The Life and Cult of St. Abbán: A Dossier Study

Ellen Elizabeth Ganly

PhD Degree

Maynooth University

Department of Early Irish (Sean-Ghaeilge)

September 2020

Head of Department Prof. David Stifter

Supervisor Dr. Elizabeth Boyle

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Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to express gratitude to my PhD supervisor Elizabeth Boyle for her invaluable support, encouragement and for the sound advice she has always offered throughout this candidature. I would also like to thank my internal and external examiners Deborah Hayden and Elva Johnston for their constructive comments and advice. I am very grateful also to David Stifter for appointing me Research Assistant on the Chronologicon Hibernicum (Chron-Hib) Project and for all of his help throughout my PhD. Thanks also to all of the staff and scholars of the Early Irish (Sean-Ghaeilge) Department. Outside of the Early Irish Department, I owe many thanks to Ronan Foley from the Geography Department for kindly offering to create GIS maps for my project. Thanks also to Micheal Bolger. Outside of Maynooth, I would like to thank Barry Lewis for sharing with me his interest in my research topic and for the insightful conversations. I must also say a huge thanks to my family and Claudio for their consistent care, support and understanding throughout the course of this research.

Dedication

In Memory of the Late

Dr. Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin

Abstract

This thesis is the first comprehensive study of the cult and textual profile of the Medieval Irish saint, Abbán. It presents a close analysis of the saint's hagiographical dossier and comparatively examines his record in the medieval Irish genealogies, martyrologies and litanies. This research is conducted through five chapters, each of which is arranged in line with the chronological order of Abbán's life. Matters concerning the saint's ancestry are the main point of focus in Chapter 1: this chapter centres primarily on a range of genealogical entries and pedigree lists, which are then compared and contrasted with some of the hagiographical evidence for his ancestry. Chapters 2-4 deal with hagiographical evidence for Abbán's monastic career, his cult in Ireland and overseas and also offer an examination of the textual history of his biographical account or *Vita*. Several key themes emerge, particularly the question of whether the extant sources reflect the merging of two geographically distinct cults of the saint; or whether two separate saints of the same name been merged into a single composite individual. These chapters also argue that the earliest extant Latin Life of St. Abbán was drawing on earlier sources which no longer survive. In Chapter 5, matters concerning Abbán's death and two feast-days (16 March and 27 October) are brought to the fore, for which the martyrologies are the main source of evidence. Normally, a saint's feast-day commemorates the anniversary of his/her death, meaning it is not possible for two feast-days to commemorate the same event. Chapter 5 argues that both feast-days may represent the separate interests of Abbán's two primary foundations: Moyarney (Co. Wexford) and Killabban (Co. Laois). As Abbán's Latin Life is untranslated, this thesis also provides a detailed English summary of each section of the Life, as an Appendix.

Abbreviations

BA   *Betha Abáin*, in *Bethada náem nÉrenn*, 2 Vols. Ed. & Trans. Charles Plummer, 1922 (Clarendon Press, Oxford).

BB   *The Book of Ballymote*, MS 23 P 12 (536), in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.

BLc   *The Book of Lecan*, MS 23 P 2, in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.

BLcRawl.   *The Book of Lecan* Material (ff. 34Ra 1-40Vc 35) in the Lacuna of *Rawlinson B 502* (ff. 51 Ra 1-52Ri 56).

BnÉ   *Bethada náem nÉrenn*, The Lives of the Saints of Ireland, 2 Vols. Ed. & Trans. Charles Plummer, 1922 (Clarendon Press, Oxford).

Bóroma   *An Bóroma (The Cattle Tribute)*, in *The Book of Leinster*, Vol. 5 of 6. Ed R.I. Best & O.J. Bergin (Vol. 6. Ed Anne O'Sullivan), 1954-1983, (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, Dublin).

BUíMh.   *The Book of Uí Mhaine*, MS D ii 1 (1225), in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.

CGH   *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, 1 Vol. Ed. M.A. O'Brien, 1976 (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, Dublin).

CGSH   *Corpus Genealogiarum et Sanctorum Hiberniae*, Ed. Pádraig Ó Riain, 1985 (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies).

FÓ   *Félire Óengusso Céli Dé: The Martyrology of Oengus the Culdee*, Ed. & Trans. Whitley Stokes, 1905 (Harrison and Sons, London).

FÓComm.   *Félire Óengusso Commentary*, in *Félire Óengusso Céli Dé: The Martyrology of Oengus the Culdee*, Ed. & Trans. Whitley Stokes, 1905 (Harrison and Sons, London).

Grev. MU   *The Grevenus of Cologne Copy of the Martyrology of Usuard*, in *Martyrologium Usuardi Monachi*, in *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae*, June, 6. Ed. J.B. Sollerius, 1714-1717 (Societatis Jesu Theologi, Antwerp).

GRSH   *Genealogiae Regum et Sanctorum Hiberniae*, Ed. Paul Walsh, 1918 (Records Society, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth).

Laud. M. 610   *Laud Miscellany 610* Manuscript, (1132), in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

LBrc   *Leabhar Breac*, MS 23 P 16, in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.

LGÉ   *Lebár Gabála Érenn* (The Book of the Invasions of Ireland)

LL   *The Book of Leinster*, MS 1339 (H 2. 18), in Trinity College Dublin.

LLdip.   *The Book of Leinster*, 6 Vols. Ed. Richard Irvine Best, Anne O'Sullivan, 1983 (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, Dublin).

LMnG   *Leabhar Mór na nGenealach, The Great Book of Irish Genealogies*, 5 Vols., Ed. & Trans. Nollaig Ó Muraíle, 2003-2004 (De Búrca, Dublin).

MC   *The Martyrology of Cashel*, Ed. Pádraig Ó Riain, 2002 (Henry Bradshaw Society, London).

MD   *The Martyrology of Donegal*, Ed. William Reeves & James Henthorn Todd & Trans. John O'Donovan, 1864 (The Irish Archaeological and Celtic Society, Dublin)

MDr   *The Martyrology of Drummond/The Drummond Missal*, Ed. Pádraig Ó Riain, 2002 (Henry Bradshaw Society, London)

MG   *The Martyrology of Gorman*, Ed. & Trans. Whitley Stokes, 1895 (Henry Bradshaw Society, London).

MGgls.   *The Glosses of the Martyrology of Gorman*, Ed. & Trans. Whitley Stokes, 1895 (Henry Bradshaw Society, London).

MK   *The Martyrology of Killeen*, in *Feastdays of the Saints A History of Irish Martyrologies*, Ó Riain P., 2006 (Sociètè des Bollandistes, Brussels).

MReg   *The Martyrology of Schottenmönche of St. Jakob in Regensburg*, in *Feastdays of the Saints A History of Irish Martyrologies*, Ó Riain P., 2006 (Sociètè des Bollandistes, Brussels).

MRW	*The Martiloge of Richard Whytford*, in *The Martiloge in Englysshe after the use of the Chirche of Salisbury…with Addicyons*, Ed. F. Procter & E.S. Dewick, 1893 (Henry Bradshaw Society 3, London).
MRW.Add	*The Additions from the Martiloge of Richard Whytford*, in *The Martiloge in Englysshe after the use of the Chirche of Salisbury…with Addicyons*, Ed. F. Procter & E.S. Dewick, 1893 (Henry Bradshaw Society 3, London).
MT	*The Martyrology of Tallaght*, Ed. R.I Best & H. J. Lawlor, 1929 Repr. 2010 (Boydell Press, London)
MTgr	*The Martyrology of Tegernsee*, in *Feastdays of the Saints A History of Irish Martyrologies*, Ó Riain P., 2006 (Socîetè des Bollandistes, Brussels).
MTr	*The Martyrology of Turin* Ed. Pádraig Ó Riain, 2002 (Henry Bradshaw Society, London)
Reg.FÓ	*The Regensburg Manuscript Version of Félire Óengusso*
TH	*Topographia Hibernica*, in O'Meara, J.J. 1951. (Trans.) *Topography of Ireland Giraldus Cambrensis newly translated from the earliest MS*. Dundalgan Press, Dundalk.
VSA	*Vita Sancti Abbani*
VSA(D)	*Vita Sancti Abbani (Dubliniensis* Version*)*, in *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*. 2 Vols. Ed. Charles Plummer, 1910 (Clarendon Press, Oxford).
VSA (S)	*Vita Sancti Abbani (Salmanticensis* Version*)*, in *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae ex Codice olim Salmanticensi nunc Bruxellensi*, 1 Vol. Ed. William Heist 1965 (Socîetè des Bollandistes, Brussels)
VSH(D)	*Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*. 2 Vols. Ed. Charles Plummer, 1910 (Clarendon Press, Oxford).
VSH (S)	*Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae ex Codice olim Salmanticensi nunc Bruxellensi*, 1. Vol. Ed. William Heist 1965 (Socîetè des Bollandistes, Brussels).

Introduction

This study offers a contextual examination of the cult and textual record of St. Abbán. This record concerns hagiographical material, but also a variety of other genres, most notably the medieval Irish genealogies and martyrologies. These textual sources are chronologically wide-ranging, some of them originating in the ninth century, whilst others are as late as the seventeenth.[1] The purpose of combining this variety of evidence is to provide an exhaustive dossier of St. Abbán, which has hitherto never been undertaken.[2] Adopting this approach will enable us to consider all aspects of Abbán's envisaged life and the manner in which his identity was commemorated and documented into the historical record. Though this thesis focuses on multiple textual genres, Abbán's hagiographical dossier (or Abbán's Life) is by far, the most significant. It preserves the longest and most detailed extant written account of the saint and is an integral component to all five chapters of this thesis. On a broader scale however, hagiography tends to be the main source of evidence for saints. This is because saints' Lives are written to depict their subject as a Christian role-model.[3] Thus, to examine the cult of any given saint, one must firstly appreciate the significance of saints and their intrinsic relationship with hagiography.

Saints: Role and Identity

Throughout early medieval Insular and Continental Europe and its peripheries, saints were among the most memorable embodiments of Christianity. Saints made a crucial impact on the growth and spread of the religion from the second century onwards throughout the Roman Empire. This is particularly due to their original role as Christian martyrs, one of the earliest being the Bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp, who was martyred 'at some time in the years 150-80'.[4] As Robert Bartlett has noted, a martyr was an individual 'who died for their faith, tortured and killed in an elaborate public way typical of imperial Roman civilisation'.[5] Such martyrs were

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[1] These dates do not apply to the manuscripts in which these sources are preserved. Details on the manuscript history of these sources will be addressed where necessary throughout this thesis.

[2] The most well-known scholarly attention St. Abbán has received up until this point was from Pádraig Ó Riain, see: Ó Riain, *St. Abbán*, pp. 159-170.

[3] Cf. Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*, p. 1, which notes that Irish hagiography, 'like all works of hagiography, was designed to depict its subject as an exemplar of holiness'.

[4] Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, p. 4, fn. 3. Records of this incident of martyrdom are recorded in *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, see: Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, pp. 2-20. Cf. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, p. 128, fn. 13 which remarks upon the apocalyptic themes from the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*.

[5] Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, p. 3. Cf. pp. 4-7 for examples of martyrs from the Roman Empire, who subsequently became canonised. Moreover, as the term 'martyrology' indicates, they were calendars which originally recorded the death dates of martyrs.

subsequently canonised within ecclesiastical institutions throughout Christendom.[6] But it was not only martyrs who became saints: what later characterised an individual as a 'saint' was the holy and often ascetic lifestyle the saint lived, preaching the word of God and the founding of churches and monasteries, from where a cult of that saint could emerge after his/her death.[7] These characteristics were moulded into storylines and anecdotes for biographical accounts (saints' Lives) of these saints, which were subsequently intended to teach society the value of the Christian faith via depictions of the saint exercising works of God, such as healing the ill or inflicted and the enactment of miracles.[8]

However, the significance of saints went beyond the pursuit of moral exemplars. As Peter Brown has demonstrated, saints were also interpreted as gateways through which the living could interact with the deceased in Heaven.[9] As Christian piety expanded throughout Europe, a growing desire to understand death and the afterlife also became increasingly clear. Tombs and graves of saints and martyrs were employed as intermediary sources through which the saint/martyr could enable the living to communicate with the deceased.[10] Towards the end of the fourth century, people began to consider how saints could intercede on behalf of people.[11] An interesting example concerns the death of an eighteen-month-old baby named Julia Florentina from Sicily, who was buried within the shrine of the martyrs.[12] The idea of burying her within such close proximity to such important Christian figures stemmed from the belief that she would reach the afterlife and be protected by the saints and martyrs in Heaven.[13] The

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[6] See for example: Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, pp. 57-64, which provides a historical review of the significance and various instances of canonisation, that being, the acting of declaring a deceased individual a saint.

[7] From the perspective of Irish hagiography, see: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*, p. 4, which explains that the founding of churches was also a necessary practise for an individual to undertake, in order to become a saint. It would have been the local community(ies) of the saint who regarded the individual as a saint and such belief would subsequently have 'spread outwards'.

[8] See for example a scene from the Life of the Welsh St. Illtud (*Vita Sancti Iltuti*) where Illtud helped his wife to miraculously recover from the loss of her sight by praying to God, see: Wade-Evans, *Vitae Sanctorum Brittaniae et Genealogiae*, pp. 216-219. More broadly, in saints' Lives, the numerous storylines can be centred on many different types of miracle motifs. For a reference book on the number of attested miracle motifs from Irish hagiography, see: Bray, *A List of Motifs*. Cf. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, p. 19, which notes that to teach (*ut doceat*) was 'the primary emphasis throughout the Middle Ages, which stemmed from the works of St. Augustine, which meant there was less emphasis on the aesthetic style of saints' biographies.

[9] Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*.

[10] Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, pp. 1-49.

[11] This pursuit also divided the wealthy from the rest of society. The idea of a saint having the ability to act as an invisible companion of the living can be recognised from the poetry of Paulinus of Nola, which claimed that Paulinus and St. Felix shared a close friendship, see: Brown, *The Cult of Saints*, pp. 53-57, 59-60 and 63-64. As a result, Paulinus acquired additional friendship, but also patronage among social ties, meaning the wealthy class gradually gained more wealth and power, which further segregated them from the rest of society. For a more in-depth review of this scenario see: Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, pp. 50-68.

[12] Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, p. 69, fn. 1.

[13] This ideology would also have served as a form of comfort for her bereaved parents, see: Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, p. 69.

implication therefore, is that the spiritual power of the saints could be mediated through proximity to the shrines that housed their bodily remains.

Hagiography (Saints' Lives)

However, for a saint's reputation to become more widely disseminated, literacy and the production of texts was essential.[14] To fulfil that criterion, the writing of saints' Lives evolved.[15] According to the eleventh-century Italian-born hagiographer Faricius, (abbot of Abingdon), there are three main reasons for writing saints' Lives: to praise God, to celebrate the saints and to provide an example.[16] The earliest known saints' Lives can be traced as far back as the fourth century. The main Lives dating to this period are those of SS. Anthony of Egypt and Martin of Tours, which served as models for the composition of subsequent Lives.[17] A saint's Life (biography) is generally the main source of evidence for the saint's identity and was normally written after his/her death.[18] As Faricius's summary would imply, saints' Lives ought to be perceived as literary texts, containing moral implications. Hence, because most hagiographers were not contemporaries of the saint whose Life they wrote, this means that saints' Lives are generally not historically reliable accounts of the saint.[19] Another

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[14] Another interesting example of this ideology can be recognised from a concept known as the 'Therapy of Distance', whereby Gregory of Tours wrote a set of instructions for accessing the shrine of St. Peter, which could be described as a 'ritual of access', see: Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, p. 87. Such devotion may also redefine Christianity as a process, which teaches and qualifies one to participate in the private and religious environments, that would ultimately enable one to gain closer access to God.

[15] For a comprehensive study on the arrival and development of literacy in Ireland, see: Johnston, *Literacy and Identity*. For a thorough discussion on the writing of saints' Lives in Insular and Continental Europe throughout the Early Medieval period, see: Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*.

[16] Winterbottom, *Faricius, Vita Sancti Aldhelmi*, p. 98. Faricius writes this in the preface of the *Vita*. For a full English translation of Faricius exact words, but also an important discussion on the matter, see: Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, pp. 510-513.

[17] See for example: Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, p. 19. In addition, SS. Anthony and Martin were also the first 'confessor saints' (saints who were not martyred), due to the end of the practice by the fourth century, see: Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, pp. 16-17. Moreover, the earliest and most famous ecclesiastical writers from the fourth to sixth centuries includes St. Augustine (Augustine of Hippo) and Gregory of Tours. For incisive references and commentary of the influential impact of their writings, see for example: Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, pp. 3-7 (for Heffernan's discussion of Gregory of Tours) and pp. 94-100 (for his discussion on St. Augustine).

[18] In that regard, the Life of the Continental St. Martin of Tours, written by Sulpicious Severus, presents an unusual because, it was written while Martin was still alive. See: Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer* for a full detailed study of Sulpicius Severus's Life of St. Martin of Tours.

[19] Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, p. 519, fn. 91. From the perspective of Irish hagiography, Richard Sharpe explains how the tenth century vernacular Life of Adomnán (*Betha Adomnán*) casts little light on the saint's historical identity, see: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 9. Cf. Doherty, The Irish Hagiographer, p. 10, fn. 3, which explains that Insular hagiography had originally been characterised as 'fable' and lacking any 'reasonable word'. For such reasons, the survival of St. Patrick's *Confessio* has been regarded as an invaluable source. It is written in the first singular, suggesting that Patrick himself wrote this account. For most saints', the extant records for their cultural identities are generally written long after his/her death. More generally, this may also explain why Patrick's dossier has been studied more acutely than that of the many other Irish saints. However, this has resulted in a notable number of other saints' Lives being neglected on a comparative scale. In Ireland, saints' Lives were typically written centuries after the saint's actual or supposed time of existence; generally believed to be the so-called 'Age of Saints'; See for example: *Corpus Genealogiarum et Sanctorum*

characteristic of the non-historical genre of saints Lives are the recurrent miracle motifs. Hagiographers borrowed such motifs from different Lives to demonstrate that the performance of its subject, a 'socially prominent individual', warranted him/her the profile of a saint.[20]

Therefore, saints' Lives are literary, but also paramount sources, for conveying the Christian faith, which was by no means a simple task. This is well demonstrated in Thomas Heffernan's study of the workload required in successfully constructing a saint's Life and thus, to convince society that the saint was a suitable exemplar of Christianity.[21] Audience was perhaps the most fundamental factor for the hagiographer/biographer to consider.[22] The hagiographer's audience comprised a community who already had a collective understanding of religious belief.[23] Thus, the purpose of writing a Life was to enhance the community's understanding and 'to bring a new, complete, and carefully documented understanding of the subject to the community'.[24] To fulfil this goal, the rhetorical writing style employed by the hagiographer was an intrinsic element. *De Doctrina Christiana* by St. Augustine taught hagiographers throughout the Middle Ages that they were required to seek that balance between *sapientia* (wisdom) and *eloquentia* (eloquence), with the former requiring more importance.[25] This effort ultimately contributes to the depiction of a saint, which also needed to be executed carefully. If the hagiographer placed too much emphasis on the saint's supernatural abilities in the Life, the saint would appear less of a human being, but if the saint's holy-like character is underplayed, 'we end up without our saint'.[26]

Hiberniae (*CGSH*), p. xiv, which says this 'Age' 'roughly' represents the following period: '500-600 A.D'. Perhaps 400-700 AD, may be a more apt period. This is because there are annalistic death-dates for famous saints who lived before 500 and later than 600; perhaps the most apparent example of a saint who was reputedly around during the fifth century was St. Patrick of Armagh, who supposedly came to Ireland circa 432 AD; see for example: *The Annals of Ulster- https://celt.ucc.ie//published/T100001A/* (Last Accessed 15th September 2020). The Annals of Ulster also record the death-date (697) of the seventh century St. Moling of Luachra; see: *The Annals of Ulster-https://celt.ucc.ie//published/T100001A/* (Last Accessed 15th September 2020).

[20] Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, p. 155. Cf. Bray, The Study of Folk Motifs, pp. 276-277, which explains that recurrent miracle motifs demonstrate how hagiographers were 'so shamelessly borrowing from one Life to another'. Cf. Bray, *A List of Motifs*, p.11 which explains that hagiography was a genre aimed at depicting its subject as 'an ideal image manifested in a holy man' as opposed to an accurate chronology of the actual time of the saint's existence.

[21] Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, pp. 18-37, which considers the audience for whom the biographer was constructing a saint's Life, the language and writing style the biographer employed and how saints' Lives served as a form of written evidence for previously unrecorded oral traditions.

[22] Towards the outset of his monograph, Heffernan makes clear that he will refer to saints' Lives as 'sacred biographies' as opposed to 'hagiography' throughout, see: Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, pp. 15-18. In this thesis however, the term hagiography/saints' Lives will be employed throughout.

[23] Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, pp. 19-20.

[24] Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, pp. 21-22, fn. 39.

[25] Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, p. 10, fn. 21 & p. 19. Cf. Martin, *Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana*, Bk., IV, XII, XXVII.

[26] Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, p. 30.

The Irish Context

While a first glance at saints' Lives would imply they are 'fable' sources which 'lack any reasonable word', as it did for earlier scholars such as J.A. Froude, Heffernan's in-depth study, but also that of the aforementioned Robert Bartlett, trump such perspectives.[27] Heffernan's and Bartlett's work has undoubtedly advanced our understanding of the origins and developments of hagiography, both on the Continent and in the Insular world.[28] Equally so, there have been important studies on Irish saints and hagiography, by scholars such as Pádraig Ó Riain, Richard Sharpe and Máire Herbert.[29] The earliest extant sources of saints' Lives in Ireland (*Insula Sanctorum*/The Island of Saints), originate from different points between the seventh and ninth centuries, whilst most of the other Lives, in their extant format, are much later, dating from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries.[30] In Ireland, saints' lives are generally written in two different languages: Latin (*Vita*) and Irish (*Betha*). In most cases, a Latin and an Irish version of a saint's Life survives, indicating that hagiography in Ireland was translated and adapted throughout the Middle Ages. While there are one hundred Latin Lives (*Vitae*) of approximately sixty Irish saints surviving, there also survive fifty Irish Lives (*Bethada*) of forty saints.[31]

While most of the earliest Hiberno-Latin Lives (*Vitae*) have been dated to the Anglo-Norman period, the extant Lives which originate from the seventh to ninth centuries, although comparatively fewer in number, represent the most well-known saints of Ireland, namely: Patrick of Armagh, Brigit of Kildare and Colm Cille of Iona.[32] For Patrick, some of his most famous Lives include Muirchú's Life of Patrick and Tírechán's Life of Patrick, both of which

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[27] See Charles Doherty's reference to Froude's comment in the following work: Doherty, The Irish Hagiographer, p. 10, fn. 3.

[28] For an important read on how scholarly interpretations of Irish hagiography progressed from the seventeenth century to the late twentieth, see: Herbert, Hagiography, pp. 79-91.

[29] See for example: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*; Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*; Herbert, Latin and Vernacular Hagiography, pp. 327-360.

[30] The earliest extant sources in which the term *Insula Sanctorum* is attested include, the late eleventh century writings of the Irish chronicler Maelbrigte and Jocelin's Life of Patrick (a mid-late twelfth century Life), but also the prologue of Abbán's Latin Life/*Vita*, which in its extant format, dates to the thirteenth century see: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 3, fn. 1-3. Sharpe dated Abbán's *Vita* to the late thirteenth century, whilst Pádraig Ó Riain dated it to the early thirteenth century, see: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170. Further details on Abbán's Life will follow in due course.

[31] Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*, pp. 5-6, fn. 12-13. There are, however, some saints for whom their Life only survives in one language, see for example, the Life of St. Flannán of Killaloe, whose Life survives in Latin, see for example: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 346-349. Moreover, there are also saints for whom no Life survives at all, such as SS. Gobnait of Ballyvourney and Lommán of Trim. Evidence for the identity of the latter saint is mainly attested in the Lives of St. Patrick of Armagh, who's hagiographical dossier will be mentioned in due course. As we will later see in this thesis, the Life of Abbán is the only source of hagiographical evidence for Gobnait.

[32] We must note also the seventh century now lost works of SS. Cumméne of Iona and Ultán of Ardbraccan, see: Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*, pp. 24-25 & 43-45; Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*, pp. 14-15.

have been dated to the seventh century.[33] For Brigit, there survives the seventh century Cogitosus's Life of Brigit and also the ninth century *Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae*.[34] For Colm Cille, his seventh century *Vita* (Adomnán's Life of Columba) is an important source of evidence for his cult, but perhaps what places further emphasis on Colm Cille, was the spread of his monastic community through the Insular world.[35] Two vernacular Lives were subsequently produced in the ninth century, one of Patrick (*Bethu Pátraic*: The Tripartite Life of Patrick), whilst the other was on Brigit (*Bethu Brigte*).[36] What also distinguishes the Lives of these three saints from most of the other Irish saints, is that fact that we can identify most of the authors of the Lives of Patrick, Brigit and Colm Cille.

The rest of the *Vitae* 'consist largely of anonymous works', but also lack 'clear dating indications'.[37] Most of these *Vitae*, are part of a broad collection of Hiberno-Latin saints' Lives, commonly known as *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (*VSH*, The Lives of the Irish Saints). This collection survives in three famous late medieval manuscript collections of Hiberno-Latin Lives: The fourteenth century *Codex Salmanticensis* Collection (*VSH(S)*) (MS 7672-7674, 3179, in The Royal Library of Belgium of Brussels), The fifteenth-century *Codex Kilkenniensis/Dubliniensis* Collection (*VSH(D)*) (MS Z 3.1.5 *Codex Kilkenniensis*, in Marsh's Library Dublin and MS 175 2, in Trinity College, Dublin) and finally The *Codex Insulensis*, or as Richard Sharpe has called it: 'The Oxford Collection' (MS Rawlinson B 485 and MS Rawlinson B 505 1, ff. 1-210, both located in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and an early seventeenth century manuscript: MS F 1, from the Franciscan Library, Killiney, now kept in UCD).[38] Though most of the Lives from these collections have not received the same degree

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[33] For an edition and English translation of the Patrician hagiographical texts (Lives of St.Patrick) from The Book of Armagh manuscript, see: Bieler, *The Patrician Texts*.

[34] Though Cogitosus's Life of Brigit was translated into English, see: Connolly & Picard, Cogitosus's Life of St. Brigit, pp. 5-27, a full modern edition and translation of Brigit's hagiographical dossier still remains to be published, see: Herbert, Latin and Vernacular Hagiography, p. 332, fn. 15. For a recent study on the cult of St. Brigit, see: Kissane, *Saint Brigid of Kildare*. For a read on the relationship between SS. Patrick and Brigit in *Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae*, see: Dawson, Brigit and Patrick, pp. 35-50.

[35] See: Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, for an edition and English translation of Colm Cille's Life. As for the name of Colm Cille's hagiographer: Adomnán of Iona, a vernacular Life was also written on this individual (*Betha Adomnán*), for incisive remarks on its history, see: Herbert, Latin and Vernacular Hagiography, pp. 342-343.For a study of the hagiographical dossier cultural development of Colm Cille, see: Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*.

[36] Herbert, Latin and Vernacular Hagiography, pp. 340-341.

[37] Herbert, Latin and Vernacular Hagiography, p. 335.

[38] One unusual example of a saint whose *Vita* is not preserved in any of these manuscript collections of *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* is St. Íbar of Beggerin Island, in Co. Wexford. Two different *Vitae* of Íbar survive: one is preserved in the *Collectanea Bollandiana* which comes from a text 'supplied by Henry FitzSimon', whilst another small *Vita* is preserved in the Book of Leinster (BL). Both *Vitae* were edited by Grosjean; see: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 155, fn. 66. For an English translation of both *Vitae*, see: Culleton, *Celtic and Early Christian Wexford*, pp. 86-96. For an important study on the textual history of the Lives from these three manuscript collections of *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (*VSH*), see: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*.

of scholarly attention as have the Lives of Patrick, Brigit and Colm Cille, they have nevertheless, being identified, in their extant format, as products of the Anglo-Norman period in Ireland.[39]

Though the purpose of saints' Lives, was and continued be concerned with depicting the saint 'as an exemplar of holiness', hagiographical authors and writers also had other intentions for writing saints' Lives. [40] As hagiographical writing progressed into subsequent centuries of the medieval period, changing interests also gave different reasons for wanting to write saints' Lives. From the pre-Norman to the post-Norman period, the contemporary concerns and interests of hagiographers (mainly those compiling *Vitae*), derived from collective desires to maintain and expand church networks within their dynastic regions and ecclesiastical dioceses.[41] To fulfil such matters, hagiographers would often invent or re-write a select number of scenes from the Life of a saint, whose cult or patronage was prominent or known in the area from which the hagiographer was working. Such scenes would often envisage the saint founding monasteries or receiving land from a group of lay people or a king from a particular location.[42] Making such claims in the Life of a saint would entitle that hagiographer or his superior to stake a claim of ownership over a particular church or plot of land from the area being cited in the Life. Therefore, these Hiberno-Latin Lives also served a similar role to a charter, in the new political order.[43]

The vernacular versions of saints' Lives (*Bethada*), dating, in their extant format, to the post-Norman period, were generally written after the extant *Vitae* which now survive in *VSH*. This is particularly discernible from the fact that many of these vernacular Lives survive in manuscript collections dating from fifteenth century, such as The Book of Lismore and *Leabhar Breac* (*LBrc*) and even as late as the time of Mícheál Ó Cléirigh, an important

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[39] For conflicting viewpoints on the origins of most of the Lives from *VSH*; see: Herbert, Latin and Vernacular Hagiography, pp. 327-360; Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 39-40; The O'Donohue Lives, pp. 38-52.

[40] Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*, p. 1.

[41] Such concerns and interests became particularly apparent during the Anglo-Norman period, when the English attempted to impose reforms upon the Irish church. There appears to have been a burst of 'intense hagiographical activity' in Ireland, which may well be perceived more broadly, as a literary response to the English, see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 40). For a concise overview of the impact the Anglo-Norman invasion had upon the production and compilation of hagiographical writing in Wales and Ireland; see: Lewis, *The Impact of the Anglo-Norman Conquest*. From this period, the typical Hiberno-Latin hagiographer would have been an important ecclesiast, such as a prelate, who was also widely engaged in political affairs.

[42] There are ample examples from the Life of St. Abbán, which depict Abbán conducting such activities. One notable example is a scene which envisages Abbán receiving land from a king, as a form of punishment, because the king had initially attempted to raid Abbán's pig farm. This scene will be examined in due course.

[43] Cf. Bray, *A List of Motifs*, pp. 12-13, for a brief review of the contemporary interests underlying Hiberno-Latin hagiography.

Franciscan scholar who compiled important manuscripts during the early-mid seventeenth century. [44] In many cases, a vernacular version of a saint's Life (*Betha*) presents a contextually similar, but abbreviated version of his/her *Vita*.[45] The change in length and quantity was largely due to the changing interests in hagiography. By the time these vernacular copies of saints' Lives or *Vitae* were being produced, the writers evidently had different intentions for compiling saints' Lives. In addition, the later manuscripts into which many of these vernacular lives were inserted 'were written for lay patrons'.[46] This would suggest that the purpose of saints' lives changed from being commodities for hagiographers to express their political interests and concerns, to being sources of devotional literature for a more secular audience. Thus, vernacular hagiographers showed more concern in the preservation of hagiography as opposed to exploiting a saint's Life as a stepping-stone for solving contemporary issues.[47]

While saints' Lives both in Latin and the vernacular are plentiful, scholarship has remained largely engrossed in the Lives of SS. Patrick, Brigit and Colm Cille, meaning these Lives have been better scrutinised than the larger number of Lives from the later manuscript collections. This apparent inequality in scholarly interest has nevertheless enticed some other observations about the Hiberno-Latin Lives from *VSH*. As noted throughout the present discussion, the Lives from this collection, in their extant format, originate from the Anglo-Norman period. This would suggest that before the Norman period, hagiographical writing was not a widely practised activity in Ireland, and only began to take off after the Norman Conquest in Ireland. Some scholars, such as Richard Sharpe and Máire Herbert however, believe otherwise. Both argue that hagiography was being written widely in Latin throughout the eighth century and that the *Vitae* from *VSH* are later copies of pre-existing eighth-century *Vitae*, and from the ninth to eleventh centuries vernacular saints' Lives were being written in abundance.[48] Pádraig Ó Riain however, presents a more sceptical view. Ó Riain doubts that there was any pre-Norman hagiographical writing beyond the key ecclesiastical centres of Ireland, such as Armagh and

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[44]Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 35; Herbert, Latin and Vernacular Hagiography, p. 354. Further discussion on the work of Ó Cléirigh will be told at a later point in the introduction of this thesis; particularly in relation to the manuscript copy of Abbán's vernacular Life (*BA*).

[45] Though this is generally the case, as it is for the Life of Abbán, there are an odd number of saints' Lives where the saint's original *Vita* provides a contextually different version to his/her *Betha*. Cf. Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 6, which notes that a saint's *Vita* and *Betha* can be contextually (un)related. A notable example of a saint whose *Vita* and *Betha* bear no similarity in content, is St. Moling of Luachra. For a read on this matter, see for example: De Paor, Saint Moling Luachra, pp. 158-214.

[46] Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, pp. 35-36.

[47] Cf. Herbert, Latin and Vernacular Hagiography, p. 354, which notes that 'conservation rather than creativity was the prevailing attitude in regard to vernacular hagiography'.

[48] Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, pp. 3-38 and Herbert, The Latin and Vernacular Hagiography of Ireland, pp. 327-260. Cf. Lewis, *The Impact of the Anglo-Norman Conquest* - see 14:43-17:41.

Kildare. He argues that the extant twelfth-century *Vitae* were written in their original form during this period.[49]

St. Abbán

On a broader scale, the different scholarly viewpoints can be interpreted as a reflection of the uncertain chronology of Irish hagiography.[50] While the hagiographical evidence is plentiful, dating from the seventh right up to the fifteenth centuries, there are, as Barry Lewis noted, awkward chronological gaps where no hagiographical texts or manuscript collections were being produced during this time, meaning it is difficult to know whether these gaps are 'accidental' or 'evidence that not much was going on'.[51] From this perspective, it would seem challenging to discern the origin of a saint's Life. Though this may well seem to be the case for St. Abbán, a review of the main points from his Life and the overall depiction of his identity in the record, need be considered first and foremost. In comparison to many of the saints whose *Vitae* now survive in *VSH*, the Life of Abbán has never been the main subject of any significant sustained scholarship. The main secondary work to consult for acquiring first-hand knowledge about any attested Irish saint is Pádraig Ó Riain's *A Dictionary of Irish Saints*. A review of Ó Riain's biographical discussion of Abbán is necessary for setting out the current state of knowledge concerning the saint in this thesis.[52]

Aside from bringing a large variety of information about Ireland's saints to the fore, Ó Riain's dictionary also plays a fundamental role in demonstrating the typical kinds of primary sources used for seeking information on saints. As noted earlier in the introduction of this thesis, the genealogies and martyrologies, as well as the Life of Abbán, serve as the main source of evidence for Abbán's identity. According to the former, Abbán's full name was 'Abbán Moccu Cormaic' (Abbán of the sons of Cormaic) and his mother and father were mainly known as 'Mella' and 'Lagnig', and his maternal uncle was reputedly the famous St. Kevin of Glendalough.[53] According to Abbán's Life, Abbán was the patron saint of two foundations in the province of Laigin (Leinster): 'Mag Arnaide' (Moyarney), located in the diocese of Ferns

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[49] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 39-40; The O'Donohue Lives, pp. 38-52.
[50] For a comment on the chronology of Irish hagiography; see: Barry Lewis, Statutory Public Lecture delivered at *Tionól* in University College Dublin (UCD), 2016: *The Impact of the Anglo-Norman Conquest on Hagiography in Wales and Ireland* - *https://www.dias.ie/2016/12/14/watch-the-2016-statutory-public-lecture/* (Last Accessed 15th September 2020); see 13:01-14:42; the key words here are that 'Ireland offers plenty of texts, but no safe chronology'.
[51] Lewis, *The Impact of the Anglo-Norman Conquest on Hagiography in Wales and Ireland* - see 13:00-17:21.
[52] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 51-52.
[53] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 51.

in Co. Wexford, in the south of the province, and 'Cell Abbáin' (Killabban), located in the diocese of Leighlin, in Co. Laois, towards the north of Laigin.[54] As Ó Riain correctly suspected, Abbán's reputed familial connection to St. Kevin of Glendalough could be perceived as an embodiment of Abbán's north Laigin patronage, that being the foundation of Cell Abbáin.[55]

But perhaps less convincing is Ó Riain's hypothesis concerning the etymology of Abbán's name. The first scholar who offered an interpretation for the etymological meaning of Abbán's name was Charles Plummer.[56] Since the character of Abbán is notably associated with water motifs throughout his Life, Plummer suggested that this association came about 'through some vague idea that his name was connected with "abann", the Irish word for river'.[57] Later however, Ó Riain suggested that the name 'Abbán' is a hypocorism of the name of a famous Munster saint, Ailbe of Emly. Ó Riain further identified this as evidence for SS. Abbán and Ailbe originally being a single individual.[58] Ó Riain subsequently explained that 'Abbán' is a hypocorism due to the doubling of the 'b' consonant in the saint's name.[59] This ultimately demonstrates that Ó Riain's hypothesis depended largely on that of M.A. O'Brien's, who previously suggested that 'the doubling of consonants' can be 'a feature of hypocoristic forms'.[60] However, it may be somewhat extreme to suggest that SS. Abbán and Ailbe were originally the same, based merely on the linguistic similarities of their names; particularly since both saints have their own individual records and two very different cults.[61]

Later however, Paul Russell explained that if the root of a vernacular name translates into the name of a place or a thing, then the name can be taken as the diminutive. If the root translates into a personal name, then the name is a hypocorism.[62] If we consider the etymology of Abbán's name through this approach, this lends support to the unlikeliness of Abbán's name being a

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[54] For fuller descriptions of the precise geographical locations of these foundations, see: *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=4460* & *https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=827* (Both Websites Last Accessed 29th January 2021).

[55] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 51.

[56] Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (*VSH(D)*), Vol. 1, pp. xxiii-xxvi.

[57] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. xxiv.

[58] Ó Riain, Towards a Methodology, pp. 152-153; *A Dictionary*, p. 51.

[59] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 51.

[60] O'Brien (Ed. Baumgarten), Old Irish Personal Names, pp. 220-221. However, O'Brien does not imply that the 'doubling of consonants' is *always* a feature of hypocorisms.

[61] One of the most notable features that distinguishes both saints from one another is Ailbe's prominent ecclesiastical status as Munster saint, whereas Abbán's dossier places most emphasis on his Laigin origins, see for example: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 46-64. For an English translation of Ailbe's *Vita*, see: De Paor, *St. Patrick's World*, pp. 227-243. Details on Abbán's hagiographical dossier will follow in due course. Ó Riain's hypothesis will be revisited in chapter two of this thesis, where we will consider the significance of Abbán's association with a location spelt as 'Cell Ailbe' in the Life of Abbán.

[62] Russell, Patterns of Hypocorisms in Early Irish Hagiography, pp. 152-153.

hypocorism. The root of Abbán's name '*Ab/Ap*' is a t-stem masculine noun meaning 'an abbot'.[63] Thus, when we apply the '*án*' element of his name, which means 'small' or 'little', the saint's name translates into 'the little abbot'. The ecclesiastical connotations of this translation would most certainly provide a fitting title for an individual who, according to the Life of Abbán, spent his entire life serving God. On the other hand, however, the ecclesiastical connotations of the saint's name may suggest that 'Abbán' may not have been his original name. Though there are no overt indications of Abbán originally having a different name, there are other examples, including the famous St. Colm Cille, whose original name, according to the list of 'Alternative Names of Saints' from The Book of Leinster (LL), was 'Crimthand'.[64]

St. Colm Cille is also among some of the very famous saints of Ireland, envisaged as a contemporary of Abbán in the Life of Abbán, with others including St. Patrick of Armagh and St. Brendan of Clonfert, also known as Brendan the Navigator.[65] Abbán's relationship with these three saints are centred on miraculous motifs and tropes, such as prophecy, the appearance of angels and water, none of which are unusual features of Irish hagiography. However, there are many other known, but less famous saints who are envisaged as having more 'historical' encounters with Abbán, some of which also pinpoint the geographical locations Abbán travelled though as part of his alleged monastic career in Ireland. After making three journeys to Rome, Abbán is said to have founded three monasteries in the province of Connacht in the West of Ireland, from which point he travelled south to Munster where his monastic work was extensive. Perhaps among the most noteworthy encounters Abbán had, was one with the aforementioned St. Gobnait, for whom Abbán founded and surrendered the monastic foundation of Ballyvourney.[66] At a later point, Abbán travelled to the medieval province of 'Mide', at which point Abbán's hagiographer notes that Abbán had baptised St. Finnian of Clonard as an infant, a point which is also made in the Life of Finnian.[67]

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[63] See: The electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language (eDIL) Database. Downloadable at *www.dil.ie/3853* (Last accessed 26th September 2020).

[64] LLdip, p. 1595. Cf. The Irish Life of St. Finbarr of Cork (*Betha Bhairre ó Chorcaigh*), whose original name was 'Lóan' was changed to Findbarr after he was born, see: Plummer, *Bethada náem nÉrenn (BnÉ)*, Vol. 1, p. 12, §2 Vol. 2, p. 12, §2.

[65] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 51-52. Though St. Brendan would not hold the same degree of fame as SS. Patrick and Colm Cille, Brendan does nevertheless, have a Hiberno-Latin and vernacular Life. Moreover, Brendan is particularly famous for his prominent association with the sea, which can be recognised from a well-known ninth century literary text devoted specifically to the saint, called *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* (The Navigation/Voyage of St. Brendan). For a list of some important studies on the textual record of St. Brendan, see: Wooding, St. Brendan's Boat, pp. 309-338; Fasting, Flesh and the Body, pp. 161-176.

[66] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 51.

[67] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 52.

Ó Riain also summarises the matters surrounding Abbán's death, which tells of the two communities of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain quarrelling over ownership of the saint's relics. The tension between both communities is eventually solved by a pair of oxen pulling a cart that contained Abbán's body, by miraculously forming a duplicate. As a result, there now stood two identical pairs of oxen, each pulling a cart that contained Abbán's body, meaning there also existed two identical bodies of the saint, one of which went to Cell Abbáin, whilst the other went to Mag Arnaide.[68] Abbán is now identified as the patron saint of both foundations, but in relation to his death-date, there remains doubt.[69] According to the epilogue of the Life of Abbán, the saint died on 27 October. Hence, when we turn to the Irish martyrologies, we would expect to find the saint's name recorded under this calendar date, which would be Abbán's feast-day. Instead, his name is recorded under two calendar dates in most of the martyrologies: 27 October and 16 March.[70] The fact that none of the martyrologies specify whether one of the dates represented an alternative event linked with Abbán, means that there is uncertainty surrounding the saint's commemoration.

The Life of St. Abbán: *Vita Sancti Abbani* (*VSA*) and *Betha Abáin* (*BA*)

But perhaps the most challenging aspect of Abbán's dossier centres on the origin of Abbán's Life. Two versions of Abbán's Life survive: a Latin Life (*Vita*), which was supposedly written in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, and a vernacular Life (*Betha*) for which no estimation on its origin has been provided, although based on its extant format, Abbán's *Betha* (*BA*) was probably written at a later point than his *Vita* (*VSA*).[71] *VSA* is preserved in four separate manuscripts, each of which present a distinguished collection of Hiberno-Latin saints' Lives, as discussed earlier:

1. MS 7672-7674 (3179) (commonly known as the *Codex Salmanticensis*; fourteenth century), in the Royal Library of Belgium, in Brussels.

2. MS Z 3.1.5, f. 138c (commonly known as the *Codex Kilkenniensis*; fifteenth century), in Marsh's Library, Dublin.[72]

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[68] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 52.
[69] Moreover, as for the year in which the saint died, there is, to my knowledge, no evidence from any of the Irish Annals or any attested primary source. This point will be revisited in chapter two of this thesis.
[70] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 52.
[71] On the dating of Abbán's *Vita*, see: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170; Doherty, Oral Presentation delivered at the Irish Conference of Medievalists (ICM) at University College Dublin (UCD) in 2015, 'Analysis of the "life" of Abbán', p. 9 of pp. 1-10. I am grateful to Charles Doherty for loaning me a copy of his oral presentation.
[72] Cf. Thornton, Vita Sancti Carthagi in the Seventeenth Century, p. 329, fn. 45, which notes that the marginalia of this manuscript 'are found attached to Maynooth MS RB201's Lives of Declan, Ailbe, Rúadán, Cíarán of Saighir, Colmán, and Abbán'. MS RB 201 is also recorded MS 3 G1. Cf. Column J (Manuscript Witness(es))

3. MS E. 3. II 175 (second half of the fifteenth century), in Trinity College, Dublin.

4. MS 3 G1, ff. 190-208 (seventeenth century manuscript taken from the *Codex Kilkenniensis*), in Russell Library, Maynooth.[73]

The *Codex Salmanticensis* collection was firstly edited by Charles De Smedt and Joseph De Backer in the late nineteenth century.[74] Afterwards, William Heist presented an updated version of this edition, approximately one century later, and this has since remained the most recent edition.[75] Where necessary, this thesis will consult Heist's edition of the *Salmanticensis* collection of Hiberno-Latin saints' Lives, via the abbreviation *VSH(S)*. Though the second and third manuscripts appear separately, both manuscripts combined do in fact present the same collection; namely: the *Dubliniensis* collection.[76] The *Codex Kilkenniensis* manuscript (MS Z 3.1.5) was firstly edited by the important Franciscan Friar John Colgan in the seventeenth century.[77] The fact that the other manuscript of the *Dubliniensis* collection (MS E. 3. II 175) was unedited, however, meant that an edition based on both manuscripts became necessary. This gap was filled by Charles Plummer, who edited both manuscript versions of the Hiberno-Latin saints' Lives.[78] Hence, when referring to the *Dubliniensis* version of Abbán's *Vita*, this thesis will consult Plummer's edition via the abbreviation: *VSH(D)*. The *Dubliniensis* version of Abbán's *Vita* will be consulted via the abbreviation *VSA(D)*, whilst the *Salmanticensis* version of his *Vita* will be referred to as *VSA(S)*.

Both manuscript versions of Abbán's *Vita* do, however, present the same version of Abbán's Life, which could imply that one version derived from another or that both are individual derivatives from an earlier exemplar. There are only small differences between *VSA(D)* and *VSA(S)*. Aside from *VSA(S)* presenting a slightly shorter version of Abbán's Life, the content, series of events and the overall narrative is essentially the same in both *VSA(D)* and *VSA(S)*. Richard Sharpe observed 'there are unmistakable signs' that *VSA(S)* is derived directly from

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from the Raw Data file from Appendix 2 of this thesis, where I cite this manuscript via the record mark: MS 3 G1.

[73] This manuscript simply provides a later manuscript copy of the *Codex Kilkenniensis* version of Abbán's *Vita*, it need not be considered in any further detail here.

[74] De Smedt and De Backer, *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae*.

[75] Heist, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (*VSH(S)*).

[76] For an important study of the textual history of the *Dubliniensis* collection; see: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*, pp. 93-215 & 347-367.

[77] Colgan, *Acta Sanctorum Veteris*. While Colgan edited the *Kilkenniensis* version of saints' Lives, it was only the Lives of saints' whose feast-days supposedly occur in January, February and March. The fact that one of Abbán's two feast-days falls in March (16 March) explains why Colgan produced an edition of Abbán's *Vita* (the *Codex Kilkenniensis* version). Moreover, Colgan's edition of Abbán's *Vita* was later copied by the Bollandist Victor De Buck; see: De Buck, De SS. Abbanis Kill-Abbaniensi et Magharnuidhiensi, pp. 276-293.

[78] Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*. (*VSH(D)*). The Trinity manuscript version (MS E. 3. II 175) only presents the first twelve sections of Abbán's *Vita*.

VSA(D).[79] However, since the Life of Abbán has been dated to the late twelfth to early thirteenth century, this would lend support to the possibility of both *VSA(D)* and *VSA(S)* ultimately deriving from this twelfth-to thirteenth-century Life.[80] This thesis will rely mainly on *VSA(D)*, because it presents a more detailed and longer account than *VSA(S)*, meaning *VSA(D)* provides us with more content to examine.[81] Moreover, since there is no full English translation of *VSA(D)*, this thesis will present an English summary of the parts of this *Vita* referenced throughout our discussion of this thesis, unless otherwise indicated.[82] A full detailed English summary of each section of *VSA(D)*, will be presented in Appendix 1 of this thesis.

The vernacular version of Abbán's Life (*BA*) survives in two manuscripts originating from the seventeenth century:

1. MS A iv 1 (Stowe 9, 968), pp. 205-221, (1627), in The Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.

2. MS 2324-2340 (3410), ff. 145b-150b, (1629), in The Royal Library of Belgium, Brussels.

MS A iv 1 was compiled by Domnall Ó Duinnín, whilst MS 2324-2340 was compiled by Mícheál Ó Cléirigh two years later. Both manuscripts provide the same version of Abbán's *Betha*. Therefore, the *Betha* need not be distinguished by the specific manuscript in which it is preserved. Both manuscripts contain a list of vernacular saints' Lives (*Bethada*). The MS 2324-2340 collection also contains a number of texts that are not related to hagiography, including prayers, hymns, law texts and secular prose material.[83] As for the content of *BA*, the *Betha* essentially provides a similar, but a much more abbreviated version of *VSA*. Though *BA* has not been assigned a date, its preservation in two seventeenth century manuscripts would suggest the *Betha* was possibly written at some point between the fifteenth to sixteenth-centuries. An edition and English translation of the *Bethada* from both manuscripts was

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[79] Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 350.
[80] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170. Details on the earliest or original Life of Abbán will be discussed in due course.
[81] Although *VSH(S)* is the oldest manuscript, dating to the fourteenth century, the *VSH(D)* manuscript (dating to the fifteenth century) presents a more detailed version of Abbán's Life. In addition, the syntax of *VSA(S)* is more compact and complex than the syntax of *VSA(D)*. On a general note, this suggests that the earliest manuscript version of a text does not necessarily mean it is always the most ideal version of the text to consult. For a textual study of the *Salmanticensis* Collection; see: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*, pp. 228-246.
[82] To my knowledge, there is no full English translation of *VSA(S)* either.
[83] For more details on the content in MS 2324-2340 and a catalogue description; see: Pádraig A. Breatnach, 2019: *ISOS (Irish Script on Screen)* -
https://www.isos.dias.ie/master.html?https://www.isos.dias.ie/libraries/RLB/english/index.html?ref=https://www.vanhamel.nl/codecs/Brussels,_Biblioth%C3%A8que_Royale_de_Belgique,_MS_2324%E2%80%932340
(Last Accessed 17th September 2020).

produced by Charles Plummer.[84] Throughout this thesis, this source will be consulted via the abbreviation *BnÉ*.[85]

While no famous figure has been identified as the original writer of *BA*, Pádraig Ó Riain alluded to the idea of the writer being a Franciscan. This assumption was made in relation to a geographical location that is cited in *BA*, namely Padua in North Italy.[86] As Ó Riain explained, the only occasions on which Padua is mentioned in Irish hagiography is in relation to St. Anthony of Padua.[87] This also lends support to the probability of *BA* being composed during the Early Modern period, because there is ample archaeological/landscape evidence of Franciscan friaries existing throughout Ireland during the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries.[88] The relatively late origin would suggest that *BA*, in its extant format, is unlikely to the original Life of Abbán In light of *BA*'s seemingly late origin but also of the scholarly hypothesis that most of the extant vernacular hagiography was produced later than the Latin hagiography, it is more probable that Abbán's *Vita* is the earliest surviving copy of Abbán's Life. Ó Riain also agreed that *VSA* is the earliest, but further implied that no earlier Life of Abbán was written in the pre-Norman period.[89]

Bishop Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid (O'Mulloy) of Ferns: Author or Redactor?

In a recent article, Pádraig Ó Néill wrote that:

> 'In the great medieval collections of lives of Irish saints, the Life of St Abbán has never enjoyed any special status, other than perhaps its alphabetical primacy - that is, until Pádraig Ó Riain showed that the work was anything but conventional hagiography.'[90]

Ó Néill remarks upon Ó Riain's hypothesis regarding the origin and authorship of Abbán's Life.[91] Having examined a select number of sections from *VSA* and *BA*, Ó Riain concluded that

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[84] See: Plummer *Bethada náem nÉrenn: Lives of Irish Saints* (*BnÉ*).

[85] Abbán's *Betha* (*BA*) is one of the vernacular Lives from *BnÉ*, as *BA* is attested in the Stowe 9 and 3410 Manuscripts. It is the vernacular Lives from these two manuscripts which Plummer transcribed and subsequently edited and translated.

[86] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 161-163.

[87] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 162.

[88] For a comprehensive review of Franciscan friaries throughout Ireland and the history of the religious order in Ireland; see: Gwynn & Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses Ireland*, pp. 235-281.

[89] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170.

[90] Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 110, fn. 20. One example of a scholar who took advantage of the Life's 'alphabetical primacy' was William Heist; see: Heist, Over the Writer's Shoulder, pp. 76-84; See in particular, p. 76, where Heist's notes that his decision to examine the Life of Abbán was 'according to alphabetic chance'.

[91] For Ó Riain's study, see: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170. This article is currently the main secondary source that is consulted for information on this saint. For the scholars who published subsequent articles on aspects of

VSA was the earliest extant Life of Abbán, and was 'produced in its original form' by a prelate named Bishop Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid (O' Mulloy) of Ferns in the early thirteenth century.[92] Much of Ó Riain's hypothesis stemmed from his consideration of the life and political activity of Bishop Ailbe, which centred mainly on matters concerning Irish-Norman relations. Two documented incidents suggest he was not positively disposed towards the Anglo-Normans: first, Bishop Ailbe announced at a Dublin synod in 1186 that the Normans in Ireland were the underlying problem in relation to matters concerning the Irish Church. The second incident tells of Bishop Ailbe losing two manors to the Anglo-Norman earl, William Marshal in a Dublin court case in 1218.[93] In response to such incidents, Bishop Ailbe produced a Life, containing episodes that were allegories of the 'Anglo-Norman pressure' he was experiencing.[94] Ó Riain's argument, therefore, is that *VSA* emerged from a colonial context.

If it was the hand of Bishop Ailbe of Ferns that was fully responsible for the production of such a Life, a biographical review of this figure is necessary. To date, the fullest consideration of the life and political stance of Ailbe is the work of Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin.[95] The significance of Mac Shamhráin's work lies in its effort to consider all the attested documented records and historical accounts of Ailbe's role within the Anglo-Norman Church. But equally so, Mac Shamhráin makes a valuable contribution to knowledge concerning Ailbe's lineage and the series of events that amounted to his success in becoming the Bishop of Ferns. The focus Mac Shamhráin provides for the latter identity is particularly valuable. As Mac Shamhráin noted, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid has not received a great deal of scholarly focus, and on the small number of occasions on which he was placed under such focus, it is geared solely towards his role as Bishop and his dealings with Irish-Norman affairs.[96] Therefore, a review of Mac Shamhráin's study of Ailbe's early life is necessary for bringing a fuller picture of Ailbe to the fore, but in relation to his acclaimed role as author of Abbán's Life, for providing clearer insight into his familiarity and the usage of hagiographical texts.

