# 'Continuity, authority and the place of heritage in the medieval world; a study of identity in west Cornwall'

Abbreviated running head;

**Authority and heritage in medieval Cornwall**

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**Abstract;**  This paper supports the contention that knowledge of the past should be seen as a political resource. Furthermore, the control and interpretation of a particular version of the past is related to power differentiation and the legitimisation of authority. The particular and subjective use of the past is not a recent phenomenon, and in this paper, is related to the construction of identity and social organisation in Cornwall during the medieval period. Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* is used as a way of grounding the rhetoric of legitimisation in early Cornish society, with particular reference to ecclesiastical authority. Hagiographical accounts and legends correspond to discourses of power and are related to the (re)production of a religious identity that legitimated Church authority. In west Cornwall, such institutional power is thus related to an identity that is generated via contemporary notions of heritage and a particular sense of past.

**Key Words;  Cornwall, medieval, hagiography, authority, identity, heritage.**

**Introduction**

*"I like roots. Plants don't grow well without them.*
*People are the same".[1]*

The idea that 'the past' is an important element in the development and identification of people has been referred to by many authors.[2] Lowenthal especially attributes great value and power to artefacts and tributes to 'the past', noting how the possession of relics and 'tangible history' can enhance life and augment one's worth, and signifying the purpose of making 'trips to the past' in order to 'validate oneself'.[3] This reification of the past as a commodity and resource, a form of cultural capital that constitutes a sense of personal and group cohesion and worth, problematizes our conception of history and its place in the dynamic of identity.

"The past is merely our conception of it and does not have an unchanging identity of its own".[4] This consideration of the past however, raises debate on how various discourses of the past have been constituted, used and interpreted by previous societies. Academic investigations of the role of 'heritage' and 'tradition' have generally dealt with present interests, uses and interpretations of the past, while previous notions of how such 'cultural resources' fitted in with notions of identity and regimes of social organisation have been largely over-looked.[5] To paraphrase Lowenthal, it is not that societies *live in the past*, but that social and cultural systems, modes of organisation and representation are in many ways *defined by 'the past'*; not by some objective and universal common history, but by an interpretation, understanding or other relation to a 'past' that is particular and subjective.[6] In this respect, the commodification of the past as a resource involves the processing of history through such filters as mythology, ideology, hegemonic control, or personal subjectification to become 'heritage' which essentially represents what Gruffudds calls the 'mediation between a society and its past'.[7] History in this sense, as well as playing a major role in the construction and identity of a society, is also itself defined by the form, structure and 'personality' of that society.[8]

'Heritage' and 'history' are subjective and value-loaded concepts, which are "locked into wider frameworks of dominant and subversive ideologies";[9] they are "deeply implicated in both the

hegemony and the struggle".[10] The privileging of certain kinds of histories, traditions and constructed heritage over others reflect strategies of domination. Colson saw 'tradition' and the 'continuity of the past' as crucial elements in the maintenance of order and the attendant forms of control. She also saw the potential for 'invented' forms of heritage and tradition.[11] This notion was investigated by Hobsbawm who saw invented traditions as keys to the establishment of social cohesion, to the legitimisation of status and relations of authority and as tools of socialisation.[12] However, while Hobsbawm acknowledges that "there is probably no time and place ....which has not seen the 'invention' of tradition", he sees it as a largely new phenomenon, related to the growth of capitalist economy over the last 200 years or so.[13] This paper contends that knowledge of the past should be seen as a political resource, and that the control and interpretation of a particular version of the past is related to power differentiation and the legitimisation of authority. The particular and subjective use of 'the past' is not a recent phenomenon, and in fact can be related to the construction of identity and social organisation within a medieval context. This paper therefore considers a period not often looked at by geographical discourse on identity, and focuses on Cornwall; a cultural region of the British Isles that is often overlooked.

Bond and Gilliam argue that "representing the past and the way of life of populations is an expression and a source of power".[14] They contend that dominant versions of the past are usually 'vague and general', with an important 'capacity to absorb diverging interests and interpretations'. These ideas can be related to Herzfeld's notion that it is the 'generalisation of history' that is essential for the 'generation of a rule-like structure in social life'.[15] In this sense, it is what may be termed 'common custom', 'myth' or 'tradition' that becomes vital to the rhetoric of legitimisation.[16] At this point, an example of how tradition and myth may shape social organisation and personality in the medieval period is perhaps a useful device to display the relationship between particular history, authority and identity. The battle of Bouvines occurred in what is now northern France in 1214, and the folk myths and traditions associated with this famous 'French' victory became significant for actual social formulations and actions in the medieval period.[17] Duby skilfully portrays how accounts of this event were used and infused into an identity which aligned the Capetian monarchy with the trajectory of 'the nation'.[18] The past is essential to identity and so the manipulation, control and particular, though apparently 'natural', interpretation of historical

discourse is central to the formation of power relationships, and the generation and maintenance of authority. In the case of Bouvines, the poetic celebration portrays a cohesive and particular version of a 'French national victory', won by "knights whose collective renown shone in all tournaments [and] were indeed born in the Capetian domain, in this province beloved by Clovis and Dagobert". Duby relates this image to an ideology that was "subtly adapting itself to support and justify the strengthening of the state".[19] Authority had to be disseminated, and the mobilisation of the past in this process should be regarded as crucial. However, the apparent cynical 'manipulation' and 'invention' of the past should be viewed within the context of social identity and the structure of power relations that were a reality in the medieval period.

