Evidence of Sanctity: Record-keeping and Canonization at the Turn of the 13th Century

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RÉSUMÉ En 1234, la papauté fait valoir ses droits exclusifs à canoniser des saints. Afin de gagner le contrôle sur le processus de canonisation, les papes exigent des preuves écrites de plus en plus précises de la part des communautés à propos de leurs saints et développent des procédures d'enquête afin d'authentifier les preuves de miracles fournies par les communautés. La cueillette de témoignages écrits devant être revus à Rome est un acte de domination sur les pratiques locales de sanctification des membres des communautés. Non seulement la gestion de 1'information mise sur pied par les papes a-t-elle retiré la décision des communautés locales, mais elle a aussi permis une révision des croyances acceptables, structuré les réponses des communautés au sacré et fourni un étalage efficace des droits papaux. Durant le procès de saint Gilbert-de-Sempringham en 1201–1203, le pape Innocent III articule les exigences du nouveau système de documents. La canonisation de saint Gilbert nous procure une fenêtre pour analyser cette transition.

ABSTRACT In 1234, the papacy asserted an exclusive right to canonize saints. To gain control over the canonization process, popes required increasingly specific written evidence from communities about their saints and developed investigative procedures to authenticate the communities' miraculous evidence. Gathering written testimony for review in Rome was an act of domination over local processes for sanctifying community members. Not only did papal record-keeping remove decision-making from local hands, but it also enabled review of correct belief, structured community responses to the sacred, and provided an effective display of papal rights. During the process of St. Gilbert of Sempringham in 1201–1203, Pope Innocent III articulated new record-keeping requirements. St. Gilbert's canonization provides a window into this transition.

Introduction

Today, canonization is one of the pope's foremost exclusive powers; yet it was not until 1234 that the pope reserved this power for his office alone. There were many factors leading up to the pope's ability to make such a claim; however, the

primary instruments for implementing such a claim were new record-keeping requirements and methods. In 1201, in the middle of considering Gilbert of Sempringham for sainthood, Pope Innocent III removed the power to declare a saint from local hands by introducing a new process of investigation to create authentic records for evaluation in Rome. The resulting dossier presents an opportunity to analyze the interplay of power, communication, and performance in the production of a record at a moment of transition between an oral and a written social process. In this study, I am mindful of Richard Cox's call for a better understanding of the history of records, specifically why they were created and what uses they had.[1] Through St. Gilbert's canonization records, I will explore the meaning of the record in a specific social context and show how the record functions as evidence of a transaction, as an instrument of scrutiny and domination, and as a site of cultural production.

Making Saints Between the 2nd and 12th Centuries

Christian saints have long been immense sources of power and prestige, both temporal and supernatural, for religious and secular leaders, and their communities. In the early Christian church, the acclamation of a saint and the worship at the tombs of martyrs were largely spontaneous acts of local communities. After Christianity became publicly established, bishops seized the opportunity to appropriate the sacred power from the tombs and relics of saints. Removing the very special dead from the private domain of the family, bishops surrounded saints' tombs with splendid shrines and lavish ceremonials.[2] Bishops performed the translation, that is, the removal of the saint from his or her original place of burial to a more prominent place. The translation ritual permitted the community to participate in making a saint from one of its own numbers. As the ill and the suffering flocked to saints' tombs for miracles, bishops also became brokers for the supernatural power flowing between God and the community through the body of the saint. In 6th- and 7th-century Europe, local aristocrats and contemporary leaders appropriated the power of the saints by promoting the saintliness of their own family members and effectively sanctifying themselves. Yet in the 8th and 9th centuries, Charlemagne and his successors passed a series of laws to restrict the formation of new cults, particularly ones that benefited their competitors.[3] They expressly forbid communities to venerate new relics without the agreement of the local priest and stipulated

1 Richard J. Cox, *Closing an Era: Historical Perspectives on Modern Archives and Records Management* (Westport, 2000), p. 13.

2 Peter Robert Lamont Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981), pp. 30–39.

3 Paul Fouracre, "The Origins of the Carolingian Attempt to Regulate the Cult of Saints," in James Howard-Johnston and Paul Hayward, eds., *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 143–65.

that only the prince or an assembly of bishops had the right to decree that a saint's body be translated.[4] From the 8th century onwards, more and more authorities were brought in to secure the status of the saint, from secular rulers to other bishops. Eric Kemp found it "inevitable that sooner or later the papacy should appear on the scene and equally inevitable that when it had appeared it should oust the inferior authorities."[5]

Under Pope Gregory VII's reforms and expansions of papal power in the 11th century, papal prestige grew, and many communities sought the pope's approval of their local cults. Several bishops, seeking ratification of their initiatives, also appealed to the pope to confer extra luster on their saints. However, most translations in the 11th century were still performed by secular or regular prelates, without requests for papal authorization. During the second half of the 12th century, papal canonization began to compete with episcopal translations and finally surpassed them. Even though some saints had already been translated, communities sought recognition of their saints from the papacy. For these petitions, the popes usually entrusted bishops or papal legates to read the saint's existing *Vita* and to hear witnesses to the miracles. By the time of Pope Alexander III (1159–1181), popes pronounced canonizations without recourse to a council or synod of bishops and by the rights of their office.[6] The typical process for a pope's recognition also was in place: witnesses testified to the saint's miracles, a cleric shaped a story around these testimonies, and upon approval, the popes performed the translation.[7]