Abbán's Life; see: Howlett, The Prologue to the *Vita Sancti Abbani*, pp. 27-30; Harvey, Varia I. Hiberno-Latin Cuvula, pp. 229-230; Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 309-338, and most recently; Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, pp. 95-112. The specific subject-matters of these secondary works will be discussed in due course throughout this thesis.

[92] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 159. These particular hagiographical sections will be examined at later points in this thesis.

[93] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 164-165.

[94] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 166. These episodes will be examined in due course.

[95] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 309-338, which considers thoroughly the political and dynastic histories through which Ailbe's life and career developed.

[96] See for example: Gwynn (O'Brien), *The Irish Church*, pp. 274-283.

Accordingly, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid came from the region of 'Fir Chell', meaning 'Men of the Churches' (in the west of Co. Offaly) in the medieval province of Mide, which would imply that the people from this region 'pursued ecclesiastical careers'.[97] Ailbe came from a Gaelic cultural background and had Irish dynastic associations. The Ua Máel Muaid family of Fir Chell were seen as the defenders of the Gaelic enclave in the south midlands throughout the thirteenth century. The implication that they were a minor, but important midland dynasty, is supported by their success in resisting English conquest. After the Anglo-Normans had invaded Ireland, they began to take over Leinster and the Midlands, but the Ua Máel Muaid in Fir Chell were seemingly successful, as they were isolated by its bogs and woods, which also awarded them the status of the 'Princes of Fearcall' in the Annals of Clonmacnoise.[98] Ailbe's early life and political viewpoints developed within the ambit of Ossory (a medieval kingdom comprising most of modern-day Co. Kilkenny) and the Cistercian religious order, which he supposedly joined as a young clerical student, possibly during the 1160's.[99] Later, Ailbe was ordained and then appointed abbot of Baltinglass in 1180.[100]

Throughout the course of Ailbe's early ecclesiastical career, Muirchertach Mac Murchada (King of the Uí Cennselaig dynasty in south Laigin), played the most influential role in Ailbe's political development, given that he was well-known to Muirchertach long before Ailbe was appointed abbot of Baltinglass.[101] Indeed, it was under the reign of Muirchertach that Ailbe was later appointed Bishop of the Ferns Diocese (located in Uí Cennselaig) in 1186, meaning Ailbe's outlooks on Irish-Norman relations were shaped by Muirchertach's role as the Uí Cennselaig king. Interestingly, the Uí Cennselaig, under Muirchertach's rule, decided to remain loyal to the English. This is because the English had rapidly conquered the east and midlands of Ireland and felt that the Uí Cennselaig 'had less manoeuvre than certain dynasties on the wooded, boggy, western fringe' of Laigin to fight the English. Thus, in any attempt to maintain the survival of their lineage and ownership of their lands 'a recognition of political realities' was the only solution.[102] The attempt to maintain loyal ties with the English particularly came to fruition in May 1171, when on the death of Diarmait Mac Murchada, his daughter 'Aífe'

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[97] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 310.
[98] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 310; Murphy, *The Annals of Clonmacnoise*, p. 246.
[99] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 315-321. See in particular: p. 316, fn. 24, which provides a tentative chronology of Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid's life and the series of key events that unfolded throughout his life.
[100] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 164, Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 311.
[101] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 310-311.
[102] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 315.Ultimately however, Muirchertach was seen as the last king of the Uí Cennselaig in the eyes of the English, as the dynasty subsequently fell in power after his death in 1193, see: Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 311.

married 'Strongbow', at which point Strongbow "claimed the right to succeed him in the kingship of Leinster".[103]

It seems that Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid also embraced this ideology throughout his career as Bishop of Ferns. He too, supported important English figures such as King Henry II, who in 1171, also visited Ireland and played an influential role in cementing English rule, and King John. When the latter king was Lord of Ireland throughout the early thirteenth century, Ua Máel Muaid was invited to England by King John on a couple of occasions. For instance, Ua Máel Muaid took on the role of 'suffragan bishop' in Winchester in 1201 and later that year, consecrated a chapel in the oldest Cistercian foundation in England in the Abbey of Waverly.[104] But while Ailbe may have enacted loyal roles towards the English, whose intervention was over-powering Irish rule, the Gaelic Irish ethos of Cistercian houses within Ossory nevertheless, remained prominent, even after 1171, by which point English over-powering of Ireland was succeeding.[105] This may also suggest that neither Ailbe nor the Ossory diocese had ever warmed up to the idea of the English interfering with Irish politics, particularly when Ailbe announced in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, in 1186 that the English were 'a corrupting influence on the Irish', which was supported by the Bishop of Ossory. Ailbe was subsequently appointed Bishop of Ferns.[106]

Even so, Bishop Ailbe continued to maintain relatively close and loyal connections with significant Anglo-Norman figures. However, one particular individual with whom Ailbe could not maintain such a connection was William Marshall, an Anglo-Norman earl, whose wife Isabella, was daughter of the aforementioned Anglo-Norman earl, Strongbow, and his wife Aífe.[107] Marshall had taken possession of two ecclesiastical estates within Ferns and Templeshanbo (a parish in the Ferns Diocese). Bishop Ailbe had claimed that they originally belonged to him, but Marshall refused to return them. Ailbe sought help from Pope Innocent III in 1214, who instructed the archbishops of Dublin and Tuam to warn Marshall that if he did not return the estates, he would be excommunicated. Ua Máel Muaid then decided to take matters into his own hands, by producing 'hagiographical tracts as a means of demonstrating

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[103] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 311, fn. 7. For a more in-depth coverage on the growing impact the expansion of Norman rule had on Irish society, see: Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans*.
[104] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 323. On the matter of Ailbe travelling overseas, some scholars, including Mac Shamhráin, have suggested that Ailbe may have travelled, at an earlier point, with the twelfth century St. Lawrence of Toole to England and Normandy, see: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 352; Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 316
[105] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 316.
[106] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 165; Cf. Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 320, fn. 44.
[107] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 329-333.

the antiquity of episcopal claims'.[108] Noticing the elevating tension between Marshall and Ailbe, King John had Bishop Ailbe translated to Killaloe, Co. Clare in 1216. At this stage however, King John was a very ill and old man and died later that year. Afterwards, regency continued to fall into the hands of Marshall, 'because of the minority of the new king Henry III', but also because Marshall was previously granted all the fiefs of Leinster, which originally came from King Henry II in 1189.[109]

Bishop Ailbe made another, final attempt to retrieve these manors, by bringing the case to an ecclesiastical court in Dublin, which was presided over by the archbishops of Dublin and Tuam, in 1218. Consequently, however, Bishop Ailbe was unsuccessful, because Marshall had convinced the young King Henry III that Bishop Ailbe wanted 'to adjudicate on a lay fee', which worried the new king and prompted him to urge the two archbishops to prohibit the case from taking place. To ensure no such case took place, letters were sent to Geoffrey de Marisco, the justiciar, informing him to prohibit the case from taking place.[110] The last form of evidence for this dispute between Marshall and Bishop Ailbe was a papal document written by Pope Honorius III, ordering both individuals to compromise, but this demand for a compromise never happened.[111] In light of the efforts Bishop Ailbe had made in supporting Anglo-Norman individuals such as King John II, his encounter with Marshall must certainly have struck him as a form of betrayal, by which point he excommunicated Marshall. Bishop Ailbe died in 1223 and was the last pre-Reformation Gaelic Irish Bishop to occupy Ferns, as his successor in 1227 was John of St. John, an Anglo-Norman figure.[112]

Before his death, however, Bishop Ailbe travelled to London in 1219 after Marshall's death in May that year. Here Ailbe communicated with Marshall's five sons, explaining that if they would come to a compromise regarding the estates/properties, that he would lift the excommunication on their father. The sons refused, and according to the thirteenth-century chronicler Matthew Paris, Bishop Ailbe subsequently placed a curse on the Marshall family, stating that they would die miserably, and their inheritance would disappear.[113] But perhaps the most intriguing attempt Bishop Ailbe made in an effort to retrieve these properties, was the

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[108] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 330. The significance of Ailbe's usage of hagiographical material will be addressed in due course.
[109] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 329-330.
[110] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 330-331.
[111] Sheehy, *Pontificia Hibernica*, Vol. 1, pp. 199-200. Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 331, fn. 85, for references to other secondary works.
[112] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 331.
[113] Luard, *Chronica Majora*, Vol. 4, pp. 491-4. Cf. p. 493, where Paris refers to Bishop Ailbe as 'a saint'.

revision and writing of saints' Lives.[114] As Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin noted, Bishop Ailbe was probably well aware of the role of saints' Lives 'in affirming title to property' as discussed earlier in the introduction of this thesis. 'The temptation to revise appropriate Lives accordingly might well have been hard to resist'.[115] Bishop Ailbe's familiarity with the genre may also have been inspired by his earlier desire to have Lorcán Ua Tuathail (St. Lawrence O'Toole) canonised. Ailbe consulted a copy of *Liber de Miraculis* (The Book of Miracles) by Máel Íse Ua Cerbaill, 'which documented instances of miracles ascribed to the saintly Lorcán'.[116]

Since Ailbe was a bishop of an important Laigin diocese (Ferns), this meant that ownership over church networks and land within this diocese was of key concern to him when writing saints' Lives. Perhaps one of Bishop Ailbe's most noteworthy concerns for writing the Life of Abbán, as Ó Riain and Mac Shamhráin have shown, was his attempt to retrieve two (now unknown) manors from William Marshal, which Marshal subsequently took after a ruling out of an ecclesiastical court in Dublin in 1218.[117] The probability of these two manors being located within the Ferns Diocese is supported by Goddard Henry Orpen's reference to the lands of Templeshanbo (a Wexford parish) being handed over to Bishop Ailbe's successor (Marshal) 'for the sake of peace'.[118] An earlier place-name (Senboth Ard) spelling of this Wexford parish was identified from §47 of *VSA(D)* by Charles Plummer.[119] In this section, Abbán receives the region of Senboth Ard from his friend Conall, whose seed was promised to service the monastery of Abbán up until the present day of the writer of *VSA*.[120] Assuming that the writer of this section is Bishop Ailbe, it is plausible to suggest that Bishop Ailbe was attempting to show his political authority and historical right to Senboth Ard (Templeshanbo).

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[114] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 333.
[115] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 333.
[116] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 327-328. Accordingly, St. Lawrence knew of Ailbe as a young cleric, see: Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 316. Moreover, it is the fact that miracle motifs are a primary feature of saints' Lives that would explain Bishop Ailbe's familiarity with the genre.
[117] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 164-165; Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 325-333 for an overview of Bishop Ailbe's adverse relationship with the growing impact of Anglo-Norman influence upon Irish socio-political and ecclesiastical affairs.
[118] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 165, fn. 78. For a modern-day geographical identification of Templeshanbo; see: Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin et al., 2008, *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=4969* (Last Accessed 2nd July 2020).
[119] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, p. 340.
[120] *VSA(D)*, pp. 29-30, §47. Abbán's monastery is most likely referring to Abbán's south Laigin foundation: Mag Arnaide, of which he is the patron saint; particularly since Senboth Ard is also located in the south Laigin Uí Cennselaig dynasty; see: *VSA(D)*, p. 29, §47. This section will be explored in more detail later in this chapter. For an important read on the history and politics of Senboth Ard and the saints connected with the location, see: Johnston, The Saints of North Wexford, Forthcoming. I am grateful to Elva Johnston for sending me a copy of her forthcoming article.

This undoubtedly provides some food for thought in relation to the importance that Abbán's Life (*VSA*) served during the Anglo-Norman period. It suggests that Bishop Ailbe wrote the Life in a manner which subtly but effectively articulated matters related to his own affairs.[121] Thus, while saints' Lives are normally written to justify the saint's status and for promoting the interests of his/her churches, Abbán's was arguably written in order to create a political tool for fulfilling and satisfying the contemporary concerns of a prelate from the Anglo-Norman era.[122] The implication however, is that it was merely coincidental, that Abbán had been selected as a subject on which to write such a Life. Hence, had it not been for Bishop Ailbe, there would be little else for which this saint was known.[123] Despite the significance of Ó Riain's hypothesis, we must also take note of the length of the *Vita* which he pondered. Abbán's *Vita* (*VSA*) is one of the longest and most detailed extant Irish *Vitae*, surviving in *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (*VSH*). Ó Riain's article addresses fourteen different sections from *VSA*, which is a limited number of sections, because the entire *Vita* contains fifty-three sections.[124] This means that most of the content from Abbán's *Vita* still awaits a fuller examination.[125]

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[121] Moreover, this also means that it did not take away from the actual genre of the text; that being: a hagiographical text or a saint's Life that presents a series of events surrounding the monastic and spiritual work Abbán enacted from the beginning to the end of his life. Hence, Bishop Ailbe's underlying concerns did not override or obscure the fact that he still was presenting a saint's Life. More details on the meaning of hagiography will follow after the present discussion.

[122] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170.

[123] See for example: Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 337, which identifies Abbán as a saint, who is 'relatively minor', aside from the political edge of his *Vita*. Cf. Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 362, which labels Abbán a 'little-known' saint.

[124] In saying that Abbán's *Vita* contains fifty-three sections, I am specifically referring to the *Vita* which survives in the *Dubliniensis* Collection, and the version edited by Charles Plummer. The *Vita* from the *Salmanticensis* Collection contains forty-six sections, according to William Heist's edition of this manuscript collection. Ó Riain commented on sections from both *VSA(D)* and *VSA(S)*. Moreover, some of the sections discussed in Ó Riain's article are in fact only briefly cited towards the end of Ó Riain's article, see: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 166. At the same time, this is not to suggest that Ó Riain totally ignored the remaining thirty-nine sections from *VSA*. He may well have considered all the sections within the context as a whole and believed that it only sufficed to comment on a select number of scenes from *VSA* for demonstrating that Bishop Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid of Ferns was the author of Abbán's Life. As this thesis will attempt to show nevertheless, a full examination of all the sections from *VSA* may challenge his hypothesis regarding the authorship of Abbán's Life.

[125] The sections which are briefly cited towards the end of his argument include §§8 to 12; see: *VSA(D)*, pp. 7-10. These sections detail Abbán's relationship with his maternal uncle Bishop Íbar. The fact that Íbar is the patron saint of the Wexford townland: Beggerin Island is used as a form of evidence for suggesting that Bishop *Ailbe* is the author of Abbán's Life; but Ó Riain offers no additional commentary in relation to the episode's connection with Bishop Ailbe's interests in the Life of Abbán; see: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 166. The first *VSA(D)* sections Ó Riain draws attention to, are §§13 and 14, which tells of a British pagan-city in which Abbán, Íbar and his crew landed; namely 'Abingdon'; Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 160-161. Next, he refers to §26 where the *VSA* writer claims to be a descendant of the children of the tyrant whom Abbán had baptised in the region of Éile; Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 162; the next section Ó Riain refers to is §47, which depicts Abbán resurrecting his friend (Conall) in a place called Senboth Ard, of which the saint subsequently received ownership; See, Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 163, but also p. 165 where Ó Riain explains that the lands of Senboth Ard were handed over to Bishop Ailbe's successor. Next, Ó Riain refers to the resting place of St. Éimhin in New Ross in §28; Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 163-164; Next Ó Riain briefly refers to §§1 and 2 of *VSA(D)*; suggesting that the topographical description from §1 was written for an international audience in Ireland and the depiction of Abbán alongside SS. Kevin and Moling as the three chief

A Pre-Existing Life of Abbán: Possibilities

Based on his assessment of the fourteen sections from *VSA(D)*, Ó Riain states that 'all other emphases in the life are compatible with Albinus' authorship'.[126] The fact that most of the *VSA(D)* scenes were unaddressed in his study means that this over-arching statement is not fully supported and the extent to which Bishop Ailbe was the author of these *VSA* sections still remain to be fully considered. Admittedly, Ó Riain subtly suggests so himself, when he briefly commented on §22 of *VSA(D)*. This section depicts Abbán completing extensive missionary work throughout the south of Munster. The fact that Abbán's missionary work in Munster bore little connection with Bishop Ailbe's general interest in the Life of Abbán, led Ó Riain to suggest that this section represents 'independent evidence of a traditional association with the saint'.[127] Moreover, material that appears to be unrelated to the contemporary stance of Bishop Ailbe would imply that he also recycled material from the pre-existing Life as he was producing the now extant Latin Life (*VSA*). Moreover, while scholars such as Richard Sharpe and Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin agree with Bishop Ailbe's imprint on *VSA*, both express subtle uncertainty regarding the idea of Bishop Ailbe being the original author of Abbán's Life.[128]

Subsequently, Sharpe and Mac Shamhráin alluded to the likelihood of Bishop Ailbe being a redactor or reviser of Abbán's Life, the former also indicating that Bishop Ailbe may have initiated the *VSH(D)* collection.[129] Therefore, one ought to consider the possibility of Bishop Ailbe making adaptations to an already existing Life of Abbán and adapting earlier materials

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Laigin saints implies that Abbán is a cultural embodiment of an important ecclesiastical site; potentially Ferns, as Ó Riain tentatively suggests; Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 164. Next, he comments on the reference to the River Brosnach (Modern-day 'Brosna') from §24 where Abbán saved the people of Éile from a cat-like monster; Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 164; and lastly, Ó Riain refers to Abbán's monastic career in the region of Mide in §32 of VSA(D); Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 164.This is not an attempt to demote Ó Riain's hypothesis; rather, it is an attempt to demonstrate that the origin(s) of Abbán's Life, or any Life for that matter, can only be fully elicited after *all* sections or episodes of the Life have been considered.

[126] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 166.

[127] Ó Riain, p. 165, fn. 88 & pp. 165-166. Later, Charles Doherty also elaborated on the same observation, explaining that if most of the geographical locations from *VSA(D)* are in Munster, then concern over the foundations within the diocese of Ferns and also within the south Laigin dynasty: Uí Cennselaig, can hardly be 'the main issue in the "life"', see: Doherty, 'Analysis of the "life" of Abbán', p. 4 of pp. 1-10. Most probably, 'property rights' is the main issue of the adapted version (*VSA*) of an original non-extant Life of Abbán.

[128] Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 350 of pp. 349-353, where Sharpe addresses §27 of *VSA(D)*, in which the writer of *VSA(D)* claims to be descendant from the saint. Here, Sharpe expresses his uncertainty of whether this writer (most likely Bishop Ailbe of Ferns) was 'the author of the original *vita* or our redactor' of the *Dubliniensis* manuscript collection. Perhaps in a more discreet manner, Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin later alluded towards Bishop Ailbe being a reviser, as opposed to an author of *VSA(D)* owing to the fact that the *Vita* of the patron saint of Ferns (Máedoc) appears to have been the subject of some revision during the late twelfth or early thirteenth century too; see: Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 333.

[129] Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*, pp. 354 & 362. Cf. p. 118 where he argues that most of the Lives from *VSH(D)* 'were subject to editorial revision', which is why most of them are contextually alike. Cf. Mac Shamhráin, 1996, *Church and Polity*, p. 8.

at his disposal, as opposed to producing one from scratch. Moreover, this serves as an important reminder of the conflicting viewpoints regarding the origins and developments of hagiographical writing in Ireland. While Sharpe and Máire Herbert have argued that most of the extant Latin Lives preserved in the three main manuscript collections of *VSH* are copies of pre-existing Lives from the ninth to eleventh centuries, Ó Riain argued that the Lives from *VSH* are the original Lives of these saints.[130] In addition, Ó Riain stressed that pre-Norman hagiographical activity centred mainly on the ecclesiastical centres where the cults of SS. Patrick, Brigit and Colm Cille emerged, and that in the late twelfth century Latin hagiography was introduced into Ireland via new monastic orders such as the Augustinian Canons.[131] This demonstrates that the Life of Abbán has largely been considered through the perspective of Ó Riain, meaning there is a need to approach Abbán's Life from the shared viewpoint of Sharpe and Herbert.

For this, we must backtrack to the main scholarship on Abbán's Life that emerged before Ó Riain's hypothesis of *VSA* being written in its original form in the early thirteenth century. James F. Kenney was the first scholar to apply some thought to the origin of *VSA*, dating the *Vita* to approximately 'the first half of the ninth century'.[132] Though Ó Riain's dating evidently does not agree with Kenney's estimation, Kenney's merits consideration, because it feeds into the possibility of *VSA* being the earliest extant version of an earlier pre-existing Life of Abbán. As for the origin of a potentially earlier non-extant Life, there is essentially little way of knowing whether it was written in Latin or the vernacular because it no longer exists. Before the extant Hiberno-Latin Lives in the *VSH* collections were produced, Sharpe and Herbert proposed that hagiography was mainly written in Latin throughout the seventh and eighth centuries and from the ninth to eleventh centuries, vernacular became the preferred language.[133] Even so, we must remember the importance of bilingualism, meaning that throughout these

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[130] Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*, pp. 3-38; Herbert, Latin and Vernacular Hagiography, pp. 327-360; Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 39-40; The O'Donohue Lives, pp. 38-52.

[131] Cf. Lewis, *The Impact of the Anglo-Norman Conquest on Hagiography in Wales and Ireland* - see 14:43-17:41.

[132] Kenney, *The Early History of Ireland*, p. 319. Cf. Hughes, *Church and Society in Ireland*, Ch. 11, p. 268, who acknowledged the ninth dating Kenney attributed to Abbán's *Vita*. From the perspective of Sharpe's and Herbert's viewpoints, Kenney's dating would suggest that the extant version of *VSA* is a later copy of a non-extant ninth century Life of Abbán.

[133] Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*, pp. 3-38; Herbert, Latin and Vernacular Hagiography, pp. 327-360. Though he did not specifically date *VSA(D)* to the same early period, the fact that Richard Sharpe dated more than several lives from the *Dubliniensis* collection to the eighth and early mid ninth centuries would imply there is further room for thought for Abbán's *Vita* bearing a similar origin; see: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, pp. 274-339; Cf. Herbert, Latin and Vernacular Hagiography, pp. 336-337, which adheres towards Sharpe's dating too. From a more general observation, the fact that Hiberno-Latin hagiography tends to precede the vernacular from the pre-Norman and post-Norman period would suggest that Abbán's original non-extant Life was written in Hiberno-Latin.

centuries, monks and scholars were well capable of writing in both Latin and the vernacular. Hence, just because there may have been a general preference to write in the vernacular from the ninth to eleventh centuries, does not mean that hagiography was never written in Latin during this period.

In essence, we can only focus on the extant copies of Abbán's Life, which are *VSA* and the later vernacular copy *Betha Abain* (*BA*). The fact that *VSA* is the oldest extant copy of Abbán's Life suggests that Latin is the preceding language in Abbán's hagiographical dossier. The work of William Heist however, implied otherwise. [134] Heist drew attention to a select number of examples from Abbán's *Vita*, which he interpreted as evidence for *VSA* being translated from the vernacular language, including two verses from the *Vita* which are written in the vernacular.[135] Ó Riain subsequently disagreed with Heist's hypothesis, particularly when he stated that Heist's article places no apparent contradiction upon Charles Plummer's observation of Abbán's *Betha* reading like an abbreviated version of the saint's *Vita*.[136] More generally, because Heist's and Kenney's input had been disregarded by Ó Riain, this may explain why later scholars who drew some attention to the Life of Abbán like Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin and Richard Sharpe have mainly adhered to Ó Riain's view and have not pondered those of Kenney and Heist. Most likely, this is because Ó Riain had conducted the greatest deal of research on the Life of Abbán up until this point.[137]

Elsewhere however, Anthony Harvey provided an etymological case study on the word *cuvula* from *VSA(D)*. Harvey proposed that the word *cuvula* is a Hiberno-Latin borrowing of the vernacular word *cúile*, meaning 'a kitchen', which is attested in *BA*. In addition, *cúile* is used in the same context in *BA* as *cuvula* is in *VSA(D)*.[138] This borrowing would suggest that Abbán's extant *Vita* was being adapted from earlier Irish material. While *BA* in its extant format, is an early modern text, this potential borrowing of *cuvula* from *cúile* could indicate that *BA* contains remnants of a pre-existing vernacular Life from the pre-Norman period. On that note, we may speculatively say that while Ó Riain rejected Kenney's estimation of Abbán's

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[134] Heist, Over the Writer's Shoulder, pp. 76-84. This scholarship emerged before Ó Riain's hypothesis on the Life of Abbán.
[135] See for example: Heist, Over the Writer's Shoulder, pp. 79-80, which draws attention to two Irish verses and the vernacular place-name spellings from *VSA*. Though the former source of evidence merits some thought, the latter is less likely to be perceived as an indicator for Abbán's pre-existing Life being written in the vernacular. This is because most Hiberno-Latin saints' Lives normally refer to such placenames in the native language.
[136] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 161, fn. 37-39.
[137] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 333-338; Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*, pp. 349-353 & 361 -362.
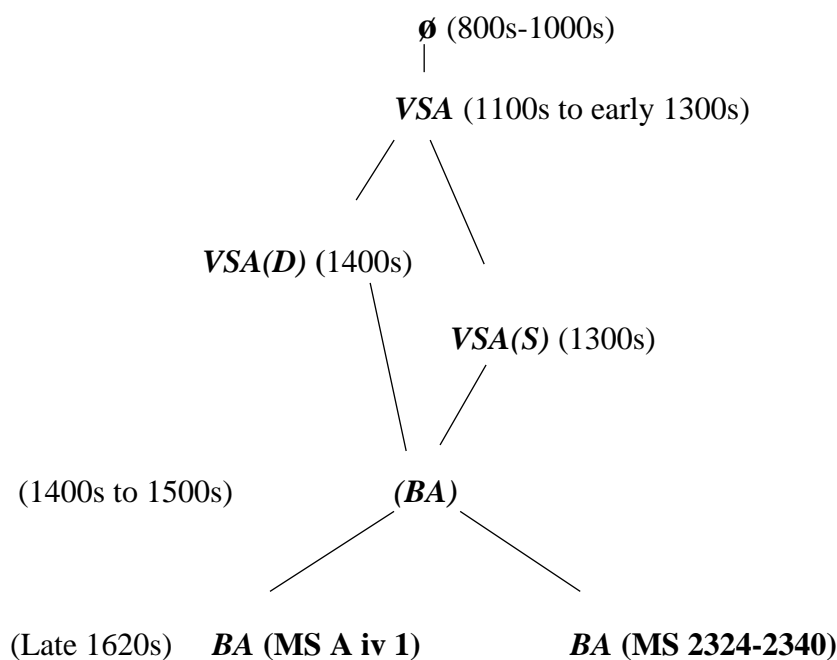[138] Harvey, Varia I., pp. 229-230. More details on the context in which this word is being used in Abbán's hagiographical dossier will follow in chapter two of this thesis.

Life having a ninth century origin and Heist for suggesting that the original language of Abbán's hagiographical dossier was the vernacular, Harvey's etymological study may be perceived as providing an alternative lens for promoting Kenney's and Heist's hypotheses. From a broader perspective, nevertheless, Harvey's study would be better interpreted as an example of bilingualism. We may note also that Harvey's study is based solely on one word, meaning the vernacular word from which *cuvula* emerged may have come from any earlier Irish material, let alone a pre-existing Life of Abbán.
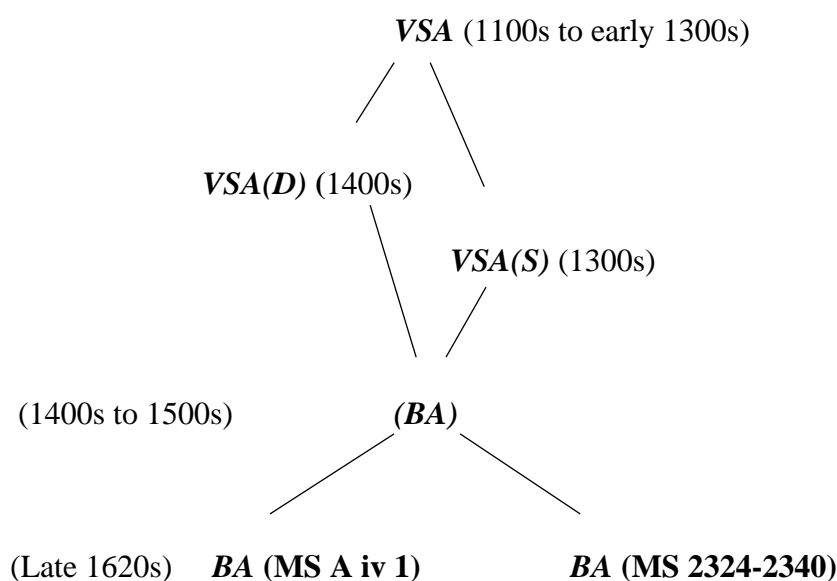
Though we may not be able to sufficiently identify the language in which a pre-existing Life of Abbán was written, it still remains possible that such a Life did exist during the pre-Norman period. In light of the conflicting viewpoints regarding the origins and development of hagiographical writing in Ireland, they evidently paint two different images for Abbán's hagiographical dossier. To further visualise both the shared viewpoint of Richard Sharpe and Máire Herbert and that of Pádraig Ó Riain we may construct two stemmas of the manuscript and textual versions of Abbán's Life, according to both viewpoints:[139]

The Genesis of Abbán's Life according to Richard Sharpe and Máire Herbert

ø (800s-1000s)

VSA (1100s to early 1300s)

VSA(D) (1400s)

VSA(S) (1300s)

(1400s to 1500s)   *(BA)*

(Late 1620s)   *BA* **(MS A iv 1)**   *BA* **(MS 2324-2340)**

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[139] ø from the stemma according to Sharpe and Herbert is an abbreviation for the original non-extant Life of Abbán (which may have been written in the vernacular, according to my review of the works of Anthony Harvey, William Heist and James Kenney). Evidently, this symbol is not listed in the stemma according to Pádraig Ó Riain, which suggests that *VSA* as it survives, is the earliest and original life of Abbán, meaning it does not adhere to the possibility of the *Vita* being a copy of a pre-existing Life.

The Genesis of Abbán's Life according to Pádraig Ó Riain

VSA (1100s to early 1300s)

VSA(D) (1400s)

VSA(S) (1300s)

(1400s to 1500s)   **(BA)**

(Late 1620s)   **BA (MS A iv 1)**   **BA (MS 2324-2340)**

Since Pádraig Ó Riain's hypothesis regarding the origin of Abbán's Life has remained largely unchallenged, this means Abbán's Life has been mainly assessed via Ó Riain's viewpoint that the extant *Vitae* preserved in the *VSH* manuscript collections were written in their original form during the Norman period. [140] To examine the Life of Abbán from the viewpoint that that these *Vitae* are copies of pre-existing Lives of their saints, as Sharpe and Herbert suggest, an examination of the entire content from Abbán's Life will be conducted in this thesis.

This will also involve an attempt to consider Ó Riain's proposition of Bishop Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid of Ferns being the author of *VSA*. The select number of scenes and episodes from Abbán's Life which Ó Riain identified as evidence for Ua Máel Muaid's authorship, were well-articulated overall, and certainly provided some food for thought. While most subsequent scholars essentially agreed with Ó Riain, Charles Doherty was the only scholar who made a clear attempt to challenge Ó Riain's proposition of authorship. [141] Before outlining Doherty's counterargument, a brief summary of the manner in which *VSA(D)* envisages the main points of Abbán's life, is necessary: [142]

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[140] See for example: Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 100, which agrees fully with Ó Riain's hypothesis. Subsequently, Ó Néill sets forward to examine the historical significance of an Irish verse from *VSA(D)*, which Ó Néill calls 'a charm', or what can also be interpreted as, 'a prayer'.
[141] Doherty, Analysis of the "life" of Abbán, pp. 1-10.
[142] See: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 3-33.

Abbán's birth and early childhood was spent in the north of Laigin.[143] At the age of twelve he was sent to the south, to be educated by his maternal uncle Bishop Íbar, in Beggerin Island, Co. Wexford. At a later point of his life, Abbán went on three pilgrimages to Rome. When he returned to Ireland, he conducted monastic work, beginning in Connacht and then travelled south to the province of Munster, where this work was particularly extensive. Abbán continued his work through Tipperary, the north of Laigin and Mide, and back down to the south of Laigin. Subsequently, Abbán became the patron saint of two foundations: Mag Arnaide in the south of Laigin and Cell Abbain in the north.

A certain number of scenes and episodes from *VSA* dissuaded Doherty from believing that Bishop Ailbe was the original author of Abbán's Life.[144] This is because such scenes bore no apparent connection with Bishop Ailbe's contemporary affairs from the Norman period. Doherty argued that if a prelate from the Diocese of Ferns (Bishop Ailbe) was the author of Abbán's Life, he would expect to see a reference to the patron saint of Ferns; namely: Máedóc.[145] This saint does not feature in any scene or episode from *VSA(D)* nor *BA*.[146] One particular section from *VSA(D)* where a reference to St. Máedóc would most certainly be expected, according to Doherty, is §2 of *VSA(D)*. This section envisages St. Patrick prophesying the three chief saints of Laigin: Abbán, Kevin of Glendalough and Moling of Mullins and Timolin.[147] The fact that Kevin and Moling are saints of north Laigin origin may cause one to question why a prelate from Ferns was willing to promote saints from outside his diocese. Doherty subsequently drew attention to the Ua Cáellaide lordship, which ruled many territories throughout the region of Ossory and Laigin throughout the late twelfth century; one of which was Abbán's north Laigin foundation: Cell Abbain.[148] The significance of the Ua Cáellaide lordship 'within the ambit' of Cell Abbain and Abbán's association with two saints

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[143] This is based on *VSA(D)* identifying Abbán's father as a king of a north Laigin dynasty, namely: the Dál Messin Corb.

[144] For the specific (short) list of observations; see: Doherty, Analysis of the 'life' of Abbán, p. 4.

[145] For a biographical review of the life and cult of St. Máedóc of Ferns; see for example: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 432-436, under the name: Maodhóg of Ferns.

[146] As we will examine in chapter two of this thesis, a relatively large number of saints are depicted as Abbán's contemporaries. Generally, a saint of greater importance or fame such as Máedóc would feature in the Life of a comparatively lesser-known saint for asserting this saint's pre-eminence. Hence, from this perspective, it may seem odd that a greater saint, also of south Laigin origin, does not appear in Abbán's *Vita*. More details on this subject-matter will follow in due course.

[147] Doherty, Analysis of the 'life' of Abbán, p. 4; *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 3-4. A further examination of this scene will be conducted in chapter two of this thesis.

[148] Doherty, Analysis of the 'life' of Abbán, pp. 5-9. Cf. Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 318-319, which refers to the different Ua Cáellaide territories throughout Laigin and Ossory.

of north Laigin origin, led Doherty to conclude that it was an Ua Cáellaide bishop who wrote Abbán's Life in the late twelfth century.[149]

This hypothesis casts light on the north Laigin origin of Abbán's *Vita*. As for Doherty's counterargument, it merits some consideration. Before Doherty's work, Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin suggested the territories that were assigned to the Ua Cáellaide lordship during the twelfth century, would have played an important role in 'the dissemination of saints' cults and the sourcing of hagiographical data by Ua Máel Muaid and his associates'.[150] This inter-relationship between Bishop Ailbe and the Ua Cáellaide lordship would in fact, promote the probability of Bishop Ailbe contributing to the production of *VSA*. There are, nevertheless, a few other scenes which Charles Doherty has, rightfully in my view, identified as bearing no connection with Bishop Ailbe's contemporary affairs. One of these scenes concerns the extensive monastic work Abbán conducted throughout Munster, in the south-west of Ireland.[151] It would be difficult to understand how this kind of scene would serve 'as a response to Anglo-Norman pressure or encroachment on church lands' within the Diocese of Ferns and Laigin, when this scene evidently reflects the Munster origins of Abbán's cult.[152]

In comparison to our discussion from the outset, Charles Doherty also drew attention to the fact that there is a notable number of scenes and episodes from Abbán's *Vita* which casts little or no light on Irish-Norman affairs or, in relation to Bishop Ailbe's dispute with William Marshal, regarding property rights. While Doherty has interpreted this observation as evidence for an Ua Cáellaide Bishop being the author of *VSA*, this thesis suggests that such scenes and episodes are more likely to be fossils from an original non-extant Life of Abbán from the pre-Norman period. Hence, this thesis agrees with the probability of Bishop Ailbe being the author of *VSA*, but further suggests that Bishop Ailbe was producing a contemporary version (*VSA*) of a pre-existing Life of Abbán. Moreover, if Bishop Ailbe's primary goal was to use *VSA* as a form of testimonial evidence for acquiring ownership over disputed property and lands, producing a Life as long and detailed as *VSA(D)* from scratch, on a saint whose cult lies within the diocese of Ferns, but bears no connection with the actual location, may have been a challenging and somewhat unrealistic task for Bishop Ailbe to complete under such

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[149] Doherty, Analysis of the 'life' of Abbán, p. 9.
[150] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbhe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 318. Moreover, the idea of Bishop Ailbe having 'associates' relates to the theory of Bishop Ailbe potentially initiating what subsequently became *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (*VSH*); see: Mac Shamhráin, Ailbhe Ua Máel Muaid, p.309, fn. 3.
[151] Doherty, Analysis of the 'life' of Abbán, p. 4.
[152] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 166.

circumstances. [153] In order to ponder the possibility of *VSA* being an adapted version of an original non-extant Life of Abbán, this thesis will address three key research questions:[154]

1. Which sections of *VSA(D)* were revised or invented by Bishop Ailbe of Ferns?

2. Which sections can be identified as artifacts of an original non-extant Life of Abbán?

3. From what period may this Life have originated?

These questions will serve as the underlying methodology for the chapters in which Abbán's hagiographical dossier will be the focal point of concern. Though this approach will not always reveal clear-cut answers to these questions, it will present the first attempt to study Abbán's *Vita* from Sharpe's and Herbert's viewpoints. This over-arching methodological approach will consider the potential pre-existence of an original pre-Norman Life of Abbán. It will also cast more focus on the actual cult and later reputation of Abbán. While Ó Riain did put forward a convincing case for the authorship of Abbán's Life, it has led subsequent scholars such as Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin, to suggest that Abbán would be relatively unknown unless Bishop Ailbe had decided to compose a contemporary Life of Abbán.[155] Though Bishop Ailbe may have left a notable imprint on the saint's Life, this thesis will also show that the significance of Abbán's cult was not merely a by-product of Bishop Ailbe's desire to respond to 'Anglo-Norman pressure'. This significance will become particularly discernible from scenes which are most likely unrelated to the political career and activity of Bishop Ailbe, which will further uncover potential pre-Norman origins of Abbán's cult.

As for matters that are probably unrelated to Bishop Ailbe's contemporary stance, we need recall how §2 of *VSA(D)*, as Charles Doherty observed, is a likely embodiment of the saint's north Laigin patronage. As noted earlier, Abbán is the patron saint of two foundations: Mag Arnaide in the south of Laigin and Cell Abbain in the north. A conflicting matter, however, lies in contrasting levels of focus the *Vita* applies to both foundations. While §2 is a probable embodiment of Abbán's north Laigin patronage, the foundation itself (Cell Abbain) is only

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[153] Cf. Mac Shamhráin's quote: 'if no references to these sites could be found, the temptation to revise appropriate Lives accordingly, might well have been hard to resist'; Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 333. Cf. Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, pp. 360-361.

[154] At the same time, while there may be material from Abbán's Life that potentially pre-dates the hand of Bishop Ailbe, we need note that such material now survives in *VSA*, dating from the twelfth to the thirteenth centuries. Thus, the significance of the content from Abbán's Life can only be considered in its extant format, meaning possibilities of the material dating to a point in time from the pre-Norman period cannot be fully confirmed.

[155] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170; Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 337. Having called Abbán a 'relatively minor saint', Mac Shamhráin was specifically drawing attention to §1 of *VSA(D)*. Further details on Mac Shamhráin's point will be explored in due course in this thesis.

cited on one occasion throughout the entire *Vita*. The latter half of the *Vita* on the other hand, focuses mainly on Abbán's life and activity when he lived in Mag Arnaide. The implication that there is an underlying division or form of single preference towards one of the two foundations can also be elicited from the scenes pertaining to Abbán's death, which as noted earlier, tells of the communities of both foundations quarrelling over ownership of Abbán's relics. Moreover, the ability to elicit such interest in Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain from Abbán's *Vita*, would imply that both of his primary foundations embody two important but ambiguous aspects of the saint's identity.

The Non-Hagiographical Evidence

Though he did not present a study on the authorship of *VSA*, Victor De Buck also drew attention to Abbán's double patronage. He proposed that 'Abbán of Mag Arnaide' and 'Abbán of Cell Abbain' were originally two different saints and that their own individual Lives were merged into one over a certain period of time.[156] In an attempt to support his proposition, he also showed that evidence for this finding can be recognised from sources outside of Abbán's hagiographical dossier; that being the Irish genealogies and martyrologies.[157] The former provides a range of pedigrees and genealogical entries, which list the names of the supposed family members and ancestors of a saint. The martyrologies, on the other hand, present a calendar of the days and months of the year. Under each day, the names of a select number of saints are recorded, which represents the anniversary of the saint's death and subsequently becomes known as the saint's feast-day. A particularly striking feature of Abbán's martyrological record lies in the fact that he is often ascribed two feast-days in the Irish martyrologies: 16 March and 27 October. De Buck further suggested that this is due to records of two different saints named Abbán being conflated.[158]

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[156] De Buck, De. SS. Abbanis Kill-Abbaniensi et Magharnuidhiensi, pp. 270-293. Cf. pp. 276-293 for a copy of John Colgan's edition of the *Codex Kilkenniensis* manuscript copy of Abbán's *Vita*. Moreover, De Buck's work is part of the 68-Volume collection of works by Bollandists, such as De Buck, since the early mid-seventeenth century.

[157] Aside from his hagiographical dossier, the genealogies and martyrologies are the next significant sources of evidence for the life and cult of Abbán. We may also note that the genealogies and martyrologies provide records of Abbán which date before the Norman period, some of which can be dated as far back as the ninth century, details on this matter will be examined in due course throughout this thesis. More broadly, it demonstrates that evidence for Abbán's cult pre-dates Bishop Ailbe's composition of *VSA*.

[158] De Buck, De. SS. Abbanis Kill-Abbaniensi et Magharnuidhiensi, pp. 270-271.

In light of my proposition of a pre-existing Life of Abbán, De Buck's theory would imply that Bishop Ailbe merged two separate pre-existing Lives each of a different saint named 'Abbán' into one. As the reduplicated feast-days show however, the issue is not solely confined to Abbán's hagiographical account. This means there is a need to consider the extent to which having two feast-days and being the patron saint of two locations is merely coincidental or represents a broader underlying issue concerning Abbán's historical identity. The latter case is more plausible, particularly since a saint's patronage and feast-day are two matters that are both related to his/her death. The probability of this case will also become evident from an examination of Abbán's genealogical record, which presents some conflicting depictions of the saint's ancestry. This will involve considering whether such depictions can be taken as examples of the historically unreliable nature of Irish genealogies more generally or if it does in fact suggest genealogical records of two different saints named Abbán were conflated. This thesis will compare and analyse the manner in which this dual image can be elicited from the saint's hagiographical, genealogical and martyrological accounts. The interpretation which De Buck has attributed to the evidence, will be termed 'The Two-Abbán Theory' throughout this thesis.

Though De Buck's theory presents a valid argument, we must also take note of the fact that he produced this secondary work in the mid-late nineteenth century. Since then, theories on the historical and textual origins of evidence for saints' cults have evolved.[159] Contemporary scholars of hagiography and genealogies are acutely aware of their inability to provide historically accurate accounts of its subjects. The main point of concern from De Buck's work lies in the fact that the different scenes and episodes of *VSA* were interpreted as relics of a real-life situation and employed as evidence for promoting 'The Two-Abbán Theory'. For instance, the death-dates of some of the saints' depicted as Abbán's contemporaries in *VSA*, were used to differentiate between the saints who were contemporaries of 'Abbán of Mag Arnaide' and those who were contemporaries of 'Abbán of Cell Abbain'.[160] Though some of these death-dates are attested in the Irish annalistic record, it is common for a saint's Life to falsely envisage various other saints as contemporaries of its subject, in an attempt to justify and enhance the

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[159] For an important read on the historical development of hagiographical scholarship since the seventeenth century; see: Herbert, Hagiography, pp. 79-90.

[160] See: De Buck, De. SS. Abbanis Kill-Abbaniensi et Magharnuidhiensi, pp. 272-274.

subject's saintly status.[161] Hence, one ought to take note of the outdated ideologies underlying this theory.

As for the two feast-days, the most logical explanation would be that, originally, both feast-days each belonged to two different saints': 'Abbán of Mag Arnaide' and 'Abbán of Cell Abbain'. However, an alternative solution may be recognised from the scenes pertaining to Abbán's death in *VSA*. As we mentioned earlier, when Abbán died in Mag Arnaide, his relics were stolen from this community and brought to the north Laigin community of Cell Abbain, which resulted in both communities attempting to fight over Abbán's relics.[162] Though these scenes as depicted in *VSA* are by no means contemporary or factual accounts of the saint's actual death, they may be perceived as a literary expression of political tension between both communities from a historical past of the hagiographers. This would suggest that Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain embodied two opposing cults of the same saint. As for the two feast-days, this explanation would suggest that one represented the actual death of the saint, whilst the other emerged from this political tension between both communities in relation to ownership of Abbán's relics. Therefore, the second theory which I propose for explaining the origin of this dual image is 'The Double-Cult Theory', that is, two distinct cults for the same saint, rather than two distinct saints merging into a single figure.

The evidence for this dual image demonstrates that Abbán's cult was by no means a by-product of Bishop Ailbe's attempt to respond to 'Anglo-Norman pressure'.[163] The dual image is an underlying concern that precedes Bishop Ailbe's imprint on Abbán's Life. This would mean it is also the foundational element for discerning the genesis of Abbán's cult. Hence, Bishop Ailbe's imprint represents a later historical development and stage of Abbán's cult. As Ó Riain has shown, nevertheless, the imprint can be recognised via hagiographical scenes which are pertinent to matters concerning Bishop Ailbe's contemporary background.[164] As for the scenes which cast little or no light on such matters, consideration of a pre-existing Life of Abbán is equally necessary. As noted earlier, the attempt to distinguish between the possible sections invented by Bishop Ailbe and those that may be fossils of an original non-extant Life of Abbán, will serve as the underlying research questions for the chapters concerned with Abbán's

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[161] In *VSA* and *BA*, Abbán is envisaged as a contemporary of several saints' who are unlikely to have had this relationship with Abbán in actuality.
[162] See: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 30-33.
[163] See: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 159, where Ó Riain notes that *VSA* was written 'in its original form'.
[164] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170.

hagiographical dossier. Each of these chapters will focus on a set number of hagiographical sections concerning the events and episodes that occurred at different stages of the saint's life.

Though hagiography is the main textual evidence for Abbán's cult, it is far from being the only source of evidence. Aside from *VSA* and *BA*, the genealogies and martyrologies are equally valuable sources for studying the saint's family history and matters concerning his death. These sources have the potential for disclosing underlying contradictory depictions of the saint's identity. The genealogies and martyrologies will also highlight the key areas of Abbán's identity which ought to be considered in relation to matters concerning the saint's dual image This will enable us to question whether the image masks the original existence of two different saints' or two opposing cultural and geographical identities that emerged from the same saint. For instance, the problem of Abbán's reduplicated feast-days will be a relevant area which can be examined via the martyrologies. Since this matter will be the last point of focus in this thesis, an examination of the martyrologies will also involve a comparative consideration of other subject-areas related to Abbán's dual image, such as his double-patronage. In order to place matters concerning the saint's dual image and discern remnants of an original pre-existing Life of Abbán, the content from all the extant records of Abbán will be examined in line from the chronological order of his life.

Methodology

This thesis is comprised of five chapters. In the first chapter, the genealogies will be our central focus. This will involve of a close examination of a variety of pedigrees and entries which date from various points from the pre-Norman period to the seventeenth century. The primary goal will be to examine the manner in which the genealogical record depicts the saint's family history. A close comparison of the pedigrees and entries from this record will enable us to discern the extent to which depictions of his family history are misrepresented and consider whether such misrepresentations resonate with the underlying dual image linked with Abbán's identity. Similar intentions will be addressed in chapter five, which will consider the saint's death and the martyrological record of his two feast-days. Most of the focus will be attributed to the latter, whereby, an analysis of Abbán's record in chronologically varied Irish, Insular and Continental martyrological texts will be undertaken. The manner in which each of the martyrologies documents Abbán's identity under his two feast-days (16 March and 27 October) will be mirrored with the saint's death. This will enable us to consider whether both feast-days, represent two different events linked with the saint and subsequently evaluate whether they bear any connection with our earlier study of Abbán's genealogical record.

While matters concerning his dual image will also be considered for the middle chapters of the thesis, more focus will be attributed to Ó Riain's hypothesis of the authorship of Abbán's Life and the possibility of a pre-existing Life. Chapters two to four of this thesis will compare and analyse sections from *VSA(D)* and *BA*. Throughout chapter two to four of this thesis, it will become clear that, because *BA* is an abbreviated version *VSA*, much of the content from *VSA* was not copied into *BA*. After Abbán's genealogical record is examined in chapter one, chapter two will pick up on the discussion of Abbán's Life from this Introduction. It will then examine the hagiographical scenes which envisage Abbán's contemporaneous relationships with different individuals. This will uncover historical inconsistencies in the Life of Abbán and demonstrate why some of these relationships were most likely the subject of hagiographical fabrication, but also consider the relationships which may embody a historical origin of Abbán's cult. The cult of Abbán will become the main point of focus in chapter three which will consider the significance of Abbán's connection the various Irish geographical locations mentioned in his Life.

Though there will be a separate set of research questions set out for each individual chapter concerned with Abbán's hagiographical dossier, the attempt to discern which sections from *VSA(D)* were the works of Bishop Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid and those that are potentially remnants of a pre-existing Life of Abbán will be considered throughout chapters two to four. In chapter four, moreover, particular attention will be paid to the scenes which were most likely invented by Bishop Ailbe. Here, we will consider how Bishop Ailbe believed such scenes could be employed as a form of evidence for expressing his overall dismay and animosity towards the Anglo-Normans. Chapter four will also examine references to non-Irish or international locations cited in Abbán's hagiographical dossier. This will involve analysing whether the location can be perceived as a historical representation of Abbán's cult or if its citation in the dossier is a commonplace fictional reference of Irish hagiography or a reflection of the contemporary stance of the writer. References to Abbán from the Irish Litanies and other Insular toponymic evidence will also be considered. The order in which this thesis aims to examine Abbán's textual record will help fully contextualise problems concerning the authorship of his Life as well as those related to Abbán's individual identity.

Chapter 1

The Ancestry of St. Abbán

Introduction: The Evidence

For any Irish saint like Abbán, genealogies are generally the main source of evidence for his/her ancestry.[1] The significance of the Irish genealogies lies in the large (unfixed) corpus of entries and pedigrees now surviving, containing an approximate number of twenty thousand names of individuals.[2] These entries and pedigrees tell mainly of the patronymic descendants of an individual (who would typically be of dynastic or religious status), but also of the dynastic or kindred group from which the individual is a descendent.[3] There are two main types of genealogical genres known today: secular genealogies and saints' genealogies.[4] Unsurprisingly, the names of the dynastic figures are mainly recorded in the secular genealogies; whereas figures of religious status (such as saints) are generally mentioned in both genres. While the corpus of Irish genealogies mainly survive in a sparse and scattered manner in the extant manuscripts, secular and saints' pedigrees mainly survive as separate tracts in the manuscripts.[5]

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[1] This is because genealogical sources are more prominent in the West of Europe than in any other region of the Continent. For further details see: Ó Corráin, Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy, p. 51; Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 41; Cf. Dumville, Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists, pp. 76-77 for remarks upon the prominence of Irish and Welsh genealogies in the West of Europe.

[2] See: Kelleher, The Pre-Norman Irish Genealogies, p. 26; Ó Corráin, Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy, pp. 55-56; Ó Corráin, Creating the Past, pp. 177-208. I refer to the extant corpus of genealogies as unfixed, because the genealogies do not survive as one whole text or in a selection of texts. As indicated from the ongoing discussion, they survive in a sparse and scattered manner throughout several manuscripts. Moreover, genealogies are not even the main corpus of text preserved in some of these manuscripts, such as The Book of Uí Mhaine a late fourteenth century manuscript. The genealogical evidence from this manuscript will later be addressed in this chapter, because there is genealogical evidence for Abbán's ancestry preserved in this manuscript.

[3] This dynastic or kindred group is identified from an entry or pedigree, which normally translates into a meaning such as 'of the descendants of a particular region', that would have been of political importance at some point during the Early Medieval period. In many cases, the name of the region derived from an ancient dynastic individual. Examples will be seen from the entries and pedigree headings under which Abbán's name is recorded, later in this chapter. Cf. Ó Muraíle, The Irish Genealogies as an Onomastic Source, pp. 24-25 which discusses patronymic references such as *mac* (son) and *ó/ua* (grandson) which are typically found in Irish pedigrees.

[4] However, less detail tends to be attributed to saints in the secular genealogies. This distinction will become more recognisable from my examination of Abbán's genealogical record in the present chapter.

[5] See for example, The Book of Leinster (LLdip.) pp. v-vii, which shows that saints' genealogies occur much later than the numerous tracts of secular genealogies from The Book of Leinster manuscript.

Most of the leading authorities on Irish genealogies agree that genealogical work began in Ireland in the seventh to eighth centuries and was the work of the 'learned elite in monasteries'.[6] The difficulty in attributing such early dates to the extant corpus (of both secular and saints' genealogies) however, is that they are now preserved in manuscripts of comparatively later origin; the earliest of which only date as far back as the twelfth century; including, Rawlinson B 502 (Rawl. B 502) and The Book of Leinster (LL).[7] Genealogical work was however, active right up until the twelfth century, which means such extant manuscripts do contain entries and pedigrees varying in origin between the seventh and twelfth centuries. [8]

The preservation of genealogies in manuscripts dating to the twelfth century and later generally obscures most attempts to distinguish their origins. However, one particular way of dating the origins of genealogical entries and pedigrees, relates to their length and level of detail. According to Donnchadh Ó Corráin, the shortest tract of entries and pedigrees are typically the oldest, which are normally identified towards the end of a tract.[9] In some cases however, the entirety of the original content of the oldest entries and pedigrees do not survive in the manuscript.[10] Most apparently, this would be due to the manuscript compilers omitting some of the original content of the entries and pedigrees. The reason for omitting such material however relates to pressure that was most likely put on the compiler to account for two causes:[11]

1. The emergence of subsequent generations descendant from a dynastic or kindred group.

2. The prominence and decline in the political power of a dynasty.

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[6] See: Johnston, *Literacy and Identity*, pp. 79-80; *CGSH*, p. xiii; Ó Corráin, Creating the Past, p. 178; Ó Corráin, *Clavis Litterarum Hibernensium*, p. 989, which subtly alludes towards a potential sixth century origin for the genealogies, because some genealogical tracts refer to matters 'as early as the sixth century'; Bhreathnach, The Genealogies of Leinster, pp. 251 & 267; Ó Muraíle, Irish Genealogies as an Onomastic Source, p. 30; Ó Riain, Irish Saints Genealogies, p. 23; Ó Murchadha, Rawlinson B 502, p. 325.

