616–34.

17 Hildeman (1985, pp. 30–31) suggests that the one well-known singer of a Dagmar ballad, which was collected from her several times during the 1860s, actually learned the song from Grundtvig’s third volume of Danmarks gamle Folkeviser, which had been published only a few years earlier.

18 DgF 166 C, v. 42; DgF vol. 3, p. 626; since this wedding took place in 1477 and the murder of which Marsk Stig was accused took place in 1286, the prisoners in question would have been exceptionally old; however, traditional narratives are often not scrupulous about such historical details.

19 “Man maa forstaa den specielle Ethos, der hersker i Folkeviserne. Man skal f. Eks. fornemme den sublme Højhed i Visen om Dronning Dagmars Død, denne skønne Højde, vdi er saa inderlig dansk, og hvor hele den danske Middelalder træder saa lyslevende for om,—daen Højde, der træder sterkest frem i Slutningsverset”.

20 “Naar man i Middelalderen sang Visen om Dronning Dagmar, saa var det ikke som en moderne Short Story, der hurtigt skulde fortæres.—Nej, de kendte den alle. Hundrede Gange var den sunget, om Vinteren i det flakkende Skær fra Branteilden i Borgerstuen, om Sommaren i de lyse Nætter under den blege Himmel,—hvem Vers var kendt, hvem Ord, men alligivel lyttede
With only a few fragmentary exceptions, including a refrain in a fifteenth-century mural in the Swedish parish church of Floda, Sodermanland.

This is, of course, a classic definition of folklore.

Another site for which an association with Dagmar is claimed is the so-called “Dagmars Kilde” (Dagmar's Spring) near the village of Vithen, northwest of Aarhus. According to Adam Kristoffer Fabricius (Fabricius 1854–1855, vol. 1, p. 405), it is said that Queen Dagmar once stopped here while on a journey and refreshed herself with a drink of the spring's clear water. While seen as a symbol of Danish success and power.

Den danske Relikvie (thi saa kan man vel kalde den), som har givet Anledning til disse Bemærkninger, hvorved Dronning Dagmars Navn, uden at et blidt Smil udbrede sig over hans Aasyn og still klare øjne. Han beskrev ikke længere nogen enkelt del af det herlige billede: det stod helt og levende for hans sjæl; men hans kærlighed til til fødelandet og dets stille venlige dejlighed bandede sig således med hans forestilling om ren kvindelig skønhed, at han i den dejligste kvindes billede så den and og det udtryk, som mindede ham om hans moders vuggesange og hans barnodms skønneste drømme. I billedet, han besang, så han således Danmarks forklarede engel opstås og velsignelse over mine tro, kærlige sønner og døtre i evighed!' (here referring to ideas current long after the Reformation, though they may be based on assumptions that she was venerated during the middle ages).

Man var grebet i det alt sammen. Man var grebet i den store Fællesfølelse, i det der bandt sammen: Minderne der levede dybt i Almuen, Sagnet om den gode og smukke Dronning, der kom sejende fra Bøhmens, hun der skaffede Fred til de fredløse, mættede de hun, delte med dem, der intet havde . . . .

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“Det foreslåede forbud vil bl. a. omfatte tilfælde hvor dommeren under retsmødet synligt bærer et kristent kors som f. eks. et såkaldt Dagmarkors eller et krucifiks, hvor dommeren bærer muslimsk hovedbeklædning som f. eks. hijab, eller hvor dommeren bærer en jødisk kalot (kippa).”

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