For the canonization of St. Gilbert of Sempringham in 1201–1203, however, Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) revised the procedure, making it more juridically stringent and giving him tighter control over the examination of witnesses and the content of the investigations. At first, Innocent gave the archbishop permission to investigate the miracles associated with Gilbert's relics and his tomb. The archbishop delegated the task to three abbots and three priors, who collected depositions from witnesses. The dossier was taken to Rome, and Innocent rejected it. Innocent ordered that it be completed again, but this time he appointed four commissioners with a papal mandate. He also issued a bull with the requirements for collecting evidence: commissioners had to gather direct testimonies from witnesses and submit them for review; they had to fast and pray for three days; they had to gather witnesses from all social categories; and they could only gather testimonies sworn by oath. The

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4 André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages,* Jean Birrell, trans. (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 20–21.

5 Eric Waldram Kemp, *Canonization and Authority in the Western Church* (London, 1948), p. 55.

6 Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages,* pp. 24–25; Kemp, *Canonization and Authority in the Western Church,* pp. 97–99.

7 Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages,* pp. 34–35.

commissioners also were to collect any written documents about the saint and inquire into their authenticity. Only after careful consideration of the written evidence in the papal court would the pope give permission for the archbishop to carry out the translation of Gilbert's bones. However, before embarking on a detailed examination of St. Gilbert's process, it is necessary first to understand the status of the written word at the time of the inquiry and the context in which Innocent's new procedure was received.

The Spread of the Written Word

In the century before Pope Innocent III's innovations, there were many developments in law and in the creation and use of documents that gave rise to Innocent's approach. After the 11th century, medieval society was "increasingly oriented towards the scribe, the written word, the literary text, and the document."[8] Written documents of all sorts became increasingly plentiful after 1150. Although written traditions superceded oral traditions, oral traditions did not immediately disappear. Transformed, they operated side by side with written traditions for centuries, and like texts, had a broad range of purposes in different contexts.

In the early Middle Ages, writing was isolated in monasteries; but by the 11th century, the skills and techniques of writing spread to urban centres and to secular specialists as well. New methods of manuscript production, page layout, and textual organization allowed for more texts to be used more often for reference and study, instead of for the spiritual practice of copying and for memorization. Throughout Europe, cathedral schools, and eventually universities, taught new ways to approach and evaluate texts, such as with hermeneutics, logic, rational objectification, and classification.

While written administrative and legal traditions in southern France and Italy never really disappeared following the dissolution of the Roman Empire, in northern France, Germany, and England, the spoken word and various symbolic or ritualistic systems were used to maintain social order until about 1050. However, southern practices spread north with the growth of ecclesiastical canon law. In northern France and Germany, trials by duel or ordeal were replaced by legal proofs involving testimonies of witnesses and examination of written records by judges, following the model of canon law. In England, they were replaced by juries for secular matters and canon law for ecclesiastical matters.[9]

Papal chanceries also led the way in developing new scribal techniques for

8   Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, 1983), p. 16.

9   Heather MacNeil, *Trusting Records: Legal, Historical and Diplomatic Perspectives* (London, 2000), p. 7.

administration and in increasing the scope and production of written records for transactions. Royal chanceries followed suit, and royal power grew hand in hand with document production between the 11th and 13th centuries.[10] In England, as a result of the demands of the royal exchequer and the courts, knights and burgesses had to create documents in order to guarantee their rights. Whereas previously, social and political relationships were founded on spoken words, acts, ceremonies, and custom, these became dependent on documentary evidence to establish continuities with the past. As written records were increasingly expected in place of memory, people of all classes began to use written records for establishing ownership and conducting business.[11]

The *Book of St. Gilbert*

The records produced for the canonization of St. Gilbert reveal a society in transition from oral to written ways of conducting community business. The dossier exists today in two manuscript copies. The first manuscript was authored and compiled by a priest and canon in the church at Sempringham for the archbishop of Canterbury, most likely for the first celebration of St. Gilbert's feast on 4 February 1203. The second one was most likely copied in the mid- to late-13th century. Both manuscripts contain the following parts in exatly the same order: a letter of dedication to the archbishop of Canterbury; a listing of the contents of the *Vita* (or saint's life); a short *Vita* written at the request of the Gilbertine prior; descriptions of miracles that the author witnessed in the church at Sempringham; an amplification of the *Vita;* letters from bishops relating to a scandal involving lay brethren of the order; a description of the canonization process; a description of the translation of St. Gilbert; copies of letters concerning the canonization, including all correspondence with Pope Innocent III; the miracles documented during the second inquiry ordered by Innocent; and additional miracles not included in the scope of the inquiry.

Since the 17th century, scholars have used diplomatics in order to elucidate the context and purpose of medieval records and establish their trustworthiness; hence, it seems appropriate to explore this methodology to understand the evidence of St. Gilbert's canonization better. According to Luciana Duranti's manual for diplomatics, records are defined, in the exclusive technical sense, as recorded transactions.[12] For a document to be classified as a

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10 Stock, *The Implications of Literacy,* pp. 34–41.