[7] Rawlinson B 502 has been dated to the early twelfth century (see for example: Ó Murchadha, Rawlinson B 502, p. 333). The Book of Leinster originates from the mid-late twelfth century (see: *CGSH*, pp. xviii-xxiii; *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* (*CGH*), pp. ix-xvi). The manuscripts (including Rawlinson B 502 and The Book of Leinster) which contain genealogical pedigree and entry records of Abbán will be discussed in due course. Cf. Mac Shamhráin, *Church and Polity*, p. 13, who explains that Rawlinson B 502 and The Book of Leinster preserve the earliest (pre- Norman) record of Irish genealogies.

[8] This is particularly evident in the following secondary work: Ó Murchadha, Rawlinson B 502, pp. 322-332. Ó Murchadha estimates which of these five centuries the various pedigrees from the extant corpus originate. His estimations are based mainly on the annalistic records of the obits of individuals whose names are recorded in the pedigree headings in the corpus. Cf. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 161-162 for a further discussion on the relationship between the annals and genealogies.

[9] Ó Corráin, *Clavis*, p. 989. For similar remarks elsewhere, see: Ó Murchadha, Rawlinson B 502, p. 325. The idea of shorter texts providing the earliest evidence of a particular textual genre also applies to the Irish martyrologies. This textual genre will be examined in chapter five of this thesis.

[10] Ó Corráin, *Clavis*, p. 989.

[11] Ó Corráin, *Clavis*, p. 989.

The former cause undoubtedly explains why, as Ó Corráin noted, later genealogical material comprised most of a tract, whilst the older material gradually became more abbreviated to continue accommodating 'for later generations'. Ultimately, this resulted in some of the material from the older entries and pedigrees becoming excluded from the extant manuscripts.[12] For modern-day scholars moreover, this often results in one stumbling upon a vague or obscure pedigree, descendant from an unknown dynasty, or a dynasty that was perhaps politically unpowerful throughout most of the early medieval period. Thus, that dynasty and its pedigree would receive little or no mention elsewhere in the extant genealogical record.[13] Indeed, this is one of the reasons why genealogies are now regarded as 'unreliable' or non-factual accounts of an individual's ancestry.[14] But neither was it the intention of the genealogist nor the manuscript compiler to provide such accounts. They were more concerned with keeping records of the contemporary political authority of dynasties, and also, in the case of saints' genealogies, of the prominence of ecclesiastical centres located within those dynastic regions.[15]

As for the saint whose name is cited in pedigrees and entries recorded with such underlying intentions, this can serve as a disadvantageous situation for understanding his/her ancestry and thus, the period in which he/she possibly lived. Aside from genealogies, the textual record for the life and activity of most Irish saints' is not contemporary with the period in which they are believed to have lived.[16] This is likely to be the main circumstance, which prompted Pádraig Ó Riain to say that he supports the so-called 'general view' of most Irish and Welsh saints bearing 'no existence as historical persons'.[17] There is no doubt, that most of the textual evidence for a saint is of a fictional and chronologically problematic nature, owing to the hagiographical genre which a saint's identity falls largely into.[18] However, the implications

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[12] Ó Corráin, *Clavis*, p. 989.

[13] Ó Murchadha suggests that this is a problem particularly linked with eighth-century genealogies. See: Ó Murchadha, Rawlinson B 502, pp. 326- 328 for a discussion of this problem but also of the general characteristics of eighth-century genealogies.

[14] *Leabhar Mór na nGenealach*, The Great Book of Irish Genealogies (*LMnG*), p. 11; *CGSH*, p. xiii-xv; Ó Muraíle, Irish Genealogies as an Onomastic Source, pp. 41-42; Johnston, *Literacy and Identity*, p. 82; Cf. Hamann, St. Fursa, pp. 152-153, who makes similar remarks in relation to a case study of the genealogical record of St. Fursa.

[15] In essence, the genealogies were a document of title that enabled powerful dynastic and ecclesiastical figures to expand their networks of power throughout and beyond their local region. See: Dumville, Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists, pp. 73, 76 & 81; Mac Shamhráin, *Church and Polity*, pp. 13-18; Ó Riain, Irish Saints Genealogies, pp. 23-29.

[16] Most Irish saints are believed to have lived at different periods between the sixth to seventh centuries. The former century is particularly undocumented, whilst only a small number of sources can be traced back to the seventh century, such as Muirchú's and Tírechán's Lives of St. Patrick. Cf. *CGSH*, p. xiv, which explains the sixth to seventh century represents the so-called 'Age of Saints' in Ireland.

[17] Ó Riain, Irish Saints Genealogies, pp. 24-25; Cf. Ó Muraíle, Irish Genealogies as an Onomastic Source, pp. 41-42. Ó Muraíle refers to Ó Riain's quote as a means of cautioning the readers that saints' genealogies serve no role in providing a historically accurate 'biographical document' of a saint's identity.

[18] The significance of a saint's chronology will be an important point of discussion in chapter two of this thesis.

this quote can have for future dossier studies of saints' are not entirely helpful. Perhaps one of Ó Riain's more helpful quotes centres on the value of the cultural identity of a saint. In an effort to identify the historical purpose of Irish saints' genealogies, he concludes that they play a role in plotting 'the progress' of a saint's 'cult'.[19]

The Case for St. Abbán

Though Máire Herbert noted that this theory needed 'to be scrutinised', some of the entries and pedigrees on Abbán's genealogy do nevertheless support Ó Riain's theory.[20] These entries and pedigrees plot Abbán's cult mainly within the northern region of Laigin (early medieval Leinster), where Cell Abbain lies.[21] However, the fact that *VSA* characterises Abbán as the patron saint of Cell Abbain, but also of a foundation (Mag Arnaide) located in the south of the province, most likely bears connotations for genealogical preference towards the saint's north Laigin origins.[22] Hence, saints' genealogies do plot the progress of Abbán's cult; only such progress is confined to the north of Laigin; a region which by no means stands alone as the sole representative of Abbán's cult.[23] In the genealogical record, preference towards Abbán's north Laigin cult is recognisable from the fact that some of his depicted familial relatives are connected with various places located throughout this province.[24] In other cases however, we will later see that the familial depictions of some of these individuals do not entirely parallel the ancestry ascribed to Abbán in his hagiographical record. Conflicting genealogical material is a typical characteristic of Irish genealogies more generally; and a review of this contrast between the genealogical and hagiographical records of Abbán's ancestry will augment this theory.[25]

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[19] Ó Riain, Irish Saints Genealogies, p. 27.

[20] Herbert, Hagiography, p. 88.

[21] Cell Abbáin (meaning 'The Church of Abbán') is now identified as the parish of Killabban located in the barony of Ballyadams in Co. Laois.

[22] The idea of Abbán's ancestry being constructed in a manner to attribute Abbán north Laigin origins will be considered in the present chapter. It will also receive consideration in chapter five of this thesis, which will examine how the saint's death causes tension to emerge between his two primary foundations: Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain. Cf. Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 335, n. 95 for a brief comment on the genealogical evidence for Abbán's north Laigin origins.

[23] *VSA* suggests the cult of Abbán extended widely throughout most of Laigin, but also throughout the modern-day provinces of Munster and Connacht. The significance of these cultural connections will be a particular point of focus in chapter three of this thesis.

[24] The most notable individuals envisaged as biological relatives of Abbán include, SS. Damán, Dubán, Senach, Miacca, Líthgein and Tomdenach who are envisaged as Abbán's brothers and Kevin of Glendalough for whom some of the genealogical entries and pedigrees depict as Abbán's maternal uncle. Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 51 & Mac Shamhráin, *Church and Polity*, p. 183 for a reference to Abbán's familial relation with Kevin.

[25] This characteristic was amplified in Stephanie Hamann's case study on the genealogical record of St. Fursa. Her study of the different depictions of the saint's maternal and paternal ancestry demonstrate that genealogical (re)construction related to broader ecclesiastical historical contexts. For a full read of this study, see: Hamann, St.

Even in the genealogical record alone, there are conflicting accounts of Abbán's ancestry. In saints' genealogies, not all of its entries and pedigrees associate Abbán with the same family members; and such differences are also recognisable from the secular genealogies. Understandably secular genealogies recorded comparatively less about saints, due to greater concern in the political authority of dynastic regions from which the saint is a descendant, as opposed to the saint's actual descent.[26] Undoubtedly, these characteristics would strike one as a classic scenario that reflects the historically problematic nature of Irish genealogies. At the same time, differences between the secular and saints' genealogies merit some thought; and this difference was particularly brought to the fore by Edel Bhreathnach.[27] In her study of the secular Leinster genealogies, she concluded that saints' cults were used as a form of property rights in the compilation of the secular genealogies, but also as 'testimonials to influence in territories which have succumbed in many instances to the authority of other population groups'.[28] This is the 'contextual significance' attributed to saints in the secular genealogies, which Máire Herbert argued is lacking in the corpus of saints' genealogies.[29]

In that regard, it is understandable how a saint's embodiment of local/regional dynastic and ecclesiastical links depicts him/her as a tool of political ideology in the secular genealogies.[30] But equally so is the lack (though not complete lack) of such significance in the saints' genealogies understandable. Most conspicuously, it is due to more focus being attributed to the saints, as opposed to dynastic history; but most importantly, the general lack of sub-headings

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Fursa, pp. 147-187. In relation to the saint's maternal ancestry for example, Hamann shows that Fursa's mother (Brónach) is depicted as a mother to five other saints; all of whom are also connected with dynastic regions surrounding a powerful ecclesiastical centre which expanded the cult of St. Patrick; namely, The Church of Armagh, pp. 153-162. The idea of a Patrician cult influencing the identity of saint's that are less known is not an uncommon feature amongst Irish saints. For example, I briefly discussed the influence of the Patrician cult within the textual record of SS. Lommán of Trim and Ailbe of Emly, See: Ganly, Commemoration or Corruption, pp. 175-180 & 183-184.

[26] See: Bhreathnach, The Genealogies of Leinster, p. 267. Moreover, this factor further supports the unlikeliness of genealogies presenting authentic historical accounts of a saint's family history.

[27] Another noteworthy point of difference between the secular and saints' genealogies lies in the extreme gender disparity in both genealogical genres. While male names tend to predominate over female names in the genealogical corpus more generally, a notable number of female names can, nevertheless, be identified from the saints' genealogies. In the secular genealogies however, there is a much weaker female presence. In the saints' genealogies, female names tend to envisage mothers of saints. Further points of observation on women in the saints' genealogies will be re-visited at a later point in this chapter.

[28] Bhreathnach, The Genealogies of Leinster, p. 267. Bhreathnach's goal was to amplify the value of secular genealogies as a source for Irish saints' cults, which stems from Máire Herbert's earlier attempt to recognise the connection between secular genealogies and hagiography, see: Herbert, Review of the Book of Leinster', pp. 167-168; Herbert, Hagiography, p. 88.

[29] Herbert, Review of the Book of Leinster, pp. 167-168; Herbert, Hagiography, p. 88.

[30] See: Johnston, *Literacy and Identity*, p. 82. On the matter concerning the regional and national scale of saints' cults and the emergence of their constituencies, see: Charles-Edwards, Early Irish Saints' Cults, pp. 79-102.

of dynastic or kindred groups which we so often find in the tracts of secular genealogies.[31] At the same however, we ought to consider the probability of the secular genealogies deriving their material on saints from earlier sources like saints' genealogies.[32] Thus, saints' genealogies need not be underestimated as sources of political value. Though saints' genealogies do not paint as clear an image of such concerns as the secular genealogies do, the fact that an image can at least be identified is noteworthy. This image stems mainly from contemporary ecclesiastical concerns which, like the secular record, also depict saints as tools of political ideology for expanding church networks locally, and if feasible, on a provincial scale.

The Genealogy of St. Abbán- Methodology

In essence, both secular and saints' genealogies reveal varying levels of dynastic and ecclesiastical concerns. While the aforementioned scholarship has amplified this significance, the scholarship also shows that genealogies ultimately say little about the actual ancestry of its subject.[33] Initially, this ideology would seem counterintuitive to what the title of this chapter implies. On another level however it cautions one of a particular manner in which the ancestry of an individual should be examined. This manner will involve addressing questions that attempt to understand the complexity of genealogical source material. Two questions of this kind will be explored in this chapter:

1. Why did the genealogist(s) choose to depict particular individuals as relatives of Abbán?

2. What implications does the contradictory evidence have for understanding the genealogies but also the portrayal of Abbán in that record?

The value of taking the genealogy of one saint as a case study enables one to recognise the extent to which genealogies are manifestations of contemporary political affairs.[34] As for the saint, it casts light on the dynastic or kindred group to which the genealogies connect the saint's origin and sometimes, 'the pattern of succession' that took place in the saint's 'church, or

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[31] See for example LLdip., pp. 1527-1577, which shows that The Book of Leinster records no genealogical sub-headings for the saints' genealogies tract. Typically, it is only seventeenth-century manuscripts, like *LMnG* which record these sub-headings in the saints' genealogies.

[32] While most scholars who have researched Irish genealogies agree that they were firstly compiled in the seventh century, some, such as Ó Riain also argue that the secular genealogies are later in origin than the saints' genealogies (see: *CGSH*, p. xiii). Later, Edel Bhreathnach argued that the secular genealogies originated from 'nodal points in the eighth century, the tenth century and the twelfth century' (see: Bhreathnach, The Genealogies of Leinster, p. 251).

[33] See for example, Ó Riain, Irish Saints Genealogies, p. 27. Cf. *LMnG*, p. 11 for a further read on the significance of genealogies but also in relation to the significance of genealogical records of women.

[34] A similar type of case study was also conducted by Stephanie Hamann; see: Hamann, St. Fursa, pp. 147-187, which examines the maternal and paternal ancestry of St. Fursa in detail.

church(es)'.[35] Ultimately, it is the later reputation or cultural identity of a saint for which the genealogies can be treated as informative sources. Hence, their inability to inform of a saint's actual identity is due to the primary interest of the genealogists not being focused on recording historical accounts of a saint's ancestry; and subsequently, because of the 'multi-layered character' in which genealogies now survive in the manuscripts.[36] This 'multi-layered character' amounts to the complexity involved in confidently ascribing dates to the entries and pedigrees.

Donnchadh Ó Corráin and Diarmuid Ó Murchadha have made important contributions to estimating the origin(s) of these entries and pedigrees. While Ó Corráin's work suggests that estimations depend on the bulk of a pedigree or entry and the space it comprises on a manuscript page or folio, Ó Murchadha showed how annalistic references to individuals whose names are recorded in sub-headings of genealogical tracts from Rawlinson B 502 can offer contextual insight for dating pedigrees and entries.[37] Both approaches provide an effective means through which one can estimate the origin of a pedigree or entry. But even if one was fortunate enough to find a pedigree or entry for which a seventh to ninth century origin was probable, the probability of it now being a reliable source for the actual identity of a saint would be less. This is because it would most likely survive in an abbreviated format in the manuscript; meaning it would offer little detail for understanding any contextual significance relating to the saint in actuality. This would be the case especially if the pedigree or entry was from the secular genealogies, where the genealogists would be less concerned about saints.[38]

As for the contradictory evidence which the genealogies provide for Abbán, the obscure chronology of the genre would strike one as the main cause for this kind of evidence. In most cases, this is true for saints with conflicting ancestries in the record. However, while genealogies are the main source of evidence for a saint's ancestry, such evidence can also be extracted from the extant hagiographical records of a saint. In Abbán's Life, the depiction of his ancestry is evident, but so is the contrast with his ancestral identity according to the genealogies. As I subtly indicated earlier, matters concerning Abbán's patronage are entangled

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[35] Ó Riain, Irish Saints Genealogies, p. 27; Herbert, Hagiography, p. 88. While Ó Riain suggested that this is the 'most important' attribution of saints' genealogies, I would argue that the applicability of this attribution depends on the prominence of the ecclesiastical centres embodying the saint's cult. A reference to Cell Abbain in a Papal document concerning 'Herlewin' (a Bishop of Leinster) and his canonical successors would imply that Cell Abbain was a historically important church during the early thirteenth century; see: Sheehy, *Pontificia Hibernica*, p. 129.

[36] Ó Corráin, *Clavis*, p. 989; Hamann, St. Fursa, p. 187.

[37] Ó Corráin, *Clavis*, p. 989; Ó Murchadha, Rawlinson B 502, pp. 316-333.

[38] See for example, Ó Murchadha, Rawlinson B 502, pp. 325-328.

in these contrasting images of his ancestry. Given the contemporary affairs which the genealogies normally reflect, it most likely embodies ecclesiastical concerns from the regions in which Mag Arnaide (anglicised name 'Moyarney', in the parish of Adamstown, in the diocese of Ferns, in the barony of Bantry in Co. Wexford) and Cell Abbáin (anglicised name 'Killabban', in the parish of Killabban, in the diocese of Leighlin, in the barony of Ballyadams, in Co. Laois) are located.[39] On the other hand, the ancestral parallel with two locations could be part of a theory put forward by Victor De Buck. De Buck suggested records of two different individual saints named Abbán originally existed but were later merged into one in the extant textual record.

As the introduction of this thesis explained, the theory (which I have rendered 'the two-Abbán theory') has been largely overlooked, because of the period in which De Buck was writing. Despite the theory's standpoint and possible unlikeliness for explaining the ancestral division, its broader relevance to the saint's origin means it merits consideration. For that reason, it would not be invalid to speculate that the conflicting ancestral images are due to the original existence of genealogical records of two different individuals named Abbán. But what is worth remembering also is that De Buck applied his theory to Abbán's full textual record. This could indicate that the ancestral division is part of wider problem linked with the saint that extends beyond the genealogies. For the purpose of assessing the theory in this chapter however, it begs one final question:

3. Can any authentic historical information be uncovered from Abbán's genealogical record despite the scholarship normally suggesting otherwise?

As we examine Abbán's genealogical record, consideration will be given to the possibility of old obscure names deriving from an unprovable 'authentic tradition'. [40] Consideration will also be given to the possibility of Abbán's 'authentic tradition' originating from the actual life of one or two individuals named Abbán. For the most part, however, attempts to trace authenticity in the ancestry of an Irish saint is an almost impossible task to complete, let alone attempting to recognise what the authentic tradition represented. Even if De Buck was correct, the mergence would most definitely have occurred at a point before manuscript production began in Ireland, by which point Abbán was depicted as one individual saint. Ultimately, De Buck's

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[39] *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=4460* & https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=827 (Both Websites Last Accessed 19th January 2021).
[40] Cf. Hamann, St. Fursa, p. 152, who suggested that the names from Fursa's paternal ancestry could derive from an authentic tradition.

theory and the historical and textual origins of genealogies are both equally likely sources (of a complex nature) for explaining Abbán's ancestral division.

The Genealogical Entries and Pedigrees

This division can be recognised from eight different entries and pedigrees. They derive from six different tracts, one of which is a secular genealogical tract, whilst the remaining five are from the genre of saints' genealogies. All six tracts now survive in manuscripts ranging in origin from the twelfth to seventeenth centuries. While a great deal of effort has been devoted to the dating of these manuscripts, there is by contrast, less focus and certainty surrounding the dates of the secular and saints' genealogies.[41] The small number of leading authorities who have pondered the dates of the saints' genealogies have suggested they originate from the eighth to ninth centuries.[42] As for the corpus of secular genealogies, we may draw our attention to the aforementioned case study of the secular *Laigen* genealogies, by Edel Bhreathnach.[43] While Bhreathnach suggested that the secular corpus was composed at 'nodal points in the eighth century, the tenth century and the twelfth century' from the outset of her work, she consequently suggested that secular *Laigen* genealogies could originate from the tenth century.[44] On a more general level, this case study demonstrates that the date or origin of a genealogical tract can depend on the population group of people on which the tract is based. Hence, it is difficult to know precisely which corpus or genealogical genre (secular or saints' genealogies) was composed first, because even the origins of tracts from one genealogical genre can be quite diverse. The question of preceding origin aside, we may now turn to the

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[41] Moreover, while editions of the different manuscript versions of genealogies such as *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* (*CGH*) and *Corpus Genealogiarum Sanctorum Hiberniae* (*CGSH*) have cast much light on the dates, origins and textual histories of these manuscripts, this type of information can now be accessed for most Insular manuscripts, via online databases such as *Irish Script on Screen* (*ISOS*). Furthermore, while most scholars agree that genealogical writing in Ireland began as early as the seventh century, as I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the composition of both corpuses (secular and saints' genealogies) evidently emerged later.

[42] See for example: Ó Corráin, The Early Irish Churches, p. 330, which dated the corpus of saints' genealogies to the eighth century. For secondary works which argue that the saints' genealogies were composed in the ninth century, see: Kelleher, The Pre-Norman Irish Genealogies, p. 143; Dumville, Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists, p. 76. Pádraig Ó Riain alludes to a point in time no earlier than the mid tenth century, given the early twelfth century origin of the earliest extant manuscript in which Irish genealogies are preserved, namely: Rawlinson B 502, see: Ó Riain, Irish Saints' Genealogies, p. 24. Moreover, while Ó Riain suggests that Rawlinson B 502 was originally known as 'The Book of Glendalough' (Ó Riain, Irish Saints' Genealogies, p. 24; *CGSH*, p. xxvii; Ó Riain, The Book of Glendalough or Rawlinson B 502, pp. 161-176), some scholars argue that Rawlinson B 502 and 'The Book of Glendalough' are two different manuscripts which should not be identified as one, see for example: Breatnach, Manuscript Sources and Methodology, pp. 40-54. Thus, one ought to be cautious of citing Ó Riain's identification of the manuscript without acknowledging other scholarly interpretations.

[43] Bhreatnach, The Genealogies of Leinster, pp. 250-267.

[44] Bhreatnach, The Genealogies of Leinster, pp. 251 & 267. The tenth century dating Bhreatnach attributed to the *Laigen* genealogies stems from her assessment of the political authority of the dynastic and ecclesiastical *Laigen* regions cited in the secular entries and pedigrees and the hagiographical material which the secular genealogists borrowed and employed when recording the saints' names.

manner in which this chapter proposes to examine Abbán's ancestry in both secular and saints' genealogies.

This chapter will firstly examine the five tracts of saints' genealogies, because these tracts provide more detail on Abbán's family history than the secular genealogies. The material examined from these tracts will be essential for understanding the significance of Abbán's record in the secular genealogies, for which there is only one tract to be considered. Each of the five tracts of saints' genealogies will be examined chronologically, which will be determined by their manuscript origin. This means that the tract which survives in the oldest manuscript(s) will be examined first. For tracts which can be traced back to the same manuscript origin, the sequence in which they will be examined will depend on the similarity of their content to the earlier tract. For example, the tract with the oldest manuscript history refers to Abbán's paternal ancestry, names his brothers, mother and maternal uncle. As for the next two later tracts (both deriving from the Book of Leinster), only one contains the same ancestral detail as the tract with the oldest manuscript history. Thus, the Book of Leinster (LL) tract containing the same detail as the oldest tract will be assessed before the other Book of Leinster tract.[45] This pattern will follow on until we come to the latest tract of saints' genealogies (i.e. the tract with the latest manuscript origin). Afterwards, these five tracts will be compared to the one surviving secular tract on Abbán.

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[45] For the purpose of clarification, referring to these two tracts as 'LL tracts' does not mean that the Book of Leinster is the only manuscript in which they survive. I will later name the other manuscripts in which these two tracts are also preserved. The reason for calling them 'LL' tracts is to show that the Book of Leinster is the oldest manuscript in which they are preserved.

Tracts from Saints' Genealogies (Pre-Norman Origin)

- Tract 1: *Recensio Maior* (The Major Recension of Irish Saints' Genealogies)[46]

Entry/Pedigree[47]	Manuscript(s)[48]
287.1 *Abban Maige Arnaide ocus Cilli Abbain m. Lagnig m. Cainnig m. Labrada m. Cormaic m. Con Corbb.* (Abbán of Moyarney and from Killabban son of Laignig son of Cannig son of Labhraid son of Cormac son of Cú Corb)	1. Rawlinson B 502 (Rawl. B 502) 2. Book of Leinster (LL) 3. Book of Ballymote (BB) 4. The Book of Lecan material in the Lacuna of Rawlinson B 502 (BLcRawl.)
287.2 *Et Daman et Miaca fratres eius, .i. F[id Mor] .i. i Cl[uain] F[at]a. et Senach et Líthgein et Duban et Tomdenach i Rus*	5. Book of Lecan (BLc) 6. *Leabhar Breac* (*LBrc*)

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[46] This is the title under which the tract is identified in the five manuscripts in which it is preserved. See the second column entitled: Manuscript(s). This is how the tract title will be displayed for my examination of the subsequent genealogical tracts. In the first column (Entry/Pedigree column), I have deliberately left out the *CGSH* entry 287.4, because it actually says nothing about Abbán's ancestry; see: *CGSH*, p. 47. Its similarity to a section from Abbán's Life means it will be considered in chapter two of this thesis, for which Abban's Life is the main primary source that will be examined.

[47] The entry numbers are not based on the manner in which the pedigrees/entry appear in the five manuscripts; they are based on the manner in which they appear in the secondary source in which all of the saints' genealogies are edited; namely: *CGSH*, see: pp. 46-47.

[48] These six manuscript sources are numbered according to their origin beginning with the oldest (1. Rawlinson B 502) down to the youngest (6. *Leabhar Breac*). The manuscripts will be numbered in the same order for the rest of the genealogical tracts to be examined in this chapter.

Glassi; septem fratres sunt. (And Damán and Miaca were his brothers. i.e of Fid Mór and Cluain Fada. and Senach and Líthgein and Dubán and Tomdenach in Rosglas: They were seven brothers) __287.3__ *Mella nomen matris eorum, soror Sancti Coemgin.* (Mella was the name of their mother, sister of St. Kevin)	

The first of these five tracts (*Recensio Maior*) refers to three main biological connections from Abbán's familial background:

1. Paternal Lineage

2. Siblings

3. Maternal Family

In the *Recensio Maior* tract, Abbán is associated with the two places (Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbáin) of which he is described as the patron saint in *VSA*.[49] Interestingly however, the genealogist specifies that Abbán is 'of' Mag Arnaide but 'from' Cell Abbáin.[50] As I mentioned

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[49] See: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 3; *VSA(S)*, p. 256.
[50] See the 287.1 entry from *CGSH*, p. 46.

earlier, this is likely to be an attempt by the genealogist to promote the saint's North Laigin patronage.[51] Most notably, the etymology of the place-name Cell Abbáin (the Church of Abbán) would suggest it was part of an ecclesiastical establishment. Like most ecclesiastical districts throughout Ireland, the district in which Cell Abbáin was located most likely had intentions for expanding its church networks. What is certain at this point however, is Abbán's association with Laigin. This association can be discerned from all three of Abbán's biological connections, which will now be explored in the same order in which they appear in *Recensio Maior* tract according to *Corpus Genealogiarm et Sanctorum Hiberniae* (*CGSH*).

1. Paternal Lineage:

The tract traces Abbán's paternal lineage back five generations. To take Diarmuid Ó Murchadha's suggestion of '33.38 years' being the typical timeframe between a father and son, would imply that Abbán's paternal lineage comprises approximately one and a half centuries.[52] However, no annalistic recordings of Abbán's obit are attested. This amounts to the chronological problem of genealogies and subsequent attempts to pinpoint the precise century in which Abbán may have lived. As for the period which his paternal pedigree represents, we can only assume that it may be some point from the 'undocumented past' of the 'Age of Saints'.[53] Moreover, we need not forget the probability of this *Recensio Maior* pedigree not representing a genuine record of Abbán's paternal ancestry. This is especially because some of the names from Abbán's paternal pedigree are better attested as names of dynastic figures of Laigin; most notably, Cú Corb.

- Cú Corb

According to F.J. Byrne's comprehensive account on the dynastic history of early medieval Ireland, Cú Corb was one of the earliest ancestral kings of early medieval Leinster (Laigin) from which subsequent figures and dynasties of this province emerged.[54] This would suggest that Abbán's pedigree can be perceived as an important embodiment of Abbán's Lagin origins. As for his depiction as Abbán's (x3) great-grandfather in the *Recensio Maior* tract, its origins

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[51] See p. 38 of this thesis.
[52] Ó Murchadha, Rawlinson B 502, p. 333. Cf., pp. 319-322 & Mac Neill, *Celtic Ireland*, p. 129.
[53] *CGSH*, p. xiv. Matters concerning the chronology of the saint's identity in actuality will receive more focus in chapter two of this thesis, where I will explore the significance of Abbán's contemporary association with the various individual figures mentioned in his Hiberno-Latin Life (*VSA*) and his vernacular Life (*BA*).
[54] Byrne, *Irish Kings*, p. 288.

merit some thought. The possibility of Cú Corb being a genuine ancestor of Abbán is an almost impossible matter to confirm for two key reasons:

1. The probability Cú Corb's time of existence originating from the pre-Christian period in Ireland.[55]

2. Since there is no attested evidence for the period in which Abbán may have lived.

These are classic examples of the chronologically obscure nature of saints' pedigrees, which demonstrates why genealogies typically provide factually untrustworthy records.[56] However, because genealogists were attempting to address contemporary affairs of an ecclesiastical and/or dynastic type, associating Cú Corb with the family history of Abbán was more likely an attempt to show that Abbán's Laigin origins go back generations. For the genealogists to prove that Abbán's Laigin origins were long-established, he could attribute Abbán with a pedigree of paternal names of ancient origin from this region, that did not have to be actual blood relatives of Abbán. Possibly, the Cú Corb name was originally part of an older separate tract of Laigin genealogies (which no longer survive), which the genealogist's attached to the bottom of Abbán's pedigree to create an additional older generation to his paternal lineage. Thus, the genealogist was not concerned with attributing Abbán and Cú Corb a realistic paternal ancestry, nor was he concerned with the possibility of both individuals not being actual relatives. For the genealogists, the comparatively earlier period from which Cú Corb came from meant that no one would be able to prove the genealogists wrong at any later stage.[57]

In any event, the *Recensio Maior* tract is only one of three tracts in which Cú Corb is depicted as Abbán's ancestor; with the other two tracts only being attested in manuscripts as late as the seventeenth century.[58] Nevertheless, the significance of Cú Corb in these later manuscripts will be revisited, particularly in relation to the prominence of his ancestral identity throughout the entirety of Abbán's genealogical record and the extent to which the name continues to be

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[55] Byrne, *Irish Kings*, p. 288. The fact that the subsequent generations from Byrne's family tree typically present individuals who lived during the fifth to eighth centuries supports the possibility of Cú Corb being an individual who existed during or slightly after the pre-Christian period. No doubt, the lack of attested evidence from this period questions the extent to which Cú Corb was a genuine or literary individual. Literary evidence for his role as a dynastic figure is attested from sources such as the poem *Fothairt for clannaib Concorb*; see: LL.dip., pp. 154-156.

[56] See for example, *CGSH*, p. xvi & Ó Riain, Irish Saints' Genealogies, p. 27.

[57] A similar ideology can be applied to the *Recensio Maior* tract of St. Kevin of Glenadalough's pedigree, where Cú Corb (the name is cited as 'Cuirbb' in Kevin's pedigree) is depicted as Kevin's (x2) great-grandfather; see: *CGSH*, p. 42, entry number 250. The fact that Kevin is depicted as an individual older by one generation to Abbán in Abbán's genealogical entry (*CGSH* 287.3 entry) would imply that the same genealogist compiled the same entry records and was attempting to show that both Kevin and Abbán were descendants from the same ancestral figure (Cú Corb); with Kevin bearing a lineage that is one generation shorter than Abbán's. This is because Kevin is depicted as Abbán's uncle in the 287.3 entry from *CGSH*.

[58] *LMnG*, pp. 220-224 & *GRSH*, p. 85.

perceived as a tool for cementing Abbán's Laigin origins. Moreover, in the *Recensio Maior* tract, Cú Corb is not the only name that holds such connotations. Two other names from this tract are recognised as names of dynastic Laigin figures but are also, according to M.A. O'Brien, one of the 'commonest names' from the Irish record: namely, Cormac and Labhraid.[59] In the corpus of saints' genealogies both names are well-attested, with the former name appearing in over twenty different entries/pedigrees, whilst Labhraid appears in nearly ten.[60] Of all the names mentioned in the 287.1 entry, Abbán's paternal connection with Cormac is most recognisable, due to the saint's patronymic: 'Moccu Cormaic'.

- Cormac m. Con Corbb

The Abbán Moccu Cormaic patronymic is attested in two entries from the secular Laigin genealogies and five martyrological sources.[61] Each of these seven sources agree with the *Recensio Maior* tract; depicting Abbán as a descendant of Cormac.[62] In *VSA*, *BA* and MC however, Cormac is depicted as the saint's actual father, and further described as a king of Laigin.[63] Certainly there is more evidence for Abbán being depicted as a descendant of Cormac. This ancestral depiction is attested in the earliest extant source material (such as MT), removing any implication of Cormac originally being depicted as the saint's father in the textual record.[64] This is further supported by the fact that three other paternal names are mentioned the 287.1 *CGSH* entry before Cormac. Hence, the earlier evidence suggests Cormac was an ancestor of Abbán's.

This is also recognisable from the possibility of Abbán having cultural connections with Knapdale (a rural district located in the south-west region of the Scottish Highlands) under the guise of MacCormaig, recorded in a select number of documentary sources.[65] This may be

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[59] O'Brien (Ed. Baumgarten), Old Irish Personal Names, p. 232. This page presents a list of the 'commonest names' from the Irish textual record.

[60] *CGSH*, pp. 278-279 & 293.

[61] *CGH*, p. 35 & *LMnG*, pp. 222-223. The significance of these secular entries/pedigrees will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter. These martyrological sources include: The eighth to ninth century Martyrology of Tallaght (MT), the twelfth century *Félire Óengusso* Commentary (*FÓComm.*), The twelfth century Glosses of the Martyrology of Gorman (MGgls), The Additions from the Martiloge of Richard Whytford (*MRW.Add*), dating from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries and The seventeenth century Martyrology of Donegal (MD); see MT, pp. 24 & 84; *FÓComm.*, pp. 98-99 & 228-229; MGgls, pp. 56-57 & 204-205; *MRW.Add*, p. 169; MD, pp. 76-77.

[62] *CGH*, p. 35; *LMnG*, pp. 222-223; see MT, pp. 24 & 84; *FÓComm.*, pp. 98-99 & 228-229; MGgls, pp. 56-57 & 204-205; *MRW.Add*, p. 169; MD, pp. 76-77.

[63] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 4; *VSH(S)*, Vol. 1, p. 256; *BA*, Vol. 1, p. 3 & Vol. 2, p. 3. In *VSA(D)*, Cormac is depicted as a king of the Dál Messin Corb dynasty.

[64] MT originates from the eighth to ninth century. For further details, see for example: MT, p. ix; For secondary works and references to the origin of MT; see: Hennig, *Medieval Ireland, Saints and Martyrologies*, Ch. I, p. 126; Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, pp. xxii-xxiii; Follett, *Céli Dé in Ireland*, pp. 128-132.

[65] For a full read on the significance of this connection, see: Mac Lean, Knapdale Dedications, pp. 49-65. There are two main Knapdale locations which are believed to be connected with Abbán; namely, Keills and Eilean Mór.

perceived as toponymic evidence for the saint's Knapdale connections but also for his complex paternal connection with Cormac. The evidence for Abbán's possible connection with Knapdale is vernacular in origin, but also chronologically varied.[66] In comparison to Abbán's hagiographical record and MC however, 'MacCormaig' also translates into 'the son of Cormac'. Potentially, the original 'Moccu Cormaic' attribution was shortened to vernacular variants of 'Son of Cormac' for the sake of brevity or in accordance with the evolution of vernacular languages.[67] Despite the concurrent existence of the 'father' and '(x2) great-grandfather' connection between Abbán and Cormac in the textual record, it is the significance of the (x2) great-grandfather connection with Cormac that remains to be considered. As Nollaig Ó Muraíle noted, full names mainly appear as patronymics in the Irish textual record.[68] While *mac* (son) and *ó/ua* (grandson) are common elements of a saint's patronymic, the older *Moccu* (of the sons of/descendant of) element presents the most appropriate meaning for Cormac's pedigree position in the *Recensio Maior* tract.[69]

Hence, the Abbán Moccu Cormaic attribution is most likely an attempt to show that Cormac is the oldest attested paternal individual from Abbán's ancestry. This may point towards the unlikeliness of the aforementioned Cú Corb name representing an authentic ancestor of the saint's; but neither is there any probability for Cormac having a similar role. Pádraig Ó Riain's examination of the *Moccu* element shows that it commonly refers to the saint's dynastic or 'tribal affiliation'.[70] The subsequent implication of Cormac representing the name of a 'tribal' or dynastic affiliation as opposed to a personage, is recognised from F.J. Byrne's genealogical tree on the 'Early Leinster Kings and Dynasties'. It depicts the name 'Cormac Lusc' as a direct descendant of Cú Corb, from whom the following south-Kildare dynasty emerged: Dál Cormaic.[71] Cormac Lusc's direct descent from the Cú Corb dynastic figure augments the probability of the Cormac name from the 287.1 CGSH entry referring to Cormac Lusc. The

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[66] For further details on the evidence for these topographical connections; see: Thomas Owen Clancy et al. 2010-2013, *Saints in Scottish Place-Names*: *https://www.saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/* (Last Accessed 23rd September 2020). Abbán's Knapdale connections will be examined in chapter four of this thesis.

[67] In relation to the extant evidence for Abbán's Knapdale origins, we must note that it only dates as far back as the late thirteenth century, and variants of the name 'Mac Cormaig' is the only evidence to suggest a cult of Abbán was in Knapdale. Moreover, the fact that Mac Cormaig is a very common patronymic in the Irish record would suggest that 'Mac Cormaig' could be referring to any individual saint.

[68] Ó Muraíle, Irish Genealogies as an Onomastic Source, p. 24. Cf. pp. 24-25 for a discussion on how the first name of a full patronymic name sometimes translates into a type of occupation. The fact that Abbán's name most likely means 'Little Abbot' suggests that the saint's full patronymic 'Abbán Moccu Cormaic' fits into this category.

[69] Ó Muraíle, 1992-1993, Irish Genealogies as an Onomastic Source, pp. 24-25. Cf. *CGSH*, p. xvi, which explains that 'the *Moccu*-formula is often used to describe the saint's tribal affiliation'.

[70] *CGSH*, p. xvi, n. 22.

[71] Byrne, *Irish Kings*, p. 288. Cf. Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 334.

subsequent significance of the Dál Cormaic dynasty and its connection with Abbán is also identifiable from the following sub-heading from a seventeenth century secular Laigin tract from *LMnG*:[72]

Do Chloinn Cormaic mc Cú Corb annso sios .i. Genealach Dhail Cormaic agus <Ui Labhraid>

'Of the family of Cormac s. Cú Corb here below: The Genealogy of Dál Cormaic and Ó Labhraid'

Hence, despite the ubiquitous appearance of the name Cormac in the Irish record more generally, the parallel with Byrne's genealogical tree and Abbán's *Recensio Maior* tract supports the possibility of Cormac Lusc being Abbán's (x2) great-grandfather in this *LMnG* tract.[73] Thus, Abbán's depicted descent from two ancient *Laigin* individuals (Cú Corb and Cormac/Cormac Lusc) was likely an attempt to attribute to Abbán the same provincial origins. The dynasty (Dál Cormaic) that emerged from Cormac Lusc frames such origins largely within a dynastic context in the north of Laigin.

- Labhraid m. Cormaic

As for the Labhraid individual, whom the *Recensio Maior* tract depicts as Abbán's great-grandfather, Byrne's tree does not depict this name as an individual of direct descent from Cormac m. Cú Corb.[74] Up until this point, there was a firm ground on which to argue that the genealogist took a line of direct descent of two dynastic Laigin individuals and attached them to the bottom of Abbán's paternal pedigree. Labhraid is often identified as 'the legendary ancestor of the Leinstermen'; with his full name being: Labhraid Longsech.[75] Once again, we see an increasingly 'Leinster' naming pattern in Abbán's paternal pedigree. Thus, even if this is not the figure which Labhraid from Abbán's paternal pedigree represents, there is a high probability of the Labhraid individual from Abbán's pedigree being named after this famous ancestor, as a number of subsequent individuals were also named after Labhraid Longsech.[76]

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[72] *LMnG*, pp. 220-221. The significance of Abbán's entry from this tract (*LMnG*) will be revisited at a later point in this chapter.

[73] Moreover, it also lessens the possibility of the 'Cormac' individual representing 'Cormac mac Ailill', as implied by Edward Culleton; see: Culleton, *Celtic and Early Christian Wexford*, p. 98. Cormac mac Ailill descends from a different Laigin dynasty; namely: Uí Dunlainge dynasty which was named after the early Laigin king Dúnlaing; see: Byrne, *Irish Kings*, pp. 288 & 289. The significance of Culleton's reference to Cormac mac Ailill being a father of Abbán is a matter connected to the chronology of Abbán, which will be drawn out in chapter two of this thesis.

[74] Byrne, *Irish Kings*, p. 288.

[75] See: Ó Corráin & Maguire, *Irish Names*, p. 119.

[76] Ó Corráin & Maguire, *Irish Names*, p. 119.

While the 287.1 entry of the *Recensio Maior* tract identifies Labhraid as Labhraid m. Cormac, the Book of Lecan material in Rawlinson B 502 (BLcRawl.) refers to him as Labhraid mac Imchadha.[77]

The Labhraid m. Cormaic m. Con Corbb pedigree is also found at the end of St. Sinchell's pedigree from the *Recensio Maior* tract.[78] For the Labhraid name from both Abbán's and Sinchell's pedigrees, *CGSH* explains that the m. Imchada patronymic originates from the Book of Lecan material that was filled into a lacuna of Rawlinson B 502 (BLcRawl.). In this manuscript format, Imchada occurs after Labhraid, but before Cormac under both pedigrees.[79] For Sinchell however, another patronymic is applied to Labhraid, which is not attested in Abbán's pedigree: namely, m. Trena.[80] To summarise therefore, Labhraid is identified with two different patronymics under Abbán's pedigree but identified with three different patronymics under Sinchell's pedigree; namely: Labhraid m. Cormaic, Labhraid m. Imchadha. and Labhraid m. Trena.[81] Most of the manuscript versions for Sinchell's (entry number 282) and Abbán's (entry number 287. 1) entries refer to the Labhraid m. Cormaic patronymic, whilst the Labhraid m. Imchadha and Labhraid m. Trena patronymics are only cited in the BLcRawl. version of Abbán's and Sinchell's entries:

Abbán:

 - Common Patronymic: Labhraid - Labhraid m. Cormaic

 - Less Common Patronymic (BLcRawl.): Labhraid - Labhraid m. Imchadha

Sinchell:

 - Common Patronymic: Labhraid - Labhraid m. Cormaic

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[77] *CGSH*, p. 46, n. d of the 287.1 entry; Cf. p. 293 for the number of names listed under 'Labhraid'.
[78] Sinchell is the patron saint of Killeigh in the barony of Geishill in Co. Offaly; see: Ó Riain., *A Dictionary*, p. 562. To take the genealogies at face value, this would mean that SS. Abbán and Sinchell were distant relatives. More likely, this demonstrates that the genealogists regularly used the same few ancestral names for promoting the ancient value of a saint's descent; even if it had already been attributed to another saint. At the same time, the genealogists could not over-attribute the same ancestral names; in which case, caution had to be undertaken for not completely intermingling the ancestral identities of multiple saints.
[79] *CGSH*, p. xviii; Cf. p. 46, n. 'f' under the 282 entry (Sinchell's pedigree). For details on the manuscript origin of the m. Imchada patronymic under the 'Labhraid' name from Abbán's pedigree, see: *CGSH*, p. 46, n. 'd' under the 287.1 entry.
[80] *CGSH*, p. 46, n. 'f' under the 282 entry.
[81] The 'Labhraid m. Imchada' patronymic is not attested in Abbán's Recensio Maior entry nor the BLcRawl. version of this pedigree.

- Less Common Patronymic (BLcRawl.): Labhraid - Labhraid m. Imchadha and Labhraid m. Trena

CGSH's index classifies Labhraid m. Cormaic and Labhraid m. Imchadha as the same individual. Even so, the Labhraid m. Cormac patronymic was more commonly attributed to Abbán.[82] As for the m. Trena patronymic from Sinchell's pedigree, it appears to depict a different Labhraid identity. The m. Trena patronymic is an unlikely representative of the Labhraid from Abbán's pedigree in the *Recensio Maior* tract. Thus, while the significance of Labhraid m. Trena need not be considered in any further detail, its obscure origin should nevertheless serve as an important reminder of the typical problems one comes across when attempting to study genealogies as sources of historical value. [83] As the pedigrees of Abbán and Sinchell show, such problems can emerge from the uncovering of corresponding ancestral names. Potentially, the attribution of different patronymics to Labhraid under both saints' pedigrees could have been an attempt by the genealogical compiler to distinguish between the attestation of the Labhraid m. Cormaic m. Con Corbb patronymic in both saints' pedigrees.[84]

-Laignech m. Cainnig

Most likely however, the 'Labhraid m. Cormaic m. Con Corbb' patronymic was attributed to both Abbán and Sinchell by the genealogist(s) in an attempt to augment their north Laigin origins.[85] The broader concern with Abbán's Laigin origins can also be discerned from the name of the individual depicted as his father: Laignech from the provincial name Laigin.[86] Donnchadh Ó Corráin and Fidelma Maguire identified 'Laignech' as a translation of 'a Leinsterman'.[87] The extent to which Laignech can be identified as a personage of historical or

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[82] The fact that the 'Labhraid m. Imchadha' patronymic is not attested in any other pedigrees/entries of Abbán's, suggests that this is a lesser-known patronymic of Abbán's. Its origin from a manuscript (BLcRawl.) of relatively late origin (the beginning of the fifteenth century) would imply that there is little or no platform on which to discern potential seventh to ninth century origins for a connection between Abbán and the 'Labhraid m. Imchadha' patronymic. The frequency of the name 'Imchad' both in the record of saints' genealogies and the entirety of the textual record works against any attempts to discern any rare value in the patronymic's connection with Abbán's ancestry; see: *CGSH*, pp. 292-293 & O'Brien, Old Irish Personal Names, p. 232.

[83] The fact that the 'Labhraid m. Trena' patronymic is not attributed to Sinchell in any other tract of saints' genealogies suggests that the patronymic would have little to offer for a historical study of Sinchell's ancestry.

[84] See: *CGSH*, p. 46, entry numbers 282 and 287.1.

[85] This is especially true when we consider the fact that Sinchell is the patron saint of a location that lay within the boundaries of north Laigin, that being, Killeigh in the barony of Geishill, Co. Offaly.
as I explained under 'The Case for St. Abbán' section of this chapter.

[86] Lagnig and Cannig are the last two individuals from Abbán's paternal pedigree of the *Recensio Maior* tract to be examined. Neither Lagnig nor Cainnig are mentioned in Sinchell's pedigree.

[87] Ó Corráin & Maguire, *Irish Names*, p. 120. Cf. Catherine Swift, Power-point Slides of an Oral Presentation delivered at the Irish Conference of Medievalists (ICM) at University College Cork (UCC), 2018: *Merchants, Monks, Miscreants and Mercenaries-Investigating Migrancy in Medieval Ireland - https://dspace.mic.ul.ie/bitstream/handle/10395/2772/Swift%2c%20C.%20%282018%29%20Migrancy%20in.... pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y* (Last Accessed 23rd September 2020). See Slides no. 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18, 36,

legendary value in Abbán's pedigree however, is difficult to determine. This is largely because Abbán is the only saint from the corpus of saints' genealogies to whom this 'Laignech' name is connected.[88] While the name depicting Abbán's father is attested in some secular pedigrees/entries from the *Laigin*, *Osraige* and *Loíchsi* tracts, only one of these pedigrees/entries (from the *Osraige* tract) refers to a 'Laignech'.[89]

Hence, the other versions of 'Laignech' from these secular genealogies are likely to be later variations of the same name. As for 'Lagnig', which is the genitive singular form of 'Laignech', an adjectival formation of the provincial name (Laigin) meaning 'one who is of Laigen' (a Leinsterman), this was likely an attempt by the genealogist to uphold the line of Laigin descent, which Cú Corb, Cormac and Labhraid carried throughout Abbán's paternal lineage too. No doubt, the linguistic significance of the name 'Laignech' succeeds in tracing this provincial descent right down to Abbán, but it also obscures any attempts to uncover Laignech's historical or legendary identity. In particular, the fact that the saint's hagiographical record names Abbán's father as Cormac and contains no references to the personal name 'Laignech' is the main cause for concern.[90] While the lack of additional evidence complicates subsequent attempts to identify 'Laignech' as an individual of historical or legendary origin, an opposite situation determines the difficulty in identifying the individual depicted as Abbán's grand-father and Laignech's father: namely, 'Cainnech'.

- Cainnech m. Labrada

In contrast to the aforementioned names from Abbán's paternal pedigree, 'Cainnech' is a common name, which can be given to both males and females.[91] In Abbán's pedigree, Cainnech evidently depicts a male individual, due to his patronymic. In the corpus of saints' genealogies, the name Cainnech is attributed to eight (including Abbán's pedigree) different saints, and about the same number of individuals in the secular corpus.[92] Abbán's pedigree is nevertheless, the only pedigree out of these eight pedigrees which provides Cainnech with the Cainnech m.

37, 38, 40, 41 and 44 of Slides 1-45, where Swift explored the historical value of the name 'Laignech' and questioned the extent to which the name is an 'inherited surname or contemporary inscriptor', showing how the name 'evolved into multi-lingual and multi-cultural colonial contexts'.

[88] The name 'Lagnig' only appears in three tracts from the corpus of saints' genealogies: 1. The *Recensio Maior* tract. 2. The *Recensio Metrica* tract. 3. On the Mothers of the Saints Tract. Each of these tracts contain references to Abbán; see: *CGSH*, pp. 46, 99 & 178.

[89] See *CGH*, pp. 111, where the 'Lagnig' spelling depicts an individual 'Lagnig Faīlad' as a (x3) great-grandfather of an individual named 'Māel-garb', from a secular tract of the *Osraige* genealogies. Cf. the reference to 'Laignech' on the index of *CGH*, p. 670.

[90] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 4; *VSH(S)*, p.256; *BA*, Vol. 1, p. 3; Vol. 2, p. 3.

[91] See: Ó Corráin & Maguire, *Irish Names*, p. 43.

[92] For the corpus of saints' genealogies; see: *CGSH*, p. 273. For the secular corpus; see: *CGH*, p. 529.

Labrada patronymic.[93] Interestingly, one entry from the secular genealogies cites the name Cainnech, alongside the aforementioned names Labhraid and Imchada from Abbán's and Sinchell's pedigrees.[94] This at least shows that both the corpus of secular and saints' genealogies have common material. Part of the following entry derives from the secular tract of Laigin genealogies under the subheading, *Genelach Dáil Cormaic 7 Hūa Labrada* (The Genealogies of Dál Cormac and of the Uí Labrada):[95]

Corbmac Con-Corb….

Secht meic la <u>Labhraid mac nImchada</u>: Luguid, Cathbud, Cōeldub, <u>Cainnech</u>….

'<u>Cormac (son of) Con Corb</u>….

Seven sons of <u>Labhraid</u> son of <u>Imchada</u>: Luguid, Cathbud, Coeldub, <u>Cainnech</u>….

The attestation of the underlined names displayed in a reasonably similar order to that from Abbán's *Recensio Maior* pedigree suggests the same individuals were being considered in this secular tract. Hence, while it is difficult to determine the individual significance of Cainnech, the attestation of his name in this secular entry reminds us of the general tendency of similar names being ascribed to various pedigrees and entries throughout saints' and secular genealogies. Moreover, the fact that this entry is from the tract of *Laigin* genealogies, could mean that the names from Abbán's *Recensio Maior* pedigree were frequently applied to other pedigrees and entries, in order to augment the ancestral history of its subject's Laigin descent. The attestation of these names (Cú Corb, Cormac, Labhraid, Imchada and Cannech/Cannig) in other pedigrees/entries from the *Laigin* genealogies supports this theory too.[96] Therefore, the frequent appearance of these names throughout the genealogical record supports the unlikeliness of them bearing an authentic ancestral connection with Abbán.

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[93] *CGSH*, p. 273.

[94] *CGH*, p. 529. This Cannech m. Labrada m. Imchada pedigree, can be found in the Book of Leinster (LL) version of secular genealogies.

[95] The underlined names are also attested in the *Recensio Maior* tract of Abbán's paternal pedigree. To see the format the rest of the names and other detail accompanying these names take in the secular corpus of genealogies; see: *CGH*, p. 28. The entry numbers are 119 ab 30 - 119 ab 34. Moreover, the same sub-heading from *LMnG* was mentioned earlier, evidently showing that *LMnG* derived its material from secular tracts.

[96] This significance will be revisited at a later point in this chapter, when we assess the tracts of later manuscript origin, such as *LMnG* and *Genealogiae Regum et Sanctorum Hiberniae* (*GRSH*).

2. Siblings

At this point of our examination of Abbán's genealogical record, we can draw the following conclusions regarding Abbán's paternal ancestry: while the lack of annalistic references to Abbán's time of existence and the frequent appearance of his patronymics elsewhere in the genealogies means that little can be said about Abbán or his paternal ancestors in actuality, the patronymics can at least be recognised as products of Abbán's Laigin origins, due to their historical and (for Laignech) linguistic connections with the province. The attestation of these names in other entries and pedigrees from the secular corpus moreover, means that the 'Leinster' naming pattern is not solely confined to one genealogical tract or pedigree. For instance, the possibility of the Dál Cormaic dynasty in South-Kildare being named after Cormac/Cormac Lusc is a prime example; but equally so is its location in the north of Laigin.[97] Further insight into Abbán's north Laigin origins can also be discerned from the entry concerning his six brothers, all of whom are patron saints of locations within this provincial region. In contrast to Abbán's paternal ancestors, the individual identities of his six brothers are better distinguished, because of the better attestation of textual evidence for their status as saints. For insight into the textual profiles of Abbán's alleged brothers, a brief review of two components (place of patronage and feast-day) that typically outline the identity of an Irish saint will now follow.