In this sense, we should engage with notions of *how* people in the medieval period recognised their identity and related to the structures of society and authority around them. Such issues touch upon notions of 'being' and ethnicity and it is to these themes that we should now turn.

**Continuity, authority and the construction of identity**

Traditional views that deal with the nature and generation of identity tend to dwell upon the question of whether subjective claims are derived from the potency of certain 'primordial' attachments or whether they are derived through the cynical manipulation of culture in the service of political and economic interests.[20] Both of these ideas have sought an objective grounding for what are subjective identity claims, but both have suffered from empirical scrutiny and neither really addresses questions of *how* people recognise their commonalities and identity; the micro-processes of existence.[21] Bentley seeks an answer to these fundamentals through the work of Pierre Bourdieu, who relates the objective structures and material conditions of existence to the notion of *habitus*.[22] Bourdieu's idea of *habitus* involves the generation and structuring of principles, practices and representations which are objectively regulated without obedience to rules, adapted to goals without conscious aiming and collectively orchestrated without being the product of conscious direction.[23] The *habitus* therefore is the "product of the work of inculcation and appropriation necessary in order for those products of collective history and objective structures" (such as language and economy) to succeed in reproducing themselves in institutions and individuals which

are "lastingly subjected to the same conditionings, and hence placed in the same material conditions of existence".[24]

Bourdieu's ideas of how notions of identity and authority can be grounded within a material and socially structured world can be used therefore, to explore the nature of actual incidents of developing institutional and societal organisation. In this respect, these ideas can be considered within the context of such patterns and developments in west Cornwall during the medieval period. In order to make sense of, and account for, the patterns and processes of organisation that we see in medieval Cornwall, it is necessary to explore the relationship between the decisions, thoughts and identity behind these processes and their 'objective conditions of existence'. In other words we need to explore how elements of medieval identity were reflected by, and indeed, incorporated into the emerging organisational framework of Cornwall. In many ways, this exercise involves an exploration of how a distinct psyche which reflected a particular version or notion of the past, both produced, and was ordered within, developing institutional and landscape forms.

The framework and form of institutional organisation and territorial patterns that emerged in medieval Cornwall was not the product of a single mind, nor did it reflect a blueprint akin to a 'clean slate' theorist's ideas. Instead, these processes reflected a myriad of actions and decisions that were linked to identities founded upon a sense of past and in many ways related to actions and views of 'habit': They acted out "objective constraints encoded in unexamined assumptions" about what was *'reasonable'* and *'unreasonable'*.[25] In this respect therefore, this paper examines the formation of a *habitus*; the unconscious generation of principles, that reflected contemporary views, beliefs, limits and ideas, upon which decisions that affected patterns and processes were grounded. Notions of a particular past and a specific reference to 'history' can be seen to have a significant role in what Bourdieu describes as "the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy".[26] The institutional and territorial forms and patterns that developed in Cornwall were sustained and supported through personal relations, the reproduction of which can be related to Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*. This paper seeks to explore certain aspects of the deeply ingrained dispositions of *habitus* as a way of accounting for elements of territorial and institutional development in medieval west Cornwall. In particular, contemporary versions and uses of 'the past' and the generation of a

specific 'heritage' can be related to patterns and processes of authority. The uses and re-interpretations of existing patterns and practices together with the existence of what may be termed a 'particular' or 'sanctioned' version of the past is related to a contemporary *habitus* of unexamined assumptions. In this respect, 'continuity, authority and the place of heritage in the medieval world' is related to notions of identity and 'correct practice' that reflect the real limits and understandings of that society.

This paper thus explores the developing organisational processes and patterns in the medieval period within a west Cornish context. A particular focus is made upon aspects of ecclesiastical and religious organisation and the way older patterns and processes were re-interpreted for newer purposes in an emerging social and institutional framework that owed much to previous notions of organisation. The use of 'heritage' and a particular relationship with the past is viewed as instrumental in the uncovered elements of continuity in both form and practice. This acknowledgement of a contemporary notion of the past however, far from representing a supposed anachronistic 'leave-over', that survived through institutional friction, is invested with an important power in the generation, support and justification of systems of authority and control. In other words, the notions and practices of identity, ritual and belief that sustained the structure of authority, are inevitably founded upon contemporary views of heritage, and senses of the past. In this respect, it is the active support and nourishment of ideas of heritage and a revered 'history' that is responsible for elements of continuity that are seen in the records and which are inexorably linked to the maintenance of structures of authority and organisation.

Notions associated with a kind of 'clean slate' theory which argue that structures of social organisation bear little or no relation to previous systems of order, have long since been eroded. However, ideas that such continuity as can be seen is based upon institutional and societal inertia, and that sees the use of previous administrative devices for instance, as simply 'the easiest approach', also risk ignoring the crucial and powerful positive role that is implicit in the re-use and re-interpretation of previous structures. A role of 'heritage', 'tradition' and associated particular narratives of the past is seen as playing a crucial role in the development of authority and control

structures. In this sense, processes of development and change are inherently interwoven with the mechanisms and practices of continuity.

As a device for exploring the formation, multi-dimensionality and context sensitivity of identity and being, Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* proves useful. As well as being nothing to do with any 'mechanical reproduction' of initial conditionings that may be related to a primordial thesis of identity, *habitus* also does not require the creation of any unpredictable novelty that would be associated with a more instrumentalist view of identity.[27] Instead, an idea of *habitus* allows us to produce a context-rich synthesis of the production of identity, the use of heritage and the support and development of authority in the ecclesiastical organisation of west Cornwall in the pre-modern period.