11 M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307* (Oxford, 1993); Stock, *The Implications of Literacy,* p. 17.

12 Luciana Duranti, "Diplomatics: New Uses for an Old Science (Part II)," *Archivaria* 29 (Winter 1989–1990), p. 12.

"record," it must emerge from a will determined to produce an action. Hence, each record is linked to the act that produced it; records may either put an act into existence or record the act after it was complete.[13] Portions of Gilbert's dossier were generated by a number of acts: the Gilbertine canons petitioning the pope to canonize Gilbert; the pope rejecting the petition and ordering a new investigation; and finally, the pope canonizing Gilbert. According to Duranti, these acts may be classified as a compound act, that is, "many different acts ... all essential to the formation of some final act of which they are partial elements."[14] Each of the partial acts results in documents, such as the letters of petition and the evidence from the inquiry, and are all necessary for the final act resulting in the formation of the final document, the pope's letter declaring Gilbert a saint and giving permission to the archbishop to perform the translation. These documents were created at various points in a procedure designed to accomplish the final act, the canonization.

Duranti outlined four phases of a procedure to accomplish an act initiated by a petitioner other than the ruling authority: 1) the petition, or the request of an authority to accomplish an act; 2) the intercession, often in the form of letters of reference or support; 3) the intervention, or witnesses to the action; and 4) the command or order given by the authority to compile the document embodying the transaction. Hence, the records within the *Book of St. Gilbert* may be understood to result from the following procedural phases, culminating in the act of canonization:

1) The *petition* in 1201 from the dean and chapter of the church of Lincoln to Pope Innocent III. Under the seal of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the petition to the pope included intercessions from various religious and secular figures, which will be described further below. The petition also included documents that Duranti would consider supplemental information: the short *Vita* of Gilbert, the report from the initial inquiry into Gilbert's miracles, and more descriptions of miracles that were not included in the inquiry or *Vita.*

2) The *intercessions* from: Roger, Master of the Order of Sempringham; the bishops of London, Coventry, Norwich, Rochester, Bangor, and Ely; thirteen abbots and six priors in Lincolnshire; King John; and Geoffrey FitzPeter, Earl of Essex.

3) The *intervention,* or the evidence from the second inquiry in which witnesses testified to Gilbert's miracles and saintly life.

4) The *order,* or the bull of canonization from Pope Innocent III in 1202, in which he ordered the archbishop to proceed with the translation and celebrate the feast of Gilbert in the province of Canterbury. Innocent also included some prayers and a sermon he had composed in honour of Gilbert.

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13 Ibid., pp. 7–8.
14 Ibid., p. 14.

In addition to classifying the documents in the dossier according to the procedural sequence of their creation, the application of diplomatics offers that the canonization procedure was a constitutive procedure, which created, modified, or eliminated the exercise of power. In particular, it was a procedure of concession, which created new situations and new powers for the addressee.[15] In other words, the act of canonization provided the archbishop with the power to perform the translation and recognize Gilbert as officially enrolled in the calendar of saints.

While diplomatics explains the juridical form and intent of the dossier, and provides a tidy representation of the links between actions and records, it is inadequate for understanding the significance of Innocent's innovation in requiring a careful investigation of witnesses to produce trustworthy evidence about Gilbert. By classifying six centuries of document production, diplomatics takes a static view of medieval records over time and does not yield a rich understanding of the context of record-keeping in communities with different attitudes towards trusting and accepting records. Moreover, diplomatics outlines a simple model of communication, that is, of a transaction between record creators and addressees, without room for understanding the broader social dynamics and implications underlying the records-creating process or any recognition of those participants without a written voice.

More problematic perhaps is how diplomatics only considers less than one third of the *Book of St. Gilbert* to be "records" and hence ignores other important contextual information about the canonization process (for example, the description of the papal inquiry, the visits to Rome, and the translation of St. Gilbert) that can be found by examining the content of these documents. In order to gain an understanding of the pivotal transformations in the shift to a literate canonization process, the behaviours surrounding the production of the record, and the shifts in power, it is necessary to employ other analytical models.

The Quest to Sanctify Gilbert

St. Gilbert founded a double monastery (housing both men and women) and monastic rule in Sempringham, England. Towards the end of his life, members of the order already considered him sacred, admiring his austerity, virtues, and miraculous intercessions. When he died in 1198, the canons of Sempringham buried him in the priory church between the altar of St. Mary and St. Andrew, so that both nuns and canons had separate access to his tomb.[16] Miracles immediately took place around his tomb and in association with his relics, and his fame spread quickly.

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15 Luciana Duranti, "Diplomatics: New Uses for an Old Science (Part IV)," *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990–1991), p. 19.
16 R. Foreville and G. Keir, *The Book of St. Gilbert* (Oxford, 1987), xxiv–xxvi.

