'The whole company of Heaven': the saints of medieval London

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By the end of the twelfth century the city of London was already divided up into over 100 parishes, or even more when the parishes in the extra-mural suburbs are included in the count. The role played by these parishes in 'shaping the city' – the phrase used by Christopher Brooke to describe the evolving topography of London between 800 and 1216 – was extremely important. In a characteristic passage he configures the different ways in which these parishes may have evolved:

> Let us imagine two circumstances. A man builds a church on his own property, his own soke; it is in the first instance a personal possession, its priest his chaplain; his tenants, the men under the jurisdiction of his soke – whatever that means – will naturally worship in his church, perhaps have an obligation to do so; and he will expect them to contribute to its building fund and to help him keep it in repair. The other case is of a group of pious craftsmen, living in the same neighbourhood, who decide to build themselves a little church for their own use and to support a priest in it. The Church and the priest will serve a community which may from the first be quite clearly defined; but it is of its nature (unlike the first example) a voluntary community, not a conscript congregation.[1]

These churches were dedicated, whether by a lord, or a group of pious craftsmen, to chosen saints. In this way they can be seen to express some of the priorities and preferences of the men – English, Danish and Norman – (and perhaps women also) who lived in London in the tenth to the twelfth centuries. What is unusual about London is that there survive records to tell us about the dedications of these early parish churches which make it possible to map the popularity of the different saints' cults. Why certain

[1] C. Brooke with G. Keir, *London 800–1216: the Shaping of a City* (1975), p. 131.

C. M. Barron, '"The whole company of Heaven": the saints of medieval London', in *European Religious Cultures: Essays offered to Christopher Brooke on the occasion of his eightieth birthday*, ed. M. Rubin (London, 2020), pp. 129–45.

saints were chosen and others not is an interesting question which is not easy to answer. Christopher Brooke, in his study of medieval cults in Cambridge and Avignon, argued convincingly that in both these very different towns, relics played a very minor role in the choice of cults.[2] The interventions by the saints in the lives of local people, the predilections of the local bishops, and the enthusiasms of returning pilgrims, may all have played a part. But these early commitments are now lost to us.

We can, however, even at this distance, observe some of these early preferences and enthusiasms. For this analysis the saints of London will be divided into four categories: biblical saints, martyrs and early European saints, British and Anglo-Saxon saints, and other dedications. It is clear from the table (see appendix) that the Virgin Mary was already outstandingly popular in twelfth-century London: twenty-one (16 per cent) of all the churches in London were dedicated to her.[3] She had twice as many dedications as her nearest rival, the catch-all dedication to All Saints. The cult of St. Michael was widely popular in Anglo-Saxon England and in Normandy, and so it is not surprising to find that the heavenly standard-bearer was commemorated in eight London churches. In fact there are few surprises among the dedications of the London churches although there are some distinctive features. Six of the eleven churches in medieval England dedicated to St. Olaf were to be found in London;St. Christopher had only six other dedications, St. Mildred only five, St. Alphage four, St. Agnes three, and St. Owen and St. Magnus just two. The parish church in Foster Lane was dedicated to St. Vedast, the bishop of Arras who died in 539 and is otherwise commemorated in England only at Tathwell in Lincolnshire; and the church in Fish Street commemorated St. Wandrille (Wandregisilus), an abbot who, in 657, established a monastery at Fontenelle in Normandy which came to be known as St.-Wandrille. This saint is only otherwise commemorated at Bixley in Norfolk.[4] One London dedication is unique: the little church in Broad Street is dedicated to St. Ethelburga (d. 675), the abbess of Barking and sister of St. Erkenwald the saintly bishop of London whose place of burial in St. Paul's cathedral became a shrine.

It is possible that the church in Coleman Street, which was at first only a chapel, was originally dedicated to St. Colman of Lindisfarne (d. 672 ×

[2] C. Brooke, 'Reflections on late medieval cults and devotions', in *Essays in Honour of Edward B. King*, ed. R. G. Benson and E. W. Naylor (Sewanee, Tenn., 1991), pp. 33–45.

[3] Brooke, *London 800–1216*, p. 141. For the numbers and dedications of parish churches elsewhere in England, see F. A. Foster, *Studies in Church Dedications or England's Patron Saints* (3 vols., 1899), esp. ch. 2.

