



The “Talisman of Charlemagne”: a gemological study

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The reliquary called “Talisman of Charlemagne” deposited in the treasury of the Palace of Tau (Reims, France) is a fascinating and a major gem-bearing jewel closely associated with the history of Europe. Its legend follows great characters such Charlemagne, Napoleon I, Empress Josephine, Hortense de Beauharnais, Napoleon III and Empress Eugenie. For the first time a scientific gemological analysis was carried out on-site at the Palace of Tau Museum (Reims) and made it possible to identify the colored stones and to give insight in their possible geographical origin. Based on our data and by comparison with similar objects of the Carolingian period, we presume that the blue-gray central sapphire is of Ceylon origin (Sri Lanka); that the garnets originate from India or Ceylon and that the emeralds are from the Habachtal deposit (Austria). The estimated weight of the central sapphire is approximately 139 ct, which makes it probably one of the largest sapphires known before the seventeenth century.

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