Most miracles were associated with healing, and the most common form of cure was through incubation. A sick person was measured and a candle was manufactured at the same height. Next, the supplicant and the candle were carried to the church. He or she would light the candle and stretch out on the tomb of St. Gilbert for the night. While the supplicant slept, if Gilbert thought he or she were deserving, Gilbert would appear in the supplicant's dream and tell him or her to arise. When the supplicant awoke, he or she was either cured instantly or over a short period of time. Cures also occurred when a supplicant came into contact with something that belonged to Gilbert, such as a belt, cloak, towel, or water that had come in contact with his body. But the miracles were not associated with the sick alone. Gilbert also punished transgressors of the community's rules. For example:

Now a certain canon was rebuked for a fault and at the instigation of the enemy of penitence he resisted discipline and fell victim to a fit of uncontrollable rage. Rebelling against the statutes of the Order and the chapter's strictness, he refused correction, disregarded his vow, and forgot the reverence which he owed both to the father and the assembled community. ... [T]he wisest of men, filled with the spirit of gentleness, struck this rash fellow lightly on the forehead with the upper part of his staff. A strange thing happened. He who even now had not blushed to feel the whip on his bare body and who had no fear of imprisoning chains, was so terrified by that light tap that he came to his senses, wondered at what he had done and what he had said, and subsequently became the gentlest of men.[17]

Gilbert also offered stability and reassurance in an age of political upheaval:

During the troubled wars between Stephen, king of England, and Henry, duke of Normandy, when widespread destruction gripped the whole of England, when fields lay untilled, villages were deserted, walls torn down, cities abandoned, and the inhabitants of this country gave themselves up to plundering, pillaging, burning, and slaughtering one another, the heart of this godly man was beset by a deep sorrow. ... [B]ut as he prayed constantly for peace heaven bestowed this comfort upon him. He was shown in a dream a book inscribed with the number of years the war was to last ... Assured by this knowledge of the future, the man of God both received comfort and imparted it to many others.[18]

With such influence, the stakes for control of Gilbert's legacy were high.

Shortly after Gilbert's death and the reports of miracles, the papal notary in England gave the English episcopate the authority to investigate Gilbert's life and miracles and make a report to the pope. The archbishop of Canterbury

17 Ibid., p. 105.
18 Ibid., pp. 107, 109.

charged three abbots of Gilbert's province to collect the depositions of witnesses at the saint's tomb. He wrote:

Therefore, we instruct you, in whose discernment we have full trust, that you should travel together to the place of this holy man's burial and investigate most carefully, on the evidence both of those who are said to be cured and also of reliable witnesses, the different types and length of illness, and the truth of the cure, and general opinion about them; you should send an account both to us and the lord pope of the facts you discovered, together with a list of miracles.[19]

The commissioners held their inquiry in Sempringham in 1201 and wrote a summary of the depositions for the archbishop:

We questioned carefully upon oath both those who have been cured and reliable witnesses of these events as to the truth of their illnesses and of their cures and also their reputation. We have drawn up a report containing the whole sequence of them, as follows below, authenticated with our seals.[20]

The abbot begged for the pope's recognition, so that Gilbert's deeds "may in the future obtain an everlasting memorial, and sanctioned by the authority of the holy church of Rome, secure the indisputable status of faith."[21] Two Gilbertine canons then made the trip to Rome to deliver the dossier to the pope, along with a bundle of letters in support of St. Gilbert from other bishops and King John, and a short *Vita* written by a sacrist in Sempringham.[22]

Upon receipt and examination, Innocent did not find the record-keeping adequate and insisted that the inquiry be repeated according to his instructions:

Because we are anxious to take every care over a decision of such importance, we are sending you, whose discretion we trust completely, apostolic letters with our instructions: on the strength of our authority, you are to go together to the place and solemnly to declare a three-day fast for the whole community of this Order. ... they shall beg and beseech that the way to discover the living truth in this manner may be revealed. Next you must seek confirmation of his virtuous character and powerful wonders, in other words his deeds and miracles, relying not merely upon statements of evidence but also upon witnesses, popular report, and authentic documents. When you have faithfully written an account of all this and attested it by your seals, you are to send it to the Holy

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19 Ibid., p. 201.
20 Ibid., pp. 201, 203.
21 Ibid., p. 205.
22 Ibid., lxxi–lxxii.

See by suitable messengers, who, after they have taken an oath in our presence, will also submit sworn evidence to us on these points.[23]

Innocent was not content to confirm the initiatives and methods of the local hierarchy. He nominated four commissioners to act with a papal mandate to carry out the inquiry. He also added another innovation to examining the saint and his community: the sworn depositions had to be recorded directly and be forwarded exactly as they were given. The brief synthesis of the previous dossier was not enough; the record had to capture the testimonies as they stood, so that Innocent could have a written representation, as close to reality as possible, of exactly who the witnesses were and what they said.