 - Damán m. Laignig of Fid Mór/Cluain Fada (*FÓ Comm.* - 12 February)[98]

This foundation (Fid Mór/Cluain Fada) is located in the 'parish of Oldleighlin, barony of Idrone West, Co. Carlow'.[99] Though the corpus of saints' genealogies is the main source of evidence for this patronage, the etymology of a place-name in Co. Wexford known as: Cell Damháin/Kildavin (The Church of St. Damhán) would suggest that this was another foundation of which Damán was the patron saint.[100] A study of the early medieval history of Wexford by Edward Culleton also shows that Damán's cult is prominent in Kildavin, because of the saint's name being attributed to the main church and a well in the townland, and also the attribution of their own feast-day to the saint (1 August).[101] The attribution of two feast-days and their apparent connection with two different locations also reveals a correlation with Abbán's

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[97] See pp. 38-40 of this thesis, where I explain that the genealogies are more telling of Abbán's north Laigin origins and compared the significance of saints' and secular genealogies.
[98] *FÓComm.*, pp.74-75. I will shortly explain why I am not citing the main text of the martyrology (*FÓ*) as a source of evidence for Damán's feast-day.
[99] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 256.
[100] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 256.
[101] Culleton, *Celtic and Early Christian Wexford*, p. 207.

double-patronage (Mar Arnaide and Cell Abbain) and reduplicated feast-days (16 March and 27 October); particularly since Fid Mór is located within the north of Laigin like Cell Abbáin, whereas both Mag Arnaide and Cell Damháin are located in the south.[102]

While the lack of martyrological and genealogical evidence for Damán's south Laigin patronage and August feast-day would suggest that his north Laigin patronage and 12 February feast-day are more original, a study on the origin of some saints' names does not entirely coincide with this ideology. In an attempt to identify why Damán, alongside a selected number of other Irish saints are 'bogus' saints, Pádraig Ó Riain explained that the occurrence of the name 'Damán' in *FÓ*, is an accidental by-product of the name of an African soldier '*Damiani militis*'; resulting in the compilers of the later *FÓComm.* identifying Damán=Damiani militis as Damán of Tech Damáin in Húi Cremthennáin and as a brother of Abban Mac Laignig.[103] Another problem is that *FÓComm.* is possibly mixing up the identities of two different Irish saints named Damán:[104]

1. Damán (Damhán) m. Daimhín of the Oirghialla

2. Damán (Damhán) m. Laignig of Fid Mór in Co. Carlow (Abbán's brother)

Ó Riain's biographical discussion on Damán son of Daimhín suggests that this is the bogus saint who he identifies elsewhere as a by-product of the original African soldier: 'Damiani'.[105] Ó Riain's reference to 12 February being the feast-day of Damán son of Daimhín would suggest so too. In essence, two different 'Damán' saints are being confused here; especially when Ó Riain incorrectly identifies 'Damán m. Laignig' as 'Damán m. Daimhín' elsewhere in his biographical discussion.[106] We are, at least, able to confirm Abbán's brother Damán is not the

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[102] However, the fact that Damán's name is not recorded under 1 August calendar date in any of the Irish martyrologies would suggest that the attribution derives merely from an earlier scholarly construct. This is because the site on which Damán's church (in Kildavin) now stands was, according to local tradition, a site on which the festival of Lughnasadh (typically celebrated on 1 August) was celebrated; see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 256. As I explained in the introduction of this thesis, both Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbáin seem to be individually connected with Abbán's March and October feast-day; see pp. 30-33 of this thesis. Therefore, the double feast day of Damán is nothing more than coincidental to Abbán's two feast-days and do not reveal any significant underlying pattern.
[103] Ó Riain, Some Bogus Irish Saints, p. 3; *FÓ*, p. 60 & *FÓComm.*, pp. 74-75. The probability of a name from the Irish martyrological record representing the identity of an African individual is due the Irish martyrologies originating from calendars of north African origin; see: Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, p. xx. This point on the origin of Irish martyrologies will be addressed in chapter five of this thesis.
[104] Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 256-257.
[105] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 256; Ó Riain, Some Bogus Irish Saints, p. 3.
[106] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 256, n. 5. In the 287.2 entry, the 'Damán' individual being cited is evidently Damán m. Laignig because of the entry's direct occurrence after the entry (287.1) to Abbán's patronage and paternal lineage. In the corpus of saints' genealogies, Damán son of Daimhín, (also known as Damhán Scéine), is identified by a different name: 'Daimine'; see: *CGSH*, p. 10. The name is spelt 'Daimhein' in the *Recensio Metrica* tract;

Damán saint who Ó Riain identifies as a bogus saint. Moreover, the ambiguous reference to Damán in *FÓComm.*, means that 12 February may not originally have been the feast-day of Damán m. Laignig. Still, it cannot be clarified which of these two saints (Damán m. Daimhín or Damán m. Laignig) the 12 February feast-day originally belonged to.

- Miacca of Fid Mór/Cluain Fada (Feast-Day- n/a)[107]; Toimdheanach of Ros Glas (Feast-Day-n/a)[108]

An even greater problem concerns the identity of Abbán's two 'brothers': Miacca and Tomdenach; namely, the lack of textual evidence for their identities. Aside from the fact that Miacca is depicted as the patron saint of the same location as Damán m. Laignig, nothing else is known of Miacca. Sharing the same place of patronage as his brother gives Miacca no distinguished identity of his own outside of the genealogical record. Miacca m. Laignig is the only individual bearing this name in the corpus of saints' genealogies. Thus, there are no other attested references to a Miacca individual with a different patronymic.[109] Like Miacca, Tomdenach is the patron saint of a foundation located in a townland, of which Abbán's three other brothers Dubán, Líthgein and Senach are also patron saints; namely, Ros Glas now known as 'Monasterevin'. Aside from that, nothing else is known about Tomdenach.[110]

Out of all Abbán's brothers, Miacca and Tomdenach have the smallest textual profiles; both of which are solely confined to Abbán's record in the corpus of saints' genealogies. This alongside the fact that no other saint from the corpus shares either of the brother's first names suggests their names served little or no role in augmenting the Laigin origins of other saints from the same province.[111] To take CGSH entry 287.2 at face value, Miacca and Tomdenach were merely historical individuals whose lives and monastic careers were not entirely expansive nor famous enough to merit any mention in the textual records. On the other hand, Miacca and Tomdenach were simply underlying commodities disguised as individuals for promoting the importance of the region of which most of Abbán's other brothers were patron saints. In that

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see: *CGSH*, p. 89. The idea of a Damhán Scéine's bogus identify being discerned from the linguistic value of his name is perhaps also supported by the linguistic similarity of his patronymic in the corpus of saints' genealogies.
[107] I have not been able to find the saint's full patronymic recorded under any of the calendar dates from MT and *FÓ*.
[108] The earliest martyrological reference to 'Tomdenach' is in *FÓComm.*, under Damán's 12 February feast-day. Otherwise, no feast-day is recorded for Tomdenach himself.
[109] See: *CGSH*, p. 255.
[110] The fact that Pádraig Ó Riain offers no biographical discussion on Tomdenach; supports this matter too; see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*.
[111] This is the conclusion I came to for some of the patronymics from Abbán's paternal pedigree; see the 'Paternal Lineage' sub-section of the 'Tract 1: *Recensio Maior* tract of saints' genealogies' section of this chapter.

regard, Monasterevin appears to be part of a prominent, but somewhat uncertain, connection between most of Abbán's brothers.

- Líthgein of Cluain Mór and Ros Glas/ 'Monasterevin' (MT- 16 January)[112]; Senach of Ros Glas/ Monasterevin and Cill Móir (MG- 2 November)[113]

Within this 'Monasterevin' sphere of sibling connections, Líthgein and Senach are the only two 'brothers' who are patron saints of two foundations. In contrast to Duban's double-patron location, Lithgein's and Senach's two foundations are each attested in the genealogies.[114] Though the modern-day location of Cill Móir is unidentifiable, the location of Cluain Mór within the 'barony of Coolestown, Co. Offaly' suggests that Líthgein m. Laignig's cult originated largely from the region of north Laigin.[115] However, the fact that Cluain Mór and Cill Mór are not mentioned in the *Recensio Maior* tract, could mean that the genealogist of the *Recensio Maior* entry (*CGSH* 287.2) deliberately omitted them for two possible reasons:[116]

1. Líthgein of Cluain Mór and Senach of Cill Mór were different individuals to Líthgein of Ros Glas/Monasterevin and Senach of Ros Glas/Monasterevin. This is because the former Líthgein and Senach individuals are also mentioned in a separate genealogical tract.[117]

2. Lithgean (Cluain Mór and Ros Glas/Monasterevin) and Senach (Cill Mór and Ros Glas/Monasterevin) are each patron saints of the two foundations and the different tracts are simply embodiments of two different textual milieus of the cults of Lithgean and of Senach.

The lack of evidence for the identities of either of these saints outside the genealogical record would lean more towards the second reason. This subsequently questions the genealogist's desire to ascribe Ros Glas/Monasterevin to four of Abbán's 'brothers'.

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[112] MT, p. 8.

[113] MG, pp. 210-211; Cf. MD, pp. 294-295 which identifies Senach's mother as Broinsech Breac. This is from an entry of a tract called 'On the Mothers of the Saints'. Broinsech Breac is also depicted as the mother of Miacca, Tomdenach and Líthgein. The significance of this maternal connection will be discussed under the third sub-section 'Maternal Family' in this chapter.

[114] The genealogical origin of Lithgean's and Senach's connection with Cluain Mór and Ros Glas will be discussed in relation to Abbán's maternal ancestry. For their patron connections with Cluain Mór and Cill Móir, see: *CGSH*, p. 180, entry number 722. 96. The significance of this genealogical entry will be discussed under the section concerning Abbán's maternal family.

[115] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 399.

[116] The first reason derives from the approach of taking the genealogies as genuine accounts of an individual's ancestry; whereas the view that genealogies were written in order to promote contemporary political matters represents the second reason. Since the second reason derives from the more widely accepted view of the origin of Irish genealogies, my discussion will go along with this viewpoint; particularly for the purpose of discerning the significance of Lithgean's and Senach's patronage.

[117] This tract is called 'On the Mothers of the Saints'.

- Dubán of Ros Glas/Monasterevin (MG - 11 November)[118]

Of these four brothers, Duban is possibly one of the few who appears in the secular literature; as implied by a depiction of an individual named Dubán in the *Bóroma* (The Cattle Tribute).[119] Dubán's depiction in helping St. Moling to remit the cattle tribute, can be perceived as coincidental to the fact that Abbán is occasionally mentioned throughout this saga too.[120] As Elín Eyjólfsdóttir demonstrated, a great deal of focus in this saga is attributed to the saints of early medieval Leinster (Laigin), of which Moling features most notably.[121] In any event, the possibility of Dubán of Ros Glas/Monasterevin being the individual who helps Moling, is supported by this preference towards Laigin. It demonstrates that Dubán's Laigin origins were known outside of the typical sources connected with saints' too.[122]

More generally, Dubán's involvement in a secular affair in the Bóroma shows that the author believed Dubán to be a saint worthy of association with one of the most famous saints of Laigin; namely, Moling. As for Dubán's part in the quadrupled sibling connection with Ros Glas/Monasterevin, Dubán's role in a saga connected with Laigin undoubtedly puts him under the spotlight.[123] In that regard, we may speculate that Dubán's connection with Ros Glas/Monasterevin is perhaps the most significant, due to little else being known of his 'brother' Tomdenach and the fact that Líthgein and Senach are patron saints of other foundations. But even if Dubán's connection with Ros Glas/Monasterevin was the most genuine, then why did the genealogist connect three of his other 'brothers' with the same foundation? Particularly since the etymology of the townland: Mainister Éimhín, meaning 'The

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[118] MG, pp. 216-217.This cannot be taken as the most reliable evidence for Duban's feast-day as MGgls identifies Duban as the patron saint of Domnach Mór Maige Itha. Later, 'the MD compiler' tentatively identified this Duban individual, under 'the 11 November feast-day', as Duban of Ros Glas; see: pp. 304-305.

[119] See Eyjólfsdóttir, *The Bóroma*, for a detailed study of the history of this saga and its content. See pp. 82-90 for her discussion on 'Moling and the remission of the bórama'. Eyjólfsdóttir's reference to Duban of Ros Glas/Monasterevin in her appendix would suggest that she believes Abbán's brother Duban is the Dubán who assists Moling, see; Eyjólfsdóttir, *The Bóroma*, p. 221.

[120] To see the scene depicting Dubán and Moling enacting such events, see for example: O'Grady, *Silva Godelica*, p. 382.

[121] Eyjólfsdóttir, *The Bórama*, pp. 82-181. These pages focus largely on the role of Moling and address the number of other saints cited in the poetry section of the *Bóroma*

[122] Elsewhere, the attestation of the spelling 'Líthgéin' in a bardic poem called *A dhorus crín a' dísgán*/ 'His door withers a din', suggests that Abbán's other brother 'Líthgein' is being cited in this poem. In this poem, Líthgein's 'curse was invoked, with that of Brighid'; see: Mac Niocaill, *A dhorus crín a' dísgán*, p. 314; Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 399. More generally, this example alongside the evidence for Dubán's probable depiction in the *Bóroma* shows that genealogists were not the only early medieval scholars who knew of these saints. In contrast to Miacca and Tomdenach, Dubán and Líthgein were probably known to writers of secular genres such as poets. This would suggest that Dubán and Líthgein bore some importance throughout the early medieval period. More generally, it shows that a poor genealogical record does not *always* mean that the saint was an obscure or totally unrecognised figure.

[123] The other three brothers connected with Ros Glas/Monasterevin are Tomdenach, Líthgein and Senach.

Monastery of St. Éimhin' conspicuously suggests that Éimhín is in fact the patron saint of this foundation.

- Ros Glas/ Monasterevin

In that regard, an intriguing parallel with a scene from *VSA(D)* merits some remarks. In §28 of *VSA(D)*, the author tells us that Abbán built a great monastery in Ros Mic Treoin (modern-day 'New Ross', in Co. Wexford), further explaining that this foundation is located by the Berbha (The River Barrow) where St. Éimhín is buried.[124] On a modern-day map of Ireland, this River begins between the border of north-east Co. Laois and the mid-west border of Co. Kildare; a topographical area in which Ros Glas/Monasterevin is located. On a speculative note, this may suggest that the reference to Berbha in VSA embodies interests in Éimhín's Laigin cult. This is because Éimhín is the patron saint of Ros Glas/Monasterevin. This foundation is located where the River begins, whilst his alleged place of burial (that being, Ros Mic Treoin according to *VSA(D)*) is located within the area in which the River ends. Hence, the fact that four of Abbán's siblings are depicted as patron saints of Ros Glas/Monasterevin in the *Recensio Maior* tract alludes towards an underlying need to assert the pre-eminence of Abbán in comparison to that of Éimhín. This is also recognisable from §39 in the *Vita* of St. Mo Lua, which 'repeats the claim that Abbán founded the foundation of Ros Ua mBercháin' (Rosbercon) for Eimíne'.[125] The fact that Mo Lua is also of Laois origin would imply that Mo Lua's hagiographer also took interest in Abbán's north Laigin origins.

3. Maternal Family

However, Abbán's association with Ros Mic Treoin should also serve as an important reminder of his south Laigin cult. In that regard, *VSA(D)*'s reference to Ros Mic Treoin can be perceived as an embodiment of concern in Abbán's south Laigin foundation: namely, Mag Arnaide. Thus, the idea of the *Recensio Maior* tract and perhaps, §39 of *Vita Mo Lua* embodying preference towards Cell Abbáin in the north, could represent an underlying clash between both of Abbán's

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[124] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1 p. 21. The significance of the reference to Éimhín in Abbán's *Vita* will be revisited in Chapter three of this thesis. Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 291-292.

[125] Mac Shamhrain, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid', p. 336. Rosbercan is located on the opposite side of the River Barrow side of New Ross. The fact that the *Vita* of *Mo Lua* explains that the place in which Mo Lua would visit Éimhín was not far from Berbha suggests that the author of Mo Lua's Vita was potentially aware of Abbán's connection with Éimhín in *VSA(D)*. For a brief discussion on the connection between this matter and the compilation of *VSH(D)*, see: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*, p. 353.

foundations that is not solely identifiable from one textual genre. It becomes particularly apparent when the *CGSH* entry 287.3 is compared with Abbán's hagiographical record:[126]

CGSH 287.3 Entry	*VSA* and *BA*
- <u>Abbán's Mother</u>: Mella - <u>Abbán's Maternal Uncle</u>: St. Kevin of Glendalough	- <u>Abbán's Mother</u>: Mella - <u>Abbán's Maternal Uncle</u>: St. Íbar of Beggerin Island

- Kevin of Glendalough

While this entry and Abbán's Hiberno-Latin and vernacular Lives envisages Abbán's mother as Mella, it can hardly be a coincidence that the maternal 'uncles' were each of important status in the north and south of Laigin; where Cell Abbain and Mag Arnaide are located.[127] Accounting for the manner in which genealogies typically operate, Kevin's and Íbar's familial positioning in the 287.3 entry and Abbán's hagiographer dossier could therefore be perceived as cultural embodiments of Abbán's north and south Laigin foundations. It is however unlikely that Kevin was an actual maternal uncle of Abbán, due to the fact that no other entry or pedigree of Kevin's makes such a claim.[128] Elsewhere in the *Recensio Maior* tract however, the aforementioned individual Cú Corb is also depicted as an ancestor of Kevin.[129] Perhaps this was an attempt to augment Kevin's Laigin origins; although Kevin's foundation of Glendalough became a significant church of status; meaning that this attempt would have required less effort than it would have for Abbán.[130] As Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin has suggested, Kevin's depiction as Abbán's maternal uncle could 'represent an agreement between' the *paruchiae* of Glendalough and Cell Abbáin.[131]

Whatever this 'agreement' represented, the milieu in which it was likely to have occurred, was under the rule of the twelfth century Ua Cáellaide family, who had many branches throughout Laigin; one of which was Abbán's north Laigin foundation: Cell Abbáin.[132] As the Ua Cáellaide family developed their own branches over many territories, they would also have

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[126] *CGSH*, p. 46; *VSHD)*, Vol. p. 3; *VSH(S)*, p. 256; *BA*, Vol. 1, p. 3; Vol. 2, p. 3.
[127] Cf. Mac Shamhráin, *Church and Polity*, pp. 190-191, for a review of the saints mentioned in Kevin's hagiographical and genealogical record, and a reference to the conflicting depictions of Abbán's maternal uncle.
[128] More broadly, the lack of annalistic references to Abbán means we cannot pinpoint exactly when Abbán may possibly have lived.
[129] *CGSH*, p. 42.
[130] For a comprehensive account on the socio-political significance of Kevin of Glendalough's *paruchia*; see: Mac Shamhráin, *Church and Polity*.
[131] Mac Shamhráin, *Church and Polity*, p. 183; Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 51.
[132] See: Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid', pp. 31-319 & 334-335. Cf. pp. 26-29 of this thesis.

disseminated local saints' cults; which ultimately aided the compiler of *VSH* (potentially Bishop Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid of Ferns) to source his 'hagiographical data'.[133] The connection between Abbán and Kevin can also be recognised from *VSA*, where St. Patrick foretells the birth of three Laigin saints: Abbán, Kevin and Moling.[134] This scene most likely relates to the potential 'agreement' Mac Shamhráin believed to be underlying Abbán's and Kevin's depicted familial relationship in the 287.3 entry. The Norman period in which this agreement was likely to have occurred suggests that the familial relationship was fabricated at some point during the twelfth century. However, the depiction attributed to Kevin in *VSA* shows that such genealogical fabrication was part of a wider context; which was to promote Abbán's north Laigin foundation within the *paruchia* of Glendalough. Moreover, the ability to discern such insight from two different genres shows that this interest was rooted mainly in the actual saint: Abbán.

As for Kevin's ancestral connection to Cú Corb; the fact that Cú Corb is also depicted as Abbán's ancestor would have served as an advantage for the genealogist (potentially from the twelfth century) of the 287.3 entry, to depict both saints as biological relatives. Indeed, it would seem convenient to say that the genealogies are unreliable when they reference an individual, like Cú Corb, who came from a period which is largely 'undocumented' or if the genealogies provide contradictory depictions of a saint's ancestry. While genealogies do contain many fabrications, we ought to be careful about loosely applying this theory to any kind of a crease we find in the corpus. These creases are not invented out of nowhere, and may be reflective of either genuine historical truths or the later relationships between churches at various historical stages.

In that regard, we may consider the possibility of Abbán being a genuine descendant of Cú Corb. Though the exact number of generations between Cú Corb and Abbán or Kevin cannot be ascertained precisely, another *Recensio Maior* entry containing the following sub-heading: *Noeb Dál Mes Corb in so* (The Saints of the Dál Messin Corb Dynasty below), identifies Kevin as a saint of this dynastic origin. Like the aforementioned Dál Cormaic dynasty of which Abbán

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[133] Mac Shamhráin, *Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid*, p. 318. This ties in with another important point concerning the authorship of *VSA*, which will be addressed in due course in this thesis. Though most scholars who have examined Abbán's hagiographical account agree that Bishop Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid of Ferns is the author of *VSA*, Charles Doherty suggests that a bishop of the Ua Cáeillaide family may have wrote *VSA*, due to the family's close connection with Uí Chennselaig and Ferns, where Abbán's south *Laigin* foundation is located; see: Doherty, *Analysis of the 'Life' of Abbán*, pp. 1-10. The family's connection to this Wexford dynasty and diocese is cited also in: Mac Shamhrain, *Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid*, pp. 334-335.

[134] *VSH(D)*, pp. 3-4; *VSH(S)*, p. 256; Mac Shamhráin, *Church and Polity*, pp. 189-191.

is a descendant, according to the 287.1 entry, the Dál Messin Corb and Dál Cormaic dynasties were named after figures (Cormac Lusc and Mess Corb) both descended from the most ancient dynastic Laigin figure: Cú Corb.[135] While it does not suggest that Kevin and Abbán are close relatives, it does suggest that their distant ancestry was originally the same.[136] Moreover, being a descendant of such an ancient, but royal figure, could suggest that SS. Abbán and Kevin were also of the same status. Although there is no definitive evidence to support this claim, a comparison of Continental, Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon saints allude towards this possibility.[137] The very fact that the fathers of most Irish saints are described as kings or at least depicted as descendants of kings in the Irish hagiographical record would suggest that such Irish saints were of royal status.[138]

- St. Íbar of Beggerin Island

It is true that the authenticity of most of these familial relationships cannot be proven, largely due to the fact that hagiography portrays similar images of most of its saints.[139] Still, it does not always suffice to suggest that no Irish saint was of royal descent in actuality; particularly since there is (perhaps more factual) evidence for such descent overseas. Thus, while the depiction of two different maternal uncles from two different genres is unlikely to suggest that Kevin and Íbar were merely two different maternal uncles of Abbán, the lack of additional genealogical evidence to suggest Kevin and Íbar were brothers, could suggest they were originally maternal uncles of two different individual saints named Abbán. This would mean that Kevin was a maternal uncle of St. Abbán of Cell Abbáin in north Laigin, whereas Íbar was the uncle of St. Abbán of Mag Arnaide in the south.[140]

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[135] Byrne, *Irish King*, p. 288.

[136] Moreover, the fact that *VSA(D)* depicts Abbán's father as Cormac and describes Cormac as a king of the Dál Messin Corb dynasty, could augment the claim that the author/compiler of Abbán's Vita was attempting to provide Abbán with an origin identical to Kevin's; see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 4.

[137] Details on the royal stature of these particular saints can be found in Robert Bartlett's comprehensive account on 'lay saints', 'royal saints' and also 'female royal saints'. These examples derive from different points approximately between the sixth to thirteenth centuries; see: Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, pp. 210-221.

[138] The numerous references to kings can be attested in most of the Lives from *VSH(D)*, *VSH(S)* and *BnÉ*.

[139] Cf. Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*, p. 1, which shows that hagiography did not provide a factual profile of its saint. It was a special type of textual genre which 'was designed to depict its subject as an exemplar of holiness'.

[140] See 'The Genealogy of St. Abbán-Methodology' Section of this Chapter and my reference to the Bollandist Victor De Buck who suggested that Abbán's textual record embodies a merging of different *Vitae* of two different saints' named Abbán. Of course, it is still equally as possible that Kevin and Íbar are cultural commodities of Abbán's north and south *Laigin* patronage. This is part of the two theories, which relates to the attestation of a dual image that can be discerned from the entirety of Abbán's textual record; namely, 'The Double-Cult Theory' or 'The Two-Abbán Theory', see: pp. 30-33 of this thesis.

This theory; namely, 'The Two-Abbán Theory' will only be further understood when Abbán's hagiographical and martyrological accounts have been thoroughly assessed. As for 'The Double-Cult Theory', it would suggest that Íbar and Kevin embody two different cults emerging from the one saint. While the south Laigin location of Íbar's patronage would support the possibility of Abbán of Mag Arnaide being a different individual to Abbán of Cell Abbáin, Íbar's genealogical record from the Recensio Maior tract does in fact suggest Íbar came from Ulster.[141] This undermines the genealogical evidence for 'The Two-Abbán Theory'.[142] At first glance, this would suggest that only one saint named Abbán existed and that Kevin is more likely to be a genuine relative of Abbán, due to his similar Laigin origins. At the same time, Íbar's frequent association with Abbán throughout *VSA* and *BA* means that Íbar still plays an important role in Abbán's textual record.[143]

The problem in ascertaining the significance of Íbar's and Kevin's familial connection with Abbán, lies in the fact that they are depicted as relatives on Abbán's maternal side of the family. As Nollaig Ó Muraíle summed up, 'the Irish genealogies are almost entirely patrilineal and male-dominated', meaning that references to names depicting women appear quite infrequently.[144] In the corpus of saints' genealogies, the type of family relative a woman most commonly depicts is a mother or a wife.[145] Abbán's mother Mella undoubtedly fits into that category, given her depiction as Abbán's mother in his hagiographical account and the 287.3 entry. However, her depiction as a mother to an Offaly saint (Manchán of Leamonaghan) with

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[141] *CGSH*, p. 16, entry number: 96.1
[142] Cf. Culleton, *Celtic and Early Christian Wexford*, p. 82-83.
[143] Typically, most saints' *Vitae* survive in at least one of the three main collections of saints' Lives: *VSH(D)*, *VSH(S)* or *VSH(O)*. Íbar's *Vita* 'survives among the Collectanea Bollandiana from a text supplied by Henry FitzSimon'; See: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 115, fn. 66, for further details. For an English translation of the two manuscript copies (in LL and MS 7773 from the Royal Library of Belgium, Brussels) of Íbar's *Vita*; see: Culleton, *Celtic and Early Christian Wexford*, pp. 86-96. Sharpe's reference to the manuscript and editorial details is invaluable because *Vitae* which do not survive in one of the three main manuscript collections are typically hard to find and access. Equally so are Culleton's translations of both manuscript versions of the *Vita* as the three main collections of *VSH* are, I would argue, long overdue an English translation. Though some of these *Vitae* have been translated as part of a separate study. See for example De Paor, *Saint Patrick's World*, pp. 227-294, which provides, for instance, translation of the *VSH(D)* version of the *Vitae* of the three main pre-Patrician saints': Ailbe, Declan and Ciarán. For local counties, Ó Riain translated the *Vitae* of SS. Ciarán of Clonmacnoise, Ciarán of Sier, Colmán of Lynally and Fíonán of Kinnitty (see: Ó Riain, *Four Offaly Saints*) and *Vitae* of SS. Colum of Terryglass, Crónan of Roscrea, Mochaomhóg of Leigh and Ruadhán of Lorrha (see: Ó Riain, *Four Tipperary Saints*.
[144] *LMnG*, p. 11. Note also that female names appear more often in the corpus of saints' genealogies than in the secular corpus.
[145] *LMnG*, p. 11.

a different ancestry to Abbán's, from the *Recensio Maior* tract also, suggests her familial connection with Abbán is not genuine.[146]

Furthermore, according to Donnchadh Ó Corráin and Fidelma Maguire, the name 'Mella' depicts a mother to a total number of seven different saints in the entire corpus of saints' genealogies.[147] More generally, this would suggest that 'Mella' was one of the most used female names to depict mothers of saints and thus, to promote their cultural identities. Three of these saints are attested in the earlier tracts from *CGSH*: Abbán, Manchán and a priest called Cannig.[148] It is most likely a mere coincidence that this priest shares the same name as the individual depicted as Abbán's grandfather: Cannig son of Labhraid in the *CGSH* 287.1 entry. Abbán's supposed 'grand-father' and the priest 'Cannig' son of Mella are unlikely to be the same individuals because none of the from Abbán's paternal lineage (apart from Abbán himself) depict religious figures. Even if one was to speculate otherwise, the tract 'On the Mothers of Saints' would be a challenging source on which to identify both 'Cannig' individuals as one, because most of the saints' names are patronymics.[149] Thus, the Cannig individual depicted as a son of Mella, need not be considered as a matter concerning Mella's depiction as Abbán's mother, as he is not ascribed with any familial relationship to Abbán. The same matter applies to Mella's depiction as a mother to a saint named Tigernaig Daire Melli from the same entry as the one in which Cannig is referenced.

In Abbán's 287.3 entry and his hagiographical record, Mella was possibly depicted as Abbán's mother for promoting two cultural phenomena (that of Íbar and of Kevin) that each embodied contemporary interest in Abbán's two foundations: Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbáin. In the actual tract concerning mothers however (On the Mothers of Irish Saints), Mella's role as Abbán's mother is replaced by the name 'Cainech Abbad'. Pádraig Ó Riain has suggested Cainech Abbad is another name for Mella. While, the evident dissimilarity between the names would not suggest so, Cainech Abbad's depiction as Íbar's sister in the LL version of Íbar *Vita* and as a daughter of Íbar's father: 'Lugna', may support Ó Riain's hypothesis. [150]

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[146] *CGSH*, p. 32. Cf. p. 178, which refers to entries and pedigrees from 'On the Mothers of the Saints' tract, in which Mella's depiction as St. Manchán's mother appears in an entry occurring directly below an entry which depicts a woman called Cainech Abbad as Abbán's mother. The conflicting depiction of Abbán's mother will be the next point in discussion.
[147] Ó Corráin & Maguire, *Irish Names*, p. 136.
[148] For the reference to the latter saint from see: *CGSH*, p. 172.
[149] See: Ó Muraíle, Irish Genealogies as an Onomastic Source, pp. 24-25.
[150] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 51; Culleton, *Celtic and Early Christian Wexford*, p. 86.

Entry/Pedigree[152]	Manuscript(s)
722.79 *Cainech Abbad ingen Lugna mathair Blait m. Laignig .i. Abbain m. Laignig* (Cainech Abbad daughter of Lugna, mother of Blat, son of Lagnig, ie. Abbán son of Lagnig)	1. LL 2. BB 3. BLcRawl. 4. BLc 5. Book of Uí Mhaine (*BUíMh.*) 6. Laud. Miscellany 610 (Laud.M.610)

Cainech Abbad's depiction as Laignech's wife and, (as the genealogist clarifies) her subsequent depiction as a mother of Abbán could imply that Cainech Abbad and Mella represent two names of the same individual in Abbán's hagiographical and genealogical record. This possibility is also supported by §§3-5 of Íbar's *Vita*, which explains that Íbar was recognised by three different names:[153]

1. Nennan

2. Ecmacht

3. Íbar

While the name Mella is attributed to several other saints of different origin throughout the corpus of saints' genealogies, her maternal connection with Abbán through Íbar can only be distinguished from *VSA* and *BA*. Her connection with Abbán in the genealogical corpus is only recognised through her sibling connection with Kevin in one entry; which is: the *CGSH* 287.3 entry from the *Recensio Maior* tract. Thus, Mella's sibling connection with Íbar is not recognisable in the corpus. For Cainech Abbad, she is mentioned in three different pedigrees/entries from *CGSH*, all of which associate her with Íbar. [154] Her depiction as one of Íbar's four sisters in his *Vita* means it is unlikely that the genealogist of 'The Mothers of the Saints' tract invented the sibling connection. Thus, associating Abbán with a saint (Íbar) whose

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[151] *CGSH*, p. 178, entry number, 722.79.

[152] Perhaps it is nothing more than a coincidence that Mella is depicted as a mother of St. Manchán of Leamonaghan directly below this 722.29 *CGSH* entry.

[153] For an English translation of Íbar's *Vita*; see: Culleton, *Celtic and Early Christian Wexford*, pp. 87-88. Cf. the references to St. Colm Cille's description of Íbar being a noble and outstanding abbot. Receiving such praises from one of the three national saints of Ireland is most likely an attempt to assert the pre-eminence of Íbar.

[154] For Cainech Abbad, see; *CGSH*, p. 230; under the head word: *Cainech Apad ingen Lugna*.

patronage coincides with Abbán's south Laigin origins, alongside Íbar's father (*Lugna*) and sister (Cainech Abbad) was perhaps a further attempt to promote these origins. But the fact that Mella's maternal role in *VSA* and *BA* bears the same connotations and equally so does she serve as a platform for Kevin's familial connection to Abbán, raises questions as to whether Mella and Cainech Abbad were the same individual. The orthographical similarity between the name Mella and the name of another one of Íbar's sisters from his *Vita*: 'Mellit Manach', would suggest that this is the individual whom the name Mella represents in *VSA*, *BA* and the *Recensio Maior* tract.[155] This probability removes the implication of Mella and Cainech Abbad being the same individual.[156]

If this is the case, then it is striking that the two different females, depicted as Abbán's mother, are both depicted as sisters of Íbar in his *Vita*. This underlying connection with Íbar could suggest that his depiction as Abbán's maternal uncle bears more significance than Kevin's. Moreover, another one of Íbar's four sisters: 'Brondfind Brecc' is depicted as a mother to four of Abbán's brothers in a separate entry in the following manner:[157]

Brondf̃ind Brecc ingen Lugna siur Epscoip Ibair mathair Ṡenaig Gairb o Chill Móir 7 Miachu 7 Toimtenaig Ruis Glassi et Lithgein Cluana Móir.

Brondfhind Brecc daughter of Lugna, sister of Bishop Íbar mother of Senach Garbh of Cill More and Miacca and Tomdenach of Ros Glas and Líthgein of Clonmore Líthgein.

Though Abbán is not mentioned in this entry, we see that four of his aforementioned six 'brothers' from the *Recensio Maior* tract are now being depicted as nephews of Íbar as opposed to Kevin.[158] At this point, it seems apparent that there are underlying attempts by the genealogists of 'The Mothers of the Saints' tract to trace Abbán's family relationships back to Íbar. Thus, the same genealogist is also attempting to demote Abbán's depiction as a nephew

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[155] See: Culleton, *Celtic and Early Christian Wexford*, p. 86.

[156] See: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 51, which suggested Mella and Cainech Abbad were the same individual.

[157] *CGSH*, p. 180, entry number 722.96. See the 'Siblings' sub-section of this chapter for my discussion on the significance of Abbán's 'brothers' from the *Recensio Maior* tract.

[158] It may seem to be more than a coincidence that the two brothers which the genealogists of 'The Mothers of the Saints' tract chose to omit, have similar names: Damán and Dubán. Why the genealogists left out two brothers in the first place, was likely to do with this genealogist attempting to disguise the fact that he was deriving this material from an older genealogical tract. Perhaps the fact that Damán is the first brother listed in the *Recensio Maior* tract meant that it would look too obvious that he was deriving the material from the older tract. Hence, to alleviate this, he chose to omit Duban also, due to its orthographical similarity to Damán. As for SS. Senach and Líthgein who are depicted as patron saints of the aforementioned foundation of Ros Glás/Monasterevin, the fact that they are associated with different foundations also in this tract could be a further attempt by the genealogist of 'The Mothers of the Saints' tract to differentiate from their depictions in the *Recensio Maior* tract, from which he was most likely deriving this material.

of Kevin of Glendalough from the *Recensio Maior* tract. However, since this tract has an older manuscript history than the tract 'On the Mothers of the Saints', it would suggest that Kevin's depiction as Abbán's maternal uncle bears an earlier, and perhaps a more authentic record. But perhaps we ought to take note of the tract into which this material was recorded. Its focus is on providing a record of women, who as Nollaig Ó Muraíle explained, feature much less frequently than men in the corpus more generally.[159] In the corpus of saints' genealogies, the aim is also to attribute a degree of fame to women and their maternal relationships with the saints. In the entry concerning Brondfind Brecc, the genealogist may also be attempting to provide a maternal record of a woman, whose name had already being depicted as a daughter in earlier entries from *CGSH*.[160]

Hence, the minor differences between the depictions of Abbán's 'brothers' in this tract and the *Recensio Maior* tract need not be considered in any great detail. This is because a saint's identity is mainly recognised through his/her patronymic as opposed to matronymic.[161] In Abbán's record in particular, the shifting depictions from his maternal ancestry enabled the genealogists to fabricate some material, such as suggesting that Brondfind Brecc is the mother of four saints, who are depicted as sons of Mella and brothers of Abbán in the earlier *Recensio Maior* tract. The genealogical record of Abbán and his six 'brothers' from this *Recensio Maior* tract is particularly similar to their record in the *Recensio Metrica* tract too:

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[159] *LMnG*, p. 11.
[160] From a tract called '*Lucht oentad Mael Ruain*' (The United Community of Mael Ruain), an entry (numbered 721.2 in *CGSH*) depicts Brondfind Brecc as a daughter of the aforementioned Lugna; See: *CGSH*, p. 168. In an earlier entry from the tract 'On the Mothers of the Saints', she is also depicted as Lugna's daughter; See: *CGSH*, pp. 171-172, entry number 722.14.
[161] See: Ó Muraíle, Irish Genealogies as an Onomastic Source, pp. 24-25.

- Tract 3: *Recensio Metrica* (The Metrical Recension)[162]

Entry/Pedigree[163]	Manuscript(s)
662.165 *Abban Muicche hArnduicch uill is Cille hAbbain áluinn, Daman, Dubhan is Senach, Lithghen, Miach is Toimhdenach.* (Abbán of Moyarney and from Killabban, there was Damán, Dubán and Senach, Lithgean, Miacca and Tomdenach) 662.166 *Secht mic Luigind co n-ana mic Caindigh mic Labradha mic Corbmaic mic Con Chorb Chaoimh do siol chomrahach Chathaoir.* (They were the seven sons of Lagin, who was the son of Cannig, son of Labhraid, son of Cormac, son of Cú Corb who was the offspring of the victorious Lord Cathaoir)	1. LL 2. BB 3. BLc

The emphasis on the seven sons from the 662.166 entry is reminiscent of the fact that the number seven is a very common trope that regularly occurs in ecclesiastical or religious sources such as the martyrologies.[164] Hence, Abbán's association with the number and the lack of substantial historical evidence for Abbán's seven 'brothers' would suggest that the reference to the number seven in this genealogical entry is merely symbolic of its frequent usage in Irish sources more widely. Earlier however, Francis J. Shearman claimed that Abbán and his brothers were the seven presbyters buried in a septenary in an ecclesiastical site named 'Cell

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[162] *CGSH*, pp. 98-99, entry number 662.165 & 662.166.

[163] Interestingly, the 662.166 entry names the ancestor (Chathaoir) of Cú Corb. The fact that the Recensio Maior tract only traced as far back as Cú Corb would imply that the *Recensio Metrica* tract derived its material from other sources as well as the *Recensio Maior* tract.

[164] See for example, The Glosses of The Martyrology of Gorman (MGgls) which refer to the *secht n-escoip Droma Airbhelaig* / 'seven bishops of Druim Airbelaig' under 15 January calendar date, see: The Martyrology of Gorman (MG)/MGgls, pp. 16-17

Fíne Cormaic', meaning 'The Church of the Kindred of Cormac' (Killeen Cormac), located in the diocese of Glendalough in the barony of Narragh and Reban East in Co. Kildare.[165] Though the vernacular spelling of the ecclesiastical site would suggest that this church commemorates the lives of individuals of religious status who were descendant from a figure named 'Cormac', it would be sheer speculation to claim that these supposed descendants of Cormac were Abbán and his brothers.[166] These 'seven presbyters' could represent any past individuals, not only because the number seven is such a common trope, but also because 'Cormac' and 'Mac Cormaic' are also commonplace names and patronymics that appear frequently in the Irish textual record. Consequently, there is no further means through which Shearman's claim can be proved, meaning any subsequent attempt to identify Abbán and his 'brothers' with the seven presbyters buried in Cell Fíne Cormaic would essentially be a wild goose chase.

Post-Norman Tracts of Saints Genealogies

At this point, the earliest (pre-Norman) tracts of saints' genealogies have now been examined. Though the remaining two tracts from the corpus are evidently later in origin, they provide a greater deal of material on Abbán's ancestry, meaning that the origin of their content merits consideration. One of these tracts derives from the seventeenth century *LMnG*:

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[165] Shearman, Loca Patriciana, pp. 544-560. On the location of this ecclesiastical site; see: Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin et al., 2008, *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=4129* (Last Accessed 23rd September 2020).

[166] See Edmund Hogan & revised and corrected by Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 2017, *Onomasticon Godelicum- https://www.dias.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/E-Onomasticon_Text.pdf*, pp. 768-769 of the text. (Last Accessed 23rd September 2020).

-Tract 4- *Naoimhsheanchus* (Saintlore)[167]

Entry/Pedigree Title: *Naoimh Dail Mesin Corb* (The Saints' of the Dál Messin Corb Dynasty)	Manuscript(s)
727.8 *Aban (.i.) Muighe hArann <nó hArnaight> agus Chill Abain in Uibh Muiredhaigh, Marta 16.* Abán, i.e. of Magh Árann (or Arnaighe) and from Ceall Abáin in Uí Mhuireadhaigh, March 16. 727.9 *<[.i.] Aban m. Laighnén m. Cainnich m. Lubradha m. Cormaic m. Niachuirp m. Moghachuirp m. Conchabair Abhradruaidh* (i.e.) Abán s. Laighnéan s. Cainnech s. Lubhraidh s. Cormac s. Nia Cuirb s. Mogh Cuirb s. Conchabhar Abhradhruadh 727.11 *< Daman, Miac a Fidh Mor .i. icCluain Foda, agus Seanach agus Lithgean agus Duban agus Toimdeanach i Rus Glais: seacht mbraíthre iad agus Abban.* Damhán, mica from Fiodh Mór, i.e. in Cluain Fada, and Seanach and Líthghean and Dubhán and Toimhdeanach in Ros Glais; they and Abán are seven brothers.	*LMnG* has been edited and translated by Nóllaig Ó Muraíle from three of the following manuscripts: 1. Add. Ir. MS 14, in University College Dublin. 2. MS B 8, in Maynooth University. 3. MS 585 (24 N 2), in The Royal Irish Academy.

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[167] *LMnG*, pp. 744-747. Moreover, the entry number 727.12 will not be considered in the current discussion because it reads largely like a miracle motif from hagiography and is identical to the genealogical entry (287.4), which was intentionally excluded from chapter one of this thesis for the same reason. Thus, it will be considered in chapter 2 of this thesis.

Though Ó Riain has provided a concise review of the various earlier sources and also manuscripts from which the compiler (Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh) of this large manuscript (*LMnG*) derived his material for the *Naoimhsheanchas* tract, these *LMnG* entries largely derive from the *Recensio Maior* tract.[168] More generally, the importance of such late manuscripts is that they typically derive their material from a large number of earlier sources; some of which may not survive; meaning that the preservation of manuscript sources like *LMnG* is invaluable.[169] While these entries mainly derive from the corpus of saints' genealogies, there are some features which suggest that the genealogical compiler also derived some of his material from the secular corpus of genealogies.[170] Entry 727.9 is the chief example; and when compared to the *CGSH* entry 287.1, it is clear that some of the patronymics from the 727.9 entry derived from elsewhere:[171]

LMnG 727.9   *CGSH* 287.1

m. Laighnén ──────────▶ m. Laignig

m. Cainnich──────────▶ m. Cainnig

m. Lubradha ─────────▶ m. Labrada

m. Cormaic ──────────▶ m. Cormaic

*m. Niachuirp   m. Con Corbb

*m. Moghachuirp

*m. Conchabhair Abratrúad

This comparison suggests that three additional generations have been inserted into Abbán's paternal lineage in the *Naoimhsheanchas* tract but left out the oldest (Cú Corb) generation from the *Recensio Maior* tract. In the secular corpus, the Niachuirp patronymic is attributed to nearly twenty different pedigrees/entries of the genealogies of (mainly) Laigin and Osraige; nearly ten of which record the name Cú Corb from the *Recensio Maior* tract.[172] In four of these pedigrees/entries, the Moghachuirp figure is either depicted as an ancestor or a descendant of

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[168] *CGSH*, pp. xlv-xlvii.

[169] Outside of the genre of the genealogies; the late MD would be of similar value; see for example: Elva Johnston, 2004, (electronic pages) p. 2 of pp. 1-19, *Munster, saints of (act. c. 450-c.700)-file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/Munster_saints_of_act._c.450-c.700%20(1).pdf* (Last Accessed 23rd September 2020).

[170] The very fact that Abbán is depicted as a descendant of the Dál Messin Corb dynasty in the *Naoimhsheanchus* tract, as his 'maternal uncle' Kevin is in an earlier section of *CGSH* shows that the secular corpus was used by the genealogical compiler of *LMnG*.

[171] *LMnG*, pp. 746-747; *CGSH*, p. 46. The names with the * symbol from the *LMnG Naoimhsheanchas* tract represents the names which do not derive from the *Recensio Maior* tract entry from *CGSH*.

[172] *CGH*, p. 713. See the *Nia-Corb* heading towards the bottom of the page.

Niachuirp. This would suggest that the genealogical compiler of the *Naoimhsheanchas* tract was drawing on these particular entries/pedigrees when recording the names of the ancestral figures from Abbán's paternal lineage.[173] Perhaps the specific entry/pedigree the compiler drew from, is recorded under the secular *Genealach Sīl Chormaicc* (The Genealogy of the Seeds/Descendants of Cormac) sub-heading. This is because the last three patronymics of the *Naoimhsheanchas* tract and the Cú Corb figure from the *Recensio Maior* tract are depicted as ancestors of an individual named 'Riān' in the following manner in the *Genealach Sīl Chormaicc* sub-heading: [174]

m. Niad-Cuirb

m. Con-Corbb

m. Moga-Corbb

m. Conchobuir Abratruaid

It is undoubtedly striking that these names are cited in a similar order in Abbán's pedigrees from the *Naoimhsheanchas* and *Recensio Maior* tracts. Moreover, the temptation to suggest that the attribution of more than one ancient Laigin individual to Abbán's paternal lineage was an attempt to augment Abbán's Laigin descent, is supported by the Dál Messin Corb sub-heading under which Abbán's *Naoimhsheanchas* paternal pedigree is recorded in *LMnG*. This dynasty was named after the aforementioned *Mess Corb* figure; who was an early Laigin king.[175]

-Tract 5- *Do Naomhaibh Laighen* (Genealogies of the Leinster Saints')

Outside of the genealogical record, the reference to Abbán's 16 March feast-day was evidently taken from the Irish martyrologies.[176] The genealogical compiler of the *Naoimhsheanchas* tract was likely deriving his material on saints' feast-days from the contemporary MD. The problem however, is that most of the Irish martyrologies record two feast-days for Abbán; which are: 16 March and 27 October. MD only recorded Abbán's March feast-day, which on the one hand, supports the fact that the *Naoimhsheanchas* compiler was relying mainly on MD for collecting

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[173] *CGH*, pp. 5, (entry number 116a9); 9 (116c37); 15 (117e21); 335 (311ab 57). The fact that there are entries/pedigrees recorded under the genealogical sub-heading: *De Peritia 7 De Gene[a]logis Dāl Niad-Cuirp Incipit* (Of the Expert and the Genealogies of the Niad-Curp Below) in the secular corpus shows that the Niachuirp individual, like the aforementioned Cormac Lusc and Mess Corb individuals, was one of the oldest and most important 'Early Leinster Kings', to whom subsequent kings and saints of Laigin were depicted as descendants; See: *CGH*, pp. 42-45. Cf. Byrne, *Irish Kings*, p. 288.
[174] *CGH*, p. 15, entry number: 117e21, 22, 23, 24.
[175] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, p. 288.
[176] See the 727.8 entry from the *Naoimhsheanchus* tract of saints' genealogies.

detail on saints' feast-days. Moreover, this also questions why Abbán is ascribed more than one feast-day; which is: the anniversary of a saint's death.[177] In any event, the reference to 16 March in the *Naoimhsheanchas* tract from *LMnG* most likely derived from MD. The feast-day was later copied from this tract into a later tract (although from the seventeenth century too) concerning the 'Genealogies of Leinster Saints', where Abbán is also attributed a paternal lineage containing over thirty patronymics: [178]

Entry/Pedigree[179]	Manuscript(s)
Abban Moighe hArnaighe ocus Cilli hAbbain (Abbán of Moyarney and Killabban) *m Laighnen m Caindigh m Labradha m Corbmaic m Niad cuirb m Con cuirb m Modha cuirb m Concubhair abhrattruaidh m. Finn fileadh m Rosa ruaidh m Feargasa fairrge m Niadhaid necht m Sédna siothbaic m Luighdeach loichfinn m Breasail bric m Fiacha foibric m Oilealla glais m Fearadhaigh foghlais m Nuadhaid folloin m Alldoid da ngoirter Oilill m Airt m Modha airt m Criomtainn cosccraig m Feidlimidh fortriuin m Feargusa fortamail m Breasail bric m Aongusa gailine m Oilella bracain m Labradha loingsigh m Oilella áine m Laogh luirc m Ugaine móir.* 16 Mar.	1. Franciscan MS A 16, University College Dublin

While the first eight patronymics are identifiable from the *Naoimhsheanchas* tract from *LMnG*, the rest most likely derives from sources that bore no relationship with Abbán.[180] Before commenting on the probability of later genealogies (or genealogies with a later manuscript

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[177] The problem of Abbán's reduplicated feast-days will be examined in chapter five of this thesis.
[178] *Genealogiae Regum Sanctorum Hiberniae* (*GRSH*), p. 85.
[179] The entire pedigree need not be translated, as it simply represents patronymics.
[180] The probability of some of these patronymics being falsely ascribed to Abbán's pedigree for attempting to attribute him with an ancient or even pre-Christian Laigin descent is identifiable from the 'Labhraid Longsigh' name: 'the legendary ancestor of the Leinstermen'; see: Ó Corráin & Maguire, *Irish Names*, p. 119. Hence, the fact that Abbán's supposed great-grandfather: 'Labhraid', shares the same name, suggests that Abbán's Laigin origins are being promoted historically, but also on a linguistic level too.

origin) being fabricated, it is worth mentioning that this is the longest pedigree from the *Do Naomhaibh Laigin* section of *Genealogiae Regum et Sanctorum Hiberniae* (*GRSH*).[181] Thus, this genealogical compiler was likely to be merging existing material from different sources into one pedigree.[182] While it is difficult to identify *all* of these patronymics, it is apparent that the genealogical compiler was attempting to trace Abbán's descent to a period even earlier than the period to which the genealogists of pre-Norman tracts traced back. The name of the earliest individual: Ugaine Mór, implies that the compiler was attempting to trace Abbán's descent as far back as the pre-Christian period. Ugaine Mór was supposedly the sixty-sixth high-king of Ireland, whose reign came to an end when he was succeeded or killed by his son: Laogh Lurc (the second last name mentioned in Abbán's *Do Naomhaibh Laigin* pedigree), at some point between 4566-4606 BCE.[183] Of course, there is certainly no way of proving this and it is highly unlikely; even between the period in which most saints lived (500-700AD) and 4566-4606 BCE is a significantly long time. More broadly, this long pedigree from *GRSH* demonstrates once again, that the later tracts from saints' genealogies continued to derive much of their material from the secular corpus for lengthening the saint's descent.

The Secular Genealogies (Pre-Norman and Post-Norman Tracts)

As Máire Herbert noted, secular genealogies serve a better role in providing the saint with a 'contextual significance'.[184] What tends to be contextualised is the dynastic group from which a saint's descent derives. The secular genealogies also differentiate between a saint being biologically descendant from an ancestor and his kingdom or a saint who belongs the geographical region of that kingdom but is 'not linked to the dominant dynastic group through blood'.[185] The latter type of genealogy is typically identified through the sub-heading: *Forsluinte* in the corpus.[186] The earliest evidence for Abbán in the secular corpus derives from this type of genealogy in the following manner:

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[181] *GRSH*, pp. 85- 92.

[182] Cf. *GRSH*, p. vii for a discussion on the derivatives of the sources in the manuscript.

[183] Two key sources for this evidence are: The Annals of the Four Masters (AFM) and *Lebór Gabála Érenn* (*LGE*); Cf. *GRSH*, p. 22. These cannot be used as a reliable source of evidence as they refer to an era; from which little or no other evidence originates. Even later references to events from the sixth century and onwards in the annals need often be taken with a pinch of salt. Moreover, the fact that AFM is one of the latest Irish annals, composed during the seventeenth century, supports the unlikeliness of this evidence bearing a trustworthy truth. As for *LGE*, the very fact that it provides a pseudo-historical depiction of Ireland's origins also applies a pseudo depiction to Laogh Lurc m. Ugaine Mór, regardless of whether they were authentic individuals who existed during the pre-Christian period.

[184] Herbert, Review of the Book of Leinster, pp. 167-168; Herbert, Hagiography, p. 88.

[185] Johnston, *Literacy and Identity*, p. 83.

[186] Johnston, *Literacy and Identity*, p. 83, fn. 127.

- <u>Tract 6- *Laigin* (The Leinster Genealogies)</u>

<u>Entry/Pedigree</u>[187]	<u>Manuscript(s)</u>
Forsluinte Hūa Labrada (The Non-Biological Descendants of the Ua Labrada Dynasty) *Is dīb Abbān moccu Chormaic* *Is uadib māthair Coluim meic Crimthaind .i. Mincloth ingen Cenannāin m. Ceise m. Lugdach m. Labrada.* (To them (the Ua Labrada dynasty) belongs Abbán descendant of Cormac. To them belongs the mother of Colum son of Crimthand .i. Mincloth daughter of Cenannan son of Cese son of Lugdach son of Labhraid).	1. Rawl. B 502 2. LL 3. BB 4. BLc

The possibility of Crimthand being, according to F.J. Byrne, a fifth-century descendant of the south Laigin Uí Chennselaig dynasty, alongside Abbán's acclaimed descent from the Dál Messin Corb dynasty (according to the *Naoimhsheanchas* tract from *LMnG*) would imply that the Ua Labrada were an over-arching dynasty of Laigin.[188] Hence, just because a saint is associated with a particular ancient figure or a figure from whom a dynasty emerged, like Labhraid Laídech (Ua Labrada Dynasty) does not always mean that the genealogist was attempting to suggest that the saint was a biological relative of the figure. As I mentioned earlier, these genealogists were skilful scholars; meaning that even if part of a saint's ancestry is fabricated; the genealogists fabricated such material in a careful manner. These genealogists had to ensure that the ancestor had a similar origin to the individual for whom the genealogist was producing a pedigree.

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[187] See *CGH*, p. 35, entry number 120a3-5. The reference to Crimthand's mother and Cenannāin's daughter (Mincloth) may be interpreted, as Nollaig Ó Muraíle suggested, as 'incidental' examples of the general infrequent references to women in the genealogies; particularly in the secular corpus; see: *LMnG*, p. 11.
[188] Byrne, *Irish Kings*, p. 290. Cf. p. 288.