[4] Foster, iii, appendix 1. Foster notes that there were, of course, more churches dedicated to these saints in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

675) and that it was the dedication of the chapel which gave the name to the street. But by 1214 the chapel had developed into a parish church and the dedication had changed to St. Stephen.[5] Some of the other dedications to British or Anglo-Saxon saints also disappeared: by 1250 the church at Newgate, originally commemorating the king and martyr St. Edmund (d. 869), had been re-dedicated to the Holy Sepulchre; the church in Honey Lane which at first commemorated St. Alphege, the eleventh-century archbishop of Canterbury who was murdered by the Danes, by 1235 was dedicated to All Hallows or All Saints.[6] The church in Friday Street in the eleventh century was dedicated to St. Werburga, an abbess who had died *c.*700, but by the mid fourteenth century she had been joined by St. John the Evangelist, and by the fifteenth century St. Werburga had been lost sight of altogether.[7] The popularity of these pre-Conquest saints is, however, attested by the fact that they secured nearly a quarter of all the twelfth-century London dedications. Moreover only four of these dedications were supplanted in the succeeding centuries which suggests a deep affection and conservatism.

A small church or chapel near St. Clement Danes in the Strand was dedicated to the Holy Innocents.[8] This is interesting because only four other English medieval churches were given this dedication: Adisham near Canterbury, Great Barton in Suffolk, Foulsham in Norfolk and Lamarsh in Essex.[9] Near to the chapel of the Holy Innocents was another small church dedicated to the Virgin, the church of St. Mary le Strand which belonged to the bishop of Worcester.[10] In 1326 the body of the murdered bishop of Exeter, Walter Stapleton, was taken *ad quandam ecclesiam Sanctorum Innocentium quae prope fuit praedictam ecclesiam Sancti Clementis derelictam et omnino destructam*.[11] So, by this date, the church of the Holy Innocents was derelict and its parish – if it had had one – was merged with that of St.

[5] E. Ekwall, *Street-Names of the City of London* (Oxford, 1954), pp. 84–5.

[6] *Cartulary of St. Mary Clerkenwell*, ed. W. O. Hassall (Royal Historical Soc., 1949), p. 166.

[7] Henry Harben, *A Dictionary of London* (1918), pp. 523–4, 619–20.

[8] This church belonged to Abingdon abbey (see *The History of the Church of Abingdon*, ed. J. Hudson (2 vols., Oxford, 2002), ii. 18–21, and 266–7, where the church of the Holy Innocents is confused with St. Mary le Strand).

[9] Foster, iii. 367.

[10] See the presentation by the bishop of Worcester to Thomas Becket in the 1150s, in *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, ed. J. C. Robertson (7 vols., Rolls ser., lxvii, 1867–85), iii. 17. I am very grateful to Christopher Brooke for help in elucidating the relationship between the churches of the Holy Innocents and St. Mary le Strand.

[11] *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, ed. W. Stubbs (2 vols., Rolls ser., 1882–3), i. 317.

Mary le Strand, and the advowson became a source of dispute in Worcester between the bishop and the Benedictine abbey.[12]

If we consider the pattern of the church dedications in London at the end of the twelfth century we can see that the dominant group (38 per cent) was comprised of the early Christian martyrs together with the saints of the Gallic church such as St. Denis (bishop of Paris, d. *c.*250), St. Martin (abbot and bishop of Tours, d. 397), St. Vedast (bishop of Arras, d. 539), St. Benedict (abbot, d. *c.*550), St. Wandrille (abbot, d. 668), St. Ouen (bishop of Rouen, d. 684) and the hermit St. Giles from Provence (d. *c.*710). These dedications testify to the strong influence in England of the early martyrs and also to the lasting influence of the Gallic church. A further quarter of the church dedications were to the British and Anglo-Saxon saints, most of them heroes of the conversion of the English following the Gregorian mission led by St. Augustine. The Virgin Mary claimed 16 per cent of all the churches and the other saints of the Bible a further 14 per cent, including six of the Apostles (Simon Peter, James, Andrew, Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas), John the Baptist and Mary Magdalene. At this comparatively early date there were only a small number of 'other dedications': eight churches were dedicated to All Saints, and one each to the Holy Innocents, the Holy Trinity, the Holy Sepulchre and, the chapel on the new stone bridge spanning the Thames, dedicated to the most recent of all the saints, St. Thomas Becket.

When we move forward into the later middle ages, it is possible to construct another league table demonstrating the popularity of different saints by analysing the dedications of the numerous – some 270 – new chapels and altars and parish and craft fraternities which were formed in these years. The figures in the second column of the table (see Appendix) are much less secure than those for the earlier period. Our knowledge of these later dedications is derived from more fragmentary and more diverse evidence. We know of the existence of these new fraternities and chapels from the returns made to the guild enquiry of 1388, from the Chantry Certificate of 1548, from licences to hold land in mortmain, from the surviving churchwardens' accounts and, above all, from references in wills.[13] There are thousands of London wills in these years enrolled in a variety of ecclesiastical courts and there has been no systematic reading or analysis of

[12] *English Episcopal Acta*, xxxiii: *Worcester 1062–1185*, ed. M. Cheney, D. Smith, C. Brooke and P. A. Hoskin (British Academy, 2007), pp. xliii and n. 57, 78–80.