Innocent's procedure was designed to record only authentic, credible miracles attested by witnesses under oath. It was a type of *inquisitio* procedure, which was formalized under Innocent and replaced the *accusatio.* In an inquisition, the judge, rather than an accuser, presented the charges against the defendant. The judge could begin an inquisition based on the reputation of the defendant, and he also was responsible for providing proof of guilt. This kind of trial became common for all ecclesiastical courts, but gained infamy in the inquisitions of heretics.[24] Regarding the inquisitions of heretics, James Given has argued that record-keeping procedures were a technology of power for combating heresy.[25] Inquisitors used records as an analytic strategy to exert power more effectively and efficiently. They created texts in new ways that enhanced their intelligibility and searchability, and they created and organized archives to facilitate their deposit and retrieval. Information about individuals and their testimonies was highlighted with marks, index symbols, marginalia, and spaces so that an inquisitor could easily find information to bring to bear in later examinations. The basis of an inquisitor's power was that he used the archives to reproduce the words of individuals and put social pressure on witnesses. In this way, the inquisition registers were instruments of coercion. For canonization processes, such rigor in examining witnesses and elaborate tools for compiling and organizing witnesses' testimony evolved throughout the Middle Ages, beginning with the canonization process for St. Gilbert. This first adaptation of an inquisition for canonization was designed to produce a record of the community's belief for examination by the papal court. It was a means to ensure correct belief and religious behaviour in Gilbert's community.

During Gilbert's trial to establish the validity of his miracles, the scribe noted a witness's name, status, place of origin, the condition of the person

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23 Ibid., pp. 235, 237.
24 Henry Ansgar Kelly, "Inquisition and the Prosecution of Heresy: Misconceptions and Abuses," *Church History* 58 (1989), pp. 441–46.
25 James B. Given, *Inquisition and Medieval Society: Power, Discipline, and Resistance in Languedoc* (Ithaca, 1997).

before and after the miracle, and manner of the miracle. When other witnesses corroborated the testimony, *testis* was written in the margin, making it easy for the investigators and examiners to identify the most trustworthy evidence. The concern for the details demanded by the papal inquiry is striking; we learn the actual names of the witnesses and where they lived, about the behaviour and emotions of the supplicants at Gilbert's tomb, and their ailments and cures.[26] An example of a miracle from the first dossier compared to one from the second shows the trend towards more accurate record-keeping:

From the first inquiry:
33. Painful feet relieved
A canon of Sixhills suffered from a terrible pain in his feet. Trusting in the master's powers, he asked a servant for the water used to wash Gilbert's feet, following his usual custom, in the evening when he retired to bed. He obtained the water and poured it over his feet, and soon all his pain abated.[27]

From the second inquiry:
[6] A knee healed
Felicia, a woman from Anwick, said on oath that for two months the muscles of her knee were so tense that she could not walk at all. She had herself taken by cart to Master Gilbert's tomb, kept vigil there for two nights with a burning candle, and vowed that if God granted her good health she would take the nun's habit there if allowed by the convent. Then on the second night she fell asleep and dreamed that a red flower fell upon her knee from the mouth of a statue of the Blessed Virgin which was in that place. As she awoke, she realized at once that she had been healed through Master Gilbert's merits and by the grace of God and the Blessed Virgin. She leapt up immediately and kissed the statue's foot.

The same Hawise of Anwick testifies to the illness and the method and place of its cure. So also, upon oath, did Ralph, son of Swein, who had taken her to Master Gilbert's tomb in his cart. The same Felicia also said that to commemorate the miracle she visits Master Gilbert's tomb every year with her offering.[28]

The commissioners retained approximately thirty miracles in the second process and grouped them according to the medical ailment, such as cures for inflamed eyes or leprosy. The commissioners also organized Gilbert's life into distinct stages and itemized his particular virtues and good deeds, then gathered testimony about each. It is likely that this schema was devised by the commissioners before the depositions, based on the earlier *Vita* and the papacy's new requirements, and that the inquiry proceeded according to this plan. In later canonizations, beginning with St. Elizabeth of Thuringia in

26 Foreville and Keir, *The Book of St. Gilbert,* c–cvi.
27 Ibid., p. 99.
28 Ibid., pp. 271, 273.

1231, the pope included a stereotyped formulary, the *forma interrogarorii,* with the letters ordering an inquiry for the investigators to use as they examined witnesses. The formularies included lists of questions that directed the witnesses' description of the miracles in order to gather the kinds of information the papal court needed to evaluate the case.[29] *Formae interrogarorii* were foremost intended to detect fraud and superstition, but were also an effective means of controlling the content of the procedure and channeling the community's efforts to conform to papal ideals.[30] As a precursor of the *formae the* classification of miracles in Gilbert's trial reveals how the concerns for generating a written record orchestrated the oral testimonies of the witnesses.

Not only were outsiders structuring the community's performance of making a saint, but the scope of witnesses' testimony was also taken out of local hands. The primary act to make a saint no longer lay in the bishop's translation or in the individual experience of a miracle; rather, it took place in the performance of creating a record. Community members testified about their experiences according to how the record had to be produced and watched as their words were transformed into written signs, and in fact, translated from Middle English to Latin. While the community gained the opportunity to communicate with the pope, the balance of power was tilted towards the examiners as they guided, interpreted, and recorded the testimonies.