For instance, while Abbán's account in the *Recensio Maior* tract depicts Kevin of Glendalough as his maternal uncle, Abbán bears no mention in any of Kevin's individual genealogical accounts. Most likely, this is because the genealogist of Abbán's tract felt that Kevin was a culturally worthy saint for promoting Abbán's Laigin origins. If this is the case, then a later secular tract concerning the pedigree of a Laigin abbot called Mithigén would suggest that Abbán served the same role as Kevin, in Mithigén's account. In another pedigree from the secular Laigin genealogies, Abbán is depicted as a great-grandfather of Mithigén's: [189]

Entry/Pedigree	Manuscript(s)
Genealach Hūa Felmeda (The Genealogy of the Uí Felmeda) *Mithigēn abb Achaid Aball* *m. Coscraig m. Cormaic m. Abbāin m.* *Ēctgussa m. Bēochaimīne m. Brain Gerthide* *m. Baītāin m. Colmāin m. Eirc m.* *Feidilmthe* (Mithigén of Achad Aball Son of Coscrac, son of Cormac son of Abbán son of Éctgussa son of Colman, son of Erc, son of Fedilmthe)	1. LL 2. BB 3. BLc

The fact that the foundation of Achad Aball is located in the same region (modern-day Co. Wicklow) as Glendalough could suggest that Kevin's depiction as Abbán's maternal uncle was a success in expanding the cult of Abbán throughout other foundations within Laigin; resulting in the later genealogist of Mithigén's pedigree perceiving Abbán as a culturally worthy saint for promoting Mithigén's identity. The fact that this abbot is not mentioned in any of Abbán's genealogical accounts would allude towards the unlikeliness of Abbán actually being Mithigén's great-grandfather. On the other hand, the fact that AFM suggests that Mithigén died in 1018, shows that this period is not significantly far from the 'Age of Saints (500-600AD)'; and because the 'Age of Saints' is the period from which Abbán may have come from, would suggest that the ancestral relationship between Abbán and Mithigén would not be unrealistic

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[189] *CGH*, p. 354 & LLdip., p. 1365, entry number 317c15-33. These entry numbers apply to both editions.

in actuality.[190] If we revisit Diarmuid Ó Murchadha's theory of '33.38 years, or three generations' being the typical gap between a father and son in the pedigrees and the typical life-span of a human, this would suggest that the Abbán from Mithigén's pedigree lived at some point from the early to mid-seventh century.[191]

As I mentioned previously however, the late origin of AFM shows that the annals are unlikely to be contemporary with most of the historical events from various years which they record. Potentially, the expansion of Abbán's cult throughout Laigin resulted in later ecclesiastical individuals, like Mithigén being named after the saint: Abbán. Moreover, the fact that the Uí Felmeda dynasty was 'a sub-segment of the Uí Cennselaig' (a dynastic region in which Abbán's south Laigin foundation: Mag Arnaide is located) would suggest that the Abbán individual from Mithigén's pedigree was not the actual St. Abbán of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain. A possible scenario may be that Mithigén's envisaged great-grandfather was given that name by his parents via knowledge of the cult of St. Abbán, meaning his great-grandfather was a later individual named after a past saint. The implication that Mithigén's great-grandfather is a different individual to St. Abbán may also open room for considering 'The Two-Abbán Theory'. From there, we may suggest that Mithigén's great-grandfather was 'St. Abbán of Mag Arnaide', given the close proximity of the Uí Felmeda dynasty to that of the Uí Cennselaig. Either way, the origin of the Uí Felmeda dynasty does not suggest that the pedigree was composed within a north Laigin milieu.

This apparent clash between Abbán's north and south Laigin identities suspiciously coincides with the saint's dual image, as discussed in the introduction of this thesis.[192] This prompts one to consider whether an original compiler merged records of two different saints named Abbán into one (the two-Abbán theory) or if two distinct regions embody two opposing cults that emerged from the same saint (the double cult theory). The former theory tends to be contradicted by the prominent attestation of Abbán's Moccu Cormaic patronymic. This patronymic is further emphasised in a later source of Laigin genealogies from the aforementioned *LMnG*, where Abbán is depicted as a descendant of the Dál Cormaic and Ó Labrada dynasties:[193]

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[190] *CGSH*, p. xiv; Cf. Bhreathnach, The Genealogies of Leinster, pp. 265-266. Cf. the top of p. 266 where Bhreathnach notes that AFM names Mithigén's father as Cormac. The fact that Cormac is depicted as Mithigén's grandfather in the secular Laigin pedigree could suggest that the same individuals are being cited in AFM and this secular Laigin pedigree.

[191] Ó Murchadha, Rawlinson B 502, p. 333.

[192] See pp. 30-33 of this thesis.

[193] *LMnG*, pp. 221-225.

Entries/Pedigrees	Manuscript(s)
Do chloinn Cormaic mc Con-Corbb annso sios .i. Genealach Dhail Cormaic agus <Ui Labhrada> Of the family of Cormac s. Cú Corb here below: The Genealogy of Dál Cormaic and Ó Labradha 450.12 *As dibh Abbán mac uí Cormaic, do Uibh Cainnigh mc Cesi, agus as dibh mathair Mo-Chua mc Lonain .i. inghean mc Lughdhoch Loichene mc Dioma. As bearuid ar aile as inghean do Loithine mac Dioma o Chill acahonnaigh mathair mochua. As do Ibh Labradha mathair mo-Diomag (mc. Labhrada) Glinne Uissin, agus as dibh mac Carthainn>* Of the family of Cormac, s. Cú Corb here below: The Genealogy of Dál Cormaic and Ó Labhrada. To them belongs Abán, s. gs. Cormac, of Uí Chainnigh s. Céise, and to them [also] belongs Mo-Chua, s. Lonán, i.e. daughter of s. Lughaidh Lóichín s. Díoma. Some say that daughter of Lóichín s. Díoma from Ceall Choinnaigh is mother of Mo-Chua. Belonging to Uí Labhrada is the mother of Mo-Dhíomóg (s. Labhraid of Gleann Uisin and to them [also] belongs mac Cárthainn>	*LMnG* has been edited and translated by Nóllaig Ó Muraíle from three of the following manuscripts: 1. Add. Ir. MS 14, in University College Dublin. 2. MS B 8, in Maynooth University. 3. MS 585 (24 N 2), in The Royal Irish Academy.

This *LMnG* secular tract is likely to be an expansion of an entry under the sub-heading: *Genealach Dāil Cormaic 7 Hūa Labrada*, in an earlier Laigin tract originating from Rawlinson B 502.[194] This *LMnG* entry is not suggesting that all of the individuals listed in the entry are related; rather it is saying that the individual family histories of Abbán, 'Mo Chua', the mother of 'Mo-Dhíomóg' and 'Cárthainn' trace their dynastic or kindred origins back to the same ancient dynastic Laigin figures named after the Dál Cormac (Cormac Lusc) and Uá Labrada (possibly 'Labhraid Laídech') dynasties; though neither of these four individuals are close relatives.[195] Thus, the 'Cormac' element from Abbán's Moccu Cormaic patronymic represents his descent from an ancient Laigin figure (potentially 'Cormac Lusc') as opposed his actual father as implied by *VSA* and *BA*.[196] While the Uí Cainnigh paternal figure is likely to be the 'Cannig' individual depicted as Abbán's grandfather in the *Recensio Maior* tract, the 'Céise' individual name appears to have been taken from a pedigree occurring two entries below the aforementioned *Genealach Dāil Cormaic 7 Hūa Labrada* entry from Rawlinson B 502, which depicts 'Céise' as an ancestor of an individual named 'Flann'.[197] Moreover, the fact that this *LMnG* tract appears to be an expansion on an earlier Laigin tract does not mean the *LMnG* tract should be labelled unreliable. Most likely the genealogical compiler of the *LMnG* tract was studying earlier references to saints from the saints' and secular corpus and the dynastic and kindred groups to which these saints belonged. Thus, the compiler was attempting to merge two genealogical genres together, not to suit his own contemporary interests; but rather; to provide a clearer platform for his audience to access and identify the origins of the Irish saints.[198]

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[194] *CGH*, p. 28, entry number: 199ab30-35.

[195] Byrne, *Irish Kings*, p. 288.

[196] See pp. 49-51 of this thesis

[197] *CGH*, p. 28, entry number: 119ab 37-49.

[198] The probability of the *LMnG Laigin* tract originating from the post-Norman period and a time when political and ecclesiastical matters from the Norman and pre-Norman era were evidently not contemporary with the compiler of this tract would explain more generally why later genealogical sources were not compiled with the same intentions as those compiled during the pre-Norman and Norman era. The compilation of later sources was more concerned with the collection and preservation of as much genealogical material as possible. For a read of this scenario from the perspective of vernacular hagiography moreover; see: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 39, which notes that it is not always clear to determine whether the 'boom in the production of manuscripts written in Irish' during the sixteenth century had a positive or negative impact 'on the survival of older copies'.

Conclusion

On this note and after an attempt to journey through Abbán's genealogical evidence, beginning from the earliest tracts to the latest, we may now return to the three main questions which this chapter has attempted to explore from the perspective of Abbán's ancestry:

- Why did the genealogist(s) choose to depict particular individuals as Abbán's relatives?

Most of the individuals from Abbán's family are of Laigin origin; which would ultimately suggest that this was the identity which the genealogists attempted to apply to Abbán. This is particularly apparent from the ancient dynastic Laigin figures depicted as Abbán's ancestors throughout most of the tracts. The name depicting Abbán's father 'Laignech' and its adjectival formation of the provincial name 'Laigin', meaning 'one who is of Laigen' (a Leinsterman) could also suggest that the genealogists altered the name of his father in a particular way to highlight the fact that Abbán was a Laigin saint. His depiction as a patron saint of foundations (Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbáin) located in the north and south of the province would suggest so too. However, the fact that the earlier *Recensio Maior* and post-Norman *Naoimhsheanchas* tracts clarify that he is the patron saint of Mag Arnaide, but actually from Cell Abbáin, may indicate the genealogists were in favour of Abbán's north Laigin origins. On the other hand, the genealogists were perhaps attempting to clarify or explain the different origins which underlined Abbán's connection with Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain. The depiction of two different maternal uncles (Íbar of Beggerin Island and Kevin of Glendalough) from separate sources; each having prominent, but separate connections with the regions in which both of Abbán's foundations are located is a notable matter.

Though a fuller understanding of the two significance of the two-Abbán and double-cult theories will only come to fruition after Abbán's full hagiographical dossier and martyrological records have been examined, we may at this point, tentatively outline how SS. Íbar's and Kevin's conflicting connection with Abbán may be perceived through both theories and its potential implications. To recap, Íbar's familial connection with Abbán can only be recognised in the Life of Abbán, where the author attributes more focus to Abbán's south Laigin foundation (Mag Arnaide). Kevin's on the other hand, is attested in Abbán's genealogical record, which, particularly through the Leinster naming pattern of Abbán's paternal pedigree and envisaged siblings, shows a strong preference towards Abbán's north Laigin origins. From the perspective of the Two-Abbán theory, this would suggest that Íbar was originally the uncle of 'Abbán of Mag Arnaide', whilst Kevin was the uncle of 'Abbán of Cell Abbain'. However,

because Abbán's name is not mentioned in the genealogical or hagiographical records of Íbar or Kevin indicates that their mention in Abbán's record was invented for promoting the individual regional interests of Abbán's Laigin origins or his two primary foundations (Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain). This would be the explanation according to the Double-Cult theory.

While this theory would suggest that Íbar and Kevin were not biologically related to Abbán, it would imply that Abbán's hagiographer/genealogist believed the status of both saints meant they were worthy of asserting the pre-eminence of a lesser-known saint or a saint, whose cult was mainly known on a local scale. Still, it is difficult to know whether this conflicting depiction of Abbán's maternal uncle in both his hagiographical and genealogical record was originally the work of one individual scholar or two different scholars, each working from different regions of Laigin and each, only being aware of one of Abbán's primary foundations, before the extant records were produced. On the one hand, this potential scenario, though it cannot be proven to any greater extent, could represent two scholars documenting records of two different saints named Abbán. However, because Abbán is linked with the patronymic 'Cormac' both in Abbán's genealogy and Life, although 'Cormac' does not portray the same familial figure in both sources, would suggest two individual scholars were producing their own local records and perhaps, interpretations of Abbán's cultural identity. The ability to elicit this distinction of course, is due the conflicting evidence of Abbán's maternal uncle, which draws our attention back to the second question set out for this chapter.

-What implications does the contradictory evidence have for understanding the genealogies and the portrayal of Abbán in the genealogical record?

The non-identical sequence in which the patronymics appeared in Abbán's pedigrees is most likely a reflection of the common fabrications one stumbles upon in the genealogies more generally. Nevertheless, the fact that most of the early patronymics such as Cormac m. Con Corbb or Lugdach m. Labrada can all be traced back to other entries and pedigrees mainly of Laigin individuals, could in fact show that the genealogist of Abbán's accounts was attempting to elaborate on his Laigin origins. Alternatively, the genealogists were simply attempting to attribute every Laigin saint in the record with early ancestral figures, in order to ascribe similar lengths of pedigrees, and thus, to depict a consistent format in the tracts more generally. Either way, the weight of evidence showed a strong 'Laigin' naming and pattern, particularly the saint's paternal pedigree from the *Recensio Maior* tract.

As for the most apparent contradiction in Abbán's genealogical record (or at the least the one which has stood out most notably in this chapter), the depiction of two different maternal uncles (SS. Kevin and Íbar) is a notable case in point. The fact that the evidence for their familial role is from two different textual genres (hagiography and the genealogies) suggests there are underlying reasons for this contrasting depiction. Mella is depicted as Abbán's mother and thus a sister of Kevin and Íbar in both Abbán's genealogical and hagiographical record. However, the fact that Cainech Abbad, another sister of Íbar's according to his *Vita*, is depicted as Abbán's mother in the later tract 'On the Mothers of the Saints', suggests there is also an underlying attempt in the genealogical record to explain Abbán's connection with Íbar, whose biological connection with Abbán is only specifically stated in *VSA* and *BA*.

Most likely, the competitive attempt to promote Íbar's role over Kevin's relates to a wider problem. Their apparent connection to Abbán's north and south Laigin foundations, indicates that there is a double strand of interest or concern in Abbán's genealogical record. The matter evidently bears a connection with 'The Double Cult' and 'Two-Abban' theories which I discussed in the introduction of this thesis.[199] Though the latter theory would initially seem to be unlikely due to the lack of evidence for a saint in actuality, the theory would suggest that Íbar's and Kevin's familial connection with Abbán bears authenticity, and their connections with Abbán's two foundations could suggest that Abbán of Mag Arnaide and Abbán of Cell Abbáin were originally two different saints to whom Íbar and Kevin were relatives. On the matter of the discussion of Abbán in actuality, we now turn to the last and final question.

- Can any authentic historical information be uncovered from Abbán's genealogical record despite the scholarship normally suggesting otherwise?

Since most Irish saints are believed to have lived during a time for which little of no authentic historical evidence survives, this inhibits most subsequent attempts to uncover authentic historical information concerning the saint as an actual individual.[200] The extant textual evidence for most Irish saints is not contemporary with the period in which they supposedly lived. The fact that the genealogies survive in an inconsistent pattern in the manuscripts and are difficult to date, lends support to this scenario too. This is why the scholarship typically advises against reading the genealogies as factual sources and defines them as unhistorical. However, as Richard Sharpe summed up elsewhere, 'a large proportion of our historical

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[199] See pp. 30-33 of this thesis.
[200] *CGSH*, p. xiv.

sources are unhistorical', but if the sources are given 'due attention to the aims and interests of the writers, they can make a valid historical contribution'.[201] In essence, this coincides with the argument that genealogies are capable of casting light on the underlying contemporary affairs of the genealogists and his reasons for associating particular individuals with each other.

But while the 'historicity' or authenticity of the records of Irish saints is almost nil, it is, nevertheless insufficient to suggest that the saints bore 'no existence as historical persons'.[202] As I emphasised on several occasions throughout this chapter, the genealogists were competent scholars, who most likely worked with earlier and now non-extant records of these saints, who, as the etymology of Cell Abbáin conspicuously tells in relation to Abbán, were church founders. The records the genealogists worked with, would have to have come from these churches, which must have been founded by an actual monastic figure. It would be far-fetched to suggest that a saint's name, and cult was completely invented, particularly when a full Life of the saint survives. Thus, while it is true that the genealogies do not always provide clear images of its subject, and are by no means, easy sources to work with, glimpses of an historical individual can nevertheless be identified, especially through a dossier study of a saint. For this chapter, we may conclude that some historical authenticity can be discerned from Abbán's ancestry, and the two schools of thought certainly add an intriguing dimension to the matter. With this viewpoint established and the two theories awaiting further examination, we will now spend the next few chapters examining Abbán's hagiographical record in great detail.

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[201] Sharpe, Quatuor Sanctissimi Episcopi, p. 376.
[202] Ó Riain, Irish Saints' Genealogies', pp. 24-25.

Chapter 2

The Contemporaries of St. Abbán

Introduction- The Genesis of Abbán's Life Revisited

According to Pádraig Ó Riain's study of Abbán's Life, the work was written from scratch by a twelfth-to thirteenth-century prelate known as Bishop Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid of Ferns.[1] As we saw in the introduction, this proposition stems from the life and political activity of Bishop Ailbe and a review of his lived experience with the Anglo-Normans, with the most prominent example being his encounter with William Marshall, who took ownership of two properties in Templeshanbo, which Bishop Ailbe believed belonged rightfully belong to him; however he was ultimately unsuccessful in retrieving the manors.[2] The very fact that Templeshanbo, via the name 'Senboth Ard', is mentioned in *VSA* would certainly indicate that incidents, such as Bishop Ailbe's encounter with Marshall, prompted Bishop Ailbe to turn to hagiographical texts, which during the Norman and pre-Norman period, played an important role 'in affirming title to property'.[3] From that point, Richard Sharpe and later, Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin pondered the extent to which Bishop Ailbe wrote and revised saints' Lives, with the former tentatively suggesting that Bishop Ailbe may have initiated *VSH*.[4] Thus, it is probable that Bishop Ailbe used Abbán's Life as a political tool for establishing authority throughout the Ferns Diocese during the Anglo-Norman period.

Identifying Bishop Ailbe of Ferns as the author of Abbán's Life pinpointed a contextual stance to which he traced the origins of a selected number of the *VSA(D)* sections. Considering the subsequent works of Sharpe and Mac Shamhráin, I agree that there is most certainly an imprint of Bishop Ailbe on *VSA*. Less certain, however, is Ó Riain's claim that Bishop Ailbe essentially wrote the Life from scratch in the early thirteenth century. This hypothesis evidently derives from Ó Riain's wider view of the extant *Vitae* from the manuscript collections of *VSH* being written in their original form during the Anglo-Norman period. As noted in the introduction of this thesis, there is also the view of Sharpe and Máire Herbert which argue that these *Vitae* are later copies of original Lives written in the pre-Norman period. Furthermore, the are some scenes from *VSA(D)* which do not resonate with the political activity of Bishop Ailbe, such as the scenes pertaining to Abbán's monastic work in Munster. It is possible that scenes are

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[1] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170.
[2] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp.163-166; Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 329-338.
[3] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 333.
[4] Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*, pp. 354 & 362.

remnants from a pre-existing Life of Abbán written during the pre-Norman period. Therefore, I propose that Bishop Ailbe worked from a pre-existing Life, potentially altered some content, but most likely invented and added additional storylines to suit his own contemporary viewpoints.

The Two-Abbán and Double-Cult Theories-Review of the Current Perceptions

Underlying this issue however, is one which questions whether *VSA* embodies the lives of two different individuals named Abbán. As I discussed from the outset of this thesis, there are two key theories concerning the origin of Abbán's textual record: 'The Two-Abbán Theory' and 'The Double-Cult Theory'. Neither theory was addressed by Ó Riain in his research on the Life of Abbán; meaning that the fundamental core for understanding the genesis of Abbán's dossier still remains ignored. In relation to *VSA*, 'The Two-Abbán Theory' stems from the fact that he is the patron saint of two foundations: Cell Abbáin and Mag Arnaide.[5] The possibility of SS. Abbán of Cell Abbáin and Abbán of Mag Arnaide originally being two different saints is also supported by the conflicting depictions of Abbán's maternal uncle (SS. Kevin of Glendalough and Íbar of Beggerin Island), examined in chapter one of this thesis.[6] On the other hand, the general tendency for Irish genealogies to offer contradictory depictions of its subject is commonplace; meaning that the conflicting depictions of Abbán's maternal ancestry may not cast any significant light on 'The Two-Abbán Theory.

In light of Abbán's double-patron location however, Kevin's and Íbar's familial positioning in Abbán's record may have served a deliberate purpose in embodying two opposing cults of Abbán: one being from north Laigin (Cell Abbain), where Kevin's cult is largely based and the other representing Abbán's south Laigin foundation: Mag Arnaide, located in the same diocese (Ferns) as Íbar's foundation: Beggerin Island.[7] There is still ample material awaiting examination in this thesis before offering further commentary in relation both theories. Nevertheless, an examination of the genealogies and a brief review of *VSA*, already indicates a double-strand runs through Abbán's textual record. Whether these strands embody the original

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[5] Of all the *Vitae* from *VSH(D)* (Vols. 1 & 2), *VSA(D)* is one of the longest biographies in length.

[6] Most of the genealogical records identify Abbán's maternal uncle as St. Kevin of Glendalough, whereas *VSA* and *BA* identify St. Íbar of Beggerin Island, see pp. 61-69 of this thesis. The depiction of Íbar's familial, but also contemporary relationship to Abbán will be addressed in *VSA* and *BA*. Though Kevin is not depicted as Abbán's biological relative in this chapter, he is nevertheless, depicted as an important contemporary of Abbán's from the outset of *VSA(D)*. More details on this contemporary relationship will be followed up on in this chapter.

[7] Cf. Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 334-335, which comments on Íbar being depicted as his maternal uncle, but also on the contrast between the dynastic origins of Abbán according to the genealogies and *VSA*: the genealogies claim that Abbán is descendant from the Dál Cormaic dynasty, but *VSA* claims he is descendant from the Dál Messin Corb dynasty.

existence of two different saints named Abbán or two cults emerging from the same saint will prove to be a challenging matter to decipher. Evidently, there is too much at stake to suggest that *VSA* was the sole invention of one man (Bishop Ailbe of Ferns) in the thirteenth century.[8] The probability of these strands originating from before the thirteenth century is supported by their applicability to Abbán's record in the genealogies, which date as far back as the pre-Norman period, but also (as we will later explore in this thesis), the records of his feast-days in martyrological texts dating to the eighth and ninth centuries.

St. Abbán- Chronology and Contemporaries

While an early origin can be determined for Abbán's textual record, another factor for which the origin is more difficult to determine, is the time of the saint's existence. As noted from the outset of this thesis, most saints' lives provide a narrative of the saint's life from birth up until death. For most Lives like Abbán's however, they rarely give any insight in relation to the period in which the saint came from. This would not be an unfamiliar problem to any scholar of Insular hagiography; particularly for those studying the records of saints' for whom no annalistic evidence of the saint's obit exists.[9] Unfortunately, Abbán falls into the same category, meaning there is essentially no evidence which tells of the century, let alone year, in which Abbán may have lived.[10] One means through which his time of existence has been estimated, was by comparing the death dates of some of his contemporaries from *VSA* and *BA*. Such analysis prompted Charles Plummer to suggest that Abbán 'belongs to the sixth and seventh centuries, and that his life had been prolonged backwards by local patriotism'.[11]

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[8] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170.

[9] For other examples of saints for whom no annalistic recordings of their obits are known; see: SS. Finbarr of Cork, Crónán of Rocrea, Enda of Aran, Fínán of Kinnity (this saint also features as Abbán's contemporary in *VSA*), Mochua of Timohue and Ruadhán of Lorrha. In the Irish record, a saint's obit (year of death/death date) is more commonly recorded than his/her date of birth. The saints' whose births are recorded in the annals tend to be saints who were famous on a national scale, like SS. Patrick, Brigit and Colm Cille. The birthdates of some saints are nevertheless also recorded in some of the Irish martyrologies; this matter will be addressed in chapter five of this thesis.

[10] The fact that the name 'Abbán' is not a common Irish personal name means that it is rare to find any textual references to the name. One of these rare findings, however, is attested in The Annals Ulster which tell us about the killing of an heir of Connacht named *Abán* in 867: 'Abán son of Cinaed, heir designate of Connacht, was killed with fire by Sochlachán son of Diarmait'; see: *The Annals of Ulster-https://celt.ucc.ie//published/T100001A/* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). The possibility of this individual being named after Abbán will be addressed in chapter three of this thesis. More generally, this would explain why Ó Riain was prompted to say most of these saints never existed; see: Ó Riain, Irish Saints' Genealogies, pp. 24-25.

[11] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. xxv. The idea of a saint's Life being prolonged backwards was also applied to the *Vita* of Ailbe of Emly, in relation to the pre-Patrician identity which his *Vita* ascribes to him and the chronological inaccuracy when compared to the annalistic record of Patrick's activity during the fifth century; see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. xxx. Cf. *VSH(D)*, p. xxiii-xxiv, fn. 9, where Plummer suggests that the 'backward prolonging of Abbán's life' may be related to the fact that *VSA* and *BA* identifies Cormac as Abbán's father, when he is actually the

Plummer referred to the death years of nine of Abbán's contemporaries; one of which was Abbán's father. While *VSA* and *BA* identify Abbán's father as Cormac, Plummer identified Cormac's full patronymic as: Cormac Mac Ailill, 'who died, according to the Four Masters, in 435'.[12] As I discussed in chapter one of this thesis, Cormac is Abbán's ancestor in most of the pre- and post- Norman Irish genealogies. In addition, Ailill is not even depicted as an individual ancestor in any of Abbán's genealogical records; only in *GRSH* do we find four variants of the name as part of patronymic names which are recorded towards the end of Abbán's *GRSH* pedigree.[13] As for the death year Plummer cited, the Annals of the Four Masters (AFM) actually record the death year of Cormac mac Ailill as 535.[14] The unlikeliness of Cormac mac Ailill being the Cormac individual from Abbán's genealogical or hagiographical records would suggest that his obit, which is from a late annalistic record (AFM), is not an effective means through which one can estimate when Abbán may have lived.[15] Moreover, the very fact that eight of Abbán's contemporaries all come from different periods between the fifth and seventh centuries would imply that their depiction as Abbán's contemporaries is largely fabricated. As Plummer showed, the annalistic references to these eight individuals implies that Abbán lived for more than two centuries:[16]

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saint's ancestor in the genealogies, both of pre- and post-Norman origin. See: pp. 49-51 & 71-81 of this thesis. 'Local patriotism' is more likely to be related to one of Abbán's two chief Laigin foundations: Cell Abbáin and Mag Arnaide. This possibility would also be recognisable from the *VSA* scenes pertaining to Abbán's death, where both communities attempt to fight over ownership of Abbán's relics. These scenes will be considered in chapter five of this thesis. Moreover, the method Plummer used to guess the century from which Abbán may have come was also undertaken for most of the other saints' lives from the *Dubliniensis* Collection; see *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. xxvi-lxxxix.

[12] *VSA(D)*, p. 4; *BA*, Vol. 1, p. 3 & Vol. 2, p. 3; *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. xxv. Cf. Culleton, *Celtic and Early Christian Wexford*, p. 98; Cf. pp. 97-101 for a brief, but clear reading on the main points concerning the life and cult of Abbán.

[13] These variants include: 'Oilealla glais', 'Alldoid da ngoirter Oilill', 'Oilella bracain' and 'Oilella áine'; see: *GRSH*, p. 85, see: pp. 74-76 of this thesis. Cf. Culleton, *Celtic and Early Christian Wexford*, p. 98, where he notes that Cormac is the 'son of Ailill, of the Dál Cormaic'. The 'son of Ailill' element is not mentioned in *VSA* or *BA* and the fact that Cormac from Abbán's genealogical record is not depicted as a 'son of Ailill' means that Cormac, son of Ailill is not the father nor is he likely to be a paternal ancestor of Abbán's. Moreover, the fact that the obit of Cormac mac Ailill comes from the latest Irish annalistic record (The Annals of the Four Masters) would lessen the reliability of Cormac mac Ailill's obit; particularly since it seems to be unattested in the earlier Irish annals. The fact that The Annals of the Four Masters, but also *GRSH* were both written in the early seventeenth century suggests that the evidence for Cormac mac Ailill does not originate from an earlier period.

[14] O'Donovan, Vol. 1, *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland*, pp. 178 & 179: '*Corbmaic, mac Oililla, ri Laighen, décc* / Cormac, son of Ailill, King of Leinster, died'.

[15] On the other hand, however, Cormac mac Ailill may be a later offshoot of the earlier genealogical evidence from Abbán's paternal ancestry. But even so, this still would not suffice as evidence for determining Abbán's time of existence.

[16] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. xxv. See, for example, The Annals of Ulster which contain records of these saints; *The Annals of Ulster*-https://celt.ucc.ie//published/T100001A/ (Last Accessed 8th July 2020). St. Munnu's year of death is recorded as 637 in the Annals of Tigernach; see: *The Annals of Tigernach*-https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T100002A/index.html (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). Elsewhere, the *Vita* of St. Ciarán of Saighir attributes him a life-span of '200-400 years'; *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. liii. This demonstrates that

1. St. Patrick was active throughout much of the fifth century.

2. St. Íbar died in 500.

3. St. Finnian of Clonard died in 549.

4. St. Brendan of Clonfert died in mid-late sixth century.

5. St. Colm Cille of Iona died in the late sixth or early seventh century.

6. Pope Gregory I (also known as Pope Gregory the Great) died in 604.

7. St. Munnu died in 635.

8. St. Moling died in 697.

This unrealistic life-span was one of the main reasons why Victor De Buck suggested that the Lives of SS. Abbán of Cell Abbain and Abbán of Mag Arnaide were fused together.[17] But as Plummer has shown, many of the lives from the *Dubliniensis* collection throw up similar inaccuracies.[18] The fact that some of these eight individuals frequently appear in the lives of other saints' lessens the authenticity of their contemporary relationships with Abbán; the most notable individuals being SS. Patrick, Brendan and Colm Cille.[19] It is more probable that Abbán's association with these three saints was invented by his hagiographer, mainly to assert the pre-eminence of Abbán in comparison to saints whose cults are known on a national, and to some extent, international scale.[20] As for the contemporaries who appear less frequently in other saints' Lives, the same factor may be just as applicable. On the other hand, there may have been an underlying circumstantial reason for choosing to depict particular individuals as Abbán's contemporaries. In that regard, the aforementioned St. Íbar of Beggerin Island may be a noteworthy individual to consider. Outside of Abbán's Life, Íbar also appears as a

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the attribution of long life-spans is not an uncommon feature of Irish hagiography. Thus, its implications may cast more light on the hagiographer as opposed to the individual saint in question.

[17] De Buck, De. SS. Abbanis Kill-Abbaniensi et Magharnuidhiensi, pp. 270-274.

[18] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. xxiii-lxxxix.

[19] In the *Dubliniensis* Collection, Patrick and Brendan feature in the Lives of approximately fifteen other saints', whilst Colm Cille appears in seventeen other Lives.

[20] For instance, the cults of SS. Patrick and Colm Cille would have expanded due to the ecclesiastical authors and hagiographical activity in the ecclesiastical centres (the Church of Armagh and the Abbey of Iona) from which much of their cults largely derived. As for Brendan, his connection with one of the four elements of nature (water), is perhaps the most prominent in contrast to other Irish saints that are associated with water; for a read of some of the main secondary works on Brendan's record; see: Wooding, St. Brendan's Boat, pp. 77-92; Wooding, Fasting, flesh and the body, pp. 161-176. For full editions/translations of the hagiographical dossiers of SS. Patrick and Colm Cille; see: Bieler, *The Patrician Texts*; Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*. Cf. Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, pp. 93-227 & 297-383 for studies of *Vitae* from or related to the *Dubliniensis* collection.

contemporary of three other saints, each of whom happen to be pre-Patrician: Declan of Ardmore, Ailbe of Emly and Ciarán of Saighir.[21]

Methodology

The example of Íbar would imply that his depiction as Abbán's contemporary, served a role in placing Abbán in the pre-Patrician period. More broadly, this goes beyond the assumption of a contemporary individual merely elevating the cult of Abbán; they embody the circumstantial concerns of the hagiographical writer.[22] Such implications will merit consideration throughout this chapter as we ponder the connection between Abbán and his contemporaries in *VSA* and *BA*. As noted under 'The Genesis of *VSA*-Revisited' section of this chapter, there are three research questions concerning the textual origin of *VSA*, which will be treated as the over-arching research questions for chapters two to five of this thesis. Though my discussion on the origin of *VSA* implies that its non-extant derivative was a vernacular Life of Abbán, the extant vernacular (*BA*) most likely bears an origin no earlier than the fifteenth century. Thus, alongside our consideration the three over-arching research questions, chapters two to four will also compare and contrast the manner in which the extant Hiberno-Latin and vernacular Lives of Abbán (*VSA* and *BA*) detail the various activities and events from Abbán's Life.

As for the task at hand, attempts to ponder the significance of Abbán's contemporaries will consider a separate set of questions for the present chapter. Though most Irish hagiography tends to be chronologically untrustworthy, the manner in which it is elicited in an individual saint's Life merits consideration. Thus, consideration will be attributed to the manner in which Abbán's contemporaries are portrayed in *VSA* and *BA* and whether they are intended to be elder or younger contemporaries of Abbán. In cases where the intended age of a contemporary(ies) contradicts his/her death-year from the annals (if known) or attributes Abbán with an unrealistic lifespan, the following questions will be paid due attention:

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[21] For a saint to be identified as pre-Patrician implies that they were practising Christianity in Ireland before St. Patrick's arrival on the island. However, some scholars who have spilt ink on the matter have suggested that it is merely a claim and bears no actual truth in relation to these three saints, nor Íbar himself, practising Christianity before Patrick. See for example: Sharpe, Quatuor Sanctissimi episcopi, pp. 376-399; Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, pp. 115-116; Ó Riain-Raedel, The Question of the 'pre-Patrician saints of Munster, pp. 17-22. The significance of the pre-Patrician saints and its connection with Abbán will be examined in this chapter.

[22] In relation to the pre-Patrician matter, Sharpe's definition of it being a claim promoted by the compiler of the *Dubliniensis* collection suggests these saints were not practising Christianity in Ireland before Patrick in actuality; see: Sharpe, Quatuor Sanctissimi episcopi, pp. 376-399.

1. At what particular points in Abbán's Life can this chronological inaccuracy be discerned?

2. How wide-ranging are the textual profiles of Abbán's contemporaries?

A total number of twenty-two individuals appear as contemporaries of Abbán in *VSA*. The social and professional positions of each of these individuals categorises them under four of the following headings: [23]

- Family

- Saints

- Other Religious Figures

- Secular Individuals

The number of times each of these individuals feature as contemporaries of Abbán in *VSA* varies; some are only briefly referred to on one or two occasions throughout the entire Life, whereas others can feature prominently in an episode comprising up to several sections of *VSA*. In *BA*, only ten of these individuals are cited; in which case their original story-line(s) from *VSA* is notably abbreviated in *BA*. The level of importance which *VSA* ascribes to Abbán's contemporaries and the prominence of their appearance throughout this Life originates from the works of the writer. This means that the stance of the hagiographical writer requires contextual consideration, which brings us to the final research question of this chapter:

3. Why may the writer(s) have selected these particular individuals as Abbán's contemporaries?

The international genre of saints' Lives means they essentially take on the same narrative structure everywhere, irrespective of their Insular or Continental European origin.[24] This similarity is particularly identifiable from the common miracle motifs and tropes which comprise the Life of a saint. As I mentioned earlier, this means the hagiographer was becoming more concerned about practising the writing of a particular genre as opposed to providing a factual account of its subject.[25] Initially, such circumstances would imply that the various depictions of Abbán's contemporaries from *VSA* and *BA* are merely reflections of the genre's writing style. Underneath such hagiographical packaging however, an individual identity of a

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[23] We will later see that only a portion of these individuals feature in *BA*, owing largely to the fact that it is comparatively shorter in length and detail than *VSA*.

[24] For a detailed review on the origins of hagiography and the meanings of the literary style it takes on; see: Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, pp. 19-26, 333-409 & 504-586. Cf. Bray, *A List of Motifs*, pp. 10-20 for a concise review of hagiographical development in Ireland.

[25] See the outset of this chapter.

saint can be discerned.[26] Equally so can the writer's circumstantial concerns for writing a Life on a particular saint. This shows that these common miracle motifs and tropes are widely used in the composition of saints' Lives but were written for different reasons concerning the eminence of its saint or for depicting storylines which later served as evidence for obtaining property rights.[27] In this regard, we need not forget the important work of Dorothy Ann Bray in tracing the frequency of miracle motifs from Irish hagiography.[28]

This will enable us to identify the most common and uncommon motifs and tropes in the episodes concerning Abbán's relationship with his contemporaries. Nine of these episodes are attested in *VSA(D)*, each of which will be examined according the chronological order of the events from the beginning to the end Abbán's life. In an overall attempt to answer the over-arching research questions concerning the origin of the Life of Abban and the questions concerned with the present chapter, these nine episodes will also be compared and contrasted with the manner in which they are narrated in Abbán's later extant vernacular Life (*BA*). Since *BA* is shorter in length and depth than *VSA*, there were will many cases where some of these scenes are given less detail in *BA* or are even completely omitted. In these cases, we will consider the potential reasons for such omission, which will mainly revolve around the changing interests in hagiography. Moreover, for a continued understanding of the underlying meaning of the miracle motifs and tropes from Abbán's hagiographical record, consideration will also be given to the manner in which they may reflect the milieu and ideologies of the writer(s).

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[26] Cf. pp. 37-38 of this thesis, where I refer to Ó Riain, who suggested that a saint did not exist due to the historical inaccuracy of the genre which records his/her identity. However, this suggestion does not consider the landscape and textual evidence of a cult, which, in most cases, originated from an individual saint.

[27] This concern is a likely cause for Bishop Ailbe of Ferns for writing *VSA*; For a read on the historical significance of hagiographical writing in Ireland; see Doherty, The Irish Hagiographer', pp. 10-20. Doherty amplifies the value of studying the genre. Cf. Herbert, Hagiography, pp. 79-90 for similar insight, but through the lenses of hagiographical scholarship from the seventeenth century up until the end of the twentieth century.

[28] Bray, *A List of Motifs*. This secondary source lists all of the various types of miracle motifs known from Irish saints' Lives and list the various motifs associated with each saint for whom a *Vita* or *Betha* survives. These miracle motifs are also categorised according to the theme and class to which they belong.

Episode 1- St. Patrick's Prophecy of SS. Abbán, Kevin and Moling (§2 of *VSA(D)* and §1 of *BA*)[29]

Perhaps one of the most common motifs attested in Irish, but also Continental hagiography, is that of prophecy.[30] As Bray has shown, this motif has been applied to nearly several different themes and tropes from Hiberno-Latin and vernacular hagiography.[31] The motif of prophecy firstly appears in §2 of *VSA(D)*, where we receive the first mention of Abbán in the *Vita*.[32] The first part of this section follows up on a discussion from the prologue or §1 of *VSA(D)*, which attempts to demonstrate why Ireland is often referred to as *Insula Sanctorum* (The Island of Saints).[33] In §2 of *VSA(D)* the writer subsequently tells us about St. Patrick landing in the south Laigin dynasty of Uí Cennselaig, where he prophesied the birth of three saints and also prophesied that they would become the chief saints of Laigin; namely: Abbán, Kevin of Glendalough and Moling of St. Mullins and Timolin. The writer of *VSA(D)* then explains that Patrick was chosen by God to convert the people of the north of Ireland first and then the people of Laigin. [34]

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[29] My naming of these nine episodes is based on the manner in which they occur in *VSA(D)*. The depiction of this episode (Episode 1) in *BA* will be discussed in next episode (Episode 2- Abbán's Birth and Childhood), because Episode 1 is drastically abbreviated and merely depicted as a reference to the scenes pertaining to Abbán's birth and childhood in *BA*.

[30] See for example: Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, pp. 373-375, which explains that a saint's ability to prophesise means that he/she had a spiritual ability to obtain knowledge of important future events, such as 'the fate of kingdoms and of individuals'. The latter form of prophesy is particularly common in Irish hagiography. Prophesy is also well-known in secular literature. See for example the Ulster Cycle tale *Loinges mac nUislenn* (The Exile of the sons of Uisliu), which depicts a chief druid named Cathbad prophesying that the unborn child that screamed from the womb of Feidlimid's wife would be a beautiful girl named Derdriu. For a review and full English translation of this tale; see: Gantz, *Early Irish Myths and Sagas*, pp. 256-267; see: pp. 257- 259 for the scene depicting Cathbad prophesying Derdriu. Cf. Ní Bhrolcháin, *An Introduction to Early Irish Literature*, pp. 24 & 47 for a review of this scene from the tale.

[31] Bray, *A List of Motifs*, pp. 110-112.

[32] *VSH(D)*, Vol.1, pp. 3-4. Cf. *VSH(S)*, p. 256. While this scene comprises one full section in *VSA(D)* (from *VSH(D)*). In *VSA(S)* (from *VSH(S)*) however, the storyline of this scene is abbreviated and merged into the scene from the previous section (§1) of *VSA(S)*.

[33] See: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, pp. 1-2 for an overview on the usage of the term *Insula Sanctorum* in Irish sources. The significance of §1 of *VSA(D)* will be discussed in chapter four of this thesis.

[34] *VSA(D)*, pp. 3-4. While SS. Patrick, Kevin and Moling were believed to have lived in the sixth to seventh centuries according to some of the Irish Annals, we must observe that the source (*VSA*) which tells of Patrick prophesying Abbán, Kevin and Moling is, in its extant format, a late twelfth to early thirteenth century source. Even if this scene was perceived to be a remnant of a pre-existing Life of Abbán from the pre-Norman period (ninth to eleventh century), there is still a large chronological between the production of Abbán's Life and the time when these saints are believed to have lived. There are significant contemporary differences between the two potential eras of Abbán's hagiographer (Bishop Ailbe or a pre-Norman hagiographer) and the world of the time of the people and events he was writing about.

This presents a common trope in the Irish hagiographical record. By no means is Patrick's depiction as a foreteller a peculiar trope from Irish hagiography, as he foretells the births of a notable number of other saints from various individual Lives.[35] Equally so is the motif a notable feature from his own hagiographical dossier.[36] On a general note, the concept of a saint having prophetic powers elevated his/her status as a saint. This would have resulted in the saint's reputation acquiring more fame within his/her local region but also beyond.[37] Thus, for a saint to be envisaged or regarded as a prophesier would imply that the hagiographical writer believed the saint to be worthy of upholding such roles. The cultural fame and ample textual record of Patrick would undoubtedly have convinced local hagiographical writers of his worthiness to be depicted as a prophesier of the births of saints, whose cults were less known than the cult of one of the three national saints of Ireland.[38] Hence, in §2 of *VSA(D)*, Patrick's association with the dynastic region (Uí Cennselaig) in which Abbán's foundation of Mag Arnaide is located, could be recognised as an underlying attempt by the *VSA* writer to elevate the status of Abbán's south Laigin cult.

Such intentions are also identifiable from Abbán's depiction as one of the three chief saints of Laigin. In light of the cults of the three national saints however, this claim ignores the earlier evidence for Brigit's cult and her depiction as 'the chief saint of the province'.[39] Another 'chief' Laigin saint who receives no mention in *VSA(D)* is St. Máedoc of Ferns.[40] The fact that

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[35] Some of these saints can be identified as 'Patrician' saints due their appearance in some of Patrick's texts, including St. Mac Nise of Connor; see: Bieler, *The Patrician Texts*, p. 158. See; *VSH(S)*, p. 404 for a read in Latin of the first section which tells of Patrick prophesying of Mac Neise's birth. Elsewhere, Patrick's foretelling of the births of other saints' include Senán of Inis Cathaig (see: *VSH(S)*, p. 303; Stokes, *Lives of Saints from the Book of Lismore*, pp. 56 & 203), Molaisse of Old Leighlin (see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, p. 131; *VSH(S)*, p. 342), Colman of Dromore (see: *VSH(S)*, p. 357), Ciarán of Clonmacnoise (see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 200, fn. 7; *VSH(S)*, p. 78) and Colm Cille of Iona (*VSH(S)*, p. 366; Cf. Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*, pp. 1-43, but also: Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, pp. 104-105, which represents the beginning of the second preface of the Life of Colm Cille and informs us that Patrick's holy disciple: Mochta prophesised the birth of Colm Cille.

[36] See for example: Bray, *A List of Motifs*, p. 82 for a reference to some of the motifs and tropes concerning prophesy and the Patrician sources from which they are attested.

[37] Bray, 2001, The Study of Folk-Motifs, p. 273.

[38] Of course, the other two national saints are: SS. Brigit of Kildare and Colm Cille of Iona. More widely, Patrick, Brigit and Colm Cille have earned this title largely due to their hagiographical (both Hiberno-Latin and vernacular) records being dated to the earliest centuries in contrast to the Lives of other Irish saints'. For a review of the origin of the Lives of these three saints', but from contrasting viewpoints; see: Herbert, Latin and Vernacular Hagiography, pp. 327-343. This work was conducted from the perspective of Sharpe's and Herbert's viewpoints; Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 39-40. This shorter account presents Ó Riain's viewpoint. Cf. pp. 8-9 of this thesis where I review the significance of both viewpoints. For a review of the beginnings of hagiographical writing in Ireland; Cf. Doherty, The Irish Hagiographer, pp. 11-12.

[39] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 337, which notes that this discreetly places down Brigit's cult. Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 123. Cf. Charles-Edwards, Early Irish Saints' Cults, p. 82 for a review of Brigit's *Laigin* origins through her attachment with a branch of people of Laigin called 'The Fothairt'.

[40] Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 362. Cf. Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 337, fn. 4 which identifies Máedoc's status as coming next in line after that of SS. Patrick, Brigit and Colm Cille.

Máedoc's diocese encompasses Abbán's south Laigin foundation would imply that the writer of *VSA* would have been prompted to include Máedoc in *VSA*; particularly since the writer was believed to be a Bishop of Ferns.[41] Moreover, the lack of any reference to Máedoc throughout the entirety of *VSA*, led Charles Doherty to question the extent to which Bishop Ailbe of Ferns may have even written *VSA*.[42] While the primary foundations of SS. Máedóc and Abbán were located in Ferns, there are examples from Máedoc's and Abbán's *Vitae* to suggest they both showed their own individual concerns in Marshal's seizure of 'several estates' within Ferns.[43] As a redactor of both *Vitae*, Bishop Ailbe possibly wished to retain the separate *Vitae* and identities of SS. Máedoc and Abbán in order to maintain two prominent sources concerned, at least to some extent, with the property rights within the diocese.[44]

At any rate, the writer's decision to depict Kevin and Moling as chief Laigin saints in *VSA* trumps and forsakes Brigit's and Máedoc's Laigin origins.[45] Either the writer does not fully acknowledge other saints taking precedence as chief Laigin saints or the writer is wholly concerned in the elevation of Abbán's cult and less concerned about any contradictions he may place upon the evidence for better known Laigin saints. Nevertheless, *VSA* is by no means the only source of evidence for the Laigin origins of Kevin and Moling. Their individual dossiers are by contrast more extensive than that of Abbán's.[46] For instance, the importance of Kevin's north Laigin foundation of Glendalough can be traced as far back as the ninth century; and the

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[41] This was of course: Bishop Ailbe of Ferns; see: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170.
[42] Doherty, Analysis of the 'life' of Abbán, p. 4 of pp. 1-10.
[43] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 334; Cf. pp. 334-335 for a broader discussion on the *Vita* of Máedoc and the proximity of the locations mentioned in the *Vita* to Abbán's south Laigin foundation: Mag Arnaide.
[44] Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 350, which points towards the possibility of Bishop Ailbe being a redactor as opposed to the original author of *VSA*. Elsewhere however, Sharpe suggests that Bishop Ailbe was 'less devoted' to St. Máedóc; see: p. 362.
[45] Outside of hagiography however, this depiction of Abbán, Kevin and Moling was also drawn out in the poetry of the medieval Irish saga *An Bóroma* (The Cattle Tribute) (*Bóroma*) (this saga was already considered in relation to Abbán's 'brother' 'Dubán'). In a stanza of the *Dénaid dún ar cotach* (Make for us our Covenant) poem, these three saints are associated with Brigit and referred to in the following manner: 'Brigit guarding it, Máedóc from Dún Inne, Moling, south of the Taídiu, Abbán, Caemgen of Glendalough'; for bibliographical details on this poem and the precise point in which this poem occurs in the *Bóroma*; see: Eyjolfsdottir, *The Bóroma*, p. 195. This would suggest that the compiler(s) of *Bóroma* borrowed their material from saints' Lives. This particular stanza would suggest the compiler(s) also accessed Abbán's *Vita*. However, the fact that Máedóc is also mentioned in the same stanza of this *Dénaid dún ar cotach* poem, may suggest saints from the same province (Laigin) tended to be mentioned in the same stanzas. See for example, Eyjolfsdottir, p. 210, which shows that Abbán, Máedóc and Munnu are mentioned in the same stanza of the *A Brigit bennach ar Sét* (Oh Brigit, bless our way) poem. The fact that Máedóc of Ferns and Munnu of Taghmon are patron saints of locations in the south of Laigin could be perceived as an embodiment of Abbán's south Laigin foundation (*Mag Arnaide*). This would suggest that Abbán's reference in the *Dénaid dún ar cotach* poem embodies the north and south Laigin cults of saints', due to the references to Moling, Kevin and Máedoc. Cf. Eyjolfsdottir, p. 198, where another stanza of the *Turchan duin a Thuathail* (Prophesy to us, oh Tuathal) poem mentions Abbán and Kevin.
[46] See for example Ó Riain's review of the documentary source material on SS. Kevin (Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 148-150) and Moling (Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 487- 490).

fact that Glendalough became an abbacy by the tenth century reflects the political expansion of Kevin's foundation.[47] As for Moling, it may seem a coincidence that his paternal lineage can be traced back to the dynasty in which Patrick landed, before prophesying of the three saints; namely: Uí Cennselaig.[48] This parallels with the location of Mag Arnaide, and as the latter stages of *VSA* show, the prominence of Abbán's cult in south Laigin.[49] However, the north *Laigin* location of Timolin, Kevin's foundation and The Dál Messin Corb origin of Abbán's ancestry could indicate that when writing what now appears as §2 of *VSA(D)*, the *VSA* writer was placing his audience 'within the ambit of Killaban in county Laois'.[50]

In addition, the possibility of §2 of *VSA* being written at a point between the late twelfth to early thirteenth century is supported by evidence for contemporary political relationships between Kevin's and Moling's foundations; thus, indicating that Glendalough and Timolin were being portrayed as the main ecclesiastical centres of Laigin in *VSA*.[51] This alludes to the idea of §2 originating from the time (early thirteenth century) in which Bishop Ailbe may have written *VSA*; particularly since this period also represents a time when the circumstantial concerns of the hagiographical writers were expressed through many of the episodes of Hiberno-Latin Lives.[52] However, the idea of Bishop Ailbe of Ferns wanting to promote foundations that did not lie within his diocese is difficult to imagine; particularly since his interests in *VSA* stem largely from his concern in property rights within the Diocese of Ferns.[53] This was used by Charles Doherty as a source of evidence for suggesting that 'an Ua Cáellaide bishop' wrote *VSA* in the late twelfth century instead of Bishop Ailbe from the early thirteenth.[54]

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[47] See *Félire Óengusso* (*FÓ*), p. 25; an important ninth century metrical vernacular martyrology, which refers to Glendalough as 'the cemetery of the west of the world'. For a more thorough review of the socio-ecclesiastical significance of Glendalough; see: Mac Shamhráin, *Church and Polity*. Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 149 which refers to Glendalough, alongside other foundations subsequently becoming 'canons regular of St. Augustine'.

[48] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 487-488, fn. 1.

[49] Subsequent details from *VSA* will be followed up on in this chapter and chapters three to five of this thesis.

[50] Doherty, Analysis of the 'life' of Abbán', p. 9 of pp. 1-10. Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 149, fn. 4, for a reference to the various genealogical, hagiographical and secondary evidence for Kevin's descendancy from the Dál Messin Corb dynasty.

[51] Mac Shamhráin, *Church and Polity*, pp. 162 & 214; Cf. Doherty, Analysis of the 'life' of Abbán', p. 9 of pp. 1-10, for a brief remark upon this matter.

[52] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170. While this is the implication given by Charles Doherty too, he actually suggests that the *writer* of *VSA* was an Ua Cáellaide bishop during the late twelfth century.

[53] See for example Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170 & Mac Shamhráin, pp. 333-338.

[54] Doherty, Analysis of the 'life' of Abbán', p. 9 of pp. 1-10.