[13] See C. Barron, 'The parish fraternities of medieval London', in *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society: Essays in Honour of F. R. H. Du Boulay*, ed. C. Barron and C. Harper-Bill (Woodbridge, 1985), pp. 13–37.

them. When a will that has been read records a fraternity or altar in a London church then the dedication has been included in the analysis. This means that although the *trends* in the popularity of different saints are reasonably clear, the exact rankings can only be tentative. In this analysis, all known dedications of fraternities, guilds, chapels and altars have been included but not dedications simply to lights or images. Also, the dedications of, and in, the religious houses of London have also been excluded. Most of the early religious houses were founded not by Londoners but by members of the royal family or the aristocracy and so the choice of saint may not represent the particular concern of Londoners.[14] Likewise, at the end of the period, when fraternities were founded in religious houses these seem often to have been inspired by the houses themselves, rather than by the Londoners.[15] In any case the number of fraternities founded in the religious houses is very small: almost all the London guilds and fraternities were based in the parish churches. The dedications of these parish guilds and fraternities were often fluid: fraternities might be combined, or additional saints added to the dedication, so the figure of 275 represents the number of times a saint is commemorated in a London fraternity, not the number of such fraternities.

The response to different saints can be seen to have varied a good deal since the twelfth century. The enthusiasm for the Virgin Mary has become even more marked: nearly a quarter of all the new dedications were made in her honour. The popularity of St. John the Baptist is also very evident, as is the enthusiasm for the new cult of St. Anne, whose feast was made obligatory in England in 1383, in part out of respect for Richard II's young queen, Anne of Bohemia.[16] The martyrs and early European saints also retained their share of the market, but with some unusual, or unexpected, additions to their company, such as St. Amand from Poitou, a monk and a missionary who died in *c.*675. He joined St. Vedast in the dedication of the fraternity of that parish church. Among the early martyrs, three newly popular saints stand out – St. Christopher, St. Katherine and St. George – and their popularity was by no means confined to London. St. Christopher protected travellers and those in danger of sudden death, St. George was linked to the Order of the Garter and the chapel at Windsor which, together with his support for the English at Agincourt, led to his feast day being raised to a principal feast in 1415. St. Katherine, the bride of Christ, was the protectress of the dying and her cult was very widely spread

[14] *The Religious Houses of London and Middlesex*, ed. C. M. Barron and M. Davies (2007), pp. 7–8

[15] Barron and Davies, pp. 19–20; Barron, 'Parish Fraternities', pp. 17–18.

[16] R. W. Pfaff, *New Liturgical Feasts in later Medieval England* (Oxford, 1970), p. 2.

throughout Europe, especially in the later middle ages.

By contrast, there is a very marked decline in the popularity of British and Anglo-Saxon saints. Indeed this decline is even more marked than it appears because six of the twelve fraternities were, in fact, dedicated to the patron of the parish church (St. Alban, St. Augustine, St. Bride, St. Dunstan (2) and St. Mildred) and so these represent old loyalties rather than new enthusiasms. The guild dedicated to St. Erkenwald at St. Paul's cathedral seems to have been deliberately, and unsuccessfully, promoted by Robert Braybrook when he was bishop of London. It never attracted any significant support among the Londoners.[17]

What is striking, if not unexpected, is the expansion of the range of dedications to embrace some of the new devotions. There were eight new cults including the widely popular cults of Corpus Christi and the Name of Jesus.[18] But there were also some more unusual enthusiasms, reflecting, perhaps, interest in Christian virtues and attributes, rather than in the personalities of the saints themselves. In 1414 John Stanton, a chaplain at St. Magnus near London Bridge left *4d* to each brother of the guild dedicated to St. Charity.[19] In the College of Priests at St. Michael Paternoster Royal, a fraternity of the Holy Wisdom was established in 1490 in honour of Jesus Christ, The Virgin Mary, St. Paul, St. John the Evangelist, St. Jerome, St. Augustine of Hippo and St. Mary Magdalene. The purpose of this fraternity was to provide a solemn public reading, or lecture, freely in the college 'so that divine doctrine and fruitful preaching may be presented to God's people'.[20] Here the Holy Wisdom, one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and synonymous with the incarnate Word of God, or the Logos, incorporates in the dedication the virtues and characteristics of a number of saints ranging from the Virgin, to the doctors of the early church and to Mary Magdalene. The most popular new feast, however, was that of the Holy Trinity, a festival that had been particularly promoted by Thomas Becket, who had ordained that the Sunday after Whitsun should be dedicated to 'The Holy, Blessed and Glorious Trinity'; and the Black Prince had a lifelong devotion to the

[17] See *St. Paul's: the Cathedral Church of London 604–2004*, ed. D. Keene, A. Burns and A. Saint (New Haven and London, 2004), pp. 40, 114–21.