Theorists such as Brian Stock and Jacques Derrida have commented on how introducing a new medium of communication, in this case, written texts, profoundly affects social behaviour. Stock argued that texts

invariably structured aspects of experience which, before their advent, were not thought of as being structured at all. ... Patterns of behavior ... crystallizing from symbolic action, were also contextualized; that is, they were increasingly compared to textual exemplars or justified by them. As written language gradually reoriented man's faculties of interpretation, the models produced could not help but feed back into the network of real social relations.[31]

The literate commissioners directed, channeled, and interpreted the witnesses' testimonies not only according to an organized classification of miracles and a new level of evidentiary preciseness to lend credibility to their claims, but they also probably had textual ideals in mind as they proceeded, such as miracles from the Bible or the much imitated 4th century *Life of St. Martin* by Sulpicius Severus. Members of the community undoubtedly had heard stories and seen pictorial representations of saints' lives, so their behaviour at Gilbert's tomb was not free from textual points of reference. However,

29 Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages,* p. 50.
30 Ibid., p. 50.
31 Stock, *The Implications of Literacy,* p. 456.

the commissioners' methods of organizing testimony used textual concerns in a more explicit way as a means to interrelate with, understand, and scrutinize Gilbert's community. As Derrida concludes,

> the technical structure of the *archiving* archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content even in its very coming into existence and its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event. ... [W]hat is no longer archived in the same way is no longer lived in the same way. Archivable meaning is also and in advance codetermined by the structure that archives.[32]

During the inquiry, the production of the written text removed the power to decide who mediated between heaven and earth from within the community and gave it to distant authorities. Jack Goody has explained how the act of writing down laws, evidence, debts, and religious precepts is a depersonalizing and decontextualizing force. Writing detaches content from specific aspects of local social situations and formalizes it in a static, transportable medium.[33] In a predominantly oral society, the terms of face-to-face negotiation are dependent on context and societal norms, and are susceptible to adaptation in each situation. However, once these terms are written, they no longer reside within the collective experience of the community, but with a separate literate class of specialists that may structure, interpret, and apply them in a more universalized manner and even use them for alternate purposes. A saint had many functions in medieval society: healer, reformer, mediator, patron, model, rebel, rule-giver, and disciplinarian. The new form of communication between community and pope fundamentally altered a community's social networks and the terms of social conduct that were previously guided, negotiated, and validated through a saint. By creating a text "out there," the community could be scrutinized by a far away ruler.[34]

In addition to affecting power structures, writing also affected cognitive processes. Walter Ong explains,

> Writing ... serves to separate and distance the knower and the known and thus to establish objectivity. It has been suggested that Learned Latin effects even greater objectivity by establishing knowledge in a medium insulated from the emotion-charged depths of one's mother tongue, thus reducing interference from the human-life worlds and making possible the exquisitely abstract work of medieval scholasticism.[35]

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32 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Perspective,* Eric Prenowitz, trans. (Chicago, 1996), pp. 17–18.

33 Jack Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 17–22, 129–30, 152–53, 166–67.

34 Ibid., p. 129.

35 Walter J. Ong, *Orality & Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London, 1982), p. 114.

Indeed, Innocent's attitude towards the miraculous testimonies of community members was careful, if not skeptical. Distanced from the direct experience of being healed, for instance, he cautioned that if the written evidence of miracles was not scrutinized and tested properly, the faithful could be misled falsely:

Thus sometimes the evidence provided by deeds is false and misleading, as we see in the case of hypocrites, and the evidence of miracles also sometimes deceives and misleads, as in the case of the magicians. But when sound merits come first and conspicuous miracles follow, they offer indisputable proof of sanctity.[36]

Similarly, in the bull canonizing St. Homobonus of Cremona in 1198, he wrote that, "merits without miracles or miracles without merits are insufficient evidence of sainthood when Satan turns himself into an angel of light and there are some who seek, by their works, human glory."[37] To Gilbert's community, the experience of being healed or watching a community member receive such divine favour was proof enough of Gilbert's special role as mediator between God and earth. But for Innocent to declare a saint, he had to be sure there was evidence of both merit and miracles. As Goody notes, in the shift from a non-literate to literate society, evidence acquires a new rigor and permits a closer, more precise examination.[38]

Innocent also added two other noteworthy innovations to the proceedings. First, he required that all members of the papal inquiry engage in three days of fasting and prayer before the inquiry. Such behaviour normally preceded important ceremonies and councils, and hence added greater solemnity to the inquiry and enhanced its sacral tone. Second, he insisted that the inquiry include examination of other authentic documents about the saint. For over a millennium, the writing of the *Vita* was an important part of a community's effort to make a saint. Hagiography is a complex literary genre, combining stereotyped forms, biblical imagery, individual and community experience, and legend. *Vitae* have performed a variety of functions, from promoting piety, to providing examples for sermons, boosting cults, re-envisioning history, and promoting causes and canonizations. This traditional form of writing existed side by side with the new forms of canonization records. In fact, the canonization records often were incorporated into later versions of saints' *Vitae*. In Gilbert's case, Innocent wanted to examine authentic documents, most likely a reputable *Vita* and any other existing documentation, including perhaps the rule Gilbert drafted and some correspondence about the founding and troubles of his Order. Innocent's insistence on authentic documents

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36 Foreville and Keir, *The Book of St. Gilbert,* p. 247.
37 Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages,* p. 36.
38 Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society,* pp. 152–63.