The investigation of patterns of organisation and processes of change in west Cornwall focuses on how versions of the past were associated with contemporary systems of authority. A further exploration of how subjective notions of the past were organised through ecclesiastical ritual and narrative allows us to perceive the role of heritage and history in the maintenance of medieval power relations. A more complex relationship between personal identity, institutional authority, and the use of a particular past is then examined with attention to Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*. Organisational development, authority, tradition, identity, and a sense of past are therefore interwoven and synthesised in this contextual investigation into medieval patterns and processes in Cornwall.

**Continuity and authority in medieval Cornwall**
This case study on west Cornwall focuses upon the development and organisation of ecclesiastical structures and religion during the medieval period. Robert Sack has described the Catholic Church as developing from a group of believers loosely organised around a charismatic leader into "one of the largest, most clearly articulated and enduring hierarchical and bureaucratic organisations".[28] The concentration upon this organisation within a Cornish context therefore allows for detailed exploration into aspects of authority and continuity to which this paper refers. The spread of Christianity into areas such as Cornwall represents a far wider package of ideas, practices and

processes than those merely to do with faith. In this sense, the analysis of ecclesiastical and religious development touches upon issues of identity and organisation at every level of society. The context of Cornwall however, also provides an example of where a distinct 'heritage' has been recognised which has greatly affected both internal organisation and external dealings.

The Cornish are much closer to the Anglo-Saxons than to other Celtic peoples, but a "rich and multifarious Celtic heritage" is ascribed by anthropologists to account for the distinct differences found in Cornwall.[29] These 'differences' were noted and acted upon even in the tenth century, when the West Saxon king Athelstan appears to have treated Cornwall as a distinct nation.[30] Ecclesiastical authority therefore established itself in Cornwall within a very real social matrix of distinct existing patterns and practices. The methods used by the Church and the development of ecclesiastical organisation reflected the social and physical context of Cornwall. To this end, the ecclesiastical development can be related to a particular identity and the generation of a specific sense of the past. The support and maintenance of authority therefore rested upon an idea of 'heritage'.

A good example of how the church in Cornwall maintained its authority through the employment of items related to a particular version of history and with a specific emphasis on heritage and identity, is seen in association with Athelstan's charter of St. Buryan.[31] This Anglo-Saxon charter represents a re-endowment by the new political order of an existing foundation comprising a group of clerics serving the church and possessing the lands of their saint. Importantly, the manner of this charter which grants land to the saint rather than to the followers of the saint, is very unusual for an Anglo-Saxon charter, in that it appears to suggest a kinship group of the saint and reveals a distinctly Cornish diplomatic tradition which paid high regard to pre-English practices of ecclesiastical organisation. The concerns for kinship represent the land-holding basis of an essentially Celtic society, while the whole charter reflects more than just a degree of respect for a previous system. In this sense, aspects of continuity of order and practice from a previous system can be seen to add credence to contemporary authority. This charter acts to re-emphasise elements of existing patterns of organisation. However, by using a specific diplomatic formula that was not ordinary for the new authorities, this charter reveals an important aspect of authority and power being supported with reference to the continuity of older practices.[32] Such claims are endorsed in parallel studies by

people such as Harfield who noted the practice of Norman authorities deliberately maintaining aspects of Anglo-Saxon documentary formulae in order to stress continuity and William's right to the throne.[33]

In order to investigate the more specific allusion to heritage and a particular version of the past however, it is necessary to examine the way the charter of St. Buryan was viewed in the medieval period; how it contributed to a certain identity and how it was used to cement ecclesiastical authority. During the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, St. Buryan was the scene of a power struggle between the Bishop of Exeter and the Crown.[34] It was at this time that the (now lost) original charter was copied out by Episcopal authorities in order to support their case,[35] and Henderson notes that when Bishop Briwere made a visitation to St. Buryan in 1238, he was most careful to honour the 'blessed Beriana, the Virgin of all saints', and he actually recited and confirmed Athelstan's charter.[36] The dispute continued however into the early fourteenth century, and after various threats and actions of excommunication, the Bishop and his retinue again visited the establishment in 1336. Importantly, the Bishop brought with him an interpreter so that his message could be put across to the local population in their own Cornish language.[37] The maintenance of authority through physical presence is obvious in this case, with the solemnity of an ecclesiastical visitation carrying rhetorical force far greater than words ever spoken or written.[38] The use and official communication of a particular history however is also strong, with the reproduction of a pre-Norman charter that was itself largely associated with pre-English arrangements, playing a crucial role in the case. Here, we see the 'memory' of a Celtic saint (Beriana) being invoked in order to win the hearts and minds of the local population. A particular heritage, that was bound up with local identity and associated with existing patterns was employed in the establishment, justification and maintenance of control and authority. The allusion to a specific and local sense of the past was mediated through an interpreter and grounded through the reproduction of a pre-Norman text that demonstrated both the apparent infallibility of the written record and the power of continuity and seeming ever-presence of ecclesiastical authority.

Perhaps one of the most crucial aspects of this affair is the central position of the documentation. The actual charter itself sealed the continuation of a specific identity in the early tenth century,

while the copying down and re-production of this charter played a vital role in the proceedings of the later medieval period. In this respect, the maintenance and apparent permanence of authority can be related to the power and control over writing technology.

With the case of St. Buryan, the use of writing and a specific written formula cemented a link between authority and territory, and was placed within a specific context of a previous social and landscape organisational strategy that reflected Celtic arrangements. The survival of this document in copied form from the fourteenth century represents a heritage, not only of these pre-English elements of organisation, but also of the re-use and re-interpretation of a particular notion of the past that constituted a link between heritage and authority in the later medieval period. The written word represented by such charters exemplified a very secure and potent force of authority and power. Therefore, the technology of the written record should be seen as a key element in the development of bureaucratic control of landscape resources and society.