The north Laigin origin of the Ua Cáellaide kingdom does support Doherty's theory. But even if Doherty was right, this would only make the 'Ua Cáellaide bishop' a writer of *VSA* as opposed to an original author. On that note, we may return to the probability of *VSA* being a version of an earlier non-extant Life of Abbán. This begs the question of whether §2 is mainly the work of the *VSA* writer or is an artifact of an original non-extant Life. [55] Considering the context in which the three saints are perceived as the chief Laigin saints; it evidently presents a trope depicting a holy man (Patrick) prophesying the births and saintly stature of three children (Abbán, Kevin and Moling). Bray has traced this trope to eighteen different saints' Lives (including Abbán) in the record.[56] Interestingly, most of the Lives from which Bray identified these tropes survive in *VSH(D)*. The underlying possibility of Bishop Ailbe initiating *VSH(D)* could suggest that many of these tropes originate with Bishop Ailbe. [57] In cases where some of these tropes posit the same individuals in separate Lives, suspicion may be raised as to whether the redactor modified some of the material from more than one Life. For instance, the fact that Patrick is also a prophesier of the birth of Kevin in *Vita Sancti Coemgeni* (The Life of St. Kevin) 'may well be taken for the work of the redactor'.[58]

Whether or not 'the redactor' was Bishop Ailbe, cannot be determined with total certainty. The possibility of Bishop Ailbe being the reviser of the *Vitae* of Máedoc and Moling supports the claim nevertheless.[59] In Moling's *Vita*, his origin is placed in the south *Laigin* dynasty: Uí Cennselaig. Hence, the fact that this is the first Irish geographical location mentioned *VSA(D)*, which also posits Moling, further alludes towards the idea of §2 of *VSA(D)* being invented or largely modified by Bishop Ailbe.[60] A further clue to this section being of a fictional nature, may be recognised from Kevin's depiction as Abbán's maternal uncle in the pre-Norman Irish genealogical record.[61] In §2 of *VSA(D)*, Patrick's prophesy of the birth of three saints' implies that they will be contemporaries of the same age. The 287.1-4 *CGSH* entry from chapter one

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[55] Cf. Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 318-319. The fact that Cell Abbáin lay within the Ua Caellaide kingdom means that despite the fact that Doherty stands alone in saying that Bishop Ailbe may not have been the writer of *VSA*, it does nevertheless give food for thought.
[56] Bray, *A List of Motifs*, p. 111.
[57] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 309-310, fn. 3.
[58] See: *VSH(D)*, p. 245, §22; Cf. *VSH(S)*, p. 363, §9; Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 353. Sharpe makes this comment based on the fact that 'Ross' (New Ross, Co. Wexford) is mentioned in both the *VSH(D)* versions of *VSA* and the *Vita* of St. Molua. Abbán's connection with New Ross will be addressed later in this chapter, but also in chapter three of this thesis.
[59] Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 353.
[60] For a read on Bishop Ailbe's political involvement with the Uí Cennselaig dynasty; see: Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 309-315.
[61] See pp. 61-69 of this thesis.

of this thesis evidently does not support this idea.[62] Of course, as I explained from the outset of chapter one, the genealogies can also throw up inaccuracy in relation to an individual's ancestry. Irrespective of this familiar problem, Kevin's different associations with Abbán in Abbán's hagiographical and genealogical record continues to elicit the same ideology; whereby Kevin continues to be perceived as a cultural embodiment of Abban's north Laigin origins. As the *CGSH* 287.1 entry also implied, Abbán's north Laigin foundation of Cell Abbáin represents where Abbán came from.[63]

Episode 2 - St. Abbán's Birth and Childhood- Cormac of the Dál Messin Corb Dynasty, Mella and Bishop Íbar (§§ 3-7 of *VSA(D)* and § 1-2 of *BA*)

As the *VSA(D)* writer transitions into §3, the reference to Abbán's father Cormac of the Dál Messin Corb dynasty also shows that we are 'within the ambit' of north Laigin, and close to Kevin's foundation of Glendalough.[64] After acknowledging the importance of Patrick's role as a preacher and prophesier, *VSA(D)* then transitions into the next episode by drawing Patrick's role as a prophesier to an end, explaining his desire to talk about Bishop Íbar's role in prophesying the birth of Abbán.[65] The probability of §2 of *VSA(D)* being the later work of Bishop Ailbe, could suggest that this sentence was merely an attempt to transition from one invented story-line to another, which came from the original non-extant Life of Abbán.[66] This would imply that §3 could be an artifact of the original non-extant Life. As we will later explore however, Íbar's depiction as a pre-Patrician saint could suggest that the transition from Patrick to Íbar represents more than an attempt to mask the fragmentary appearance of an adapted version of Abbán's Life.[67]

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[62] Perhaps a more pedantic reading of the chronological significance of §2 of *VSA(D)* would imply that Abbán, Kevin and Moling would become chief Laigin saints at different timeframes after Patrick. For instance, according to the Annals of Ulster and Tigernach, Kevin died in the early mid-seventh century, whereas Moling supposedly died in 697; see for example: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 148-149, fn. 3; p. 489, fn. 23. This would suggest that Kevin would become a chief Laigin saint before Moling. As for Abbán, his exact time of existence cannot be determined due to the lack of annalistic evidence; although his depiction as Kevin's nephew would imply that he became a chief Laigin saint after Kevin but before Moling. As I noted however, this is by no means a reliable way of assessing the chronology of a saint with no annalistic record. In any event, the probability of §2 implying that they would become chief Laigin saints at the same time is promoted by Moling's depiction in maintaining saintly brotherhood with Abbán in a later episode from *VSA(D)*.

[63] *CGSH*, p. 46.

[64] Glendalough is located within the centre of modern-day Co. Wicklow, whereas the Dál Messin Corb dynasty is located in the east of the county. *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 4. *VSA(S)* mentions nothing about the Dál Messin Corb dynasty; see: *VSH(S)*, p. 256. Cf.: Doherty, Analysis of the 'life of Abbán', p. 9 of pp. 1-10, when he suggests § 2 places us 'within the ambit of killaban in county Laois'.

[65] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 4, the last sentence of §2.

[66] If so, it demonstrates that the Life of Abbán underwent significant change throughout the course of a couple centuries until its earliest extant format (*VSA*) was produced.

[67] See for example: Sharpe, Quatuor Sanctissimi Episcopi, pp. 386-387, 389, 392-393; Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, pp. 115-116.

In §3 of *VSA(D)*, the writer identifies Abbán's father as a Laigin king of the Dál Messin Corb dynasty, named Cormac and names Abbán's mother Mella, whose brother is named Bishop Íbar.[68] As I showed in chapter one of this thesis, Mella upholds the same familial role in most of Abbán's genealogical record.[69] Thus, the significance of Mella as Abbán's mother need not be considered in any great detail in this chapter. Similarly, the conflicting depiction of Abbán's father and paternal lineage was discussed in detail in chapter one. Though Abbán's pre-Norman *Recensio Maior* tract did not trace Abbán's ancestry to the Dál Messin Corb dynasty, Kevin of Glendalough's ancestry can be traced to the same dynasty, according to his own individual hagiographical and genealogical records.[70] This could suggest that *VSA(D)*'s attempt to trace Abbán's paternal lineage to the same dynasty, represented an underlying attempt to maintain a discreet connection between Abbán's and Kevin's north Laigin foundations.[71] Though speculative, Bishop Ailbe's focal concern in property rights could suggest the connection between Abbán and Kevin does not derive from Bishop Ailbe's work on Abbán's Life. The fact that Abbán and Kevin are brought together in Abbán's genealogy would bolster this view. This is because, there appears to be no indication of Bishop Ailbe's concern in property rights prompting him to alter genealogical records of the saints. With these tentative suggestions in mind, we may proceed to examine the content of Episode 2.

After introducing Abbán's father, mother and maternal uncle, and explaining that Íbar's depiction as a prophesier would be the focal point of the next section of *VSA*, the writer proceeds to talk about the events surrounding Abbán's birth:[72]

§3 of *VSA(D)* and §1 of *BA*

> One day, Mella was in the final stages of pregnancy and was experiencing severe labour pains. When she saw her brother Bishop Íbar walking towards her, she begged him to help her pain and to forgive her for her sins; and said:

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[68] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 4.
[69] See: pp. 61-69 of this thesis.
[70] See for example: *CGSH*, pp. 46; Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 149, fn. 4 for a bibliographical list of the different hagiographical and genealogical evidence for Kevin's Dál Messin Corb descendancy.
[71] Cf. Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 334, fn. 94, which suggest a connection between the Dál Messin Corb dynasty and 'Glendalough interests'.
[72] See: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 4-5. As I explained in the introduction of this thesis, I will be mainly providing English summaries of the sections of *VSA(D)* as there is no published English translation of *VSA(D)*; at least to my knowledge. For sentences or sections which have been translated, the name of the author and the authors' secondary source will be indicated. Unless otherwise indicated, English translations are my own work.

> Bishop Íbar to my aid;
>
> It is he who knows my secrets;
>
> Let him ask forgiveness of my sins;
>
> Sharp pains have overtaken me;

Subsequently, Bishop Íbar prayed over Mella assisting with her pains, and replied:

> Bishop Íbar is before you;
>
> Sharp pains have overtaken you;
>
> You will bear a noble, wondrous son;
>
> May the King of the elements aid you;

Thus, Bishop Íbar prophesised that she would give birth to a noble son who would be the most important sight of God and man. When Mella gave birth, this prophecy immediately came true. The noble son was named 'Abbán' and Abbán was expected to become the king of Laigin after his father, Cormac.'

Though birth motifs are well-known in Irish hagiography, the trope of a painless birth or pregnancy has only been traced back to the Lives of three other saints': the aforementioned Kevin, Declan of Ardmore and Senán of Scattery Island and Inishcarra .[73] While the assistance of a divine figure (Bishop Íbar) was what took away the labour pain of Abbán's mother, the holiness of the child to be born was what prevented the mothers of SS. Kevin and Declan from experiencing any labour pains.[74] In the fifteenth-century Book of Lismore version of Senán's *Betha* (*Betha Shenáin meic Geirginn*), the divine figure who eased his mother's pregnancy was an angel.[75] Angels regularly appear as the chief figures of most hagiographical tropes; from the enactors of various miracles to prophesiers, many examples can be recognised from the Irish hagiographical record.[76] Alongside assisting Mella with her labour pains, Bishop Íbar also prophesies of the important life which Mella's son (Abbán) would uphold. The fact that Bishop Íbar also enacts the role of a divine figure would attribute him a degree of acclaimed importance

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[73] Bray, *A List of Motifs*, p. 92.

[74] For St. Kevin; see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 234-235; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, pp. 125-126; Vol. 2, pp. 121-122; For St. Declan; see; *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, pp. 35-36; For an English translation of this section; see: De Paor *Saint Patrick's World*, pp. 247-248; for a full English translation of the *Dubliniensis* version of Declan's *Vita*; see: pp. 244-271.

[75] See: Stokes, *The Book of Lismore*, pp. 57 & 204.

[76] Cf. Bray, *A List of Motifs*, for examples of the types of motifs angels are most commonly linked with. Their high regard in the Irish milieu is also recognisable from the image of the archangel: Michael weighing the souls of humans. This image is carved onto 'the eastern side of Muiredach's Cross in Monasterboice, dating to the ninth or tenth century'. This carving may display the oldest depiction of the scene in Ireland; see: Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, p. 166, fn. 117; Cf. pp.163-165 which shows how the 'cult of angels' from as early as 70 AD, concerned and prompted writers to warn people not to equate angels with the importance of the Church of God.

that is also associated with angels. Nevertheless, the greater frequency of Patrick's depiction as a foreteller of saints' births shows that Patrick's status is more commonly equated to that of an angel than Bishop Íbar's.[77]

In Abbán's hagiography however, Patrick's role is compressed in order to promote Bishop Íbar's. The writer of *BA* perhaps also read Patrick's and Bishop Íbar's depiction as prophesiers in the same manner in his attempt to provide a shortened vernacular version of *VSA*. This is because the *BA* writer only briefly refers to Patrick's prophesy of Abbán, in a scene pertaining to Abbán's childhood.[78] While *BA* mentions nothing of SS. Kevin and Moling, *BA* does imply that Patrick was not the only saint to prophesise of Abbán. The implication is particularly apparent from the following sentence structure: *óir ro thirchan Patraicc he, an tan ro gab port hi lLaignibh ar túa, 7 drem dona naemhaibh ele* / 'seeing that Patrick, when he first landed in Leinster, prophesised of him, as did many other saints'.[79] *VSA(D)* gives no such indication from the outset. The only other saint to prophesise of Abbán is the aforementioned Bishop Íbar; but this sentence from *BA* suggests that there were more saints. Though the act of prophecy does reoccur in later stages of *VSA*, there are no depictions of other saints foretelling Abbán's life. Only one such scene is recognisable towards the middle of *VSA*, but it is an angel, not a saint or any other type of ecclesiastical figure, who prophesises of Abbán.[80] Elsewhere, prophecy is a prominent motif from three different sections of *VSA*; and in all three cases, Abbán is the enactor, as opposed to receiver. [81]

On the other hand, the *BA* writer was simply referring to Patrick's prophesy of many other saints; in which case the evidence for Kevin and Moling from *VSA*, but also the outside hagiographical evidence for Patrick's role, would serve as a valid explanation. Either way, the evidence from Abbán's hagiographical record does not support the theory of many other saints prophesying of him. With the prophecy at hand however, we may now consider the manner in which subsequent events proved Bishop Íbar's prophecy right. As the latter part of §3 of *VSA* suggests, Abbán was expected to become his father's heir. Throughout Abbán's childhood

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[77] Cf. Bray, *A List of Motifs*, p. 81 where she references a trope from Patrick's hagiographical dossier, which depicts him healing a pregnant woman.

[78] *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 3, §1; Vol. 2, p. 3, §1. This *BA* section will be referred to in the ongoing discussion.

[79] *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 3, §1; Vol. 2, p. 3, §1.

[80] This scene occurs in §17 of *VSA(D)*; See: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 13-14. In *BA*, this scene is told in a more abbreviated manner in §8; See: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, pp. 6-7; Vol. 1, p. 6. This scene will be addressed later in this chapter.

[81] See §22, where Abbán prophesises of the Abbot: St. Fínán, §26 where Abbán prophesised that a pagan member of the royal family of the region of Éile would become Abbán's monk and §31 where Abbán fulfilled the Biblical prophecy of the wolf lying down with the lamb (see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 17-18, 20 & 22-23). §22 will be addressed in this chapter; but §§26 and 31 will be addressed in chapter three of this thesis.

however, his actions suggested otherwise: as he took pleasure in reading Biblical texts, possessed unique abilities to do such pious religious deeds, which only the old religious learned men were capable of doing and continually prayed and fasted.[82] Of course, these behaviours did not parallel with Abbán's expectations to become a king. To confirm Abbán's reluctance towards the idea of kingship, Abbán's schoolmates tested him by referring to him as a king, which had the following outcome:[83]

The Latter Part of §5 of *VSA(D)* and Part 4 of §1 of *BA*

> 'Abbán instantly showed his dislike towards the idea of becoming and told these people that he wanted to devote his life to God. Upon hearing this, Abbán's parents pleaded with him, but it was of no avail'.

The fact that two divine figures (Patrick and Bishop Íbar) have already prophesised of Abbán at this point of *VSA(D)*, would initially suggest that §5 of *VSA(D)* is referring to the prophecies of both figures. On the other hand, the possibility of §2 of *VSA(D)* being a later addition of the twelfth to thirteenth century prelate: Bishop Ailbe of Ferns, would imply that §5 is an advancement on Bishop Íbar's prophecy.[84] The fact that *VSA(D)* quotes the exact words of Bishop Íbar's prophecy would bolster this view too.[85] On this provisional basis, it undoubtedly shows that Íbar's prophecy did not coincide with the expectations which Cormac (Abbán's father) or his mother (Mella) had for Abbán's future. Abbán's rejection of birth-right ultimately enraged Cormac to the extent that he ordered to have his son (Abbán) bounded in chains, and declared the following:[86]

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[82] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 5, §§4 and 5 (only the former part of §5); *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 3, §1; Vol. 2, p. 3, §1. Moreover, the depiction of a saint acting like an old religious man during his/her childhood is commonplace in Insular hagiography; *Vita Prima Sancti Carantoci* (The First Life of St. Carannog), from which the prologue or §1 of the *Vita* refers to Carannog preserving his innocence as a boyhood and then 'read the canonical lessons from the new and old law'; see: Wade-Evans, *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogiae*, pp. 142-143. Cf. *Vita Sancti Tathei* (The Life of St. Tatheus), from which the prologue/§2 of the *Vita* explains that while Tatheus was descendant from a king, he disliked such secular matters concerning kingship; Wade-Evans, *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogiae*, pp. 270-271. The next section of *VSA(D)* will also tell of Abbán's preference to talk about matters concerning God and religion as opposed to kingship. However, while Tatheus's parents were willing to approve of his desire to follow a religious path; Abbán's parents took quite the opposite reaction, which will be the next point in discussion. Moreover, the ability to identify analogies with Welsh hagiography serves as another example for Barry Lewis's comments on Welsh Lives sharing 'many concerns, tropes, motifs and interests with Irish hagiography'; see: Lewis, *The Impact of the Anglo-Norman Conquest* - see: 11:41-12:28.

[83] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 5-6; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 3; Vol. 2, p. 3.

[84] For a tentative suggestion of the *VSH(D)* reviser being Bishop Ailbe of Ferns; see: Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 309-310, fn. 3.

[85] The significance of Bishop Íbar's words of prophecy been written in a vernacular verse will be examined at a later point in this chapter where we examine a vernacular prayer/charm ascribed to Abbán by an angel.

[86] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 6; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, pp. 3-4; Vol. 2, pp. 3-4. In relation to saints rejecting their birth-right more generally, Cf. Bitel, *Isle of the Saints*, p. 104 which cites some female saints who rejected their expectation of

'Abbán does not promise to become his father's heir, he would be martyred. The following night however, Abbán miraculously broke the chains. A bystander who witnessed this, told Abbán's parents who were astonished to hear then. Abbán's father (the king) then had a change of heart and decided to let Abbán serve God.'

VSA's attempt to associate Abbán with martyrdom ultimately shows that the saint was willing to die to support his beliefs.[87] Abbán remained adamant, even throughout the binding of chains, which were eventually broken by the divine power of God.[88] The enactment of this miracle evidently prompted both of Abbán's parents to release him and allow him to spend his life serving God. The writer then reminds us of Abbán's unique abilities as a child, by informing his audience that Abbán was pre-destined by God to be a father and teacher to many people.[89] This also contributes to Bishop Íbar's prophesy of how 'noble' and 'wondrous' the life of Abbán would be. Thus, the scenes pertaining to Abbán's birth and childhood purport to demonstrate the starting point of this lifestyle Abbán would lead. In order to fulfil this lifestyle however, this would entail the saint going on an extensive pilgrimage throughout the country and overseas, meaning that he would rarely have an opportunity to see his parents.

On this note however, the writer then emphasises that Abbán still chose not to leave his parents until he had their permission.[90] From a historical perspective, it would have been a difficult decision for parents to make, because it would mean that they would no longer be able to see their son or daughter. As a hagiographical trope, it is well known in the Irish milieu.[91] The

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marriage to a man chosen by their parents; SS. Monenna, Samthann, Íte and Brigit. For an important study on the dossiers of two female saints (Cranat and Canir) and the significance women in the Irish textual record; see: Johnston, Powerful Women or Patriarchal Weapons?, pp. 302-310.

[87] Martyrdom is also mentioned in the *Vitae* of saints' such as Aedi (*VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 39); Mochua, (Vol. 2, p. 186) & Mochoemog (Vol. 2, p. 173). Cf. *Betha Bhrenainn meic Fhinnlogha* (The Life of Brendan son of Fionnlugh) from the Book of Lismore, which depicts a buffoon who leapt into the water for sea-cats to eat him. Subsequently, the buffoon's name was written in a martyrology because he was, reputedly, a wonderful martyr; see: Stokes, *The Book of Lismore*, pp. 111-112 & 257; The *Vita* of Mochua identifies St. Munnu as a martyr; see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, p. 186. For a read on the historical origin of martyrdom; see: Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, pp. 1-7. Cf. Wycherley, *The Cult of Relics*, pp. 16-18 for a read on martyrdom and examples which allude towards the societal value of relics.

[88] This trope (the breakage of locks/chains) has been traced back to the Lives of nine different saints'; see: Bray, *A List of Motifs*, p. 103. In most of these cases however, the context is unrelated to the saint's childhood nor is the saint always the object of chain binding. Overall, the trope tends to bear negative connotations. A prime example can be found in *Da Apstol Decc na Herenn* (The Twelve Apostles of Ireland) from *BnÉ* which depicts chains as one of the objects associated with the many torturous elements of Hell, Brendan witnessed when the Devil opened the doors of Hell to the saint; see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 98; Vol. 2, p. 95.

[89] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 6; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, pp. 3-4; Vol. 2, pp. 3-4.

[90] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 6

[91] Examples of saints who left their parents in order to service God include SS. Brendan (See: *VSH(S)*, p. 56); Colm Cille (Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, p. 105) and Aéd (*VSH(S)*, p. 169).

ideology seems to have been largely influenced from the words according to the Gospel of Matthew: 'He who relinquishes father and mother and sister will receive one hundredfold in the present and will possess eternal life'.[92] Hence, even if a saint happened to return to their homeland, this ideology would dissuade the saint from visiting his/her family.[93] Thus, for Abbán to carry out God's work, he still needed to convince his parents of his worthiness of leaving them to service God. It turned out to be his ability to resurrect a deceased calf which allowed him to live the life that had been prophesised of him after he was born. Unsurprisingly, the incident unfolds as a result of Abbán's *puer-senex* childhood behaviours, as noted of him when he was a younger child:[94]

§7 of *VSA(D)* and §2 of *BA*

> 'Abbán, as a child, allows a hungry wolf and her cubs to eat one of the fattened calves in the settlement. When the other children and pastors discover a dead calf, they become very agitated and worried, especially for the cow who could die without her calf. Abbán miraculously resurrected the calf to its full form. People became amazed by this miracle and told Abbán's parents, who subsequently allowed Abbán to leave them in order for him to his life serving God'.

Essentially, it is a wolf motif that enables Abbán to make this transition in his life. Abbán's association with a wolf however, need not raise any suspicion. This animal bears a familiar appearance in many hagiographical accounts, but also plays a prominent role in many sagas and tales from the large corpus of secular literature.[95] While wolves are typically portrayed as savage beasts, hagiographers tend to use these literary depictions as an opportunity to enhance the holy-like character of its saint. In Abbán's case, it the obedient manner of the wolf in approaching Abbán, as opposed to the wolf instantly attacking the cattle, which depicts Abbán 'as an exemplar of holiness'.[96] This implies that such animals become tame under the view of

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[92] See: Bitel, *The Isle of Saints*, p. 102, fn. 77. For the Biblical reference, see: Matthew 19:29.

[93] On his return to his birthplace in Donegal, St. Munnu never travelled anywhere near his family home and thus chose to see and speak with no family relative when he was spending time in his birthplace; see: *VSH(S)*, p. 200. A less straightforward example concerns St. Monenna who actually remained in the same household as her parents when she decided to become a nun but did not interact with her parents in any form; see: Ulster Society for Medieval Latin Studies, Vol. 1, *The Life of Saint Monenna by Conchubranus*, p. 256.

[94] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 6-7; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 4; Vol. 2, p. 4.

[95] See for example; *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel); a saga in which wolves feature notably throughout. For an English translation of this tale; see: Gantz, *Early Irish Myths and Sagas*, pp. 60-107. Cf. O'Connor, *The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel*, for a comprehensive historical and textual study of the text. For an archaeological, historical and geographical review of wolves in Ireland more generally; see: Hickey, *Wolves in Ireland*.

[96] Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*, p. 1. Here, Herbert is referring to the general significance of hagiography.

saints.[97] As Charles Plummer further noted, the depiction of a saint feeding a wolf, 'is always quoted as an instance of the saint's great kindness to animals'.[98] As for the calf whom the wolf and her cubs devoured, Abbán's subsequent ability to resurrect the calf was what ultimately epitomised his holiness, but also convinced his parents that he was pre-destined to service God.[99]

Episode 3- St. Abbán's Supervision under Bishop Íbar- (§§8- 12 of *VSA(D)* and §3 and Parts 9 and 10 of §4 of *BA*)

From the ambit of the Dál Messin Corb dynasty, Abbán left his family at the young age of twelve and was sent to the south of *Laigin* to be educated by his maternal uncle: Bishop Íbar of Beggerin Island.[100] Bishop Íbar was delighted to have Abbán under his schooling, not so much because Abbán was the son of a king and his sister, but most importantly because Abbán was full of the Holy Spirit and Bishop Íbar knew that Abbán would be a loving father to many of the future servants of God and would also convert many people to Christ.[101] This feeds into Abbán's refusal of his royal lineage and decision to service God, which as noted earlier, is a relatively common trope in Irish hagiography.[102] On this note however, the *VSA(D)* writer reminiscences on Abbán being bonded in chains by his enraged father and subsequently explains that 'these events serve as a good example to flee from the lusts of the world in order

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[97] There is another trope from *VSA(D)* which depicts a pack of wolves refraining from attacking Abbán's herd without the presence of any individual on site. The scene in which this trope occurs will be examined in chapter three of this thesis.

[98] *VSH(D)*, pp. cxli-cxlii, fn. 10. Cf. Bray, *A List of Motifs*, who traced this trope to the Lives of five other saints.

[99] For a brief review on the relationship between a cow and her calf from Early Irish texts more generally; see Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, pp. 37-38. Hence, the depiction of the shepherd concerned about the cow dying without her calf, is not merely an attempt by the hagiographer to promote Abbán as a heroic saviour. More obviously, it reflects a common concern shared by most people from a past historical era. Furthermore, the significance of resurrection in hagiography ultimately stems from the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in the Bible. The ideology subsequently became transformed into hagiographical motifs, which offered the highest rank of spirituality that could be attributed to a saint. The fact that resurrection is subjected to numerous tropes in the Irish record demonstrates the high regard which hagiographers held in the ideology more widely.

[100] The fact that the number twelve represents the number of sons Jacob had according to The Old Testament and is the number of apostles Jesus had according to the New Testament would suggest the number upheld biblical importance. As a result, Irish hagiographers attempted to apply this number to various contexts from saints' Lives, including matters such as the number of people present in a particular situation, or in Abbán's case, the age of the saint; St. Mochuda was also twelve years old when he left his father to service God; see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 202-203. Thus, the probability of Abbán being a twelve-year-old boy during this event in actuality may be open to some degree of doubt. Cf. *Da apostol decc na hErenn* (The Twelve Apostles of Ireland) text from *BnÉ*; Vol. 1, pp. 96-102; Vol. 2, pp. 93-98.

[101] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 7. *BA* merely says: *7 ba failtighi an tespocc roimhe for a dhiadhacht nafora ghaol fris* / 'and the bishop welcomed him for his godliness even more than his near relationship to himself'; see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 4, §3, part 8; Vol. 2, p. 4, §3, part 8.

[102] See for example: Bitel, *The Isle of Saints*, pp. 101-104.

to serve the Lord'.[103] Next, the writer reminds us of Abbán's ability to read Biblical texts as a child, telling us that he could study the holy scripture, and other writings and had in-depth knowledge and wisdom which astonished Bishop Íbar and his monks.[104]

The importance of Bishop Íbar is then brought under the spotlight, as the writer refers to Bishop Íbar's role in training monks, clerics and nuns and, his role in converting the Irish to Christianity, and provides a description of Íbar's primary foundation, Beggerin Island: [105]

§9 of *VSA(D)* and §3 of *BA*

> 'Beggerin Island' is walled in by the sea, located in the southern part of Uí Cennselaig. The monastic island also preserves Íbar's relics, which will protect the people of Laigin, although he originally came from Ulster'.

The value of saints' relics is evidently a focal point of concern to the *VSA(D)* writer. As §9 of *VSA(D)* shows, society believed it was essential to physically retain the relics of a saint within their local church. This is because the relics were perceived as gateways through which society could connect with their patron saint in Heaven.[106] Furthermore, the implication that saints' relics would help to better people throughout their life on earth and enable them to ascend to Heaven on Judgement Day, demonstrates the invaluable means they would have served to society.[107] This implies that a clash over ownership of relics would have been a common problem between ecclesiastical communities.[108] Hence, *VSA(D)*'s claim that Íbar's relics were chosen by God to save the people of Laigin as opposed to those of Ulster, where he came from, would elicit such connotations.[109]

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[103] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 7. The *BA* writer does not make any similar kind of reference in this episode; see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 4, §3, part 8; Vol. 2, p. 4, §3, part 8.

[104] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 7-8. Once again, these words, or a summarised version of such words, do not appear in the *BA* version of this episode.

[105] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 7-8; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 4; Vol. 2, p. 4.

[106] See: Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, pp. 78-79 for a brief read on relics being treated as a form of dialect between Heaven and earth, from the context of Continental Europe. Cf. Wycherley, *The Cult of Relics*, p. 129 where she notes that 'the use of relics in church consecration helped forge a close relationship between the church and community'.

[107] The significance of saints' relics will be addressed in chapter five of this thesis.

[108] The ample evidence for *translatio* (the movement of saint's relics from one type of location to another) of saints' relics within an Insular and Continental context would undoubtedly bolster this view. For a discussion of the contextual significance of *translatio* within a wider Insular and Continental context; see: Thacker, The Making of a Local Saint, pp. 45-73. For a more focused view on the Irish evidence; see: Wycherley, *The Cult of Relics*, pp. 73-99. This affair will be the focal point in chapter five of this thesis.

[109] It is also coincidental that the *translatio* of shrines occurred in Beggerin Island in 819, according to The Annals of the Four Masters, as a result of outside invasion; see: Wycherley, *The Cult of Relics*, p. 98.

On the other hand, Bishop Íbar's depiction as a Christian missionary may represent some form of controversy towards Patrick's more widely attested depiction as a preacher. The fact that *VSA* associates both saints with the same two regions, raises suspicion:[110]

VSA(D) §2 - Patrick converted the people of the north and then the people of Laigin.

VSA(D) §9 - Bishop Íbar came from Ulster but was chosen by God for Laigin.

Though Richard Sharpe's analysis of the Lives of the Pre-Patrician saints' implies that *VSA(D)* expresses the smallest degree of interest in the claim, the imitation between the careers of Patrick and Bishop Íbar from *VSA(D)* must surely add some food for thought.[111] While this imitation shows no concern for the ecclesiastical affairs of Munster, the implication that the arrival of Christianity does not solely originate with Patrick is what *VSA(D)* is attempting to express in §9.[112] The implication that Christianity bears a high level of association with Abbán in *VSA(D)*, is further elicited in the next section. This section warns its audience about the importance of always remaining firm in the Christian faith, as the next events tell of Abbán's work as a Christian missionary and the challenging obstacles he faced along the way in converting people; further warning his audience that they may find these events disturbing to listen in §10 of *VSA(D)*.[113]

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[110] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 3-4 & 8. Neither of these points are elicited in *BA*.

[111] See for example: Sharpe, Quatuor Sanctissimi Episcopi, pp. 378, 386 & 389. The three chief pre-Patrician saints are saints of Munster: SS. Ailbe of Emly, Declan of Ardmore and Ciarán of Saighir. Elsewhere, Bishop Íbar's depiction as a contemporary of St. Brigit in her *Vita Prima* would imply, that Bishop Íbar asserts a similar degree of fame as those of the three national saints of Ireland more generally; see: Connolly, Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae, pp. 27-28.

[112] The earlier annalistic evidence for Palladius's arrival to an already Christian society in Ireland and the contradiction it places on the more widely accepted view of Patrick's depiction as the converter of the nation, is a noteworthy point to consider. Overall, the fact that *BA* makes no reference towards Bishop Íbar's relics or his predestination demonstrates the changing interests in hagiography; particularly since these matters were possibly written in a manner that coincided with the contemporary concerns of the writer. For a read of the possibility of these events been written or largely modified by the redactor of the *Dubliniensis* collection, as has been demonstrated by Richard Sharpe; see: Sharpe, Quatuor Sanctissimi Episcopi, pp. 376-399; Cf. Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, pp. 347-367 for a comprehensive study on the source material that influenced the compilation of the collection.

[113] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 8-9. Most of the subsequent events which the *VSA(D)* writer warns of, are told in sections to be discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis, due to their wider relevance to the geographical origin of Abbán's cult. The next two sections refer to Bishop Íbar and Abbán's conflict over travelling to Rome. Moreover, the content from §10 *VSA(D)* is not told in *BA*. The possibility of this scene bearing an underlying relationship with the pre-Patrician claim; a matter or concern which may have originated, to some degree, with the compiler of the *Dubliniensis* collection or the original hagiographical writer of *VSA*, could suggest that the scene bore less value to the vernacular writer of *BA*, whose concern was most likely to transcribe the main points from the earlier Hiberno-Latin version of Abbán's Life.

The next two sections represent the beginning of this series, which the *VSA(D)* writer entitled: *De Ambulacione eius super Mare* / 'The Walking over the Sea'.[114] As implied by the title, this is a miracle Abbán had to perform in order to travel to Rome with Bishop Íbar. The story unfolds in the following manner:[115]

§§11 and 12 of *VSA(D)* and Part 9 and 10 of §4 of *BA*

'One day, as in Beggerin Island, Bishop Íbar was preparing to travel to Rome. When Abbán asked if could with Íbar and his crew, Íbar said 'no'. Abbán asked one final time, and was teary, because Íbar was adamant that he could not travel. Before leaving Íbar allows Abbán to rest his head on his chest, which puts Abbán to sleep. Meanwhile Íbar sneaked off and sailed for Rome. When Abbán woke up, he discovered Íbar left without him, he miraculously walked over the ocean. Íbar and his crew stopped the boat for Abbán to embark and they subsequently travelled on to Rome via Britain'.

This scene presents the first, and one of the many associations Abbán has with one of the four elements of nature; namely: water.[116] The depiction of Abbán walking over the sea, accompanied by angels to catch up with the boat, was intended to strike the writer's audience because Abbán showed an ability to perform an unrealistic task. However, this would not be an unconventional trope from Irish hagiography; particularly in relation to its similarity with Jesus Christ walking on water from the New Testament.[117] In relation to the overall plot of Episode 3 nevertheless, it may suggest that Bishop Íbar's role as Abbán's supervisor was starting to become less necessary.[118] Aside from showing traits of an old learned religious man throughout his childhood and (according to his age when he left his parents) teenage years, it was Abbán's miraculous ability to catch up with a boat, already well out into the sea, that proved to Bishop Íbar that Abbán was gradually becoming an independent servant of God.[119]

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[114] See: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 9. Not attested in *BA*.

[115] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 10-11; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, pp. 4-5; Vol. 2, p. 4.

[116] Abbán's most prominent association with water is attested in §17 of *VSA(D)* and §8 of *BA*, which will be the next point of discussion under Episode 4 of this chapter. Cf. Ó Neill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 106, who cites this scene as one of the many 'maritime miracles' from *VSA(D)*.

[117] See: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 51. In relation to the frequent appearance of the trope of a saint being attributed power over the sea and the assistance of an angel in transporting saints; see: Bray, The Story of Plea, p. 64, fn. 14; Cf. Bray, *A List of Motifs*, p. 98, which traced the trope of an angel transporting saints to the Lives of twelve other Irish saints.

[118] Once again, we must observe that Íbar, according to the annals, lived throughout the fourth century. Thus, *VSA*, a late twelfth to early thirteenth century source in its extant format, is envisaging a story from its own contemporary or from a point in time between the ninth to eleventh centuries, about a saint who lived centuries. More generally, this is why Irish hagiography should not be perceived as an accurate historical account of events.

[119] Perhaps an analogy can be made to Episode 2. Both Episodes 2 and 3 comprise the same narrative structure: A. An event or setting: In Episode 2, it is *puer-senex* childhood behaviour which reflected his destiny in becoming

It was during their journey to Rome where Abbán converted a heathen city, resurrected an individual and eradicated dangerous monsters from the city. These actions ultimately confirmed his predestiny in serving God and thus, his worthiness to travel to Rome.[120]

Episode 4- St. Abbán's Power over the Sea and Prophecy from an Angel- Bishop Íbar, St. Patrick and Pope Gregory I (§§17-20 of *VSA(D)* and §§8-10 of *BA*)

As a result, however, Abbán later endured a frightening threat from the work of the Devil in the following manner:[121]

§17 of *VSA(D)* and §8 of *BA*

> 'Abbán made three visits to Rome. On the second occasion however, as he was praying on the seashore, a huge terrifying looking wave rose extremely high into the sky from the middle of the sea and pulled the saint into the sea. This wave was guided by angry demons who wanted to kill Abbán after he had converted a pagan nation on his first journey to Rome. Suddenly, angels of God came to Abbán's rescue, warning the demons to leave Abbán alone and to retreat. After the demons retreated, an angel of God approached him attributing him with an Irish that would become famous among mariners who would recite the prayer three times in the name of the Trinity: *Curach Abbain ar a lind/Muinnter fhinn Abbain ind* (Abbán's boat on the ocean, Abbán's blessed community on board). The angel then prophesied that Abbán would live for 310 years, which he would spend serving God and that he would be ordained by Pope Gregory on his third visit to Rome, which ultimately came true.'

As Pádraig Ó Néill has aptly noted, the depiction of a huge wave rising to the sky and pulling Abbán into the sea would strike one as 'bizarre'.[122] The scene is undoubtedly too intrinsic for

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a servant of God. In Episode 3, it is Bishop Íbar's decision to travel to Rome and Abbán's excitement upon hearing of his decision

B. A problem emerges: In Episode 2, Abbán's expectation to accept his future position in becoming his father's heir, which would not reflect the lifestyle of a saint. Abbán is subsequently bounded in chains as a result of rejecting his future position as heir to the kingship of Laigin. In Episode 3, Bishop Íbar refuses to let Abbán travel on board with him to Rome.

C. The Problem is Solved: In Episode 2, Abbán convinces his parents to allow him to be a servant of God after God had broken the chains that bounded Abbán and resurrecting a calf which he had previously fed to a hungry wolf and her cubs. In Episode 3, it is Abbán's spiritual ability to walk over the water to catch up with the boat, which enabled him to travel to Rome with Bishop Íbar and his crew.

[120] The scenes pertaining to Abbán's journey to Rome and his conversion of a heathen city will be discussed in chapter four of this thesis.

[121] This scene occurs in both *VSA* (see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 13-15, §17 of *VSA(D)*) and *BA* (*BnÉ*, Vol. 1, pp. 6-7; Vol. 2, p. 6, §8 of *BA*). §17 of *VSA(D)* was translated into English by Pádraig Ó Néill, see: Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, pp. 102-103.

[122] Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 107.

one to suggest that it presents nothing more than commonplace hagiographical motifs and tropes. Moreover, Ó Néill's recent study of Abbán's hagiographical connection with water motifs and tropes offers a number of incisive remarks upon their potential origins and significance.[123] Despite the events from this section, Ó Néill attempts to underline the hagiographer's message: 'having successfully interceded with God to save his people from a tsunami-type wave, the saint was himself carried by the same wave out to sea where, standing on a staff, he proclaimed his faith in God's power to save him'.[124] But the most noteworthy feature from this scene is the angel's prophesy of the saint. It not only represents another important chapter of events to come in Abbán's life, but also elevates Abbán's status. The life-span of three hundred and ten years is an interesting feature to consider. The fact that Abbán's genealogical record claims he lived for three hundred and seventeen years too, would raise suspicion.[125]

As Charles Plummer noted, the obits of some of the individual saints depicted as Abbán's contemporaries would imply that Abbán lived for more than two centuries.[126] Potentially, both ages (three hundred and ten and three hundred and seventeen) were estimations by the non-contemporary hagiographical and genealogical writers, based on the problematic chronology Abbán's Life throws up. This may also explain why the aforementioned Victor De Buck suggested the Lives of two different saints named Abbán were merged into one.[127] However,

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[123] See: Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, pp. 102-110. More importantly, Ó Néill traced the prayer/charm of Abbán to a thirteenth to fourteenth century Anglo-Norman manuscript: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 405; pp. 95-101. This manuscript originates from the south-east of Ireland, where Abbán's south Laigin foundation (Mag Arnaide) is based. The fact that a prayer/charm from the Life of a local Irish saint was transcribed into such a manuscript casts light on the manner in which the Norman invasion influenced Irish literature more generally. For a read on this matter; see: Ó Néill, The Impact of the Norman Invasion on Irish Literature, pp. 171-185. For bibliographical details and secondary works on this Cambridge Manuscript; see for example: Ó Néill, St Abbán's Charm, p. 95, fn. 1.
[124] Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 103. Perhaps the one slight element of this message which I am uncertain about is the idea of Abbán saving his people. While the wave is depicted in a frightful manner, the hagiographer gives no implication of this wave threatening to kill other people and outsiders. From what I can tell, the purpose of the huge wave is merely to confront and terrify Abbán for converting a heathen nation. Moreover, this section comprises two tropes: one which depicts a saint contending with demons and the other, a saint travelling on a staff out into the sea. According to Bray, the former is a very common trope; tracing it to the Lives of twenty other saints' in Irish hagiography; see: Bray, A List of Motifs, p. 91. Her research also suggests that Abbán is the only saint from the record to whom the latter trope is connected; Bray, A List of Motifs, p. 104. While this specific trope may only be attested in Abbán's hagiographical record, the writer's construction of the trope was most likely influenced by similar tropes concerned with water and travelling out to sea from voyage literature on saints such as Brendan of Clonfert. Potential comparisons between the dossiers of Brendan and Abbán will be drawn out later in this chapter. More details on this heathen nation will be drawn out in chapter four of this thesis.
[125] CGSH, p. 47, entry number: 287.4 which provides a pre-Norman entry of Abbán's life-span; LMnG, pp. 744-745 for an edition and translation of a later genealogical record of the entry. The attempt to attribute Abbán a life-span of more than three hundred years in both his genealogical and hagiographical records would imply that the underlying reason goes beyond typical hagiographical concerns.
[126] VSH(D), p. xxv.
[127] De Buck, De. SS. Abbanis Kill-Abbaniensi et Magharnuidhiensi, pp. 270-276.

we ought to remember that the attribution of long life-spans is a known feature associated with saints; particularly if no annalistic references to his/her birth or death are known.[128] Moreover, it may be more than a coincidence that Abbán's maternal uncle, Bishop Íbar, also died at the grand age of three hundred in the early sixth century according to The Annals of Tigernach. Potentially, such unrealistic life-spans were only attributed to saints of a prestigious stature. Hence, Bishop Íbar's pre-Patrician identity and the fact that he was the head of a religious school (Beggerin Island) may allude towards this possibility. This would imply that the prophecy of Abbán's long lifespan embodied an underlying attempt to assert the pre-eminence of Abbán too.

Equally so, does the attribution of a prayer for mariners. It ultimately demonstrates his power over the sea. What merits prior consideration however, is the manner in which this prayer/charm is written. The fact that it is written as a verse in the vernacular; akin to the manner in which Bishop Íbar's prophecy was written. More broadly, this begs the rather cloudy question of whether both verses were part of the original non-extant Life of Abbán or invented by the *VSA* author (potentially Bishop Ailbe of Ferns). The fact that the writer was compelled to provide a Latin translation of the verse detailing the angel's prophesy, would imply that he is writing for an 'Anglo-Norman community in Ireland'.[129] But the fact that the verse is written in Irish in the first place, remains to be considered. William Heist has suggested both Irish verses are fossils of an original non-extant vernacular Life of Abbán.[130] Though Ó Riain has disagreed with Heist's theory of the Latin being dependant on Irish, it would nevertheless, offer a valid explanation for the sections of *VSA* which seem to bear no connection with the contemporary affairs of Bishop Ailbe.[131]

Alternatively, the evidence of Irish verses in Latin hagiography could merely be a reflection of the writer showing his fluency in both languages. According to Richard Sharpe, a learned man

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[128] For example, even for St. Patrick perhaps the most well-known saint in the Irish record, even his chronology throws up problems for understanding when he lived and whether two Patricks originally existed; for a fuller discussion on this matter; see: O' Rahilly, *The Two Patricks*; Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 527. Other saints who are attributed a long lifespan include SS. Crumine and Moninne who lived nine scored years and Sinchell (who's genealogical record was in chapter one, see: pp. 52-53 & 55 of this thesis), who supposedly lived to the age of three hundred and thirty; see for example: Stokes, *Lives of Saints from The Book of Lismore*, p. 346.

[129] Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 106. The probability of some of the *VSA* sections being written for an Anglo-Norman audience will be addressed in chapter four of this thesis.

[130] Heist, Over the Writer's Shoulder, pp. 79-80.

[131] See: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 161. Ó Riain however, seems to be under the impression that Heist is suggesting the extant vernacular Life of Abbán (*BA*) is older than *VSA*, which would most likely be incorrect, due to the early-modern origin of the language from *BA*. However, this is not what Heist said; rather he says that *VSA* 'must translate an Irish original'; see: Heist, Over the Writer's Shoulder, p. 80. This suggests that *VSA* is a version of an earlier vernacular non-extant Life of Abbán; not the extant *BA* from Charles Plummer's *BnÉ*.

from the late twelfth to thirteenth century would most likely have been able to compose Irish and Latin writings.[132] Even so, it is still possible that such a learned writer was choosing to keep certain sections from the original non-extant Life in Irish.[133] Regardless of whether the vernacular prayer reflects the bilingualism of the twelfth to thirteenth century writer or, as William Heist suggested, is a fossil of an original vernacular Life remains to be considered. As for the subject-matter expressed through the angel's prophecy from §17 of *VSA(D)* and §8 of *BA*, the depiction of Abbán's power over the sea persists in the next section, where his spiritual power outmanoeuvres that of St. Patrick and Bishop Íbar:[134]

§18 of *VSA(D)* and Parts 17 and 18 of §7 of *BA*

> 'On another occasion, Abbán, Bishop Íbar and the senior St. Patrick were in a boat in Loch Gorman and challenged by an enormous monster that had one hundred different head forms, two hundred eyes and two hundred ears. The monster was making huge waves that Abbán, Bishop Íbar and Patrick were almost engulfed by the very large sea, which flows up into the River Slaney every day. Abbán, with the help of God, made the sign of the cross over the monster which instantly killed it. Íbar, Patrick and Abbán gave thanks to God and subsequently discovered the monster was a disguise of the devil.'

Though the chronology of events contrasts between *VSA(D)* and *BA*, the ongoing attempt to demonstrate Abbán's power over the sea is particularly evident from *VSA(D)*.[135] This *VSA(D)* scene (§18) presents an almost identical context and scenario to the preceding scene. Abbán's power over the sea is particularly elevated by his ability to overtake Patrick and Bishop Íbar in killing the sea monster.[136] While it would make sense to choose these prestigious saints as Abbán's contemporaries, given their original appearances from earlier *VSA(D)* and *BA* scenes,

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[132] Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 35. Cf. Sharpe Quatuor Sanctissimi Episcopi, pp. 390-391, which comments on an Irish verse preserved in the *Vita* of St. Ailbe of Emly (preserved in the *Dubliniensis* and *Salmanticensis*) collections, and also noted that the compiler of *Dubliniensis* version of the saint's *Vita* was unable to 'translate the Old Irish verse into Latin'.

[133] In that regard, the only changes the writer may have to make was translating from Early Irish to the Irish spoken during his era: Middle Irish.

[134] *VSH(D)*, p. 15; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 6; Vol. 2, p. 7. In *BA*, this scene occurs before the scene where Abbán is threatened by a tsunami-like wave, whereas it occurs afterwards in *VSA(D)*.

[135] The trope of a saint defeating a monster has been traced back to the Lives of six other saints, two of which are SS. Brendan and Colm Cille; see: Bray, *A List of Motifs*, p. 88. It is probable that the trope from *VSA(D)* is an (in)direct borrowing from the hagiographical dossiers of these saints; whose association with the sea and water more generally, originates from earlier records. Such records may also have served as derivatives for the other four saints, whose Lives contain this trope: SS. Colman Elo, Enda, Mochua and Senán.

[136] Cf. Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 106, where he also comments on Abbán's ability to challenge the abilities of a 'supreme national saint' (Patrick) and 'his local counterpart' (Bishop Íbar).

the fact that both are ascribed less spiritual power presents an underlying attempt to attribute prestige to Abbán.[137] Still, it is rather unclear why Abbán's hagiographer was willing to associate his prestige with the sea, particularly since the cults of the more famous maritime saints' tend to be close to the sea.[138] For instance, St. Ailbe of Emly's association with the sea in his *Vita* may embody his hagiographer's attempt to demonstrate the importance of the saint's coastal cult.[139] As Pádraig Ó Néill observed, neither of Abbán's primary foundations are coastal locations.[140]

Upon a close reading of § 17 of *VSA(D)* however, Ó Néill suggested the fact that *VSA(D)* says Abbán's prayer/charm was for *multis* 'the multitude' would mean that the prayer was not just for Irish people, but also 'the recently arrived Anglo-Norman colonisers'.[141] However, the probability of *VSA* being a version of an earlier non-extant Life of Abbán could suggest that Abbán's prayer/charm was thus invented or revised by Bishop Ailbe of Ferns; particularly if, as Ó Néill suggests, it was aimed at an Anglo-Norman audience. On this note, we may also consider another argument proposed by Ó Néill in suggesting that Abbán's prayer/charm was originally the latter part of §19 of *VSA(D)*:[142]

§19 of *VSA(D)* and Part 21 of §9 of *BA*

> One day, Abbán embarked on three boats, each containing fifty disciples travelling to Rome. Suddenly, they were hit by a storm and then becalmed. Then God's voice addressed them, explaining that they could not move because they did not appoint themselves a leader. God then said that he would give then a God-fearing and humble leader like Moses, drawing their attention to Abbán. The disciples subsequently chose Abbán as their leader and continued on to Rome'.

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[137] Bishop Íbar is depicted in a similar manner in a scene where Abbán converts a heathen nation on their way to Rome. This will be discussed in chapter four of this thesis.

[138] This was an observation made by Pádraig Ó Néill in his attempt to question Abbán's association with the sea and various water motifs and tropes; see: Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, pp. 106.

[139] For a review of Ailbe of Emly's association with the sea and voyages; see: Herbert, Literary Sea-Voyages and Early Munster Hagiography, pp. 182-189.

[140] Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 106.

[141] Ó Néill, p. 110, fn. 52. The Anglo-Norman origins of Abbán's Life will be discussed in chapter four of this thesis.

[142] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 15-16; For the English translation; see: Ó Neill, St. Abbán's Charm, pp. 104-105; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 7; Vol. 2, pp. 6-7. For a noteworthy remark on Abbán's comparison with that of Moses, see: Boyle, *History and Salvation*, p. 44, fn. 89. However, Boyle subsequently demonstrates that it is St. Brendan of Clonfert (or Brendan the Naviagator), whose dossier attributes him most of the 'Moses' characteristics, see: Boyle, *History and Salvation*, p. 44.

Consider the content of Abbán's prayer/charm: *Curach Abbain ar a lind / Muinnter fhinn Abbain ind* (Abbán's boat on the ocean, Abbán's blessed community on board).[143] It would certainly make more sense to apply this prayer to a scene depicting Abbán as a leader of one hundred and fifty clerics in boats.[144] But then the question remains as to why Abbán's prayer/charm would be switched from §19 to §17. On this note, Ó Néill explains §17 was intended 'to emphasize the saint's role as a universal protector of maritime travellers' whereas §19 was merely an attempt to show 'how Abbán first formed his monastic community'.[145] In light of *VSA* being written as a response to Marshals' seizure of properties, the growth of Anglo-Norman communities in Ireland, and thus, to an international audience more generally, the *VSA* writer (potentially Bishop Ailbe) was perhaps, attempting to find an appropriate section of Abbán's Life where he could ascribe Abbán with international fame and thus, overall pre-eminence.[146] Potentially, the 'original aetiological context' for Abbán's power over the sea in §17 was perceived as an appropriate opportunity.[147] Thus, he attempted to internationalise the Life of Abbán, by removing the saint's prayer/charm from a section merely intended to emphasise his connection with water, and attaching it to one (§19) which would elevate the fame of Abbán's depiction as a maritime saint in greater detail. More broadly however, Ó Néill's argument implies, once again, that the *VSA* writer (potentially Bishop *Ailbe*) was working on an earlier non-extant Life.

As for the rest of the content from §17, one important element of the angel's prophesy remains to be examined; that being: Abbán's ordination by Pope Gregory The Great when he landed in Rome with his one hundred and fifty clerics. As the subsequent section of *VSA(D)* tells, this prophesy came true:[148]

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[143] *VSH(D)*, p. 14; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 7; Vol. 2, p. 6. This translation is taken from Ó Neill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 103.

[144] The fact that there are one hundred and fifty psalms in the Bible and Abbán is depicted singing psalms in the scene where he is challenged by the great wave, would suggest that his hagiographer was relying on his Biblical knowledge and perhaps indirectly borrowing from Biblical literature when writing these scenes.

[145] Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 105. While no name or location is given to this so-called 'monastic community' in *VSA* or *BA*, the fact that the Irish Litanies depict Abbán and one hundred and fifty Gaels embarking on a pilgrimage would imply that either this litany or Abbán's Life are borrowing from each other. Abbán's record in the Irish Litanies. will be discussed in chapter four of this thesis.

[146] See: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 164. The theory of *VSA* being written for an international audience will be explored in chapter four of this thesis.

[147] Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 105.

[148] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 16; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 7; Vol. 2, p. 7.

> 'When they landed in Rome, a kind and holy man, who was used to receiving Christ's pilgrims came to greet them with joy and brought them to the house of guests which he owned. The other monks noticed how the man's steward honoured Abbán so dearly. They asked why, particularly since Abbán was quite a young man who did not wear excellent garments. The steward explained to the guests that an angel pointed him out to me, and that is why I do as I do. Furthermore, in the view of these guests and other monks, Pope Gregory ordained Abbán a priest and an abbot. Subsequently, Abbán and his disciples left.'

Indeed, the recollection of how Abbán become their leader as they journeyed to Rome, can be perceived as anticipation for an important event: namely; Abbán's ordination as a priest and an abbot by Pope Gregory.[149] Undoubtedly this elevated Abbán's stature as a servant of God in his hagiographical record. More generally, this scene also shows Abbán progressing on to a later stage of his life. But while there are some later scenes from *VSA* and *BA*, which envisage Abbán enacting the duties of an abbot, the extent to which Pope Gregory ordained Abbán in actuality is doubtful. Firstly, the attribution of two ecclesiastical titles of different stature, within the same period of time, is somewhat unrealistic. In addition, Abbán's name is not cited in the list of priests' names from LL (*De Sacerdotibus*).[150] As for Pope Gregory, his contemporaneous depiction in the Lives of four other saints' from the *Dubliniensis* collection, and the similarity of his relationships with these saints, lessens the authenticity of him bearing

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[149] See: Bray, *A List of Motifs*, p. 98 and the number of saints' Lives to which she traced the trope of an angel attending to a saint. The trope of an angel halting a ship however, was only traced to one saint: Abbán; p. 98. The construction of this trope was possibly influenced by a scene from the second Book of the Life of Colm Cille, which depicts the saint halting a storm by his prayer; see: Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, p. 163.

[150] The Book of Leinster (LL.dip.), pp. 1653-1656. The fact this is a relatively long list, would allude towards Abbán's ordination by Pope Gregory I being largely fabricated in an overall attempt to depict Abbán 'as an exemplar of holiness'; see: Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*, p. 1, for the manner in which she explains the significance of hagiography. More broadly, the fact that Bishop *Íbar* is cited in the list of the names of Bishops (*De Episcopis*), lends support to the possibility of Bishop Íbar upholding such a role in actuality; see: LL.dip., p. 1649.

historical relationships with any of the saints.[151] Potentially, Pope Gregory's presence merely applies an element of prestige to the scenes pertaining to Abbán's third journey to Rome.'[152]

Even if Pope Gregory's role in Irish hagiography is largely fabricated, it is the fact that he upholds a role, to begin with, which may merit some thought. Once again, the fact the Pope Gregory lived throughout the sixth to seventh centuries demonstrates the large contemporary differences between the hagiographers and the world of the figures on whom they envisage as characters of typical storylines from Irish saints' Lives. Moreover, according to her study on Pope Gregory in the Irish record, Máire Herbert observed he tends to appear mainly 'in Hiberno-Latin saints' Lives' that tend to originate from the eighth century.[153] Though it implies that Abbán's non-extant Life was written in Latin, there is nevertheless, equal grounds for suggesting it was written in the vernacular.[154] Whichever language the non-extant Life of Abban was written in, it would be too early to give an answer at this point, due to the additional material awaiting examination. We can however, speculate that because Pope Gregory does not appear in a large number of saints' Lives, his appearance in Abbán's, may serve as distinctive evidence for Abbán's non-extant Life being written in Latin. Whether the pre-existing Life was written in Latin or the Vernacular, we may, in any event, now examine the remaining episodes which tell of Abbán's contemporary relationships.