reveals his awareness of the possibilities for forgeries or unreliable information. Innocent, in fact, promulgated the first papal decretal about various tests to apply to determine if a papal bull was trustworthy or forged.[39] He also was the first to establish a consistent archival policy for the papal court; registries of important papal correspondence began with him.[40]

Shortly after Gilbert's inquiry concluded, representatives from Sempringham, including the witnesses that Innocent had requested to testify in front of him, made the long journey to Rome with the second dossier. They arrived on 31 December 1201. On 2 January 1202, Innocent and his cardinals heard the witnesses and weighed the evidence. The author and compiler of the *Book of St. Gilbert* described the experience: "For a careful discussion of these matters took place among the cardinals in the pope's presence; the evidence which the messengers had brought was inspected and the witnesses who had come were put under oath and carefully examined."[41] In later years, the cardinals' skepticism was notorious.[42] For example, in the mid-13th century, a cardinal chastized one of the postulators for St. Edmund of Canterbury: "We do not believe in your miracles and we refuse to give them the approval of the Apostolic See because the signs have disappeared and the voices are stilled."[43] But more significant is the lack of trust in the written documents alone. The process still required the physical presence of the witnesses and their oral testimonies in front of the pope and cardinals. It calls to mind M.T. Clanchy's caution that "documents do not immediately inspire trust. ... There was no straight and simple line of progress from memory to written record. People had to be persuaded – and it was difficult to do – that documentary proof was a sufficient improvement on existing methods ..."[44]

Within a few days, Innocent accepted the new dossier, wrote a sermon emphasizing Gilbert's merits, and drafted a bull giving the archbishop of Canterbury permission to proceed with the translation and add Gilbert's feast day to the religious calendar in the region. It is significant that this bull does the work of canonization. The power of the pope to act is encapsulated in this record. Nevertheless, the sanctification of Gilbert was still not complete: Gilbert needed a translation, with the participation of his community. The archbishop translated Gilbert's remains in October 1202.

The importance of written evidence for establishing Gilbert's sanctity was also demonstrated at the translation itself. The abbots placed a document testifying to the papal approval of Gilbert's sanctity in the tomb. It read:

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39 Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record,* pp. 323–24; Stock, *The Implications of Literacy,* p. 62.
40 Stock, *The Implications of Literacy,* p. 35.
41 Foreville and Keir, *The Book of St. Gilbert,* p. 275.
42 Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages,* p. 481.
43 Ibid.
44 Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record,* p. 294.

The archbishop, acting on the mandate of Pope Innocent III, has made careful inquiry
into the divinely inspired miracles performed through Gilbert, along with his col-
leagues Eustace bishop of Ely and Acharius abbot of Peterborough and they sent evi-
dence about the miracles, faithfully copied into written form and closed under their
seals, to the apostolic see. Thus the pope was assured of his sanctity and his miracles,
so that in the fourth year of his pontificate he decreed that Gilbert should be added to
the number of saints.[45]

The focus on generating authentic documentation for the pope was of such
great concern to the community that it became a sign and symbol of Gilbert's
sanctity, competing and even overpowering the former significance of the
translation as the defining moment in elevating a saint. The dossier too had a
sacral luster. Being a collective voice of the community's supernatural com-
munion with its own special patron, bearing witness to proven miracles,
reviewed and accepted by the pope, and representing divine truth, the dossier
rested side by side with Gilbert's relics. It did not merely provide a report of
Gilbert's sanctity; the record came to embody it.

James O'Toole has also explored the symbolic meaning of records, when
the act of record making is more significant than the content. He describes
many documents created for a ritual or emotional experience, such as a funer-
ary register, or "carving your initials and those of your first sweetheart into a
tree trunk ... or writing your congressman a letter which he or she will almost
certainly never read."[46] In addition to explaining the awed reaction of Gil-
bert's community to the approved dossier, we might also understand the sym-
bolic significance of record-keeping in terms of domination. The East German
Stasi files are one example, but more appropriate is William the Conqueror's
Domesday Book, an 11th-century survey of his new kingdom that "set its
shameful mark on the humiliated people, and even on their domestic ani-
mals."[47] The Domesday Book was less about the practical administration of
his new kingdom than about establishing his authority. Similarly, Gilbert's
interrogation process had as much symbolic significance as the content of the
resulting record for asserting the pope's authority.

After the approved dossier was placed in Gilbert's tomb, his community
also placed a lead strip with the following inscription next to him:

Here lies St. Gilbert, first father and founder of the order of Sempringham, translated to

45 Foreville and Keir, *The Book of St. Gilbert,* p. 193.
46 James O'Toole, **"**Cortes's Notary: The Cultural Meanings of Record Making," Paper de-
    livered at the RLG Annual Meeting, 1999. Available at <http://www.rlg.org/annmtg/
    otoole99.html>, accessed on 24 Novemer 1999; James M. O'Toole, "Symbolic Significance
    of Archives," *American Archivist* 56 (Spring 1993), p. 18.
47 Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record,* p. 6.

this shrine by Hubert, archbishop of Canterbury by the mandate of Pope Innocent III on 13 October in the year of Our Lord's Incarnation 1202.[48]

Note the concern for providing an exact date in *Anno Domini* time. In England, bishops rarely dated their writings according to Christ's time. Clanchy suggests that it may have been blasphemous to record ordinary business in this way, but to record a date in *Anno Domini* was a deliberate act of placing an event and the writer in divine time.[49] Appropriately used for declaring the exact date Gilbert was enrolled in the pope's catalog of saints, the canons must have imagined that the strip of lead would endure far into the future, perhaps as an authentic written marker of sanctity for Gilbert to display on his person at the Resurrection of the body.