[18] See M. Rubin, *Corpus Christi: the Eucharist in late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991); Pfaff, ch. 4; E. A. New, 'The cult of the Holy Name of Jesus in late medieval England, with special reference to the fraternity in St. Paul's Cathedral London *c.*1450–1558' (unpublished University of London Ph.D. thesis, 1999).

[19] Guildhall Library, Archdeacon of London's Register, MS. 9051/1 fo. 14v. I am grateful to Robert Wood for this reference.

[20] *The Register of John Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury 1486–1500*, ed. C. Harper-Bill (3 vols., Canterbury and York Soc., 1987–2000), i. 18–19.

Holy Trinity and chose to be buried in the Trinity chapel at Canterbury.[21]

There were, as might be expected, regional variations in the popularity of different saints. In London's three 'home counties' of Middlesex, Surrey and Essex the Blessed Virgin, St. Katherine, St. John the Baptist and the Holy Trinity were among the most popular dedications, as they were in London.[22] Further afield there were some shifts of loyalty. In Norfolk and Essex St. Peter is notably more popular than he is in London, and in Cambridgeshire the feast of Corpus Christi was the second most popular dedication after the Virgin Mary.[23] The popularity in London of St. Anne, St. George and St. Christopher appears to have been distinctive compared with other areas of England. The cult of St. Thomas Becket, although reasonably popular in London, was by no means unique to the city. The chapel on London Bridge was dedicated to St. Thomas (possibly to help with money-raising in the initial phases of construction) but the London churches already had their saints by the time of Becket's martyrdom. However, in the rest of England, sixty-nine churches were dedicated to England's newest saint.[24] It might have been expected that the Londoners would have formed fraternities and dedicated altars to St. Thomas Becket, who was born in the city; in fact, only six such dedications are recorded.[25]

What may well have played a part in determining which cults were popular in London was the compendium of saints' lives which came to be known as *The Golden Legend*. The Latin version of the stories of the saints written by Jacobus de Voragine appeared first in 1260, and a French version by Jean Belet was produced early in the next century. In 1380 Jean de Vignay produced his *La Legende Dorée* in which he added a substantial number

[21] See *Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England 1200–1400*, ed. J. Alexander and P. Binski (1987), pp. 478–9; C. Wilson, 'The medieval monuments', in *The History of Canterbury Cathedral*, ed. P. Collinson, N. Ramsay and M. Sparks (Oxford, 1995), pp. 451–510, esp. pp. 494–5.

[22] This statement is dependent upon the unpublished work of other scholars who are working on the fraternities in these counties: Dr. Jessica Freeman in Middlesex; Dr. Matthew Groom in Surrey; and Dr. Janet Cooper in Essex. I am grateful to all three of them for generously sharing their work with me.

[23] See K. Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community in Late Medieval East Anglia, c.1470–1550* (Woodbridge, 2001), p. 38. Farnhill provides a table comparing the popularity of different saints in Norfolk, Suffolk, Yorkshire, Cornwall, London and Cambridgeshire. St. Christopher does not appear on the list, perhaps because he was not particularly popular in Norfolk which provided Farnhill's template, but the numerous surviving wall paintings of St. Christopher in churches suggest that he was, in fact, widely venerated.

[24] Foster, iii. 24.

[25] At St. Dunstan in the East; St. Magnus; St. Margaret, Southwark; St. Martin in the Vintry; St. Mary Aldermary; St. Mary Islington.

of new legends to the original corpus. A group of 'clerks and doctors' translated de Vignay's text into English in 1438 and this compilation was known as the *Gilte Legende*.[26] The different versions varied considerably in their selection of saints' lives. When Caxton came to print his *Golden Legend* in 1484 he used all three versions of the text and added a number of legends of his own, including accounts of the lives of some of the Anglo-Saxon saints such as Alphege, Dunstan, Edmund, Swithin and Erkenwald.[27] Of the seventy-seven saints and festivals commemorated in the churches and fraternities of London, only about a third of them do not appear in any of the known versions of the *Golden Legend*. As will be clear from the table, those saints who did not appear in the *Golden Legend* were almost all British and Anglo-Saxon: in fact only four of these nineteen British and Anglo-Saxon saints appeared in the pre-Caxton versions of the *Golden Legend*, which is not surprising since it was a compilation largely made in Italy and France. However most of the Gallic saints venerated in London appear in the *Golden Legend*, except St. Ouen, the bishop of Rouen who died in 694; St. Faith, the virgin and martyr of the third century; St. Wandrille; St. Eloi, the bishop of Noyon who became the patron saint of metal workers; and St. Erasmus, a third-century bishop from Campagna who came to be considered as a patron of sailors and of children with stomach problems. Caxton, however, did include St. Erasmus in his printed version of the *Golden Legend* and he also included St. Barbara who, very surprisingly, given the numerous surviving images of her, does not appear in either the *Golden Legend* or the *Gilte Legende*.[28] As might have been expected several of the non-saintly dedications did not have accounts in the *Golden Legend*: the Holy Trinity, St. Sepulchre, St. Charity, Corpus Christi, the Five Wounds, the Holy Wisdom and the Name of Jesus. But it remains the case that the extremely popular *Golden Legend* appears to have exerted a considerable influence on the devotional preferences of men and women in London.

