This database is designed to help me create a DH conference presentation I submitted to ICMS 61. The presentation relies on all 4 units we will be doing in class this semester. Overall, it examines the continued ecclesiastical relationship between Gaelic Ireland and the church in Scotland from 1200-1500, paying special attention to the fallout of the English invasion of Ireland in 1169 and the reforms of the 11th and 12th centuries. I plan to use hagiography to set the stage, so to speak, and set up a comparative analysis of early Christian religious archetypes transmitted between the Church in Ireland and the fledgling Churches developing in the various kingdoms of what is now Scotland. Building on archaeologist Sally Foster’s call to further include the peripheries of northwest Europe in studies of the medieval church, this project endeavors to center Scotland and the Scottish Church as an autonomous player in the conversation about shared practices, rather than a passive organization acted upon by outside forces from Ireland and Britain.[[1]](#footnote-1) The hagiographical database is just the first step of this analysis, which will use these religious archetypes and the trends demonstrated in the hagiographic texts of the early medieval period in Scotland and Ireland, and compare them to monastic and ecclesiastical texts from the later medieval period, 1200-1500, to see how this early cultural interconnectedness survives the upheavals of the Viking Age and the Gregorian Reformation.

The database consists of a table collecting biographical information of saints venerated in medieval Scotland and medieval Ireland, a table laying out controlled vocabulary surrounding the miracles performed in the various hagiographic texts being analyzed, a table to keep track of sources, and an events table, which also acts as my join table. All 3 other tables are connected to that one using foreign keys. The events table tracks specific miracles performed in the extant *Lives*, in Latin, English, and Irish, of each saint. Eventually it will also include later additions to hagiographic narratives of the saints such as those collected in the *Martyrology of Oengus*. The database was built in VSCode using SQL and Python, but I have been using DB browser to enter my data. If this database necessitates further entry when I shift my focus to my dissertation, I plan on building an app to do that. I don’t really like DB Browser, and I don’t think the SQL code is easy to alter or change in the browser itself. I don’t feel confident changing it in VSCode, because I am concerned it won’t transfer to the browser correctly.

The total list was 70 individuals long. For the scope of this assignment and the larger project, I decided to cut the list in half. First, I considered a series of questions. These questions were both practical and methodological. Because I am considering the maintenance of earlier cultural ties after 1200, I removed any saints whose *Lives* occurred later than the second half of the 11th century.[[2]](#footnote-2) Then, I made sure to include saints like Palladius, Brigid, and Brendan, who overlapped across the sources. I removed saints not native to the British Isles. Margaret is the exception here, because she is a member of the English royal family who happened to be born during a period of exile.[[3]](#footnote-3) Finally, any saints without an extant English translation of their hagiography were removed for future examinations. This final consideration is practical in two ways: one, Latin translation requires time not conducive to a semester long project. Two, topic modeling in Latin is complicated, and text analysis is also challenging. I intentionally saved the original list before cuts were made. This way, if my dissertation uses this database, the 35 saints that I cut have been appropriately recorded for ease of later addition.

As I worked, approximately 10 more saints were removed. Some, like Convallus, were removed because the primary source they appeared in did not contain enough information to identify them in a secondary source. Others, like Machutes, may or may not have been a repeat or alternate spelling, but the primary sources were not enough to confirm or deny this. My final list of saints ended up being about 25 individuals long. Of these 25, only 5 Scottish saints had extant English translations in any of my primary sources. To avoid skewing the data and overrepresenting Irish saints or overrepresenting Irish female saints, I chose 3 Irish *Lives* with criteria in mind that complimented St. Kentigern, St. Servanus, and St. Margaret. I chose Brigid because she is most like Margaret in terms of the scope of their venerations. Brendan’s *Life* is similar in length to St. Kentigern’s, so I used his as well. Finally, Abban and St. Servanus were both active slightly earlier than others, and their *Lives* are of similar length. Abban was active in the 2nd century, and Servanus died sometime in the 500s. Many of the other earlier saints that might have complimented Servanus are women, and I wanted to keep the ratio of women the same in both groups, so Abban’s *Life* was my compromise.

My first query is admittedly not as exciting as I think querying this database could be, but the database itself was such an undertaking to create that I chose to keep it simple for my initial exploration to best feel out the structure within the timeline of this assignment. I am admittedly not very comfortable with SQL, especially in the Python environment, and am still wary of breaking the database structure. The intent of the hagiographical database is to demonstrate the archetype of religious exchange, but I noticed an interesting spatial trend that I thought could be effectively queried using the Saints information data. Almost every saint was born somewhere in Ireland, but a regional pattern was beginning to emerge. Leinster and Munster, two provinces in Ireland, appeared as frequent birthplaces for saints. I wanted to pull them out of the table and analyze the percentage of saints in the database with birthplaces listed specifically as Leinster or Munster. I wrote this as two queries, so that I could arrange them by sex.[[4]](#footnote-4) Only one female saint was born in either place. 3 male saints were born in Leinster, and 2 were born in Munster. This provides an avenue for further research: Why are those locations significantly overrepresented by male saints, and what is happening there to produce so many saints overall?

I knew when I began work on this database that it would likely function more as a study tool than a stand-alone research project. Moving forward, I am interested in learning more about creating visualizations with SQL and Python. I think an interesting avenue for further research as well would be the gendered aspect of miracles. This would necessitate adding more women to the Events table, so this would be something to do after this particular project is complete.

1. Foster citation [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Gregory 7 begins his project of reform in the late 11th century, changing the dynamic of the religious landscape in Ireland especially. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Britannica Margaret of Scotland [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. I did leave copilot on while writing my queries. It was showing suggestions, but before I accepted any, mostly just a reminder to print the query or shift my select commands around, I double checked in my notes. I have cited copilot in the works cited. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)