Shortly after the canonization of St. Gilbert, Innocent formally articulated the exclusive right of the papacy to approve worship of saints. Canon 62 of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 declared that no new relics were to be venerated without the approval of the pope.[50] In 1234, a statement reserving canonization to popes alone was inserted into the Decretals. By the end of the 13th century, in practice and theory, canonization was effectively removed from local hands.

The procedures for recording and analyzing testimonies rapidly also became more elaborate. Between 1199 and 1276, forty-eight enquires were ordered, but only twenty-five were completed. Eighteen had to be performed again because the dossiers did not meet the exacting new juridical norms. Typically, the testimonies of witnesses were not recorded as accurately as the papacy thought necessary.[51] While it only took the cardinals a day to evaluate Gilbert's sanctity, by the late 13th century, it could take years for the papal court to examine the evidence meticulously, organize and classify the virtues and miracles, and compile the reports.[52] Only sovereigns and bishops with connections in the papal curia could sustain the amount of influence, resources, and pressure needed to push through an extended canonization process.[53]

A Question of Power

The preceding analysis of Pope Innocent's record-keeping innovations offers a standard Weberian model of bureaucratic power, whereby depersonalized

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48 Foreville and Keir, *The Book of St. Gilbert,* p. 193.
49 Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record,* p. 301.
50 Kemp, *Canonization and Authority in the Western Church,* p. 106.
51 Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages,* p. 51.
52 Ibid., p. 62.
53 Ibid., p. 41.

agents apply abstract written rules, laws, and procedures, thus allowing bureaucratic organizations to evolve and assert their authority across vast distances in space and time.[54] This model of authority, scrutiny, and control must be qualified, however, by three more considerations: the papacy's inability to keep up with its new demands; communities' demands for papal intervention and approval of their saints; and the participative aspects of creating community and culture through the production of the record.

First, after Gilbert, the papacy was besieged by requests for canonization and refused to handle a majority of them. In the canonizations the papacy did take on, it offered a model of sanctity quite different than popular belief, with an emphasis on virtues over miracles, on clerics over marginal figures, and on the socially elite over commoners.[55] Only a small number of canonized saints enjoyed an official public cult, while a multitude of local devotions outside of the control of the church actually experienced a boom in the 13th and 14th centuries.[56] In order to have more power over the making of saints, the papacy had to give up some too. By relying on written records to consolidate control centrally, popes could not handle the demands placed on their bureaucratic system.

Second, papal innovations for the canonization procedure were largely brought about by demand. Communities desired prestige and validity for their saints, which the pope could best provide, hence the reason communities instigated the process. Receiving the pope's approval for the saint would bring numerous rewards – spiritual, financial, social, and symbolic. The papacy, after all, could not force canonization on an unwilling populace. There had to be widespread recognition of the saint's holiness in a community for canonization to take place. Innocent III tried to encourage the canonization of Peter Castelnau, his legate in Languedoc who was killed by the count of Toulouse's henchmen in 1208, but there was no local devotion to him and Innocent's efforts failed. In order to embark on a procedure, there had to be some local fame attesting to the person's sanctity.[57]

Third, the canonization process was a performance of domination and acceptance in which the community participated. It was not a repressive process; rather, the pope's intrusion produced new structures of behaviour in the community, new ways to understand divine influence, and new communication methods to relate to distant religious authorities. It was a productive process. Michel Foucault explains:

54 David Bearman, "Diplomatics, Weberian Bureaucracy and the Management of Electronic Records in Europe and America," *American Archivist* 55 (Spring 1992), p. 169; Mark Poster, *The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Content* (Chicago, 1990), pp. 37–38.
55 Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages,* p. 419.
56 Ibid., pp. 137–40.
57 Ibid., p. 414.

… the notion of repression is quite inadequate for capturing what is precisely the productive aspect of power. In defining the effects of power as repression, one adopts a purely judicial conception of such power, one identifies power with a law that says no, power is taken above all as carrying the force of prohibition. ... If power were never anything but repressive, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than a negative instance whose function is repression."[58]

The production of records during the process gave the community an opportunity to articulate its relation to the sacred in new ways acceptable to developing standards for knowledge and to become part of an international network of recognized saints. Fittingly, as Steven Lubar concludes, "archives don't simply *record* the work of culture, they *do* the work of culture."[59]

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58 Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977,* Colin Gordon, ed., Colin Gordon et al., trans. (New York, 1980), p. 119.
59 Steven Lubar, "Information Culture and the Archival Record," *American Archivist* 62 (Spring 1989), p. 15.