But neither the *Golden Legend* nor a strong local connection can explain the popularity in London of an Italian servant girl saint who lived in Lucca, hundreds of miles away from London. St. Zita (or Sithe as she was known in England) was unlike other home-grown English saints. On the whole England did not go in for popular canonization. There were a number of

[26] *Gilte Legende*, ed. R. Harmer (3 vols., Early English Text Soc., 2006–7), i. xi.

[27] See W. Blades, *Biography and Typography of William Caxton* (new edn., 1971), p. 277; N. F. Blake, *England's First Publisher* (1976), p. 117.

[28] See Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints,* trans. W. Granger Ryan (2 vols., Princeton, N.J., 1993); Harmer, *Gilte Legende*. For a list of the saints added to Caxton's edition of the Golden Legend, see *The Golden Legend or Lives of the Saints as Englished by William Caxton* (7 vols., 1922), vii. 276–80.

unsuccessful attempts to secure canonization for failed political leaders promoted by their supporters: men such as Simon de Montfort, Thomas of Lancaster, Edward II, Richard Scrope, archbishop of York, and Henry VI.[29] The successful canonizations were those of bishops and theologians such as Hugh of Lincoln (d. *c.*1200), Richard of Chichester (d. 1253) and Thomas of Hereford (d. 1282) and their cults were usually fairly local.[30] St. Zita was completely different. She was a poor peasant girl, born at Monsegrati in the countryside north of Lucca, who came to work in the household of the Faitinelli family where she lived an exemplary life. When her devotions, or her charitable activities, might have caused trouble with her employers, Zita was spared their wrath by divine intervention. When she prayed too long in church and forgot to put the bread in the oven, she found it ready baked when she returned home. When she gave away some of her master's supply of beans to feed the poor, the sacks were replenished. When her master lent her his fur cloak to wear in church on a cold night, Zita gave it to a beggar who, miraculously, returned the cloak the next day. Zita practised many forms of mortification including beating her breast with a small stone. When she died in 1278 the Faitinelli family promoted her cult in the local church of San Frediano where Zita's tomb became a shrine.[31] The cult was sufficiently popular to challenge the long-established cult of the Volto Santo in the cathedral in Lucca.

There were already strong links between England and Lucca, and especially strong links between Lucca and Bury St. Edmunds. This may explain the presence of an altar in the abbey dedicated to Zita already by 1299, only twenty-one years after her death.[32] Moreover the earliest surviving copy of a life of Zita is found, not in Lucca, but in a manuscript (Bodley MS. 240) compiled at Bury before 1377.[33] It is not surprising, therefore, that the Bury poet, John Lydgate, wrote a three-verse hymn to St. Zita in the fourteen-twenties in which he drew attention to two of her attributes in particular: the little stone with which she was accustomed to beat her breast and the fact that she helped those who invoked her aid to find objects which they had lost. This latter aspect of her piety is not to be found in the accounts of

[29] S. Walker, 'Political saints in later medieval England', in his *Political Culture in Later Medieval England* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 198–222.

[30] For the development of central ecclesiastical control over the process of canonization, see R. Bartlett, *The Hanged Man* (Princeton, N.J., 2004), esp. ch. 2.

[31] For a translation of the life of St. Zita and a discussion of her cult, see D. Webb, *Saints and Cities in Medieval Italy* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 160–90.

[32] See C. M. Barron, 'The travelling saint: Zita of Lucca and England', in *Freedom of Movement in the Middle Ages*, ed. P. Horden (Donington, 2007), pp. 186–202, esp. p. 199.

