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THE CANONIZATION PROCESS OF SAINT ELISABETH
AND CONTEMPORARY CANON LAW

The canonization process of Saint Elisabeth of the Árpád dynasty ended on 27 May 1235 with her solemn canonization.

The present study aimed at exploring the possible divergences and defects of the process with regard to the contemporary state of the canonization process, itself still not fully developed at that time, and, in case such divergences and defects could be grasped, at pointing at the section of the process during which anything irregular could happen. Finally, it was seeking answer to the question whether the process itself, in terms of its whole course and final result, was in keeping with contemporary prescriptions.

In order to establish the news of holy life and miracles there was no need of an officially commissioned three-member jury. This was only necessary for the examination of the truth of such news. The process of canonization could also be initiated by others than the local bishop.

As for the eventual formal or procedural defects that emerged in the present case, it can generally be stated that they either proved unimportant from the perspective of the validity of the process (such as the fact that the petition of the prelates was not properly sealed at the start of the case, for other, impeccable petitions were also at hand, for instance that of Conrad of Marburg), or concerned the activity of the first jury. As the second jury complied with all the necessary requirements, the regularity and validity of the process were beyond any doubt. The possible shortcomings of the first jury were the following:

Since the letter of pope Gregory IX with the incipit *Visibilium et invisibilium*, which established the jury, did not contain the traditional clause authorising the members of the jury to proceed individually as well, the fact that the members of the first jury interrogated witnesses individually could be regarded as irregular.

On the basis of the documentation left by the first jury, it cannot always be established who exactly presided to individual interrogations.

In his letter mentioned above, pope Gregory IX decreed that the documents of the examination conducted by the first jury should be forwarded to the papal curia after a new commission. But the acts were in fact forwarded to the Pope without any such special commission, which is proved by the letter composed by those who undertook the examination (*Epistola examinatum miraculorum sancte Elyzabeth ad dominum papam*). The second jury, however, was authorised, and even commanded, to forward the documents to the Pope in the very letter (Gregory IX, *Ne possimus argui*), which established the jury itself.

The first jury was ordered, in the letter *Visibilium et invisibilium* itself, to investigate the life of Elisabeth as well. Yet no such investigation took place in this phase of the process. The life of Elisabeth is only contained by the brief *Summa vite*, which Conrad of Marburg attached to his initial petition, and later appears in the testimony of the three „maidservants” (*Libellus de dictis quatuor ancillarum*), which was made before the second jury.

The case was expedited quickly and in accordance with the customs in vigour in the first third of the 13th century. The *translatio* of the earthly remains of the deceased took place not by virtue of an episcopal measure prior to canonization, but after the papal canonization. The enthusiastic tone of the letter communicating the canonization, and the dynamism of the process itself, can be regarded as indications of pope Gregory’s personal interest and esteem.