Trolle-Larsen follows the work of Levi-Strauss when he puts forward the idea of writing being a prime instrument in the consolidation of power, and the facilitation of exploitation and subjugation.[39] "The emergence of writing does not *create* or *cause* social complexity, the rise of the state, urbanism, slavery or freedom. It is, on the other hand, ....an *enabling* factor".[40] When one looks at these processes in more detail, the link between power, writing and the Christian Church in the medieval period is emphasised,[41] and the role of the Church as an authority with a monopoly interest in literacy and therefore on a particular recorded past (or 'heritage') becomes critical. In this respect, literacy allows a society to move beyond the human limits of individual memory and so the monopolisation of the technology and instruments of literacy represents an appropriation of "a society's symbolic resources in religion, philosophy, art and science".[42] In this sense, the power and authority of such an organisation as the Church, rests upon its control of a society's memory and its ability and methods of recording the past.[43]

The example of St. Buryan already highlighted, exhibits how ecclesiastical authority was supported through a particular relation with the past. This theme can be explored further with reference to the archaeology of the site itself. Preston-Jones discovered that the medieval Christian foundation that

was dedicated in the honour of a supposed specific saint, was also established upon an Iron Age site of some significance.[44] Although very few such sites have been investigated archaeologically, a good many of those that have been excavated have revealed evidence of previous site usage of sometimes great significance.[45] In this respect, the desire to acquire extra religious credibility necessitated the re-use of ancient foundations and 'sacred sites'. This idea of continuity, even from pre-Christian patterns and practices echoes St. Gregory's instruction which called for Christian missionaries to 'cleanse heathen shrines and use them as churches'.[46] This re-use and re-interpretation of sites is a crucial and enduring concept. In west Cornwall, even where early sites fell out of use, they were often re-used, sometimes centuries later, supported by a desire to utilise the credibility and religious gravity that was associated with such sites that were mediated through a particular spiritual heritage.[47] Even where Celtic associations were dubious such as at Trewothak in St. Anthony, the increased potency of a 'Celtic' establishment meant that hard evidence of ancient origins was less important than the figurative relation between contemporary Christian worship and a Celtic tradition that held almost mystical qualities.[48] Seen in the context of archaeological theory, traditions became linked to objects and secured their continuity.[49]

A more detailed investigation of the political and landscape organisational context onto which the Christian Church in Cornwall established itself reveals a deep-rooted and consistent continuity of territorial structures.[50] The continuity and re-use of pre-existing structures and practices reflects more than simply institutional inertia and may be related to a distinct strategy that was based upon contemporary notions of heritage and authority. In the context of west Cornwall, pre-existing structures were re-interpreted to suit contemporary demands by successive Anglo-Saxon then Norman regimes which utilised the existing physical structures, a particular sense of the past, and related notions of heritage in order to convey their authority most effectively. Such links with previous systems as can be seen therefore are representative of far more than mere administrative convenience, but are in fact the conscious channels of continuity upon which important elements of further development and change are based. The desire by Christians to be part of an established chain of tradition in both sites and culture, that stretches unbroken to the early Christian missionaries (and even pre-Christian arrangements), is an important theme. Continuity in this sense was an integral part of Christian philosophy, and its consequences in terms of organisational

continuity should be highlighted. The arrangements of the earliest Christians in west Cornwall were embedded within previous notions and inherited by later generations. This inheritance played an important role both in detailed organisational patterns and practices and in the religious psyche of later medieval ecclesiastical authorities in search of spiritual credibility.

The physical continuity of territories and sites is supported by the continuity of the meta-physical aspects of a religion which resorts so heavily to a particular history which is maintained through its influence of the written record and encroachment upon many aspects of life. One of the most important elements through which the ecclesiastical authorities asserted a particular version of the past is through hagiographical accounts. In many ways, these accounts represent a specific and sanctioned folk-memory that was both one of the basic links between a society and its past, and a tool of authority that saw the binding together of historical narrative and contemporary societal organisation.

In early medieval west Cornwall, ecclesiastical authorities moulded their organisation so as to suit that which they found. A hierarchy based upon local and almost familial or personal relationships was generated and saintly legends and appendant hagiographic accounts were developed to reflect these relationships. Whether historically accurate or not, the familial nature of many of the histories of local and often obscure saints is of great importance. The personal relationships suggested between Ss. Levan and Breage for instance,[51] while not necessarily real, played an important part in the local legends and traditions of the Church. The extensive and detailed stories involving the 'Irish' group of saints point toward a familial analogy. The tales of St. Gwinear (or Fingar) or the sisters Ia, Euny and Erth have played a pivotal role in the pastoral supervision of the local people by maintaining a strong identity with both family and territory. Hagiographical accounts were produced for a purpose and supplied the raw material for local identity and memory. In this sense, these stories created more than just a sense of the past, but supported a notion of origin and were used to make sense of the world. The heritage of a martyr or reverence of an earlier age therefore, constituted a powerful tool in contemporary social polity, and served the authority of the Church.