[33] Barron, 'The travelling saint', pp. 190–1.

her life, nor is it apparent in the numerous miracles which were attributed to her in Italy.[34] But, in England, this would appear to have been her defining attribute. Images of her (and there are some seventy surviving in books of hours, stained glass, alabasters, carvings, wall paintings and vestments) show her in a variety of guises. Sometimes she is depicted clasping the small triangular stone with which she beat her breast; or with a bunch of keys or a purse hanging from her girdle. Whereas St. Petronilla usually has a single key, or pair of keys held upright, St. Zita's keys hang in a bunch at her waist or dangle from her wrist. Often she holds a rosary or a book and, occasionally, three loaves of bread. She may be dressed as a servant with an apron or more grandly: often she is shown wearing the expensive cloak which she borrowed from her master. Her hair may be covered with a wimple-like headdress or flowing freely in locks falling over her shoulders. Occasionally she appears to be holding flowers in her apron, or they may be the replenished beans. The many ways in which Zita is presented suggest that she spoke to many needs and aspirations.

Although Zita's cult may have reached England with some monks of Bury returning home from Lucca, the enthusiasm for the new cult must have received some encouragement from the Lucchese silk merchants who did business with the London mercers. Many of these mercers lived in Cheapside and as early the thirteen-forties there was a chapel dedicated to St. Zita in the church of St. Benet (Benedict) Sherehog, a small parish at the eastern end of Cheapside. By 1356 the rector of the church was known as the 'rector of St. Sithe's' and this title was again used in 1358 and 1373. John Fresshe, a London mercer who died in 1397, asked to be buried in the church of St. Sithe in the parish of St. Benet Sherehog, and the lane leading to the church was known as 'Sise lane' as early as 1357.[35] So, for a time at least, the cult of St. Zita ousted the original dedication to St. Benedict. In the parish church of St. Andrew Holborn there was a fraternity dedicated to St. Sithe by 1394 and several references in the wills of parishioners show that this fraternity was the main one in that church, was well-endowed with lands and maintained a priest who celebrated daily at St. Sithe's altar. The fraternity continued to attract support from parishioners right up to the fifteen-forties.[36] There was another fraternity dedicated to St. Sithe in the church of All Hallows on London Wall. This was a small parish and there are no surviving wills which refer to the fraternity, but the churchwardens'

[34] Barron, 'The travelling saint', pp. 201–2.

[35] See Barron, 'The travelling saint', pp. 192 and 197 and references there cited.

[36] C. M. Barron and J. Roscoe, 'The medieval parish church of St. Andrew Holborn', *London Topgraphical Record*, xxiv, (1980), 31–60, esp. pp. 37–8.

accounts reveal that by 1469 there was an image of 'sent sithe' in the church and it seems likely that the 'Brotherhood of St. Sithe' which rented the hall of the Carpenters' Company on some twenty occasions between 1468 and 1500 was the fraternity in the nearby church of All Hallows. In 1509 'Sente Sythis clothe' (that is, hearse cloth) was rented out for 1*d* 'for the berying of moder Adams hosbonde', and as late as 1538 the churchwardens acknowledged receipt of 31*s* 10*d* from the wardens of 'sante Sythys brethehed'. It is clear from these accounts that this brotherhood dedicated to Saint Sythe was the main fraternity in the church of All Hallows.[37]

In addition to these two fraternities there were also altars dedicated to the Italian servant saint. In 1490 Margaret Croke, the wealthy widow of the London alderman and skinner John Croke, chose to be buried before the image of St. Sythe in the London Dominican house at Blackfriars, and in 1518 the pope granted an indulgence for the altar in Blackfriars which was, rather improbably, jointly dedicated to St. Thomas Aquinas and Beata Scita the Virgin.[38] In 1527 Margaret Sale, the widow of a London baker, bequeathed her funeral torches to burn in her parish church of St. Margaret Pattens before the images of Our Lady, St. Katherine, St. Anne and St. Sithe.[39] So, we know of two fraternities, two altars and an image dedicated to St. Sithe in medieval London.

Elsewhere in England we have further evidence of the popularity of the cult of St. Zita. She was commemorated in over 100 churches from Devon to Norfolk and from Sussex to Cumberland, as well as in Scotland and in Ireland. It seems clear that Zita could be fashioned, or imagined, as her worshippers desired. She could be depicted as a servant, as a woman of religion or as an attractive, even elegant, young girl. Indeed there are some indications that the cult of St. Zita was beginning by the end of the fifteenth century to attract more aristocratic patrons. This may be a reflection of the presence of merchants from Lucca in England in the later part of the fifteenth century. Two cousins, Giovanni Gigli (d. 1498) and Silvestro Gigli, from the Lucchese merchant community succeeded each other as bishops of Worcester from 1497 until Silvestro's death in 1521. They were men who exercised considerable influence in England, and at the

[37] *The Churchwardens' Accounts of the Parish of Allhallows, London Wall … 1455–1536*, ed. C. Welch (privately printed, 1912), pp. 12, 36, 40, 48, 59, 61; B. Marsh, *Records of the Worshipful Company of Carpenters*, 7 vols. (Oxford, 1913–68), ii, pp. 41, 43, 45, 50, 51, 56, 63, 69, 74, 103, 111, 130. I am grateful to Doreen Leach for this reference.