Recap

Up until now, the focus has been centred on the first stage of Abbán's life; from the scenes pertaining to his birth and childhood to those concerning his early years of adulthood, the *VSA(D)* writer has undoubtedly portrayed Abbán 'as an exemplar of holiness'.[155] As for his contemporaries, the roles of three categories of individuals have contributed to this image:

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[151] In the Life of St. Colman Ela, Pope Gregory tutored Colman Ela; see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 264-265; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 172; Vol. 2, p. 166; In the vernacular Life of Brendan of Clonfert (*Betha Brenainn Clúana Ferta*), the saint's characteristics of a commentator are compared to those of Pope Gregory; see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 44; Vol. 2, p. 44; In the Life of St. Finbarr, a flame comes from Heaven as Pope Gregory places his hand on Finbarr's head; for more details on his contemporary relation with Pope Gregory; see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 68-72; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, pp. 14-17; Vol. 2, pp. 14-17; In the Latin Life of St. Molua (*Vita Sancti Moluae*), Pope Gregory praises Molua's virtues; see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 220-225.

[152] Patrick's depiction throughout the scenes pertaining to the early to early-mid stages of Abbán's life, may also suggest that he serves a similar purpose.

[153] Herbert, The Representation of Gregory the Great in Irish Sources of the pre-Viking era, p. 182.

[154] As noted earlier in my discussion under 'Episode 4', the two Irish verses depicting Bishop Íbar's prophesy and an angel's prophesy could well be, as the aforementioned William Heist implied, fossils of an earlier vernacular Life. Furthermore, Anthony Harvey's case for suggesting Abbán's original non-extant Life was written in the vernacular awaits consideration in this chapter still.

[155] Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*, p. 1

1. Family: Cormac of the Dal Messin Corb Dynasty, Mella and Bishop Íbar

2. Saints: Patrick, Kevin and Moling

3. Other Ecclesiastical Figures: Pope Gregory the Great

While we cannot determine the time of his parents' existence, the fact that the Dál Messin Corb dynasty falls under the headship of Cormac, at least confirms that Abbán's birthplace was within the north of Laigin, according to *VSA(D)*. As for the other contemporaries, their individual annalistic records need now be briefly considered. While Abbán, Kevin and Moling are prophesised to be the chief saints of Laigin; the death date recordings for Kevin and Moling suggest that they were not contemporaries; not even elder or younger contemporaries.[156] The implication would be that they were regarded as chief Laigin saints from different eras; with Kevin taking chronological precedence over Moling.

As for Abbán's time of existence, the implication that he was the oldest out of the three Laigin saints and lived in the sixth century, is supported by the annalistic death date of his maternal uncle: Bishop Íbar, who is envisaged as an elder contemporary of Abbán's in Episodes 3 to 5.[157] The attestation of the annalistic evidence for the death dates of SS. Kevin, Moling and

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[156] While 'The Annals of Tigernach' suggest Kevin died in 616, 618 is recorded as the year of his death in 'The Annals of Ulster'. As for Moling, both of these Annals record his obit under the year 697; see: *The Annals of Tigernach*- *https://celt.ucc.ie//published/G100002/index.html*
;*The Annals of Ulster*-*https://celt.ucc.ie//published/T100001A/* (Both Websites Last Accessed 24th September 2020). More generally, while the annals tend to be the most reliable source for tracing an individual's time of existence, they are largely uncontemporary recordings of historical events. Often the date of the manuscript(s) in which they are preserved can reflect at what chronological point the recording may have become contemporary. While the chronological range of 'The Annals of Tigernach' is from the 318 BC right up until the mid-late twelfth century, the two manuscripts in which the Annalistic record is preserved dates to different periods: 1. Rawlinson B 502, which dates to the twelfth century and 2. Rawlinson B 488, which dates to the fifteenth century. While the chronology of the Annals of Ulster ranges from 81 AD to the early sixteenth century, its manuscript (MS 1282 Trinity College Dublin) dates to the late fifteenth century. Thus, the chronological recordings only become contemporary towards the end of the ranges from both Annals. For a fuller study on the textual history of the Annals from Ireland; see: Mc Carthy, The Irish Annals, pp. 601-622; Cf. p. 602, where he remarks upon the year 702 as a point where entries begin to revolve mainly around events from Ireland and less about other 'World History entries'. The World History entries are far from contemporary with the Irish Annals, as they are linked with periods as early as the time of Adam. This subtly indicates that the sixth century was when the records became slightly more reliable; as the focus becomes more confined to Irish history; particularly since the fifth to sixth centuries is believed to be the period in which literacy began in Ireland more generally. See for example: Ó Corráin, Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy, pp. 51-52 & Herbert, Latin and Vernacular Hagiography, p. 327. For a comprehensive read on the beginnings and development of literacy in Ireland; see: Johnston, *Literacy and Identity*. Cf. Byrne, *Irish Kings*, p. 134, where he notes that 'contemporary annalistic writing in Ireland does not begin until the middle of the sixth century, but it is not until the eighth century that the annals deal in any way fully with Leinster affairs'.

[157] 'The Annals of Tigernach' record Bishop Íbar's death-date as 502, whereas according to 'The Annals of Ulster', he died in 500; see: *The Annals of Tigernach* - *https://celt.ucc.ie//published/G100002/index.html*
; *The Annals of Ulster* - *https://celt.ucc.ie//published/T100001A/* (Both Websites Last Accessed 24th September 2020). Moreover, the fact that Irish genealogies depict Kevin as Abbán's maternal uncle is ultimately contradicted by this examination. Thus, as I suggested in chapter one of this thesis, Kevin's familial depiction in the genealogies

Íbar provides a relatively reliable means through which we can estimate the period from which Abbán may have come.[158] Less reliable however, is the annalistic record of St. Patrick. In 'The Annals of Ulster' alone, Patrick's death date 'is variously dated to 457 and 461' but also to 493.[159] Interestingly however, Patrick is recognised under two different titles under these death-dates: under 457 and 461 he is identified as *senis Patricius*, whereas *Patricius Archiapostolus Scotorum* is the heading attributed to Patrick under 493.[160] While Pádraig Ó Riain has identified both headings as different guises of the same saint, it seems that the *VSA* author is under the opposite impression; specifically when he identifies Patrick as *sanctus senior Patricius* / The senior St. Patrick, from §18 of *VSA(D)*.[161]

Whether the *VSA* author was under the impression he was referring to an original older saint named Patrick, or if §18 is merely showing that Patrick is an old man at that particular point of Abbán's life, both possibilities are equally valid. The former would call for a more general need to examine the manner and extent to which (non-Patrician) Irish hagiography addressed the troublesome chronology of Patrick; particularly for the Lives which depict Patrick as a contemporary. At the same time, the point (§18) at which Patrick is referred to as *sanctus senior Patricius* in *VSA* is fitting, particularly since Bishop Íbar is also depicted as an elder contemporary of Abbán. Despite the different death dates attributed to Patrick, the fact that they all belong to the mid-late fifth century would still suffice to make him a contemporary of a similar age-group to that of Bishop Íbar. In any event, this cannot be a trustworthy means of guessing Abbán's existence, particularly since the evidence for his maternal uncle changes throughout Abbán's dossier. This is also supported by the fact that miracle motifs and tropes from Episodes 1-4 contextualised most of Abbán's contemporaneous relationships with these saints. Thus, the sections through which they were expressed, largely served a role in asserting the pre-eminence of Abbán.

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most likely embodies a cultural concern from north Laigin as opposed to an authentic biological relationship with Abbán, see: pp. 61-69 of this thesis. Cf. Mac Shamhráin, *Church and Polity*, p. 183.

[158] However, the fact that these fifth to seventh century saints (Kevin, Moling and Íbar) are envisaged as contemporaries in a literary text (*VSA*) dating from the twelfth to thirteenth centuries in its extant format, that may have pre-Norman (ninth to eleventh centuries) origins means *VSA* covers several centuries of great differences.

[159] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 527, fn. 10-11.

[160] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 527 & 530.

[161] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 527; *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 15. For a read on a former theory which suggested that Patrick's later record originally belonged to Palladius, see: O'Rahilly, *The Two Patricks*. Since then, however, it has become more believable that Palladius and Patrick were not the same individual. Moreover, the Prosper of Aquitaine's Chronicle suggests Palladius became the first Bishop of Ireland, where the people were already Christians in the year 431. This ultimately contradicts the famous claim of Patrick converting the nation in 432.

Episode 5- St. Abbán's Founding of Monasteries- SS. Fínan, Gobnait and the Abbess Segnith (§§22, 28 & 32 of *VSA(D)* & §11 and Part 28 of §13 of *BA*)

In the remaining episodes of this chapter however, we will find that this role is often reversed. After returning from Rome, Abbán begins his monastic career in Ireland. § 22 of *VSA(D)* names the numerous monasteries he founds, mainly in Munster. During this time, we are also brought into contact with some saints; and this time, Abbán is the individual elevating the status of other saints; the first of which is a saint named Fínán:[162]

§22 of *VSA(D)* and §11 of *BA*

> 'In a region called Corco Duibhne, which is in the west of Munster, Abbán built a monastery called Cell Achaid Conchinn. In this monastery, he prophesised of an abbot St. Fínán before he was born, which later came true'.

While the bracketed detail from *BA* may, at first glance, imply it is referring to a different foundation, a translation of its placename would imply it is essentially a slightly varied topographical description of the same location: 'Cill Aithfe ar Magh Coincinn' (The Church of Aithche on the Plain of Conchenn).[163] From *VSA(D)* its meaning would be 'The Church on the Field of Conchenn'. Hence, with the indication that St. Conchenn is the primary saint of this foundation, it may be striking, that there is no mention of this individual saint in *VSA* or *BA*.[164] It may be more striking also, that a foundation containing the name of another saint (Conchenn) would be assigned to Fínán, according to *BA* .[165] *VSA(D)* however, makes no such claim.; only

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[162] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 17; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 8; Vol. 2, p. 7.

[163] See: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 8, fn. 4, which explains that the bracketed detail comes from the Stowe manuscript; Cf. my review of the manuscripts in which *BA* is preserved on pp. 12-15 of this thesis. Moreover, the implication that there was a church dedicated to a saint by the name 'Aitche' which stood on this plain, is lessened by Pádraig Ó Riain's suggestion of Aitche being 'a bogus saint'; see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 62. Ó Riain explains that the Franciscan scribe Mícheál Ó Cléirigh 'had misread the phrase *agus a itche*, 'and his prayer', in a gloss to his exemplar at 15 January', fn. 1. Though Ó Riain is known for saying that most saints are fictional figures who bore no historical existence, the lack of any earlier martyrological reference to a St. Aitche or any attestation of the name in the genealogical record would suggest that he is probably correct in this case. Moreover, given that Ó Cléirigh had also compiled the MS 2324-2340 version of *BA* would explain the implication of Aithche being depicted as a saint from §11 of *BA*. For examples where Ó Riain has alluded towards the idea of saints never being real human figures; see: Ó Riain, Irish Saints' Genealogies, pp. 24-25; Ó Riain, Some Bogus Irish Saints, pp. 1-8.

[164] While Ó Riain has identified Conchenn as a male saint (Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 179-180), another version of the name 'Conchenna' has suggested to some that this is a female saint; See for example, Archdall, *Monasticon Hibernicum*, p.73, under the geographical headings 'Killeigh' and p. 303 under the heading 'Killachad-Conchean'. Under both headings, Concheann is referred to as a 'holy virgin'; Cf. *Monastic Matrix (A Scholarly Resource for the Study of Women's Religious Communities from 400-1600 CE-https://monasticmatrix.osu.edu/monasticon/cell-achid-conchinn* (Last Accessed 17th July 2020).

[165] In a footnote from *BnÉ*, Charles Plummer noted that the Abbán's prophesy of Fínán is reversed; see: Vol. 1, p. 7, fn. 1. In this episode, we will also come across another foundation founded by Abbán, where the etymology would appear to be connected to the cult of another saint. Cf. Graves, On the Proper Names occurring in the

that Abbán prophesised of Fínán whilst founding 'Cell Achaid Conchinn'.[166] What merits most consideration nevertheless, is the depiction of Abbán taking precedence in saintly status. As for the saint whom Abbán prophesised, he has a relatively common name; with several other saints bearing this name.[167] The St. Fínán individual mentioned in Abbán's hagiographical account was the patron saint of two key foundations: Kinnity, in the 'barony of Ballybrit, Co. Offaly' and Aghadoe, in 'the barony of Magunihy, Co. Kerry'.[168]

Abbán evidently embodies his south Munster foundation; but more generally, Fínán's patronage of two foundations draws a point of correlation to Abbán, whose also has two primary foundations: Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbáin. Some points of comparison can also be discerned from similarity in the structure of their cults; most notably, Fínán's depiction as one of the three 'chief protectors' of Corco Duibhne; with the other saints being Laichtín and Senán, according to the Miscellaneous Items of genealogies.[169] As observed from Episode 1 of this chapter, Abbán receives the same type of association with Laigin, which was ultimately ascribed eminence from Patrick's prophecy. Though Abbán's prophecy of the birth of Fínán is told in a separate source to that of Fínán's depiction as a chief saint of Corco Duibhne, Abbán's role could still be perceived as supplementary evidence for Fínán's connection with Corco Duibhne, where the foundation of Cell Achaid Conchinn lies, according to *VSA(D)*. However, the fact that Abbán receives no mention in Fínán's hagiographical account, would imply that the attempt to connect both saints only derives from the interests and concerns of Abbán's hagiographer.[170]

Ogham Inscriptions Found in the Cave of Dunloe, p. 891, for a read of Cell Achaid Conchinn's reference from Abbán's hagiographical account. Cf. pp. 669-672 for his discussion on the probability of the name 'Conchinn' being inscribed on a pillar stone in the centre of the cave, which bears an orthographically similar version of the saint's name: 'Cunacena'. The fact that Graves alludes towards the possibility of Conchinn being a female saint, suggests that most scholarship is in favour over Conchinn being a female saint as opposed to a male.

[166] This is the head word spelling according to the Monasticon Hibernicum website; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=833* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). For the various foundations founded or ascribed to Abbán in his hagiographical record, the spelling will largely coincide with that from Monasticon Hibernicum in this chapter, but also in chapter three of this thesis, where Abbán's foundations will be more of a focal point.

[167] The name 'Fínán' appears thirty times in the attested Irish source-material; see: O'Brien, Old Irish Personal Names, p. 232. For the individual saints named 'Fínán', see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 325-330.

[168] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 327.

[169] *CGSH*, p. 110, see entry number 665.7. Another noteworthy point of comparison is the attestation of two feast-days of Fínán in the martyrological record: 16 March and 7 April; see for example: MT, pp. 24 & 30; Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 329, which notes how both calendar dates each associate Fínán with one of his foundations: 16 March associates him with his Kerry foundation, whilst the April feast-day alludes towards his Offaly foundation. The Irish martyrologies also record two feast-days for Abbán, both of which appear to have separately originated from the cults of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain.

[170] Fínán has a *Vita* (*Vita Sancti Finani abbatis Cenn Etigh*) which survives in the same two manuscript collections as Abbán's *Vita*: The fifteenth century *Dubliniensis* collection and the fourteenth century *Salmanticensis* collection; for a read on these manuscript collections; see: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, pp. 93-119, 228-

Moreover, it is unlikely that this hagiographical scene fell under the authorship of Bishop Ailbe of Ferns, particularly since his contemporary affairs lay mainly within the boundaries of Laigin.[171] The fact that §22 of *VSA* and §11 of *BA* offer relatively detailed accounts on Abbán's monastic career in Munster, augments this claim too. Indeed, the number of contemporaneous relationships continue after Fínán and (perhaps to a lesser extent), Conchinn. Though there is no mention of the individual St. Conchinn in *VSA* or *BA*, the fact that the saint's name can be discerned from the placename of the monastery (Cell Achaid Conchinn) built by Abbán, implies that he subsequently surrendered the monastery to Conchinn. The possibility of Abbán enacting this role with Conchinn is further supported by Abbán's hagiographical account claiming that he built another monastery in the barony of Muskerry, and subsequently surrendered it to a female saint named Gobnait.[172] This monastery became what is now the parish of Ballyvourney, in Co. Cork.[173] The extent to which her relationship with Abbán was invented by the hagiographer or represents some underlying truth is difficult to determine: one the one hand, because there is no annalistic records of her obit; but more obviously, because of her meagre textual profile.[174]

As Thomas Charles-Edwards observed, there are four typical characteristics of saints, whose cults are 'important', but also minor in the sense that the cult is only known on a local scale. These characteristics can be applied to the cult of St. Gobnait:[175]

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246 & 347-367. For a discussion on Fínán's *Vita*; see: Ingrid Sperber, The Life of St. Fínán of Kinnity, pp. 115-126. Cf. Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, pp. 297-339; Herbert, Latin and Vernacular Hagiography, p. 336, which suggest that the *Salmanticensis* version of Fínán's Life, alongside a group of other Lives from this manuscript collection, date back to the eighth-ninth century. This is would imply that Fínán's depiction as the object of prophecy does not date this far back, owing to the fact that *VSA(S)* has not been dated to the same period; we await to discern Anthony Harvey's and Charles Doherty's implications of Abbán's Life originating to periods earlier than the one suggested by Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170.

[171] Charles Doherty also identifies this matter as a reason for why Bishop Ailbe was not the author of *VSA*; see: Doherty, 'Analysis of the "life" of Abbán', p. 4 of pp. 1-10.

[172] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 17, §22; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 8, §11, part 24; Vol. 2, p. 7, § 11, part 24. In *BA*, the sequence of events is reversed: Abbán surrenders his monastery to Gobnait in the barony of Muskerry before prophesying of Fínán; see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 8, §11, part 24; Vol. 2, p. 7, §11. For a brief review of the significance of Gobnait's minor, but important cult; see: Thacker, Loca Sanctorum: The Significance of Place in the Study of Saints, pp. 34-35. For a list of some late nineteenth century and early twentieth century scholarship and references to St. Gobnait and Ballyvourney; see: Kelly, Saint Gobnata and her Hive of Bees, Vol. 3, p. 102; Berry, The Parish of Kilshannig and Manor of Newberry, Co. Cork, p. 53 & Concannon, The Holy Women of the Gael, p. 92.

[173] While this modern-day place-name can be discerned from its Irish spelling in *BA*: *Boirnech*, *VSA* seems to have cited a corrupted version of the Ballyvourney: *Huisneach*. Interestingly, *VSA(S)* contains the more logical spelling: 'Burnech'; see: *VSH(S)*, p. 264. Cf. *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 17, fn. 6. Normally, *VSA(S)* contains the corrupted or complex forms of place-names.

[174] While no annalistic evidence, as far as I am aware, for the death date of Fínán exists, the fact that he has a fuller textual record than Gobnait would show that his cult was more extensive than that of Gobnait's. In this regard, the major point of contrast is the fact that Gobnait has no individual hagiographical account of her own.

[175] Charles-Edwards, Early Irish Saints' Cults, p. 81.

1. The saint has no hagiographical record: No *Vita* or *Betha* account on Gobnait is known; at least not from the three famous manuscript collections of *VSH* nor those which contain *BnÉ*.

2. The saint only has one main church: For Gobnait, it is the monastery which Abbán built for her in Muskerry according to *VSA* and *BA*.

3. 'The connections claimed for them by the genealogists of the saints are regional or provincial': The genealogies trace Gobnait's ancestry to two dynastic Munster lineages: Uí Eachach Mhumhan and Múscraighe Midíne.[176]

4. 'The onomastic and physical evidence indicates how effective the impact of the cult was within its home district, which was likely to become a parish in the late-medieval period': There exists a parish named 'Brí Gobhan' (Brigown) in the neighbouring barony of Condons and Clangibbon; a statue of the saint stands in Ballyvourney; Ballyvourney is now a parish.[177]

Indeed, the cult and textual profile of Abbán ticks some of these boxes too.[178] While it would initially imply that there is thus, little to say about Abbán assigning Ballyvourney to Gobnait; it bears one potentially discernible advantage. Abbán bears contemporary relationships with saints known on a national scale, like Patrick. However, because Patrick is a contemporary of saints from other saints' Lives, would insinuate that his relationship with Abbán in *VSA* and *BA* is a literary invention and that Patrick's depiction was merely used as a commodity for elevating the status of Abbán.[179] The lack of any hagiographical records for Gobnait and the confinement of her cult to Cork means that she was unlikely to have fallen victim to these typical hagiographical fabrications, which were part of a universal attempt to assert the pre-

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[176] Charles-Edwards, Early Irish Saints' Cults, p. 81; Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 368, fn. 3.

[177] Brí Gobhan, meaning 'The Hill of the Smith' would imply that the saint's identity was attached to the patronage of iron-working according to some earlier scholarship; see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 368, fn. 4. Later in this chapter, we will explore an episode concerning a craftsman named Gobán. For the geographical detail on the location of Brigown; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=673* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020).

[178] The most notable example would be the third box, as Abbán's genealogical record traces his cult mainly within the parameters of north Laigin. As for the fourth box, we need take note of his north Laigin foundation: Cell Abbain, which is now identified as a parish; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=827* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020).

[179] In other cases, however, there are saints, such as Kevin, who are not as famous as the three national saints, but certainly come close in line, whose contemporary relationship with Abbán may bear some specific importance for Abbán's cult. While Kevin's depiction as Abbán's maternal uncle in the genealogies is not supported by Kevin's individual genealogical record, the fact that Kevin's record can be traced back to the Dál Messin Corb dynasty is noteworthy. Abbán's father also assumes the headship of this dynasty in *VSA(D)*, which also depicts Kevin, alongside Abbán and Moling as chief Laigin saints, whose primary foundations (one of Abbán's: Cell Abbáin) are located in the north of Laigin; these factors imply that Kevin's association with Abbán serves a role in promoting Abbán's north Laigin cult.

eminence of a saint and to fulfil the writer's contemporary interests or concerns.[180] In that regard, there may be room to speculate that Abbán's and Gobnait's contemporary relationship may bear some authenticity. The ample number of south Munster locations where Abbán founded and built monasteries would have required the saint to select particular groups of individuals to manage these monasteries. In actuality, the possibility of this being a matter of consideration for Abbán is also recognisable from a later section of *VSA(D)*, where Abbán founds monasteries in the province of Mide, and continues to assign people monasteries:[181]

§32 of *VSA(D)*

> 'Another time, Abbán visited his holy men in the region of Mide, where the people greeted Abbán joyfully. The people of Mide asked Abbán to protect them. In the region of Mide, Abbán also founded two monasteries; one in the east of Mide, which is called Cell Ailbe. In this monastery, the blessed virgin Segnith cared for nuns, under the management of Abbán. The other monastery is located in the north of Mide, which is called Cell Abbain, where Abbán still enacts the greatest of God's miracles. Afterwards, Abbán visited the most blessed abbot Finnian, who honourably respected Abbán. The author further informs us that Abbán baptised Finnian when he was an infant.'

Once again, Abbán surrenders another monastery to a female individual who, in this case, is an abbess named 'Segnith'. The description of her role in managing the monastery of Cell Ailbe suggests that the foundation became a nunnery when Abbán appointed Segnith its abbess.[182] Like Gobnait, an even smaller quantity of detail is known for Segnith, let alone her role as an abbess.[183] While little else can be said for discerning the authenticity of her role, it

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[180] Such fabrications are particularly recognisable from scenes which are largely contextualised by miracle motifs and tropes, which depict a saint enacting more power or setting out a better example than another saint whose own individual record suggests otherwise. The scene depicting Patrick, Bishop Íbar and Abbán being attacked by a sea-monster in Loch Gorman and Abbán being the only able saint to kill it, is undoubtedly an invention of the hagiographer for asserting pre-eminence to Abbán. The fact that Patrick's hagiographical dossier is comparatively more wide-ranging and has an earlier origin supports this claim too. Specifically, however, Bishop Íbar's presence in this scene would imply that Abbán's role is an underlying attempt to elicit the prominence of the pre-Patrician claim. Moreover, the only fabrications centred on Gobnait would include local folklore, such as her ability to cure 'every strange disease'; see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 369, fn. 9. Some early twentieth century scholarship also tells of Gobnait attempting to comfort her ill sister after hearing that their headmaster: Abbán had died; see for example: Concannon, The Holy Women of the Gael, p. 92.
[181] *VSA(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 23. This scene is not attested in *BA*. The significance of Cell Abbáin from this section will be discussed in chapter three of this thesis.
[182] Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 564, fn. 2, which identifies this nunnery as an ecclesiastical site which now stands 'in the townland of Knightstown and parish of Kilshine'.
[183] Segnith is best known for her association with Cell Ailbe. Accordingly, textual and documentary evidence for this saint is slight; see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 564. Note also that Ó Riain identifies her under the head name: Sineach.

is worth noting nevertheless, that the etymology of the foundation Cell Ailbe 'The Church of Ailbe', would imply that this foundation is neither associated with Segnith nor the original reputed founder: Abbán. Originally, Ó Riain identified this as a form of evidence for why SS. Abbán and Ailbe of Emly were originally the same saint; in concluding that the name Abbán is a hypocoristic form of the latter saint's name.[184] Despite whatever linguistic relationships may lie between the names Abbán and Ailbe, their cults share no common points. The fact that Cell Ailbe is not even mentioned in Ailbe of Emly's *Vita* would indicate so too.[185] Moreover, according to Mervlyn Archdall, another name for this monastery was Techsinche or Cell Sinche, potentially meaning that Cell Ailbe was merely another variant of the placename and further suggesting that the location was not connected to the cult of Ailbe of Emly.[186]

After surrendering a monastery to Segnith, Abbán visited a saint, whom he had baptised as an infant: St. Finnian of Clonard. Finnian reputedly died in the mid-sixth century, which would suggest that Abbán was active throughout the late fifth and early sixth century.[187] While the hagiographical dossier of the aforementioned Fínán said nothing about Abbán prophesying of

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[184] Ó Riain, Towards a Methodology in Early Irish Hagiography, pp. 152-153; Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 51; Moreover, in his later article on the genesis of Abbán's Life, Ó Riain suggested that the foundation name 'Cell Ailbe' may bear some connection with the potential author of *VSA*: Bishop Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid of Ferns; see: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 164. While the early life and career of Bishop Ailbe seems to have originated from the region of Éile, which is where Abbán converted the people and completed monastic work before arriving to the people of Mide according to *VSA*, the implication that Cell Ailbe somehow originated with Bishop Ailbe seems far-fetched; particularly if Bishop Ailbe's reasons for writing *VSA* derived from his contemporary concerns with property rights in the south of Laigin.

[185] See for example: *Vita Sancti Albei archiepiscopi de Imlech*, in *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 46-64; for an English translation of this version of Ailbe's *Vita*; see: De Paor, *Saint Patrick's World*, pp. 227-243. Moreover, in *VSH(D)* and *VSH(S)*, Cell Ailbe can only be traced back to one *Vita*; namely: *VSA*; see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, p. 318; *VSH(S)*, p. 268.

[186] Archdall, *Monasticon Hibernicum*, p. 573. According to Ó Riain's later work, Cell Sinche is now recognised via the parish name 'Kilshine' and is located in the diocese of Meath, see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 564. Cf. Monasticon Hibernicum whose work also agrees with this being the modern placename of what was reputedly Segnith's (or as Archdall names her, 'Sinche') abbess: *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=2334* (Last Accessed 19th July 2020). Moreover, while Archdall suggested that Sinche died in 597, the Annals of Tigernach imply that they are referring to the obit of a different saint named Sinche. Accordingly, the cult of this Sinche spread to Cluain Lethtengad in the province of Ulster, and died in 598; see: *The Annals of Tigernach-https://celt.ucc.ie//published/G100002/index.html* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). According to Monasticon Hibernicum, her feast-day was 9 November and Ó Riain identified this saint as Sineach of Kilrush; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=2753* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020); Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, 2011, p. 564. Thus, while we ultimately do not know when the Sinche individual from Abbán's *Vita* died, the fact that she was an abbess and her role in *VSA* is not contextualised by miracle motifs and tropes would imply that she was an individual of status in actuality nevertheless.

[187] See for example *Chronicon Scotorum*, which tells that Finnian, alongside several other individuals died from a great plague in the year 551; see: *Chronicon Scotorum-https://celt.ucc.ie//published/T100016/index.html* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). Cf. Kenney, *The Early History of Ireland*, p. 374, which notes that Finnian died in 549 according to 'The Annals of Ulster'. For a detailed study on the historical importance and cult of Finnian; see: Hughes, *Church and Society in Ireland*, Ch. 2-6, pp. v-vi. For a read on how the name 'Ninian' is a spin-off Finnian; see: Clancy, The Real St. Ninian, pp. 1-28.

his birth (as was told in *VSA* and *BA*), Finnian of Clonard's dossier actually adheres to *VSA*'s claim that Abbán baptised Finnian as an infant.[188] The fact that Abbán's and Finnian's hagiographers adhere to their contemporary relationship would suggest that their hagiographers shared similar contemporary interests or concerns. According to Kathleen Hughes, the depiction of Finnian receiving baptism from Abbán was possibly an attempt to augment Finnian's Leinster (Laigin) origins; and Abbán 'the apostle of Leinster', was a prime candidate for fulfilling this concern.[189] Defining Abbán as 'the apostle' would imply that Hughes was referring to Abbán's depiction as one of three chief Laigin saints; a scene which we discussed under the 'Episode 1' section of this chapter. However, if we assume that this episode originated with the work of Bishop Ailbe of Ferns, Hughes's suggestion would thus imply that the story of Finnian's baptism was a later invention and that his earliest extant Life (most likely his *Vita*) was written or potentially revised within the same period as *VSA*.[190]

Potentially, the hagiographers of Abbán's and Finnian's *Vitae* had different concerns, but for the outcomes to be reached, the relationship between both hagiographers had to be mutual. Firstly, we must note that Abbán is baptising a saint, whose primary foundation (Clonard) has been regarded as important as Armagh and Clonmacnoise.[191] This would ultimately have applied prestige to a saint, whose Life was being revised and most likely used as a form of evidence for Bishop Ailbe's concern with property rights in south Laigin. On a highly speculative note, we may say that Abbán's contemporary relationship with Segnith came from the original non-extant Life of Abbán. By the time Bishop Ailbe began to write his version (*VSA*) of Abbán's Life, he brought Finnian into the Life; potentially in an attempt to coincide with the already existing reference to Finnian's baptism from *Vita Sancti Finniani*; but also to demonstrate that the subject of *VSA* was a worthy saint, who enacted God's service upon saints

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[188] See: *VSH(S)*, p. 96, which tells of Abbán visiting and blessing Finnian towards the outset of *Vita Sancti Finniani Abbatis De Cluain Iraird*, p. 96. Moreover, the Book of Lismore version of Finnian's *Betha* (*Betha Fhindéin Clúana hEraird*) also tells us that Abbán baptised Finnian out of a well called Bal, located in a field in which another well called Dimbal stood; see: Stokes, *The Book of Lismore*, pp. 75-83 & 230. Cf. Bitel, *Isle of the Saints*, pp. 73-74 which explains that wells provided an important means through which one received baptism as they 'symbolised ritual cleaning and rebirth, and so were doubly holy'. For references to these wells from older scholarship; see: Comerford, Vol. 3, *Collections relating to the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin*, pp. 92 & 93; Healy, *The Holy Wells of Ireland*, p. 90. Otherwise, nothing else, as far as I can tell, is known about these wells or whether they were merely literary inventions by the author or compiler of Finnian's *Betha*.
[189] Hughes, *Church and Society in Ireland*, Ch. 4, p. 360.
[190] For a review of the different dates attributed to Finnian's *Vita* and *Betha*; see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 319-320. See: p. 320 where he says that the reference to Abbán in Finnian's hagiographical dossier would imply that Finnian's *Vita* dates to the same period as *VSA*.
[191] Kenney, *The Early History of Ireland*, p. 374; Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society*, pp. 165 & 217; Gwynn & Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses Ireland*, p. 58, which tells that as a medieval diocese, Clonard emerged in the early mid-twelfth century.

of importance and whose cult was not solely confined to the Ferns Diocese.[192] As for Finnian's hagiographer, it was likely he already had existing concerns for Finnian of Clonard's prestige as a Laigin saint. Hence, depicting Finnian as a receiver of baptism from a saint whose primary foundations (Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain) lay within two ambits of the province and who was being attributed provincial fame by his hagiographer (Bishop Ailbe), Abbán may certainly have been a satisfactory candidate for Finnian's hagiographer.[193]

Episode 6- St. Abbán's Punishment upon the Wrongdoers, his Healing Powers and his Saintly Brotherhood- Cormac Mac Diarmata of Uí Cennselaig, and SS. Bércán, Brendan, Flannán, Moling and Munnu. (§§33 and 37 of *VSA(D)* and Part 31 of §16 of *BA*)

On the other hand, Finnian and Abbán's contemporary relationship may embody concerns and interests originating from before Bishop Ailbe's time. While his reason for writing *VSA* seems to have originated largely from his concern in property rights, neither were such concerns an alien matter for pre-Norman hagiographical composition. In that regard, we may consider the eighth century dating Charles Doherty applied to the following section of *VSA*:[194]

§33 of *VSA(D)* and part 31 of §16 of *BA*

> 'On another occasion, a king of the Uí Cennselaig region named Cormac mac Diarmata tried to plunder Abbán's farm in Camaross. As two of Abbán's guards brought a huge vat of milk that they carried by thrusting a bar through the two loops carrying the milk vat, they suddenly realised they were unable to let go of the vat. Cormac and his guards seek forgiveness from Abbán, who forgave than. Cormac subsequently gave property called 'Find Mag', meaning 'The Bright Plain' to the senior St. Abbán.'

Receiving the property of Find Mag ultimately suggests that the writer's concerns lie in property rights.[195] In the *Vitae* of SS. Comgall of Bangor and Munnu (Fintan) of Taghmon,

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[192] Moreover, this may explain why St. Maedoc of Ferns does not appear as a contemporary of Abbán in *VSA*, as was queried by Charles Doherty; see: Doherty, Analysis of the "life" of Abbán, p. 4 of pp. 1-10. The possibility of Finnian's *Vita* being written before *VSA* is supported by the implication that the *VSA* author is already aware that he has received baptism. In terms of the dating attributed to Finnian's *Vita* however, little remains to be known; see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 319.

[193] At the same time, however, further insight into the contemporary concerns and interests of Finnian's *Vita* is awaiting examination. Hence, my theory remains tentative; but for the purpose of understanding the saint's contemporary relationship with Abbán in *VSA* and *Vita Sancti Finniani*, it applies a starting point from which we can carry out subsequent examination, Cf. Bitel, *Isle of the Saints*, p. 38.

[194] Doherty, Analysis of "life" of Abbán', pp. 4-5; *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 23-24; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 9; Vol. 2, pp. 8-9,. *BA* essentially provides an abbreviated version of the scene from *VSA*, with the only difference being that no name is given to the property in *BA*. Thus, we need not transcribe the edition and translation here.

[195] For a read on some older scholarship on Find Mag; see: Shearman, Vol. 4, Loca Patriciana: Part X: The Companions of St. Fiacc, p. 57, fn. 1.

Cormac mac Diarmata also appears as a contemporary.[196] Mac Diarmata's association with church properties is particularly recognisable from the former *Vita*, where 'he makes grants to churches in Leinster'.[197] However, the fact that the property of Find Mag is located within the Ferns Diocese and is 'only a short way distant' from Mag Arnaide in *VSA*, would imply that this scene is the work of Bishop Ailbe.[198] Considering the political power of the Uí Cennselaig and Uí Bairrche dynasties however, Doherty notes that this scene would belong to a period before the early ninth century when 'the Uí Bairrche and their churches were under severe pressure from the Uí Cennselaigh'.[199] This begs two questions as to whether the scene was written at a point between the twelfth to thirteenth century or derives from an earlier non-extant Life of Abbán:[200]

1. Does §33 originate with Bishop Ailbe's contemporary concerns; particularly due the property's locational point (that being close to Abbán's south Laigin foundation)?

2. Since the scene is reminiscent of a socio-political context that concerned the Uí Bairrche and Uí Cennselaig dynasties from the pre-Norman period, would this suffice to suggest that this scene was being composed from within the same context?

The problem Anthony Harvey identifies, moreover, lies in the following *VSA(D)* sentence, which he translates and dissects in the following manner: As they plundered Abbán's farm, two of Cormac's army men took ' "a large vessel of the best milk and cream, and placed a bar through its handles, and bore it between them" to their waiting commander. They carried this

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[196] Byrne, *Irish Kings*, pp. 136-137.

[197] Doherty, Analysis of the "life" of Abbán', p. 4 of pp. 1-10.

[198] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 336. Moreover, Mac Shamhráin's observation of Find Mag's geographical standpoint also clarifies that the Camaross townland being cited in *VSA(D)* is in Co. Wexford. This is necessary for distinguishing between another Camross location in Co. Laois; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=724* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). From what I can gather there appears to be no annalistic records of a Cormac mac Diarmata of the Uí Cennselaig or Uí Bairrche. I have found one reference to the name under 'The Annals of Connacht', which refers to an attack, of which a son of Cormac mac Diarmata was one of the victims, in the year 1237. The unlikeliness of this Cormac mac Diarmata being the individual from *VSA* or the *Vitae* of Comgall and Munnu is due to the fact that this Cormac mac Diarmata is identified as assuming the headship over a Mayo townland named Moylurg; see: *The Annals of Connacht-https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T100011/text014.html* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020).

[199] Doherty, Analysis of the "life" of Abbán', pp. 4-5. For a concise reference to the religious lifestyle during the early Christian period and before the Viking period; see: Cf. Byrne, *Irish Kings*, p. 149, where he notes 'warfare between monasteries, which had become territorial powers, was only too common a feature of Irish ecclesiastical life in the century before the Viking raids, while royal interest in the fortunes of a monastery had begun much earlier'. These affairs and concerns are ultimately expressed through such hagiographical scenes, like §33 from *VSA(D)*.

[200] One should note, that whether Cormac mac Diarmait's envisaged encounter with Abbán's resonates with a political concern contemporary with *VSA* or a pre-existing Life, demonstrates more broadly, that throughout this course of time, were important political transformations and reconfigurations.

vessel off from Abban's *cuvula*.'[201] Charles Plummer's and John Colgan's interpretation of the word implies that it means something like a 'vessel'; but then, to say that 'the plunderers took a vessel from Abbán's vessel' evidently makes no sense. From there, Harvey turned to the *BA* version of this scene, which in the same context says *hi ccuili Abáin* / 'into Abbán's kitchen'.[202] Since this sentence provides a more sensible translation than that from *VSA*, means that this *BA* reading is shorter, but more accurate. Subsequently, Harvey further noted that 'the similarity of form' between *cuvula* and *cuili* would suggest that the former is a 'Hiberno-Latin loan from Irish'.[203]

From there, Harvey returned to the previous theories of James F. Kenney and William Heist (which had been rejected by Ó Riain) which suggested that Abbán's original Life dates back to the ninth century. Since it has been argued by scholars such as Richard Sharpe and Máire Herbert that Irish hagiography from this period was mainly written in the vernacular, this would give reason to speculate upon the possibility of Abbán's pre-existing Life been written in Irish.[204] As I argued from the outset of this thesis however, Harvey's etymological study is better interpreted as an example of bilingualism.[205] Moreover, an example from *VSA* which could indicate the pre-existing Life of Abbán was written in Latin, is the reference to Pope Gregory in §20 of *VSA(D)*. According to Máire Herbert, Pope Gregory tends to appear in eighth century Hiberno-Latin Lives.[206] Once again, we are confronted with the question of whether Abbán's non-extant Life was written in Latin or the vernacular. While the former linguistic mode is supported by the literary representation of a famous Continental figure, Harvey's etymological study of the Latin word *cuvula* would imply that Bishop Ailbe was transcribing from an Irish source. Ultimately, there is little evidence to determine the language in which Abbán's original non-extant Life was written.

As for the scene (Cormac mac Diarmata plundering Abbán's farm in Camaross) from which such commentary has been elicited, we may now consider the manner in which the plot is contextualised. The key trope from this scene is the depiction of a vat of milk sticking to the

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[201] Harvey, Varia I, p. 229.
[202] *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 9; Vol. 2, p. 9.
[203] *BnÉ*, p. 230, fn. 7.
[204] *BnÉ*, p. 230, fn. 8 & 9. For a read of Sharpe's and Herbert's interpretations of hagiographical writing in Ireland; see: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, pp. 3-38; Herbert, The Latin and Vernacular Hagiography, pp. 327-360. For a differing and more sceptical interpretations on the origins and developments of Irish hagiography but also on the origin of Abbán's Life; see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 39-40; Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170.
[205] See: pp. 24-25 of this thesis.
[206] Herbert, The Representation of Gregory the Great in Irish Sources of the pre-Viking era, p. 182. Cf. Doherty, Analysis of the "life" of Abbán pp. 4-5, who suggests *VSA*, was originally written in the eighth century, implying that this was the period from which Abbán's pre-existing Life may have originated.

hands of Cormac mac Diarmata's army men.[207] The image of a wrongdoer being indirectly punished by a saint is also discernible from a scene where Abbán's livestock is stolen by a thief:[208]

§37 of *VSA(D)*

> 'Another time, a thief from Ossory stole a herd of Abbán's pigs. This thief was a nephew of St. Bercán. Abbán and Bercán went to confront the thief. In an attempt to stab Abbán, the thief had actually stabbed Bercán. As the thief attempted to stab Abbán a second time, the thiefs hands began to wither. Abbán put his hand on Bercán's wound to stop the bleeding and the wound closed immediately. As the thief witnessed Abbán saving Bercán from death, the thief begged for forgiveness from Abbán. The thief was required to do penance and his hands were subsequently purified.'

While Mac Diarmata's army men were unable to remove their hands from the vat, the hands of this thief (who attempted to kill Abbán) began to wither.[209] But of course the greatest call for concern, were the injuries that the thief inflicted upon his uncle Bercán, which almost cost Bercán his life.[210] Instead of handing property to Abbán, the thief was required to do penance for both Abbán and Bercán.[211] More generally, the fact that the thief's hands had fully recovered after carrying out penance, elicits the notion of a saint having the ability to heal, as well as punish; but this ultimately depends on the obedience of the saint's wrongdoer and the manner in which the saint approves of him.[212] Moreover, the thief's Ossory origins is also

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[207] Moreover, the trope of an object sticking to the hand of any enemy has only been traced to the Lives of two other Irish saints': SS. Berach and Patrick; see: Bray, *A List of Motifs*, p. 102.

[208] *VSA(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 25. This scene is not attested in *BA*. From the viewpoint of societal concerns in medieval Ireland, the theft of livestock was one of society's frequent problems on a more general level. For a read on the importance of pigs in the context of farming; see Fergus Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, pp. 79-88; Cf. p. 82 where Kelly notes 'the evidence of the saints' Lives suggests that young slaves were often given the job of herding the pigs and protecting them from robbers'. Moreover, the plot is akin to that from §33 from *VSA*; whereby there are wrongdoers (thief or a disobedient servant), who are punished directly or indirectly by the saint (whereby their hands stick to an object) and the wrongdoers seek forgiveness by praising the saint, which is fulfilled on the condition that they work under the saint or, as was the case in *VSA*, hand over land to the saint.

[209] This motif is undoubtedly centred on malediction and the trope of a saint punishing a thief and has been traced back to the Lives of thirteen other saints'; see: Bray, *A List of Motifs*, p. 101.

[210] A pedantic read of this trope would suggest that this is a near-death experience which Bercán suffered and was subsequently saved by Abbán. The fact that Bercán did not die in the first place means there was no need for resurrection; which may initially strike one as the subject-matter of this trope.

[211] Perhaps handing over property was not an ideal way for the hagiographer to end the storyline of this scene as it would result in conflict of interest between two saints: one from the Diocese of Ossory (Bercán) whilst the other (Abbán) being from the north of Laigin and also on the verge of becoming the patron saint of the south Laigin foundation of Mag Arnaide. The clash between the communities of both Laigin foundations is a matter which comes to light towards the end of Abbán's *Vita*; this matter will be addressed in chapter five of this thesis.

[212] Healing motifs will be addressed in chapter three of this thesis. Moreover, the fact that the thief had originally feared that Abbán had cursed him demonstrates that cursing is another form of punishment commonly inflicted upon wrongdoers; for a study of such matters from the viewpoint of Irish and English hagiography; see: Jesse

confirmed by his uncle's Ossory foundation of Cluain Immurchair; as is told in the Miscellaneous Items of genealogies.[213] Aside from its diocesan standpoint, no specific locational details are known of Bercán's foundation.[214] As a side-point, we may note that Laigin's and Ossory's political relationships can be traced as far back as the ninth century; particularly when 'Cerball mac Dúnlainge' a ninth century King of Ossory, ousted continuing Viking raids from the River Barrow in the south of Laigin. Subsequent attempts to claim power over Laigin kingship right up until the eleventh century, however, were largely unsuccessful.[215]

The implication that Bercán's depiction embodies part of Ossory's ongoing struggle to challenge Laigin kingship is nevertheless, contradicted by Abbán's and Bercán's brotherhood:[216]

The Latter Part of §37 of *VSA(D)*

> 'Abbán and Bercán developed a powerful brotherhood bond (*firmissimam fraternitatem*), as did their monks. Abbán and Bercán also shared similar brotherhood (*fraternitatem alia*) with Saints Brendan, Moling, Flannán and Munnu. On different occasions, as Abbán would return to these four saints (*reuersi sunt*), they would also kiss and greet each other (*salutantes et osculantes se invicem*). Many other people have also confirmed of this brotherhood (*aliis multis firmauerunt*).'

The attempt to incorporate three other saints, distracts from this implication too, but also from the idea of dynastic relationships between Laigin and Ossory being a focal point of concern in §37. As for the importance of saintly brotherhood; it does not indicate they are biological siblings, but rather, that they maintained close personal contact. Given the contemporary

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Harrington, 2017, PhD Thesis: *Vengeance and Saintly Cursing in the saints Lives of England and Ireland c. 1060-1215-https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1810/277930/J.%20Harrington%2c%20hardbound%20thesis%2c%2010.07.2017.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020).

[213] *CGSH*, p. 141, entry number 707.74. Bercán is identified in the following manner: 'Brocan Cluana Immorchair'.

[214] See for example: *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=2748* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020); Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 127.

[215] For more details of such events see: Byrne, *Irish Kings*, pp. 162-163; Cf. Doherty, Analysis of the "life" of Abbán, p. 8, who made the following remarks about the dynastic concerns (from the Norman period) that lay behind the composition of §37 of *VSA*:
'with the settlement of the Uí Cáellaide in the territory on the west bank of the Barrow to form a frontier against Munster encroachment, the site of New Ross and Rosbercon on the opposite bank was of the utmost strategic importance as was realised by the Normans when they came to the area. Chapter §xxxvii concerning the theft of pigs by the Osraige and the role of St. Bercon in their recovery is further evidence of the accommodation that evolved on both sides of the river'. For §37 of *VSA* moreover, Doherty, but also Byrne demonstrate more widely that this section could well have originated from an era encoded with concerns that came before Bishop Ailbe's time.

[216] This is a synopsis of the latter part of §37 of *VSA(D)*; See: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 25.

matters hagiography generally carries however, this scene may be encoded with an underlying message concerned with relationships between the church foundations of these saints. The aforementioned St. Moling is a notable example, due to his previous depiction as a chief Laigin saint from §2. §37 confirms that *VSA* attempted to envisage Abbán and Moling as contemporaries; despite the chronological errors it throws up in comparison to the death-dates of Kevin of Glendalough, Patrick and Bishop Íbar. The fact that Moling's foundation is located in the diocese of Glendalough but that the genealogies trace his ancestry to Uí Cennselaig raised uncertainty as to whether §2 does being its audience solely into 'the ambit of Killaban in county Laois'.[217] Thus, the possibility §§2 and 37 being mere reflections of the expansion of most of Abbán's Laigin cult may be considered; particularly since a primary foundation of another one of these saints (Munnu of Taghman) stands in the same diocesan boundary as Abbán's south Laigin foundation of Mag Arnaide.[218]

Like Abbán, Munnu is a well-attested saint with a full textual record of his cult.[219] Interestingly, Munnu also features in the *Vita* of Kevin (*Vita Sancti Coemgeni*), which depicts Munnu's messengers telling of a conversation with demons.[220] On a general note, this would suggest that local hagiographers tended to envisage saints from within the parameters of their province, as contemporaries of their subject, and that references to saints from outside regions were typically one of the more famous saints of Ireland. In that regard, St. Brendan is a noteworthy candidate and his appearance in more than several saints' Lives would support this observation.[221] In light of Abbán's power over the sea (in *VSA* and *BA*) however, Brendan was possibly chosen as one of Abbán's brothers in an underlying attempt to show awareness of Brendan's precedented connection with the sea.[222] This would suggest that the significance of Abbán's saintly brotherhood embodies more than the writer's concerns in Abbán's Laigin cult.

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[217] Doherty, Analysis of the "life" of Abbán, p. 9. For Moling's genealogical evidence; see: *CGSH*, p. 42, entry number 249 from the *Recensio Maior*; Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 487, fn. 1.

[218] At the same time, the fact that a Munster saint (Flannán) is also incorporated into this scene would imply that the significance of *VSA* does not solely revolve around Abbán's Laigin origins.

[219] For a biographical review of the life and cult of Munnu; see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 505-507.

[220] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 244-245, § 21; Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 506.

[221] See for example: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, p. 348, which shows the number of saints' Lives from the *Dubliniensis* collection in which Brendan appears as a contemporary. In contrast to Abbán moreover, Brendan's ancestry and cult mainly originates from Munster and Connacht. Thus, it is unlikely that Brendan's contemporaneous depiction in *VSA* bears an underlying connection between the cultural landmarks of Abbán and Brendan.

[222] Most apparently, this is due to the attestation of voyage literature that is attributed to Brendan. More details on the matter of *VSA* attempting to assert the pre-eminence of Abbán to Brendan will addressed in this chapter.

This indication may also be supported by Flannán's brotherhood too. St. Flannán of Killaloe, in Co. Clare, is an important saint, with a relatively abundant textual record; but like Abbán, Flannán's obit cannot be traced in the annals.[223] However, there is, as far as I know, no other evidence to suggest that Abbán and Flannán interacted with each other or had an important relationship. Aside from being saints of different provincial origins, neither saints share any other cultural connections. The reason for Flannán's contemporaneous depiction in *VSA* nevertheless, may derive from the fact that Bercán of Cluain Immurchair is depicted as an elderly contemporary of Flannán in *FÓComm..* and in *Vita Sancti Flannani*.[224] Therefore, it would seem that one of Bercán's contemporaries were being incorporated with some of Abbán's, into §37 of *VSA(D)*. The author's need to emphasise this saintly brotherhood circle is clear from the claim that 'many other people have also confirmed of this brotherhood'.[225] The Laigin origins of Moling and Munnu and the late twelfth century origin of Flannán's *Vita* would imply that these 'other people' came from the same era as Bishop Ailbe. Thus, his desire to tell his audience of the fame of Abbán's saintly brotherhood potentially embodied an underlying need to tell of the predominance of Abbán's cult, for confirming the worthiness of the saint (Abbán) who founded certain south Laigin properties. From this standpoint, it would appear that §37 was used as a form of testimonial evidence for Bishop Ailbe to claim that through Abbán, he was the rightful owner to a particular set of properties.[226]

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[223] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 346-349; Cf. Elva Johnston, 2004, (electronic pages), p. 11 of pp. 1-19, *Munster, Saints of (act. c.450-c700)- file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/Munster_saints_of_act._c.450-c.700%20(1).pdf* (Last Accessed 20th July 2020).

[224] In *Vita Sancti Flannani*, Bercán is depicted as Flannán's mentor (see for example: *VSH(S)*, pp. 285-286, §§ 8-11), whilst *FÓComm.* tells of how Bercán's foundation, (which is described as a meadow; hence: Cluain Immurchair) was named after Flannán, because Flannán used to come to visit Bercán's meadow and *co roibe for imorcor isin cluain* / 'so that he was carried through the meadow'; see: *Félire Óengusso* Commentary (*FÓComm.*), pp. 208-208. The twelfth century origin of *FÓComm.* supports the idea of Flannán's cult developing and originating from the eleventh and twelfth centuries; see: Elva Johnston, 2004, (electronic pages), p. 11 of pp. 1-19, *Munster, Saints of (act. c.450-c700)- file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/Munster_saints_of_act._c.450-c.700%20(1).pdf* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020); Cf. Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, pp. 26-27, which states the that Life of Flannán was 'written from scratch' in the mid-late twelfth century. Moreover, this contemporary relationship between Flannán and Bercán strikes a relatively similar parallel to that of Finnian's and Abbán's relationship. Like Flannán, Finnian receives a form of care from an elder saint (namely Abbán) and when he was also older, Abbán visited him.

[225] See the last cited section from this chapter.

[226] As I explained from the outset of this chapter, there are some particular south Laigin locations mentioned in Abbán's hagiographical account which suggest that they were taken by the Anglo-Norman Earl: William Marshal. The last episode to be discussed in this chapter will refer to a location that undoubtedly seems to be one which Bishop Ailbe was concerned about.

Episode 7- A Nationally Famous Craftsman builds a Church for Abbán- Gobán Saor (§42 of *VSA(D)* and §21 of *BA*)

In relation to the over-arching questions as to whether particular sections of *VSA* were written by Bishop Ailbe or derive from the original non-extant Life, we ought to consider the possibility of Bishop Ailbe only revising or modifying elements of a hagiographical section as opposed to a full section. In that regard, an element of Bishop Ailbe's revisions may be identifiable from the fact that the same character is mentioned in the *Vitae* of Abbán, but also the *Vita* of the patron saint of Ferns: Máedoc. The character in question is 'Gobán Soar', who, as the name implies, was a blacksmith. In *VSA* and *BA*, Abbán gives Gobán his eyesight back long enough for Gobán to build Abbán a church, but after Gobán had built the church, he went blind again.[227]

Gobán builds a basilica for St. Máedoc in *Vita Sancti Maedoc episcopi de Ferna*.[228] In Máedoc's *Vita* also, there is an emphasis upon the fact that Gobán is needed, as Máedoc lacked the skills for such craft.[229] Gobán and his role as a skilled craftsman, is perhaps better known from Irish mythology and folklore.[230] While this genre would imply that he was a fictional character, his association with Abbán and Máedoc would imply that he lived in the sixth century.[231] Nonetheless, by no means is this an effective way of assessing when Gobán may have existed as a figure in actuality; particularly due to the chronological inaccuracy that surrounds Abbán's potential time of existence. In this context, it is difficult to discern the elements from this scene which were potentially modified by Bishop Ailbe, but perhaps more difficult to believe that he would have been willing to make modifications to the section in the first place. There is little or no opportunity in this scene to express his concerns in property

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[227] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 27. *BA* essentially provides an abbreviated version of this scene; see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 10; Vol. 2, pp. 9-10. In relation to the depiction of Gobán being blinded, Dorothy Ann Bray identified this as a trope where a saint heals a man blinded by an angel, to which she also traced to the *Vita* of Ailbe of Emly; see: 1992, *A List of Motifs*, p. 94. For a Latin read of this section from Ailbe's *Vita*; see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 48; For an English translation; see: De Paor, *St. Patrick's World*, pp. 227-243. In *VSA* however, we are told it is saints who blinded Góban. Also, Abbán does not necessarily heal Gobán as Gobán subsequently goes blind again after building a church for Abbán.