In addition to the spiritual role of hagiographical accounts that were used to support a notion of authority based upon a particular past, such accounts also served a more secular need. Edgar's Hundred Ordinance (*circa* AD 959x963) allowed a third of a lord's tithe to be kept for the maintenance of an existing church which had a burial ground,[52] thereby fuelling the need to find documentation, myth and local legend that supported the credibility of an 'ancient' establishment. Historical narratives, legends and saintly accounts were also crucial in the raising and maintenance of a place of pilgrimage.[53] Another aspect of the importance of hagiographical accounts is displayed in their use and even production for a specific purpose of landscape organisation. Davies and Fouracre for instance, point to the link between writing, hagiography and 'property' when they find "a number of instances of the writing of acts of donation into the contents of hagiographical texts, some of which may indeed have been devised principally for that purpose".[54]

Hagiographical accounts are not innocent stories, and the rituals, services and everyday functions and processes of ecclesiastical authority are not simply about the innocent cure of souls or objective provision of spiritual welfare. Following the ideas about language discussed by Austin among others,[55] hagiographical texts represent a language that acted as 'an agent in the replication and constitution of social relations'. In this respect, hagiographical narratives are part and parcel of a developing body of heritage that constituted an important aspect of a society's mediation with the past. They were a device used to support and maintain ecclesiastical authority, but importantly, they were also an intrinsic and recorded element of social 'memory'. In this sense therefore, they re-enforced an identity, and a continuity with a particular past which enabled the maintenance of societal order and developments in mechanisms of control.

Hagiographies as historical narratives should be seen as re-interpretations of myths and legends that were based on, and placed in, historical fact. They reflect contemporary notions of tradition, authority and the past and so should not be viewed through twentieth century eyes, as tired, illogical and teleological tales of Christian domination and early practice. On the contrary, they are deeply implicated in the religious hegemony of the later medieval period. History played a key role in the institutional development of ecclesiastical and secular structure, patterns and practices. At the same time, ecclesiastical authority played a critical historical role in defining what a conception of

history should be. Hagiographies were constructed and deployed in a specific historical context and therefore reflect an implicit sustenance of power and authority through a privileged and particular view of the past.

Power is related to the control of writing technology, and an implicit authority over how society mediated with its past. In some respects, hagiographical accounts can be related to what Hobsbawm calls 'invented tradition'.[56] Hagiographies are subjective and particular records not of historical *fact* but of a sanctioned *version* of history that was used to legitimise contemporary authority and control patterns. Therefore, hagiographical accounts represent elements which help to compose and weave a discourse of power relations based upon the control of history and the influence on personal identity.

**Heritage, identity and power**

The use of the past as a form and source of power and authority in the medieval period needs to be related to wider ideas about social organisation and sources of identity. Driscoll relates notions of authority to the control over a 'symbolic system' by an elite.[57] In this respect, the involvement of the Church in the sanctioning of certain practices and insignia, the definition of belief structures and the establishment of personalities are bound together in a wider system of control. These ideas can be related to what some authors have described as the 'policing of tradition', whereby aspects of this source of identity are codified, controlled, reformed, suppressed and ritualised.[58] In the context of the medieval period, hagiography and the written word belonged to the authorities and to the Church in particular. It became the discourse in which the 'policing of tradition' was transformed into the 'knowledge of tradition'.[59] In west Cornwall, the generation and control of such 'traditions' was a crucial factor in the development of ecclesiastical organisation, with authority and validity resting upon claims and counter claims of ancient heritage. Hagiographical accounts appeared to play a vital role in the spiritual support of the important pilgrimage site of St. Day for instance. When St. Day's credibility reduced in the fourteenth century, its authority and even material well-being also faded to become an insignificant chapel within the parish of Gwennap.[60]

The notion of continuity therefore should be seen as representing far more than just a persistence of existing patterns and practices for the sake of convenience. Even the idea that newer systems of organisation rest upon previous systems of organisation, tends to diminish the vital importance of how those older forms were perceived, re-used and in some respects, 're-invented' for the purposes of developing claims to authority and control. The existing frameworks, patterns and practices and the articulation of them as 'heritage' through such devices as hagiographical accounts, represent a source of power. Later medieval ecclesiastics for instance, took the inheritance of legends, local allegiance and spiritual influence, and utilised their power for their purposes of extending control and supporting their authority. In this sense, organisational developments such as those associated with processes of territorialisation for instance, were generated and maintained with reference to continuity and a particular notion of heritage.

With respect to the authority of the Church, legitimacy is claimed and believed in on the basis of the sanctity of the order and the attendant forms of control as they have been handed down from the past and 'have always existed'.[61] An unquestioned and enduring permanency is an important source of ecclesiastical authority into which particular traditions and rituals are interwoven. As many authors have shown however, 'tradition' merely relates to authorisation for contemporary control and routine actions in terms of maintenance of order and power structures, and is therefore not a fixed entity across time and space.[62] It is its assumed permanency and familiarity that gives ideas of 'tradition' their power and which therefore generates legitimacy for contemporary authority. "In the platitudes of convention many people sought stability, and in the familiarities of tradition they found stability".[63]

These ideas suggest therefore that it is through the everyday practices and patterns that notions of heritage and authority are generated and replicated. Instead of viewing the medieval Church simply as a consciously exploiting and power-hungry organisation that is cynically manipulating the population for its own ends, the basis of ecclesiastical authority is grounded within everyday action, contemporary 'received wisdom', and the enactment of 'enduring tradition'. The source of authority therefore is found within the demarcations, hierarchies, codes of dress, forms of address

and what Griffiths *et al* call 'a host of other insistent properties'; the 'order of things', which was always and everywhere rehearsed and reinforced.[64]

It is easy to draw a picture of medieval clerics acting concertedly, with twentieth century hindsight, and specific political/economic objectives, but the context of contemporary 'laws and ways', perceptions and practices, must be recognised. In many respects, we must be sure to make room for contemporary 'faith'. Social order in the medieval world for instance, was not meant to be 'fair' in a twentieth century understanding of the word, and so notions of authority and heritage need to be placed within the context of medieval identity and contemporary notions of order.