[38] K. Lacey, 'Margaret Croke, d. 1491', in *Medieval London Widows*, ed. C. Barron and A. Sutton (1994), pp. 143–64, esp. p. 161; *Calendar of Papal Registers*, xx, ed. A. P. Fuller (2005), no. 1295 and n. 109 (at p. 578).

[39] S. Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford, 1989), p. 9.

royal court.[40] The Lucchese family of Buonvisi were also active in England and commissioned several expensive copes and chasubles from English workers for chapels in Lucca, on which St. Zita was depicted alongside the Volto Santo.[41] As a result, perhaps, of this renewed Lucchese influence in high places, the popular veneration of St. Zita was reinforced by a new enthusiasm for her to be found among the English aristocracy. William Lord Hastings commissioned a beautiful book of hours in Flanders in about 1480 in which Zita is depicted as a charming young girl stepping delicately through a flowered landscape while she reads a book with her keys dangling from her belt.[42] Richard III included a prayer to St. Sitha in his own book of hours and he also specified that she was to be represented among the saints at his projected college at Middleham in Yorkshire.[43] At Croft castle in Herefordshire, on the fine alabaster tomb of Sir Richard Croft, who had been a faithful servant of the Yorkist and Tudor dynasties for fifty years, St. Zita is again to be found alongside St. Margaret.[44] And she is also included among the army of saints raised in protective solidarity around the tomb of Henry VII in the Lady Chapel of Westminster abbey.[45]

It is difficult to assess what it was about St. Zita that made her so attractive to people of all social and economic conditions. It was certainly not only women and servants who remembered Zita in their prayers and devotions. Her ability to find lost objects must have made her popular, but that cannot have been all. It was perhaps her very ordinariness that appealed to people. Unlike the heroic martyrs of the early church, she lived a normal life and did not need to mutilate herself in order to be able to live

[40] See J. B Trapp, 'Gigli, Giovanni (1434–98)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10670> [accessed 30 Sept. 2008]; and C. H. Clough, 'Gigli, Silvestro (1463–1521)', *O.D.N.B.* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10671> [accessed 30 Sept. 2008].

[41] See the chasuble now at Stonyhurst College which has the arms of the Buonvisi family and also depicts St. Zita and the Volto Santo. See F. Pritchard, 'A pair of late fifteenth-century orphreys embroidered in a London workshop for a Lucchese merchant family'. I am very grateful to Dr. Pritchard for allowing me to see a typescript of her unpublished paper.

[42] British Library, Additional MS. 54782 fos. 66v.–7.

[43] Lambeth Palace Library, MS. 474; and see A. F. Sutton and L. Visser-Fuchs, *The Hours of Richard III* (Stroud, 1996), esp. p. 47. For the statutes for Middleham College see J. Raine, 'The statutes ordained by Richard, duke of Gloucester, for the College of Middleham, dated 4 July 18 Ed. IV (1478)', *Archaeological Journal*, xiv (1857), 160–70, esp. p. 169.

[44] See C. S. L. Davies, 'Croft, Sir Richard (1429/30–1509)', *O.D.N.B.* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/47535> [accessed 30 Sept. 2008].

[45] Royal Commission on Historic Monuments, *Westminster Abbey* (1924), p. 65; J. T. Micklethwaite, 'Notes on the imagery of Henry the Seventh's chapel, Westminster', *Archaeologia*, xlvii (1883), 361–80.

in a pious, God-fearing and useful manner, alleviating the needs of her poor neighbours and providing succour for all who came to her for help. If we look at the representation of St. Zita in the Hastings Hours we can observe a simple vignette of Christian charity: a young woman (not so much a servant) holding her book to symbolize her regular attendance at church, and with her keys and her purse hanging from her belt to demonstrate her housewifely duties, who moves serenely through the temptations of the vacuous and pleasure-seeking activities of the courtiers on the opposite page. Whether to the poor and needy, or to wealthy aristocrats, the life of Zita was a reminder that it was possible, however disadvantaged by poverty or wealth, to live a good Christian life amid the temptations of earthly experience.

St. Zita's presence among the fifty or so saints who were commemorated by fraternities or altars in London in the later medieval period is distinctive and unusual. St. Zita was not a biblical saint, nor a Gallic bishop, nor a martyr of the early church, nor a hero of the evangelization of the English. She was not even English and, until 1748, she was not officially a saint, and yet her unofficial and popular cult flourished not only in London but throughout England. There is no evidence that Zita's cult took root outside Italy, and indeed there is very little evidence of veneration for her outside Lucca.[46]

The shifting patterns of popular devotion in London at the end of the middle ages show that there was still a place for saints whose lives were exciting and fantastical, such as St. Christopher, St. George and St. Katherine. But the popularity of the devotions to the Holy Trinity, to Corpus Christi and to the Name of Jesus show that there was also support for the more abstract, more symbolic, aspects of the Christian faith. And in the popularity of the cults of St. Anne and St. Zita we can detect an appreciation of patterns of accessible piety and of saints in whose footsteps ordinary Christians might walk and so find a pathway to Heaven.

Appendix

The dedications of London parish churches in the eleventh and twelfth centuries compared with dedications of fraternities and altars in London in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries

The names in italics are those saints who were included in *The Golden Legend/Gilte Legende*. Those indicated with a C were added by Caxton to the *Golden Legend* in the fourteen-eighties. M indicates a martyr.

Saints	**11th c. and 12th c. church dedications**		**14th c.–16th c. altars and fraternities**	
BIBLICAL SAINTS				
St. Andrew	4			
St. Bartholomew	1			
St. James	1		3	
St. John the Baptist	2		18	
St. Mary Magdalene	2		3	
St. Matthew	1			
St. Paul	1			
St. Peter	5		1	
St. Thomas	1		1	
St. Anne			16	
St. John the Evangelist			3	
	18	14%	45	16%
Virgin Mary	21	16%	59	22%
MARTYRS AND EARLY EUROPEAN SAINTS				
[a]*St. Agnes* M	1			
St. Anthony/Antholin	1		2	
[b]*St. Benedict/Benet*	4			
St. Christopher M	1		11	
St. Clement M	2		4	
St. Denis/Dionis	1			

Saints	**11th c. and 12th c. church dedications**		**14th c.–16th c. altars and fraternities**	
St. Ewan/Ouen	1			
St. Faith M	1			
St. George M	2		14	
St. Giles	1		1	
St. Helen	1			
St. Katherine M	1		23	
St. Lawrence	2		5	
St. Leonard	3		2	
St. Margaret M	6		4	
St. Martin	6			
St. Michael	8		3	
St. Nicholas	3		7	
St. Pancras M	1			
St. Stephen M	1		4	
St. Vedast	1			
[c]St. Wandrille	1			
St. Amand			1	
St. Augustine of Hippo			1	
St. Barbara M C			1	
St. Cornelius M			1	
St. Eloi/Eligius/Loy			2	
St. Erasmus M C			2	
S Fabian and Sebastian M			1	
St. Gabriel			1	
St. Jerome			1	
St. Sebastian			1	
St. Ursula M			3	
	49	38%	95	35%

Saints	11th c. and 12th c. church dedications		14th c.–16th c. altars and fraternities	
BRITISH AND ANGLO-SAXON SAINTS				
St. Alban C	1		1	
St. Augustine	3		1	
[d]St. Alphage/Aelfheah C	2		1	
St. Bridget/Bride	1		1	
St. Botolph	4			
[e]St. Coleman	1			
St. Dunstan C	3		2	
[f]St. Edmund C	2			
St. Ethelburga	1			
St. Gregory (Pope)	1			
St. Magnus	1			
St. Mildred	2		2	
St. Olaf/Olave	6			
St. Swithin C	1			
[g]St. Werburga	1			
St. Erkenwald C			1	
St. Hilda			1	
St. Etheldreda			1	
St. Patrick			1	
	30	22%	12	4%
OTHER DEDICATIONS				
All Hallows/Saints	8		5	
Holy Innocents	1			
Holy Trinity	1		18	
St. Sepulchre	1			
St. Thomas Becket	1		6	
All Souls			1	
St. Charity			2	

Saints	**11th c. and 12th c. church dedications**		**14th c.–16th c. altars and fraternities**	
Corpus Christi			12	
Five Wounds			1	
Holy Cross/Rood			5	
Holy Wisdom			1	
Name of Jesus			9	
Resurrection of Christ			1	
St. Sithe/Citha/Zita			4	
	12	10%	65	23%
TOTAL	130		276	

[a] By 1467 the church was dedicated to St. Anne.
[b] St. Benet Sherehog was known as St. Sithe in the later fourteenth century, see p. 139, above.
[c] By 1181 the church was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin.
[d] By 1235 the church was dedicated to All Saints.
[e] By 1214 the church was dedicated to St. Stephen, see p.132, above.
[f] By *c.*1250 St. Edmund outside Newgate was dedicated to St. Sepulchre.
[g] By 1349 the church was dedicated to St. John the Evangelist.