In west Cornwall, developing ecclesiastical authority can be related to contemporary notions of heritage and a particular perception of a sanctioned past that was communicated through such devices as hagiographical narratives. A theme of continuity and tradition therefore bound together ideas of power and authority with a notion of identity and everyday practice. Ecclesiastical authority was maintained through the control and mediation of a particular past that reflected notions of identity. In this respect, power and authority can be related to the 'received wisdom' of unexamined assumptions and to what Bourdieu terms *habitus*. Using the ideas of Bourdieu, we can acknowledge the significance of human agency within practices and assumptions which are yet still structured by the objective constraints of the medieval context.

Bourdieu's 'theory of practice' can explain what Bentley terms the "affective focus of ethnic identity" upon which notions of heritage and therefore authority are built.[65] The generation of ecclesiastical authority through mediation with a particular history therefore, does not pre-suppose a grasp of class consciousness on the part of the elite group, nor the cynical manipulation of the 'gullible masses' to act in ways not in their own interests. Internal organisation and institutional power is sustained, supported and reproduced through personal relations that sought stability within a particular heritage. It is the notion of *habitus* therefore that forms the essence of social identity, knowledge of the past and the legitimisation of institutional authority. The *habitus* acquired in medieval society underlies the structuring of religious experience and the reception and assimilation of the specifically pedagogic message and authoritative *version* of the 'past'.

Bourdieu notes that the "whole trick of pedagogic reason lies precisely in the way it extorts the essential while seeming to demand the insignificant: obtaining the respect for form and forms of respect which constitute the most visible and at the same time the best-hidden (because most 'natural') manifestation of submission to the established order".[66] In many respects, ecclesiastical authority fashions, and is itself fashioned by, the rituals, recognition, deference and subservience that was expected as 'natural' in the medieval Church. Religious experience, identity and authority are therefore bound together through the mediation of unexamined assumptions about heritage and a particular version of the past.

**Conclusions**

This paper has a variety of implications both for the interpretation and explanation of certain medieval patterns and practices, and for the methods and ways used to analyse such phenomena. Three areas of concern appear to be especially addressed both implicitly and explicitly. Firstly, aspects of identity, sources of power and the nature of authority have been examined within the context of ecclesiastical development in west Cornwall. In this respect, the institutional evolution of ecclesiastical organisation has been linked to notions of contemporary identity and the nature of ecclesiastical authority has been explained in relation to specific sources of power. Secondly, the way the medieval world is perceived has been brought into question. The critical importance of contextualised analyses is especially highlighted. Thirdly, the area of 'heritage studies' has been broadened. The partiality of heritage and tradition has been examined in relation to wider structures of authority, technological change and organisational development, within a pre-modern context.

The implicit pedagogy associated with medieval ecclesiastical authority was capable of instilling a whole cosmology, an ethic, a metaphysic, a political philosophy, and other elements that are essentially related to a notion of identity, through insignificant injunctions and practices.[67] Hagiographical accounts therefore constitute a discourse of power that was associated with the formation and replication of a particular *habitus* that corresponded with ecclesiastical power structures. The notion that the Church possessed a deep civilisation going back to the earliest missionaries and beyond was essential to both their apparent authority and their own sense of

categorical superiority.[68] The Church therefore possessed discourses which were connected with the maintenance of authority and which served as devices of power at a variety of levels. Power structures therefore were established and reproduced with reference to 'ritual strategies and strategic rituals'.[69] In practice, strict adherence to times for prayer for instance, became unquestioned daily routine and a 'natural' ritual.[70] In this respect, the Church had a very large input into the construction of the medieval *habitus* through controlling knowledge of, and mediation with, the past and having interest in the daily routine of society, and it is the *habitus* that "weaves the veil of enchantment which allows differentiated social formations to reproduce themselves".[71] Messages of what in some senses can be called a 'subliminal hegemony', were represented by visual displays and demonstrations, and communicated through such devices as hagiographical narratives and a physical assumed permanency of buildings and sites.

The Church used the material culture and 'heritage' from previous systems in order to legitimise their own authority. A theme of continuity is thus an important aspect of understanding organisational development; 'customs' were not written onto a blank sheet. Contextualisation however, is also critical. "We have tended to clothe the Middle Ages in the cloak of our own uniformity, a task made easier by the medieval church's own literate and self-interested attempts to project and brutally enforce a myth of Christian Catholicism".[72] The importance of such contextualisation is stressed even more so when one recognises that time and space are not merely environments or arenas of human existence, but a 'matrix through which social life is threaded'.[73] The notion of *habitus* is used therefore in order to achieve a deeper exploration of the nature of authority, elements of identity and concepts of the past which are crucially grounded within the objective limits of medieval society and material structure.

A final element of this paper has been the examination of notions of 'heritage' and 'tradition'. Their context subjectivity has been exposed and their function has been related to authorisation for current routine actions in terms of maintenance of order and power structures. Heritage is not innocent; it is a value-loaded concept and constitutes a discourse of power. This source of power was associated with a particular 'official' historical narrative in order to maintain the institutional hegemony of the Church. Monopolisation of spiritual care and writing technology went hand in

hand with the presentation of an enduring and specific past that was essentially a fantasy.[74] In this sense, the notion of a 'timeless' history can be related to Bond and Gilliam's idea of a dominant history.[75] They draw a picture of this history being general, persuasive and impenetrable and relate it to Levi-Strauss's notion of dominant history being "a machine suppressing time". Such ideas were also explored by Herzfeld, who drew on the work of Foucault when he asserted that "history does not just ideologically legitimise the *status quo*; it also generates an atemporality that validates the seeming permanence of the *status quo*".[76]

## Endnote

[1]  A Southampton parent interviewed by Kathy Ermmott, A child's perspective on the past; influences of home, media and school, in R. Layton (ed.), *Who Needs the Past? Indigenous Values and Archaeology* (Routledge; London 1989) 21-44, 28.

[2]  For instance, D. Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge University Press; Cambridge 1985), R. Hewison, *The Heritage Industry* (Methuen; London 1987), Layton (ed.) op. cit., and P. Gruffudd, Heritage as national identity; histories and prospects of the national pasts, in D.T. Herbert (ed.), *Heritage, Tourism and Society* (Mansell; London 1995) 49-67.

[3]  Lowenthal, *op. cit.,* 43-4.

[4]  F.F.J. Schouten, Heritage as historical reality, in Herbert (ed.), *op. cit.,* 21-31, 23.

[5]  See E. Hobsbawm and T Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press; Cambridge 1983), Lowenthal *op. cit.*, P. Wright *On Living in an Old Country; The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (Verso; London 1985), Hewison, *op. cit.*, D. Hardy 'Historical geography and heritage studies' *Area* **20.4** (1988) 333-338, and R.A. Butlin, *Historical Geography; Through the Gates of Space and Time* (Edward Arnold; London 1993) 145-6.

[6]  Lowenthal, *op. cit.,* 185.

[7]  Gruffudd, *loc. cit.*, 50.

[8]  For instance, Dirks relates the construction of the nation state to both the role of history and the modernist conception of what history should be. N. Dirks, History as a sign of the modern *Public Culture* **2** (1990) 25-32, 25.

[9]  Hardy, *loc. cit.*, 333.

[10]  Dirks, *loc. cit.*, 25-6.

[11]  E. Colson, *Tradition and contract; the Problem of Order* (Heinemann; London 1975) 76.

[12]  E. Hobsbawm, Introduction; inventing traditions, in Hobsbawm and Ranger (eds.), *op. cit.*, 1-14, 9-10.

[13]  *ibid.*, 4-5.

[14]  G.C. Bond and A. Gilliam, Introduction, in G.C. Bond and A. Gilliam (eds.), *Social Construction of the Past; Representation as Power* (Routledge; London 1994) 1-22, 1.

[15]  M. Herzfeld, *Anthropology Through the Looking Glass; Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe* (Cambridge University Press; Cambridge 1987) 44.

[16]  The 'politics of custom' are discussed further in K. Wrightson, The politics of the parish in early modern England, in P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle (eds.), *The Experience of Authority in early Modern England* (Macmillan; Basingstoke 1996) 10-46, 22-5.

[17]  G. Duby, *The Legend of Bouvines* (Polity Press; Cambridge 1990).

[18]  *ibid.*, 157.

[19]  *ibid.*, 155.

[20]  G.C. Bentley, Ethnicity and practice, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, **29.1** (1987) 24-55, 25.

[21]  *ibid.*, 26.

[22]  *ibid.*, 27-8.

[23]  P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge University Press; Cambridge 1977) 72.

[24]  *ibid.*, 85.

[25]  See Bentley, *loc. cit.*, 28, for ideas of 'habits'.

[26]  Bourdieu, *op. cit.*, 94.

[27]  Bourdieu, *op. cit.*, 95.

[28]  R.D. Sack, *Human Territoriality; Its Theory and History*, (Cambridge University Press; Cambridge 1986) 93.

[29]  R.G. Harvey, M.T. Smith, S. Sherren, L. Bailey and S.J. Hyndman, How Celtic are the Cornish?, *Man.* **21.2** (1986) 177-201, 177.

[30]  See D.C. Harvey, *Territoriality and the Territorialisation of West Cornwall*, (Unpublished PhD thesis; University of Exeter 1996) for a wider and more detailed discussion of Cornwall (especially chapter 2).

[31]  The St. Buryan Charter is dated AD 943, though claims to herald from the reign of Athelstan (AD 924-939). Exeter Diocesan Record Office, *Register Commune Johannis de Grandison 1329, fo25v (saec XIV)*. Although no original exists, its form is inconsistent with later medieval forgeries. Transcription and copying mistakes can account for irregularities, such as the obviously wrong date, and so despite some problems, this charter does seem to be a genuine document. See L. Olson, *Early Monasteries in Cornwall* (Boydell Press; Bury St. Edmonds 1989) 79, for more detail on the provenance of this document and Harvey, *Territoriality*, 156-7 for further discussion.

[32]  Other notable charters of Lanlawren and Lanow also appear to support the importance of this distinct diplomatic tradition during this period. See O. Padel, Two new pre-Conquest charters for Cornwall, *Cornish Studies,* **4/5** (1978) 15-27, and Olson, *op. cit.*, 81-3.

[33]  C.G. Harfield, Control of resources in the medieval period, in J. Gledhill, B. Bender and M. Trolle-Larsen (eds.), *State and Society; The Emergence and Development of Social Hierarchy and Political Centralisation* (Routledge; London 1988) 137-48, 140.

[34]  The authority of the Crown eventually 'won the day' and St. Buryan became a peculiar deanery outside of Episcopal control until the nineteenth century.

[35]  Olson, *op. cit.*, 79.

[36]  C. Henderson, *Essays in Cornish History* (Clarendon Press; Oxford 1935), 98-9.

[37]  The significance of the presence of an interpreter is stressed when one considers that at this time, a large proportion of any actual church service would have been conducted in Latin and literally understood by very few of any congregation.

[38] For a discussion of such devices of communication of authority and order, see Griffiths *et al.* (eds.), *op. cit.*, especially the Introduction, 2-6.

[39] M. Trolle-Larsen 'Literacy and social complexity' in Gledhill *et al* (eds.), *op. cit.*, 173-191.

[40] *ibid.*, 187.

[41] See for instance, the Church's role in charter production and dispute settlement as discussed in W. Davies and P. Fouracre, The role of writing in the resolution and recording of disputes, in W. Davies and P. Fouracre (eds.), *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge University Press; Cambridge 1986) 207-14. Also S. Driscoll, Power and authority in early historic Scotland, in Gledhill *et al.* (eds.), *op. cit.*, 215-36, 222.

[42] Bourdieu, *op. cit.*, 187.

[43] The theme of the Church's control over these devices and the notion of 'writing as power' will be returned to in association with the discussion of hagiographical accounts.

[44] A. Preston-Jones, Road widening at St. Buryan and Pelynt churchyards, *Cornish Archaeology* **26** (1987) 153-60, 158.

[45] In west Cornwall, archaeological evidence reveals pre-Christian activity, often of a supposed ceremonial purpose (such as burial practice) at the sites of Merther Uny, Phillack, Constantine and Lelant. See Harvey, *Territoriality*, chapter 4, C. Thomas, Merther Uny, Wendron, *Cornish Archaeology* **7** (1968) 81-2, and A. Preston-Jones and P. Rose, Medieval Cornwall, *Cornish Archaeology* **25** (1986) 135-85, 155.

[46] See J. Blair, Minster churches in the landscape, in D. Hooke (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (Blackwell; Oxford 1988) 35-58, 50.

[47] St. Augustine's chapel in Binnerton for instance is an early site re-used as a domestic chapel, where-as Merther-Derwa in Camborne, appears to be an ancient site that was re-used as a trades-guild chapel. See Harvey, *Territoriality*, 181.

[48] At Trewothak there is no hard evidence of an actual pre-English foundation of any significance, but much was made of dubious reports of such in the later medieval period. See C. Henderson, The 109 ancient parishes of the four western hundreds of Cornwall (Penwith, Kirrier, Powder and Pydar), (1924) reprinted in the *Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall* (in four parts) **2.3-3.3** (1955-60) 1-497, 17.

[49] Bond and Gilliam, *loc. cit.*, 14.

[50] See Harvey, *Territoriality*, chapter 4. Also D.C. Harvey, The evolution of territoriality and societal transitions in west Cornwall, *Landscape History* **19** (1997) in press.

[51] They were apparently brother and sister.

[52] Article 2, *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England* (Record Commission) 263.

[53] In west Cornwall for instance, pilgrimage sites such as that of St. Day and St. Germoe were heavily supported by such accounts. See Harvey, *Territoriality*, 319, 322.

[54] Davies and Fouracre, *loc. cit.*, 213.

[55] D. Austin, The "proper study" of medieval archaeology, in D. Austin and L. Alcock (eds.), *From the Baltic to the Black Sea* (Routledge; London 1990) 9-42, 34. Austin utilises the ideas of both Bourdieu and Giddens in his synthesis of theory in medieval archaeology.

[56] Hobsbawm, *loc. cit.*.

[57] Driscoll, *loc. cit.*.

[58] See Dirks, *loc. cit.*, or M. Rowlands, The politics of identity in archaeology, in Bond and Gilliam (eds.), *op. cit.*, 129-43, 138.

[59] Dirks, *loc. cit.*, 28.

[60] Harvey, *Territoriality*, 157-8, 322.

[61] Colson, *op. cit.*, 76. Colson refers to Max Weber's concept of traditional authority.

[62] See Hobsbawm and Ranger, *op. cit.*, and especially A.K. Case, Perceptions of the past among north Queensland Aboriginal people; the intrusion of Europeans and consequent social change, in Layton, (ed.), *op. cit.*, 169-79, 170.

[63] P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle, Introduction, in Griffiths *et al* (eds.), *op. cit.*, 1-9, 6.

[64] *ibid.*, 3.

[65] Bentley, *loc. cit.*, 39-40.

[66] Bourdieu, *op. cit.*, 94-5.

[67] See Bourdieu's idea of the hidden persuasion of such pedagogic messages. *ibid.*, 94.

[68] This idea extends from Shack examination of colonial identity in later periods. W.A. Shack, The construction of antiquity and the egalitarian principle: Social constructions of the past in the present, in Bond and Gilliam (eds.), *op. cit.*, 113-18, 114.

[69] Bourdieu, *op. cit.*, 41.

[70] See E. Hobsbawm, On the watch, *New York Review of Books* **30.19** (December 8th 1983) 35-36, 36 for some discussion of the organisation and control of time.

[71] Bentley, *loc. cit.*, 42.

[72] D. Austin and L. Alcock, Introduction, in Austin and Alcock (eds.), *op. cit.*, 1-6, 2.

[73] See A. Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory* (Macmillan; Basingstoke 1979) chapter 6.

[74] Gruffudd, *loc. cit.*, 50. Gruffudds stresses the notion that "all national pasts are essentially fantasies".

[75] Bond and Gilliam, *loc. cit.*, 11-12.

[76] Herzfeld, op. cit., 44.