[228] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, p. 159, §§ 46-48.

[229] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, p. 159, §§ 46-48. Cf. Bitel, *Isle of the Saints*, p. 135, which attempts to show from a societal viewpoint that saints tended not to conduct such laborious work and lacked much of the skills for such work. Cf. *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. xcvii-xcix.

[230] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. clxiii-clxiv. Cf. Ní Bhrolcháin, *An Introduction to Early Irish Literature*, p. 27.

[231] See: Ní Dhonnchadha, M'airiuclán hi Túaim Inbir: Speaker and Setting, pp. 75-94, which examines the origin of a poem called: *M'airiuclán hi Túaim Inbir*. This poem also refers to 'Gobán', and Ní Dhonnchadha considers the extent to which the 'Gobán' name from this poem represents a historical person or the 'Gobán Sáer'. See in particular pp. 90-91, which refers to the Gobán mentioned in the *Vitae* of Abbán, Máedóc and Moling, which explains the difficulty in determining whether this Gobán was a historical individual.

rights; particularly since the lack of a placename means that the setting is unidentifiable in this scene.[232] On that note, it is more likely that Gobán's contemporary relationship with Abbán is a fossil of the saint's non-extant Life. In that regard, the concerns and interests of the hagiographer of the non-extant Life merit some thought. Admittedly, they are more difficult to discern than those of Bishop Ailbe's, given Pádraig Ó Riain's scholarly contribution on Bishop Ailbe's interest in Abbán.[233]

Episode 8 - Important Individuals who were always Firm Believers in the Christian Faith-SS. Colm Cille and Brendan (§§45-46 of *VSA(D)*)

Nevertheless, there are certain scenes that can be tentatively traced back to the work of the original hagiographer. Perhaps the most apparent scenes to consider are those which depict the saint's contemporary as one of the more famous saints. Speaking largely from Sharpe's and Herbert's viewpoint that the *Vitae* from *VSH* are later copies of original pre-Norman Lives, the fact that concerns with saintly status are commonplace in Irish hagiography would suggest that the practise is one of the earliest traditions of hagiographical writing, which emerged from the pre-Norman period. The following scene presents a classic example of an attempt to assert the saint's pre-eminence to that of a well-known and important saint; namely: Colm Cille.[234]

§45 of *VSA(D)* and §24 of *BA*

> 'Colm Cille visited Abbán and asked Abbán to prayed for his monks to ensure they would be saved, which was fulfilled. Later, Colm Cille witnessed an angel visiting Abbán while he was praying. The angel assured Abbán that his monks and the monks of Colm Cille would obtain rest in Heaven'.

Abbán is evidently depicted as the saint with higher status in this section. The fact that Colm Cille pleads in his request, suggests that Abbán's prayers are regarded as more noteworthy and thus, uphold a stronger ability to ensure another saint and his monks would ascend to

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[232] However, the fact that the subsequent scene in *VSA(D)* refers to a place located in Co. Kerry (See: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 333) would support the idea that Gobán's contemporaneous depiction in Abbán's *Vita* elicits the saint's south Munster cult.

[233] See: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170. Cf. my discussion under 'The Genesis of *VSA(D)*-Revisited' section of this chapter, where I attempt to explain why *VSA* may not be the original Life of Abbán, as originally proposed by Ó Riain: see: p. 159.

[234] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 28-29; *BA* presents an abbreviated, but incomplete version of this section; see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 10; Vol. 2, p. 10. The final part of *BA* does not survive. Colm Cille's death-death according to *Chronicon Scotorum* for instance, suggests that he died in 595; see: *Chronicon Scotorum-https://celt.ucc.ie//published/T100016/index.html* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020).

Heaven.[235] Moreover, the inventory nature of this scene is augmented by the fact that Abbán receives no mention in Colm Cille's hagiographical dossier.[236] Outside of Abbán's dossier however, Colm Cille is an important and famous saint, not merely because his hagiography can be dated as far back as the seventh century, but also because he founded monasteries like Iona, which subsequently expanded in size and importance and became part of 'the Columban monastic community'.[237] Thus, it is through the lens of Abbán's hagiographer that this significance is not accounted for. In that regard, we may consider the possibility of Abbán's non-extant Life being produced during an era when Colm Cille's monastic settlements were developing into major ecclesiastical sites. Hence, it may be understandable why a monk or provost from the monastery of Abbán, would have been tempted to bring down the fame of Colm Cille in an attempt to elevate the cult of a comparatively lesser-known saint throughout the parameters of Laigin, and perhaps also Munster.[238] Alternatively, it could also represent later tensions with Columban churches such as Kells.[239]

But for Abbán's hagiographer to attribute to Abbán the same prestige, in a manner which appeared convincing to his audience, he obviously had to be aware of Colm Cille's hagiography.[240] Indeed, it is not only awareness, but also familiarity with Colm Cille's dossier which Abbán's hagiographer shows; most notably through the motifs and tropes concerning angels. While hagiographical depictions of angels are commonplace, the fact that the majority of scenes from *Vita Sancti Columbae III* includes angels would imply that this was the particular source Abbán's hagiographer was using as an exemplar for what is now §45 of *VSA(D)*.[241] But perhaps one scene from *Vita Sancti Columbae III* which is particularly reminiscent of §45 of *VSA(D)*, is one which envisages St. Brendan of Birr witnessing an

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[235] The depiction of Abbán 'praying harder than his physical strength could endure' would suggest that Abbán is a relatively old man at this stage of his life.

[236] See for example: Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*.

[237] Herbert, Latin and Vernacular Hagiography, pp. 333-334; For a more comprehensive historical and textual study on the hagiography and monastic development of Colm Cille's cult; see: Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*.

[238] The idea of Abbán having a provost running his monastery is recognisable from Episode 5, where Abbán founded the monastery of Ballyvourney and surrendered it to St. Gobnait (this scene will be explored in more detail in chapter three of this thesis, where we will also consider the numerous other monasteries Abbán founded in south Munster). The idea will also be recognisable in chapter five of this thesis, which tells of a provost of Abbán's monastery in Mag Arnaide.

[239] For important secondary works on the significance of Columban churches; see: Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*; Cf. Clancy, Iona v. Kells: Succession, Jurisdiction and Politics in the Columban Familia in the later tenth century, pp. 89-101.

[240] See: Ó Corráin, *The Irish Church, Its Reform and the English Invasion*, p. 3, where he concisely sums up how hagiographical writing operated in society and how its meaning was interpreted by the audience: 'hagiographers borrowed miraculous fictions from one text to another, presenting them as historical facts that proved the virtues and intercessory powers of their founder, to whom the ignorant faithful prayed and gave gifts.'

[241] Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, pp. 205-234.

apparition of holy angels walking with Colm Cille over a plain.[242] Hence, the depiction of a saint witnessing a saint of greater importance being accompanied by angels is the same trope applied to §45 of *VSA(D)*, only in §45, Colm Cille is envisaged as the witness, and thus, a saint of lesser importance.

Aside from tropes concerning angels, the aforementioned scenes from Episodes 3 and 4 which envisage Abbán's power over sea, bear notable similarities to *Vita Sancti Columbae*, specifically §§12 and 13 of *Vita Sancti Columbae II* which attribute Colm Cille power to still a sea storm and depict his companions asking for help from Colm Cille during another sea storm.[243] While the depiction of a sea storm being stilled was the successful outcome in §12 of *Vita Sancti Columbae II*, the stilling of a sea-storm resulted in the stilling of the boats in which one hundred and fifty clerics stood in *VSA(D)*, which was eventually solved after God advised them to choose Abbán as their leader. But perhaps the most apparent candidate to consider for the origin of Abbán's power of the sea, is one for whom voyage literature is attested; St. Brendan of Clonfert. As Johnathan Wooding has shown, there are notable analogies between Colm Cille's dossier to that of Brendan's, but also his voyage literature, such as *Navigatio Brendani* which are discernible.[244] While *VSA* attempts to place the status of Colm Cille below Abbán in scenes contextualised by motifs and tropes concerning angels and the sea, the importance of Abbán's power over the sea is underplayed in the following scene:[245]

§46 of *VSA(D)*

> 'One time, Abbán visited St. Brendan the navigator, who told Abbán about what he had seen in the ocean under the command of God. This sacred conversation lasted for seven days. The author then tries to demonstrate that Abbán, Brendan, the monks mentioned in the previous section and other saints mentioned in Abbán's Life are prime examples of people who always remained firm in the Christian faith throughout their entire life. After Abbán and Brendan prayed for one another, they gave each other a kiss to symbolise their inner peace, with the blessing of God.'

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[242] Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, pp. 207-208. The depiction of angels walking over the sea with Abbán from Episode 3 could also be perceived as another example of Abbán's hagiographer asserting Abbán's pre-eminence. It is worth noting also that St. Brendan of Birr is a different individual to the more famous St. Brendan of Clonfert, who is particularly famous for his association with the sea; as I indicated on some occasions.
[243] Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, pp. 163-164.
[244] Wooding, St. Brendan's Boat: Dead Hides and the Living Sea in Columban and Related Hagiography, pp. 77-92; For a read on the contextual significance of Brendan's *Vita* and voyage literature and the references to food and diet in *Navigatio Brendani*; see: Wooding, Fasting, flesh and the body in St. Brendan dossier, pp. 161-176.
[245] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 29.

As I mentioned earlier in Episode 6, this ultimately acknowledges Brendan's precedented position in relation to the sea. This scene may also be perceived as an attempt, by Abbán's hagiographer, to compensate for Brendan's absence from the scenes pertaining to Abbán's ongoing association with the sea throughout *VSA*.[246] Equally so, may the depiction of Abbán and Brendan giving each other a kiss to symbolise their inner peace, also serve as a reminder of their saintly brotherhood.[247] Despite Brendan's apparent precedence, §46 still attempts to show that Abbán bears an important connection with the sea nevertheless. The fact that 'a scared conversation' between both saints lasted for almost a week, is a prime example.[248] However, the implication that the depiction of saintly power over the sea is a trope that originates from Brendan's voyage literature is unlikely. This is because *Navigatio Brendani* used earlier voyage episodes from Brendan's *Vita* and perhaps those from the *Vitae* of the aforementioned Colm Cille and Ailbe of Emly, as exemplars for its composition.[249] As for the dating ascribed to *Navigatio Brendani*, it ranges from the mid-early eighth century to the early ninth.[250] The fact that Brendan's *Vita* is believed to be earlier would suggest that the prominent depiction of saintly power over the sea was a later elaboration, from which Brendan consequently became the protagonist saint in an Irish milieu.[251]

As for the potential pre-Norman (ninth-to eleventh-century) era from which Abbán's non-extant Life was produced, this may allow room for speculatively stating the possibility of the trope (saintly power over the sea) from *VSA(D)* taking some degree of precedence over the trope's depiction from *Navigatio Brendani*.[252] Even so, it would still be difficult to understand why Abbán's hagiographer was willing to prominently associate Abbán with the sea; particularly since his primary foundations (in contrast to Brendan's and Ailbe's for instance) are not coastal locations.[253] On a general note, this circumstance serves as an unfortunate

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[246] Moreover, Brendan does not receive any mention in *BA*.

[247] See p. 131 of this thesis.

[248] The presence of angels from the beginning and throughout this dialogue demonstrates, more generally, how angel motifs are frequently used as points of literary transition too. A similar observation was made by Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin in relation a *VSA(D)* scene (§27) which depicts an angel advising and directing Abbán to progress on to the region of Uí Cennselaig, which was foretold to be the place of his resurrection; see: Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 335.

[249] Wooding, Fasting, flesh and the body in the St Brendan dossier, p. 161-162; Cf. Herbert, Literary Sea-Voyages and Early Munster Hagiography, pp. 182-190, for a read on the significance of Ailbe's dossier.

[250] Wooding, Fasting, flesh and the body, p. 162, fn. 4; Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 115, fn. 6.

[251] Wooding, Fasting flesh and the body, p. 162.

[252] The possibility of Abbán's non-extant Life being a vernacular Life from the ninth century is only supported by Anthony Harvey's work on a Hiberno-Latin word from *VSA(D)* being a borrowing from the Irish word *cúile*; whereas, the possibility of the non-extant Life being written in Latin is only supported by Herbert's observation of Pope Gregory typically appearing in eighth century Hiberno-Latin Lives; see: pp. 128-129 of this thesis.

[253] This is a point elucidated by Pádraig Ó Néill, in an overall attempt to discern the significance of Abbán's charm/prayer for mariners; see: Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 106. More generally, Ó Néill's point demonstrates

reminder of the fact that the precise dating of most saints' hagiographical dossiers await much examination. This inhibits us from drawing to closer conclusions in relation to the precise sources from which hagiographers were borrowing motifs and tropes and of course, the contemporary standpoints from which hagiographers were conducting such work. The very fact that the dossiers of some of Abbán's contemporaries, such as Flannán of Killaloe and Munnu of Taghmon have not received scrutiny, demonstrates more generally that the scholarship has by no means reached a conclusion in discerning the significance of hagiography within Ireland.[254] As Máire Herbert has shown nevertheless, while 'an agenda for research' awaits our scholarly attention, the hagiographical research which has been conducted represents 'a record of achievement'.[255]

Thus, on a more positive note, we may offer one final thought for the purpose of Brendan's and Colm Cille's contemporaneous depictions in Abbán's hagiographical account. Despite what the hagiographers' underlying reasons were for envisaging both saints as Abbán's contemporaries, their depiction nevertheless, contributes to the message that Abbán's hagiographer expressed in the exhortatory scene from §10 of *VSA(D)*: 'to always believe in Jesus Christ'.[256] As he further states towards the end of §46; Abbán, Brendan, Colm Cille and his monks and the other saints mentioned throughout *VSA(D)* serve as 'prime examples of people who always remained firm in the Christian faith throughout their entire life'. Consider some of the fearful and wrongful events we have witnessed so far in Abbán's Life; the tsunami-like wave and the devil-like creatures attempting to kill Abbán or Cormac mac Diarmata plundering Abbán's farm in Camaross; the outcomes always served Abbán well due to God's inevitable intervention and Abbán's ability to enact God's power. Thus, in an overall attempt to depict Abbán 'as an exemplar of holiness', the author is attempting to teach his audience

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that despite the commonplace nature of such motifs and tropes, they may bear a notable connection with a selected number of saints, whose cults relate to the general significance of the motives and tropes. Earlier, Charles Plummer believed the saint's association with water bore some connection to the possibility of his name meaning river, if read as *abann*; see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. xxiv-xxv. In chapter three of this thesis, we will also explore some scenes in which the storylines are connected with rivers.

[254] More generally, the fact that many Irish saints' cults and hagiographical dossiers await close scrutiny, but also await an edition and/or translation, means that Ó Riain's 'Dictionary of Irish Saints' remains the main source for consulting knowledge of the numerous individual saints. On the one hand, this monograph is an outstanding contribution for identifying saints and acquiring a general biographical overview of their cults and textual profiles. However, because Ó Riain has argued that the extant *Vitae* were written in their original form during the Norman period, means that he tends to date most saints' Lives, which have not received earlier scrutiny, to the eleventh and twelfth centuries; see for example, his discussion on St. Munnu of Taghmon: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 505.

[255] Herbert, Hagiography, p. 90.

[256] See p. 108 of this thesis.

that remaining firm in the Christian faith will guide you through such terrible events, and the following scene is another classic example:[257]

Episode 9- The Resurrection of a Murdered Individual- Conall from Senboth Ard

§47 of *VSA(D)*

> In Senboth Ard (Old High Cottage) in the Uí Cennselaig region, Abbán's friend 'Conall' was murdered by enemies. When Abbán heard that Conall was killed, his heart was filled with pain. Abbán was now a very old man, and a great crowd of people came to fetch Conall's body for Abbán's monastery. Abbán then went to the place where Conall's body was currently laid out. Abbán prayed to God with all of his heart and turned to Conall's body telling Conall to rise and speak. This was fulfilled. Conall then explained that angels and demons had fought over his soul, when a supreme angel arrived and announced that Abbán had asked God to bring him back to life. Conall then offered to give his sons, daughters, slaves and also his own region to God and Abbán. The author then informs us that Conall's seed will service the monastery of Abbán up until the present day of the author of Abbán's Life.'

The depiction of Abbán resurrecting his friend 'Conall' undoubtedly demonstrates the saint's ability to enact God's power.[258] One feature that would most certainly have struck the hagiographer's audience as fearful, was Conall's ability to recall seeing angels and demons fight over his soul, after his resurrection.[259] However, the resurrection of the dead is perhaps one of the commonest tropes from Irish hagiography, having been traced back to the Lives of thirty-three other saints in Irish hagiography', indicating that §47 presents nothing more than commonplace miracle motifs.[260] At the same time however, it is noteworthy the scene is set in Senboth Ard, a location which is perhaps better known for the story of the continuously resurrecting ducks from another relatively contemporary, but more famous source than *VSA*,

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[257] Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*, p. 1; *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 29-30. In *VSA(S)*, the placename (Senboth Ard) is not mentioned; the *Vita* merely tells that Conall's death and subsequent resurrection took place in the region of Uí Cennselaig; see: *VSH(S)*, p. 272, see §42.

[258] Cf. Doherty, Some Aspects of Hagiography as a Source for Irish Economic History, pp. 313-314, which observes that the reference to 'sons and slaves' being granted to Abbán is an example of church grants being made in the medieval period more generally. For the precise Latin wording of this reference; see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 29-30.

[259] For a read on the historical and philosophical perceptions of the soul in early medieval Ireland, see: Herbert, The Seven Journeys of the Soul, pp. 1-11.

[260] Bray, *A List of Motifs*, pp. 118-119. Of course, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, from section 1: 3-4 of the Bible was the most original exemplary source for Irish hagiographers; despite the (in)direct manner in which the hagiographers were borrowing scenes from the Bible.

namely, *Topographia Hibernica* (*TH*), written by Gerald of Wales in the late twelfth century.[261] This would imply that the author's desire to invent the story of Conall in *VSA*, may have derived some of his inspiration from the story of the continuously resurrecting ducks from *TH*. The fact that *TH* is a late twelfth century source, would further indicate that the story of Conall was invented by Bishop Ailbe of Ferns, of which he subsequently embedded into a pre-existing Life of Abbán.

As for the individual whom Abbán resurrects, nothing else appears to be known of a man named 'Conall' as a historical or attested literary figure.[262] Potentially, Conall was merely an invented character, whose role contributed to part of the author's continuous attempt to promote Abbán's saintly status. However, the implication that this work was the invention of Bishop Ailbe also becomes apparent when we consider the scenes that occur before and after the story of Conall's resurrection. In the preceding scenes, the author reminiscences on the earlier memories of Abbán's Life and explains to his audience how they demonstrate why one should always remain firm in the Christian faith. This would imply that the author had completed his discussion on the saint's life. The fact that the scenes which occur after §47, tell of Abbán's death, would suggest that Abbán's death was the subject matter the author intended to discuss directly after reminiscing on the saint's life. From this perspective, the story of Conall appears to have been shoehorned into the saint's Life, because it fragments and disguises that transition. The implication, therefore, is that the story of Conall was invented and inserted into an already existing narrative structure from an original non-extant Life of Abbán.

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[261] This story tells about ducks in a pond in Senboth Ard which were under the protection of St. Colmán ua Fíachrach. One time, a Norman archer, alongside Dermot Mac Murrough (King of Laigin) struck an arrow in one of these ducks. The archer 'burned out three fires and spent until midnight trying to cook it' in a pot, but the duck remained as raw as when he first put the duck into the pot. Ultimately, the archer was unsuccessful and subsequently 'perished miserably', see: *TH*, pp. 62-63. Cf. Johnston, The Saints of North Wexford, Forthcoming, which explains that such stories purported to teach local communities about the power of saints. In the case of Colmán ua Fíachrach of Senboth Ard, if one attempts to harm his ducks, the saint upholds the spiritual ability to indirectly punish the 'wrong-doers'. This story is also attributed to Colmán under his feast-day (27 October) in late twelfth *Félire Óengusso* Commentary (*FÓComm.*), see: *FÓComm.*, pp. 228-229. For the date of *FÓComm.* and the sources used for the compilation of the martyrological source, see: Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, pp. 183-203. This would imply that Bishop Ailbe of Ferns received the inspiration to write about the story of Conall in Senboth Ard in *VSA* from *FÓComm.*, particularly since 27 October is also one of Abbán's feast-days in the most of the Irish martyrologies, including *FÓComm.* As we will later see, however, there are other scenes from *VSA* which would suggest that Gerald's probable influence on *VSA*, can be discerned from more than one scene.
[262] See: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, pp. 352-353, which shows that more than several different individuals named Conall appear in the *Vitae* of the *Dubliniensis* collection. Thus, the ubiquitous appearance of the name 'Conall' lessens our attempts to discern more detail about his own individual identity; Cf. O'Brien, Old Irish Personal Names, p. 232, which shows that the name 'Conall' is one of the commonest in the entirety of the Irish record more generally.

Hence, while it may seem increasingly apparent that Bishop Ailbe invented the story of Conall's resurrection in Senboth Ard, further attempts to recognise his desire for writing this story become even clearer when we consider the location in which the story is set. Initially, we may note that his desire to associate Abbán with Senboth Ard may stem from the fact that the foundation is located in the Ferns Diocese.[263] Furthermore, after identifying Senboth Ard as the modern-day parish of 'Templeshanbo' in Co. Wexford, Goddard Henry Orpen noted that there were two manors in this location, for which Bishop Ailbe and William Marshall were both at odds with one another as to whom the manors rightfully belonged.[264] As Pádraig Ó Riain's article on 'the genesis' of Abbán's Life suggests, this would explain why Bishop Ailbe would want to write about Senboth Ard in the Life of a saint who's south Laigen foundation stands in the Ferns Diocese.[265] It suggests Bishop Ailbe used his revised version (*VSA*) of Abbán's Life as a form of charter evidence for re-claiming the manors. Consequently, however, Bishop Ailbe was unsuccessful after a ruling in a Dublin court in the early thirteenth century.[266] Thus, given Bishop Ailbe's probable familiarity with the genre of hagiography and 'their role in affirming title to property', he was the probable inventor of a scene (§47) contextualised by one of the commonest hagiographical tropes, but also set in a place (Senboth Ard), most famous for its reference from *TH* and of course, where his beloved manors were located.[267]

Conclusion

As for the individual whom Abbán resurrected, Conall was perhaps one of the most fictional characters of all Abbán's contemporaries. This is because he appears as one of the few secular individuals in Abbán's life, who bears no fame as a historical or literary figure outside of Abbán's hagiographical dossier. Thus, his role was merely to contribute to the creation of a classic hagiographical trope, encoded with Bishop Ailbe's contemporary concerns in property rights. More broadly, this scene demonstrated the importance of considering the probability of Bishop Ailbe working from an original non-extant Life of Abbán when producing the early

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[263] See for example: *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=4969* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020).

[264] Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans*, pp. 29-31. The manors, however, are unnamed, meaning we are unable to identify which properties and whether or not the manors are still standing today; see: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 164-165.

[265] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 164-165. Cf. Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 333-334, which tells that Templeshanbo (referred to as Senboth Ard in *VSA(D)*) is the setting of a scene (§25 of the *Dubliniensis* version) from the *Vita* of Máedoc of Ferns, which depicts Máedoc visiting Templeshanbo, where a local boy became Máedoc's disciple. Potentially, the attempt to insert the location into the *Vita* of a Ferns saint was part of Bishop Ailbe's attempt to prevent William Marshal from taking the manors.

[266] See: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 164-165. Cf. Ó Néill, The Norman Invasion and Irish Literature, p. 178.

[267] For the scholarly quote on Bishop Ailbe's familiarity with the role of hagiography; see: Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máil Muaid, p. 333.

thirteenth century *VSA*. As for the scenes examined in this chapter, subtle indications were expressed in relation to whether certain scenes originated from the non-extant Life or from the twelfth to thirteenth century modifications made by Bishop Ailbe. At this point of the thesis, it would be too early to begin pondering and tentatively suggesting which of these sections are original and which were invented or revised by Bishop Ailbe. Consideration needs to be attributed to the contextual significance of the sections first and foremost. In this chapter, we attempted to explore the significance of Abbán's contemporaneous relationships; that being; the individuals depicted as his elder and younger contemporaries and those of a similar age-group. As regularly noted throughout this thesis, the key problem involved in discerning Abbán's time of existence lies in the fact that there is no annalistic evidence for his year of death. Hence, the only means by which we can estimate when Abbán lived is by comparing the obits of his contemporaries, as did Charles Plummer.[268]

However, of the eighteen individuals depicted as Abbán's contemporaries, the death dates of more than ten of these individuals are unattested. All five of the individuals whose death dates are attested in the annals are saints; three of whom appear frequently as contemporaries in other saints' Lives: Patrick, Colm Cille and Brendan. While the latter two saints died towards the end of the end of the sixth century, Patrick's activity is linked towards the early-mid and late fifth century. This ultimately shows why it is impossible that these saints could have been contemporaries, let alone contemporaries of Abbán. Moreover, the fact that their depicted associations with Abbán are based in settings contextualised by miracle motifs and tropes advises that their depiction in Abbán's hagiographical account is invented, largely for asserting the pre-eminence of Abbán and thus elevating his saintly status. As for Kevin and Í bar however, the fact that their connections can be discerned from Abbán's genealogical record, as we examined in chapter one of this thesis, means they bear more of an underlying connection with Abbán. While their biological and contemporary relationships from Abbán's hagiographical records contrast and often contradict each other, the probability of both saints being cultural embodiments of Abbán's north and south Laigin foundations suggests their connection with Abbán's cult may be genuine.

Moreover, this shows that the overall attempt in this chapter was less concerned with discerning the extent to which such individuals were actual contemporaries of Abbán. Rather the broader concern was to consider why such individuals were being depicted as Abbán's contemporaries.

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[268] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. xxv.

The vast majority of these individuals were saints, and despite the Laigin origins of Abbán's primary foundations, a notable number of these saints' cults originate in south Munster. For instance, while the textual profile of some of these Munster saints, such as Gobnait would not be as wide-ranging as those of SS. Fínán or Flannan, Abbán's founding and surrendering of a monastery to Gobnait would suggest that their connection may bear some underlying truth, particularly when such hagiographical scenes are not contextualised by miracle motifs and tropes. As for the saints for whom Lives are attested, the extent to which Abbán was depicted as a contemporary in his/her Life provided a means through we could discern a shared interest and concern between their hagiographers. St. Finnian of Clonard was the key candidate here; as both Finnian's hagiographical dossier and that of Abbán's agreed that Abbán was an elder contemporary who baptised Finnian.

Overall, the attempt to discern the significance of Abbán's contemporaneous relationships not only identified who his contemporaries were; but through scrutinising the contexts in which his various contemporary relationships were told, this approach made it possible to perceive how and why certain miracle motifs and tropes were being employed in Abbán's Life. On a broader scale, this chapter went beyond merely re-iterating how such miracle motifs and tropes are commonplace in the Irish hagiographical record. This was made possible by the fact that this chapter is part of a dossier study, whereby the aim is to critically examine the origin(s) and development of Abbán's cult but also that of his textual profile. A smaller study would be less capable of discerning the same level of findings. Moreover, this chapter also sufficed to identify the main Irish regions in which Abbán's cult is most prominent; namely, Munster and Laigin. This will prove to be an important matter of concern in the next chapter, where a large number of the geographical locations mentioned in Abbán's hagiographical dossier are located in Munster; a region for which its connection with the cult of Abbán remains to be studied in depth.

Chapter 3

The Cult of Saint Abbán in Ireland

Introduction: St. Abbán's Geographical Origins

In any attempt to discern knowledge of the identity and textual profile of a saint, the first source of information to consult, typically concerns the saint's place(s) of patronage and dynastic lineage.[1] As noted from the outset of chapter one of this thesis, both matters suggest that Abbán was solely a saint of Laigin origin.[2] Arguably, this is why the origins of Abbán's Munster cult have been largely ignored by the limited number of scholars who have drawn attention to the saint.[3] Indeed, some of these Munster locations have already been examined in chapter two of this thesis; specifically those which identify Abbán's contemporaries. The Munster locations which serve as the geographical settings for Abbán's contemporaneous relationships include Cell Achaid Conchinn; a monastery which Abbán built and where he prophesised of St. Fínán; and the monastery of Ballyvourney which Abbán founded and later surrendered to St. Gobnait.[4]

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[1] See for example: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, where the majority of his biographical discussions on saints begins with a reference to the saint's patronage and a review of his/her genealogical record. See for example: p. 51, fn. 1-2 where Abbán's patronage and paternal and maternal ancestry is the first matter Ó Riain comments on, as part of his biographical discussion on Abbán.

[2] Details of five different types of family members and ancestral figures from Abbán's genealogical record are considered in this chapter: Abbán's father, paternal lineage, his mother, his maternal uncle, his brothers. Despite the contradictory depictions that Abbán's genealogical and hagiographical record provide for the saint's father (Lagnig m. Cainnig; Cormac of the Dál Messin Corb dynasty), mother (Mella daughter of Lugna; Cainech Abbad daughter Lugna) and maternal uncle (Íbar of Beggerin Island, son of Lugna; Kevin of Glendalough); the origins of these individuals can ultimately be traced back to different parts of the province of Laigin. Moreover, since Abbán's ancestry and paternal connection with the Dál Messin Corb and Patrick's prophesy from the Uí Cennselaig have already been discussed in chapters one and two of this thesis, we need not ponder both matters in any great detail in this chapter.

[3] After Ó Riain proposed that *VSA* was the original Life of Abbán and was written by Bishop Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid of Ferns in the early thirteenth century (see: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170), his theory has since served as the main foundational platform for subsequent focus drawn to Abbán or Irish hagiography more generally; see for example: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, pp. 349-363; Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 333-338; Ó Néill, St Abbán's Charm, p. 100. Since Ó Riain directed little focus towards Abbán's Munster cult, it is thus, understandable how and why they have escaped notice amongst such scholars. To my knowledge, Charles Doherty is the only scholar to acknowledge the lack of scholarly interest in Abbán's Munster cult; particularly where he identified the notable number of Munster placenames from *VSA* as being one of the main reasons for why Bishop Ailbe of Ferns cannot have been the original author of Abbán's Life; see: Doherty, Analysis of the "life" of Abbán', p. 4. Nevertheless, some of the older scholarship which has referred to some of the Munster locations from *VSA* and *BA*, will be addressed throughout this chapter.

[4] The references to these Munster locations were discussed under Episode 5 from pp. 120-127 of this thesis. Cf. my discussion on the etymology of Cell Achaid Conchinn suggesting that a saint by the name Conchinn was the patron saint of this foundation, although neither *VSA* nor *BA* give her any mention. Furthermore, it may be peculiar that Cell Achaid Conchinn is identified as a *monasterium* (monastery) when the first element of the placename in fact indicates that this was a church (*cell*); see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 17. Interestingly, *BA* merely identifies the monastic site as a boundary or district of territory in naming the monastery as: crích Eachach Coinchinn; see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 8; Vol. 2, p. 7; Cf. *Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language (eDIL)- http://dil.ie/12912* (Last Accessed 25th July 2020), for an English translation of the word *crích*, which essentially suggests that 'crích' from crích Eachadh Coinchinn refers to the topographical confinements of the 'plain of Conchinn' (Eachadh

Aside from Abbán's prophecy, his depiction as a founder and builder of monasteries is the most conspicuous theme in this section from *VSA* and *BA*; whereas most of the other scenes examined in chapter two, were largely contextualised by narratives on the performance of miracles.[5] This has implications for considering the extent to which Abbán's cult emerged and developed throughout Munster in actuality.[6]

The fact that Abbán's Munster cult is unlikely to bear any connections with the political affairs of Bishop Ailbe of Ferns, would also suggest this cult originates from a different milieu of hagiographical interests and concerns.[7] The probability of this milieu pre-dating that of Bishop Ailbe's and the absence of conventional motifs and tropes may also be perceived as a form of secondary evidence for Abbán as a historical individual, having 'a physical existence' in the province of Munster.[8] On a general but relevant note, attempts to evaluate such significance poses a challenging task. This is because hagiographical writing tends to be of an inventive nature and essentially ascribes the same narrative structures to most saints' lives composed in Ireland, but also overseas.[9] As noted from the outset of chapter two of this thesis, this fabricates much of the saint's identity.[10] Therefore, a saint's dossier is not to be employed as a source of primary evidence for his/her real time of existence; but rather as evidence for the saint's cult, which is subsequently corrupted by the contemporary concerns of the author.[11] Under such

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Coinchinn). A similar scenario surrounds *VSA*'s reference to Abbán's north Laigin foundation: Cell Abbáin. Its significance will be examined in further detail in this chapter.

[5] For a read of this scene from *VSA(D)*; see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 17-18, § 22. For a read of this scene in the vernacular and in an English translation (from *BA*); see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 8, §11; Vol. 2, p. 7, §11.

[6] As Alan Thacker has shown; for a saint's cult to emanate throughout a particular region, there would need to be evidence of the saint having 'a physical existence' or a prominent connection with 'a site' from this region in the first place; see: Thacker, Loca Sanctorum, The Significance of Place in the Study of Saints, p. 1.

[7] In addition, as I noted from the outset of chapter two of this thesis, its lack of relevance to Bishop Ailbe's affairs also suggest that Abbán's Munster cult derives from an original non-extant Life of Abbán; Cf. Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 165-166, which briefly acknowledges that the scenes pertaining to Abbán's monastic work in Munster is unlikely to fall under the authorship of Bishop Ailbe of Ferns.

[8] See: Thacker, Loca Sanctorum, p. 1. In relation to the Munster cult originating from before Bishop Ailbe's time; Cf. pp. 22-30 of this thesis, where I present the main argument for *VSA* being the earliest extant Life of Abbán, but not the original Life.

[9] See: Picard, Structural Patterns in Early Irish Hagiography, pp. 67-82. For a reference to the commonplace nature of hagiographical writing on an international scale; see: Lewis, *The Impact of the Anglo-Norman Conquest on Hagiography in Wales and Ireland* – see 4:17 – 4:32.

[10] Moreover, a similar problem is connected with the Irish genealogies, whereby scholarship has identified genealogies as unreliable and perplexed accounts of a saint's ancestry. In contrast to hagiography however, the smaller quantity of detail contained in a genealogy further inhibits our attempts to discern traces of the saints as past historical individuals.

[11] For example, take note of the following quote about saints' Lives from Herbert, Literary Sea-Voyages and Early Munster Hagiography, p. 182: saints' Lives 'represent the past through particular narrative conventions and structural principles'.

circumstances, it is undoubtedly understandable why the saint as a historical individual has seldom been a focal point of research in hagiographical scholarship.[12]

At the same time, this need not imply, as it did to Pádraig Ó Riain, that most Insular saints 'had no existence as historical persons'.[13] While a saint's Life is primarily encoded with the author's contemporary messages, we ought to consider where the author was retrieving his information on the saint.[14] For the author to be writing a biography of a saint in the first place, he was perhaps writing in (or commissioned by) a church which was founded by the saint when he/she was alive and to whom the author may even have been a hereditary abbot.[15] This would mean that the church was a representation of the saint's cult and a topographical landmark from where his/her cult developed.[16] Therefore, it is probable that the church preserved records of its founder for the author to work from when producing a Life of the saint. In that regard, it would be difficult to believe that the cultural identity of the saint was solely invented by an ecclesiastical figure. This suggests that accurate records of a saint's historical identity did exist at one point. Subsequently however, they were altered and fabricated in accordance with the contemporary monasteries and churches that maintained the saint's cult.

Methodology

While Abbán's Munster cult may certainly fit into this category, *VSA* (and to a lesser extent *BA*) does nevertheless, trace his cultural identity to other monastic locations outside of Munster, one of which is the aforementioned foundation of Cell Ailbe from the medieval province of Mide. According to *VSA*, Cell Ailbe became a nunnery that was ran by an abbess named Segnith.[17] Indeed, there are several other monastic locations awaiting examination in this chapter, but equally so are the locations which (like most of the scenes discussed in chapter two of this thesis) are largely contextualised by miracle motifs and common hagiographical tropes; some of which are not entirely traceable or have more than one geographical origin. In

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[12] For a review of how hagiographical scholarship and ideologies have developed from the seventeenth century up until the end of the twentieth century; see: Herbert, Hagiography, pp. 79-91.
[13] Ó Riain, Irish Saints' Genealogies, pp. 24-25.
[14] Cf. the following comment on the textual origin of hagiography: Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*, p. 2: 'The hagiographical text thus bears an encoded message about the milieu in which it was compiled and received'.
[15] This is also supported by Máire Herbert's explanation of the evidence for saints' cults mainly originating from clerical institutions; for more details; see: Herbert, Hagiography, p. 87.
[16] See however: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 162-163, where he suggests that *VSA* was most likely written in the church of Ferns as oppose to the saint's south Laigin foundation (Mag Arnaide), as Mag Arnaide was not important or wealthy enough to produce a saint's Life; due to the lack of references to the foundation outside of Abbán's dossier or in the annalistic record. While this suggests that not all saints' Lives were written in the saint's primary foundation on a broader scale, we may also observe that this suggestion contributes to his overall attempt to promote the idea that Bishop Ailbe of Ferns wrote the original Life of Abbán.
[17] See pp. 124-125 of this thesis.

that regard, the ambiguous nature of such locations could suggest they were invented by the hagiographer in order to fabricate episodes which demonstrated that the saint was 'an exemplar of holiness'.[18] Thus, for discerning the contextual significance(s) of Abbán's geographical orientation, this chapter will consider the following research question:

1. To what extent does Abbán's hagiographical dossier historicise and/or fictionalise his association with each location?

This will enable us to distinguish between the locations which are more likely to be authentic embodiments of Abbán's cult and those which derive from the inventive works of the hagiographer. For the latter however, we need consider also that the hagiographer is not solely inventing story-lines for proving that its subject is worthy of being characterised as a saint. As Jean-Michel Picard argued, in their ability to compose a specific literary genre (hagiography), the Irish writers and monks were also demonstrating 'their understanding of the mechanisms behind the original texts', which provided them with the opportunity 'to adapt the traditional structures in order to suit their own specific aims and to appeal to the milieu for which they were writing'.[19] From this context, the writers would express their contemporary concerns through conventional hagiographical scenes, which would be set in a particular geographical location(s) that bore relevance to the writer's concern.[20] More broadly, this shows how the saint's life could be employed as a platform through which its hagiographer attempted to better his political and geographical stance.

However, if the geographical location was surrounded by neighbouring church foundations, this could mean there were several other hagiographers who shared the same interest in the one location. As a result, the same location would be cited in more than one saint's Life. This may suggest that the location bears no authentic connection with any of the saints' cults. On the other hand, if the foundations of these saints were within close proximity, the shared location may simply represent a nodal point in their cults. In that regard, references to the same location in a notable number of saints' lives may not be an entirely fictitious feature of a Life; particularly if the location was primarily associated with scenes pertaining to the founding of

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[18] Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*, p. 1.
[19] Picard, Structural Patterns in Early Hiberno-Latin Hagiography, p. 82.
[20] As we identified with Bishop Ailbe of Ferns earlier, hagiography was capable of 'affirming title to property'; see: Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 333. For a reading of the etymological connection between placenames and saints' names within a broader Insular and Continental context on a more general level; see: Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, pp. 454-458. Moreover, the hagiographer is attempting to envisage a story of a past individual in an attempt to express concern that echoes with contemporary affairs.

monasteries that were located within its parameters.[21] More generally nevertheless, we will see how the larger or more politically important locations such as medieval provinces or dynastic kingdoms tend to be cited more frequently in saints' lives than smaller locations such as a modern-day townland or a parish. Hence, in a continued attempt to discern the historical and fictional purposes of Abbán's geographical locations, and their relevance to the hagiographers' concerns and interests, another two research questions will be considered in this chapter:

2. How well-known is the location from other saints' Lives and in the Irish record on a broader scale?

3. From what historical milieu(s) may the geographical origins of Abbán's cult have originated?

As noted from the outset of this thesis, the author of Abbán's earliest extant Life (*VSA*) is believed to be a twelfth to thirteenth century prelate: Bishop Ailbe of Ferns. At the same time, consideration ought to be attributed to the probability of Bishop Ailbe adapting from an original non-extant Life of Abbán, specifically in relation to the hagiographical scenes which cast no light on Bishop Ailbe's concerns with property rights and/or the Anglo-Normans imposing reforms upon the Irish Church more generally.[22] Therefore, the present chapter will reveal an ongoing attempt in distinguishing between the content that originates with the work of Bishop Ailbe and that which may derive from an original or at least earlier hagiographical author.

 In contrast to chapter two however, this procedure will be conducted from the viewpoint of Abbán's geographical orientation.[23] The geographical locations to be examined in the present chapter are focused on the middle and latter stages of his life. This is because the locations mentioned in the scenes pertaining to his birth, childhood and early adulthood have already been examined in chapter two. In addition, the present chapter will explore scenes which tell of miracle motifs and tropes, similar to those explored in the previous chapter. As with chapter two, the hagiographical scenes to be explored in the present chapter will be categorised by episode names. This chapter will consider six episodes, each of which will be identified by a geographical title, such as South Laigin. Hence, if the hagiographical scene relates to Abbán's

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[21] Moreover, the nodal point may also represent a clash of interest in the same location.

[22] For an important study on the life and political activity of Bishop Ailbe of Ferns; see: Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 309-338.

[23] Some of the geographical locations have already been examined in chapter two; specifically scenes for which the author names the geographical setting in which associations with individual(s) took place (see for example §32 of *VSA(D)*; this section tells of Abbán visiting St. Finnian of Clonard in the medieval province of Mide) or where the author names the location from which one of Abbán's contemporaries came (see for example §33 of *VSA(D)* which tells that that king (Cormac son of Diarmait) who came to plunder Abbán's farm in Camaross, Co. Wexford came from the Uí Cennselaig dynasty. Therefore, such locations need not be considered in any great detail in this chapter.

association with this particular part of the province, the scene will thus, be examined under this episode. The scenes to be examined in these six episodes will be examined by the order in which they are narrated in *VSA(D)*, the first of which concerns Abbán's monastic career in the west and (mainly) south of Ireland.

Episode 1- Connacht and Munster (§22 of *VSA(D)* and §11 of *BA*)[24]

After completing three journeys to Rome, Abbán began to complete a great deal of missionary work in Ireland.[25] The first province in which he began this work was Connacht.[26] While the absence of miracle motifs from this scene would imply that Abbán's cult in Connacht is genuine, detail concerning the specific location and the name of the actual monasteries he founded, is vague:[27]

§22 of *VSA(D)* and §11 of *BA*

> 'The first region in which he began his work was the province of Connacht. He founded three monasteries in the plain of Cé, which is in the Field of Trudi. Abbán also had many Christian men helping him build the monasteries. After these men had completed sufficient work for Abbán, he left them behind to man the monasteries he had founded.'

Connacht

It may be striking that the Latin (Campus) as opposed to the vernacular (Mag) is used for the nouns 'Field' and 'Plain' in *VSA(D)*.[28] On the one hand, it suggests the author is merely informing his audience of the topographical layout of Cé/Triudi. As we will later observe in this episode however, the author often gives the full vernacular placename and then explains

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[24] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 17-18; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 8; Vol. 2, p. 7.
[25] This is an English summary of the following Latin sentence: *Postquam sanctus Abbanus cum donates sibi a Deo discipulis in Hiberniam venit, multa loca in honore Domini construxit*. See: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 17.
[26] *VSA* does not clarify whether Abbán returned from Rome and stopped in Connacht and instantly began to enact such work or if the saint stopped in Beggerin Island, from where he travelled to Rome on the first occasion, with Bishop Íbar. At any rate, it need not concern us, as the *VSA* author is evidently more concerned about the scenes which tell us about Abbán's cult than he is with envisaging a historically accurate series of chronological events concerning Abbán's life, activity and monastic career.
[27] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 17; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 8; Vol. 2, p. 7. The fact that *BA* is less specific about the location in which Abbán founded these three monasteries demonstrates, why *BA* tends to read like an abbreviated version of *VSA*. More generally, this is a typical observation we came across in chapter two of this thesis, and that will continue to be a recognisable characteristic throughout the rest of this present chapter. For scholarly references to Abbán's connection with Connacht; see: Power, *Crichad an Chaoilli*, p. 21; Culleton, *Celtic and Early Christian Wexford*, p. 98. Note that the former secondary source incorrectly says that Abbán founded two monasteries. Evidently, *VSA(D)* and also *BA* identify three monasteries. Aside from Power and Culleton nevertheless, no other scholarship has addressed Abbán's Connacht connections.
[28] In *BA*, the name of the Connacht foundation is not given. The *Betha* merely tells us that Abbán build three churches in Connacht, see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 8, §11, paragraph 24; Vol. 2, p. 7, §11, paragraph 24.

its meaning in Latin. For example, in *Vita Sancti Declani*, the saint's hagiographer refers to a location containing the vernacular word for 'a field' or 'a plain' named Mag Scheth, and subsequently notes: *id est campus scuti* (that is, the field of Sciath).[29] Thus, from the first part of §22 of *VSA(D)*, one would expect the author to cite Mag Cé/Triudi first, and then provide the Latin translation campus Cé/Triudi.[30] Nevertheless, one vernacular version of 'Campus Cé/Triudi' was identified by John Colgan in some of his personal manuscript copies of *BA*. Accordingly, this place is called 'Magh Ele' or 'Elle', which he located in Co. Galway.[31] The fact that *VSA* traces this location (under the name Cé/Triudi) to the province of Connacht, in which Co. Galway is based, supports Colgan's theory too. Later, Mervlyn Archdall identified Magh Ele as 'Maghce', which was subsequently linked with a foundation named Maigin and tentatively traced back to a modern-day Galway townland called 'Moyne'.[32]

Perhaps one problematic feature from Archdall's identification of Abbán's obscure Connacht foundation lies in the manner in which he refers to Abbán, that being, 'St. Alban'.[33] Initially, this would imply that 'Maigen'/Moyne was a cultural foundation of the British martyr St. Alban.[34] From a more general observation, the fact that there are Irish placenames containing the name 'Alban' could be interpreted as a reflection of the wider developments throughout Insular Europe. According to *Logainm*, there are three 'Alban' placenames in Ireland, located in counties Galway, Laois and Carlow.[35] The 'Alban' townland of Galway is located towards

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[29] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, p. 37. For further bibliographical details on this location from St. Declan's *Vita*; see: *Onomasticon Godelicum- https://www.dias.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/E-Onomasticon_Text.pdf* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020); see: entry number 21081, from pp. 2198-2199 of pp. 1-2943.

[30] Even if *BA* contained the full vernacular place-name spellings, the *BA* version would concern us less, as the *BA* compiler was merely transcribing from *VSA* during a time when hagiography became a source of devotional literature. Thus, *BA*, alongside other extant vernacular Lives did not uphold the same contemporary interests as those of Hiberno-Latin hagiography. To see how this placename is spelt in *VSA(S)*; see: *VSH(S)*, p. 264; neither does this source provide what we would expect to be full vernacular placename spelling: Mag Cé/Triudi.

[31] This was observed by Charles Plummer; see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, p. 318; see under the headword: Cé campus. Plummer also cites Colgan's reference to another location in the barony of Boyle in Co. Roscommon, which Colgan claims could also be the campus Cé/Triudi location mentioned in VSA; namely: Loch Cé. This would imply that the location was a lake, though the topographical reference to the location in Abbán's *Vita* evidently does not suggest so.

[32] Archdall, *Monasticon Hibernicum*, p. 294. The implication that campus Cé / Triudi is now identified by the modern-day townland name 'Moyne' was implied by Mac Shamhráin; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=4501* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). For bibliographical details on the textual attestation of the place-name *Mag Ele*; see: *Onomasticon Godelicum- https://www.dias.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/E-Onomasticon_Text.pdf* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020); see: entry number 20633 on p. 2153 of pp. 1-2943. Moreover, there were approximately several other places named *Maigen* throughout Ireland; see for example: *Onomasticon Godelicum- https://www.dias.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/E-Onomasticon_Text.pdf* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020); see: pp. 2211-2212 of pp. 1-2943.

[33] Archdall, Monasticon Hibernicum, p. 294.

[34] see: Farmer, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, pp. 9-10.

[35] see: *Logainm.ie- https://www.logainm.ie/en/s?txt=Albain&str=on* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020).

the north-east of the county, whilst further south, towards the centre of the county is the 'Moyne' townland where a cult of Abbán may possibly have existed at one point.[36] This may be a coincidence that a Galway townland, supposedly named after the British martyr Alban, and the Moyne townland are relatively close to each other in distance.[37] However, the possibility of Moyne representing a spread in the cult of the British Martyr in Galway is lessened by the fact that 'Alban' was also another way in which Abbán's name was spelt in *VSA(S)*. Thus, Archdall's usage of the name 'Alban' was unlikely to be referring to the British Martyr Alban.[38]

In any event, we can only assume that Maigen (Moyne in Co. Galway) is the modern-day townland to which Abbán's Connacht cult can be traced. It is worth noting also that two other locations named 'Maigen' (Moyne) are located in Co. Mayo, in the Connacht province; one of which is now identified as 'Moyne Abbey' in the north of the county, whilst the other Moyne location is in the most southern barony of Co. Mayo, namely, the barony of Kilmaine.[39] Also, Mac Shamhráin has tentatively associated a saint by the name 'Muiccin' with both locations.[40] On a broader scale, this demonstrates that uncertainty surrounding the history of the Maigen locations in Connacht goes beyond Abbán's hagiographical dossier. Nevertheless, it still remains more likely that it is the Maigen (Moyne) townland in Co. Galway, as opposed to the two Maigin locations from Co. Mayo, which is the modern-day representation of the Campus Cé/Truidi foundation from *VSA(D)*. This is not simply based on Mac Shamhráin's distinction of the Maigin locations of Ireland, but geographically, the Maigen foundation from Co. Galway

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[36] Cf. *Logainm.ie-* *https://www.logainm.ie/en/s?txt=Albain&str=on* & *https://www.logainm.ie/en/1373064* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020).

[37] But perhaps what is more coincidental is the fact that the Alban townland of Laois is located within the south-east of the county like Abbán's north Laigin foundation: Cell Abbain, whilst the Alban townland of Carlow is located in the barony of Rathvilly, where the foundations of some of St. Abbán's siblings were located according to the saint's genealogical record, see: pp. 56-61 of this thesis. Whether it is sheer coincidence that such 'Alban' placenames are located relatively close to places connected with Abbán is difficult to determine.

[38] More generally the similarity between the names 'Abbán' and 'Alban' is an example of how saints with different quantities of textual profiles and cultural identities can easily be conflated when their names that are orthographically akin. Abbán is sometimes identified as 'Alban' in some martyrological texts too; this matter will be considered in chapter five of this thesis.

[39] See: *Onomasticon Godelicum-* *https://www.dias.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/E-Onomasticon_Text.pdf* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020); see: entry numbers: 21206 & 21207 on p. 2211 from pp. 1-2943.

[40] See: Monasticon Hibernicum-*https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=4502* & *https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=4503* (Both Websites Last Accessed 24th September 2020); Mac Shamhráin also associated this saint with a Maigen (Moyne) foundation from Co. Kilkenny: see: Monasticon Hibernicum- *https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=4504* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). Mac Shamhráin implies that the latter Maigen foundation is more likely to be associated with St. Muiccín, as did Ó Riain, who also identified the name of the saint as 'Aonghas Láimhiodhan'; see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 80; Cf. p. 502, where Ó Riain identifies Muicín son of Moiche as 'Aonghas Láimhiodhan'.

would place Abbán in a closer location to reaching his next point of destination, which, as we are soon to see, is a foundation in the south-east barony of Co. Kerry, namely Maginuhy.

Moreover, in relation to the variants of the name of Abbán's Connacht foundation (possibly the modern-day Moyne townland, in the barony of Tiaquin in Co. Galway) in *VSA* (Campus Cé/Triudi) and that identified by Colgan (Mag Ele), there is little or no evidence for explaining the etymological transition from Cé/Triudi to Ele. The fact that Mag Ele was supposedly attested in a manuscript copy of *BA* (a late medieval source), would suggest it was a later placename than Cé/Triudi.[41] On that note, we may (speculatively) consider the possibility of 'Ele'/ 'Ely' being the surname of an Anglo-Norman family that settled in this part of the county. This is because changes in Irish placenames most often resulted in the location adapting an anglicised name.[42] But even so, this would shed no further light on Abbán's connection with Moyne, as the etymological transition would have occurred along the lines of contemporary events as opposed to interest in the original founder of the townland. This means that a past cult and later historical events would have been two unrelated issues.[43] Moreover, the fact that the etymology of the location is not connected to Abbán's name leaves us with little room for discerning the significance of Abbán's Connacht origins.

Still, it would not seem fitting to disregard the idea of Campus Cé/Triudi (later Mag Ele) being an embodiment of Abbán's Connacht cult; particularly since *VSA* and *BA* overtly state that he founded three monasteries in this location.[44] The fact that this location is not shared with any other saint, makes it less likely that Abbán's connection with the place is a complete fabrication

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[41] For my discussion on the manuscript history of *BA* (i.e., the extant vernacular Life / *Betha*).

[42] For example, Abbán's south Laigin foundation: Mag Arnaide (Moyarney) is now identified as 'Adamstown', as a result of the land in the location being ceded to an Anglo-Norman man and his family; namely: Adam Devereux; see: Culleton, *Celtic and Early Christian Wexford*, p. 99.

[43] In different contexts nevertheless, there are examples (to be explored in the present chapter, and also chapter four of this thesis) which show how the impact of the Anglo-Normans prompted the author (potentially Bishop Ailbe of Ferns) of *VSA* to alter and modify hagiographical content. Hence, the development of Anglo-Norman settlement and power enticed Bishop Ailbe to conflate contemporary matters with the life of an individual saint (Abbán) who was most likely from an earlier historical era.

[44] The fact that Abbán left a number of men to man his three monasteries would suggest so too. However, according to the extant landscape and archaeological evidence of Moyne, there is no evidence of Abbán's cult. J.G. Higgin's report of excavational works conducted on the ecclesiastical site of Moyne in Co. Galway suggested that the main evidence there is a church, and various parts of this church have been dated to the thirteenth to fourteenth and fifteenth to sixteenth centuries, for which there was no mention of Abbán; see: Higgins, The Ecclesiastical Site at Moyne, Co. Galway: News Report, p. 89; Cf. *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=4501* (Last Accessed 29th July 2020). Potentially, this ecclesiastical site was built long after Abbán's three monasteries were dissolved or long abandoned. At the same time, the reference to these three monasteries in *VSA* and *BA* could hardly suggest that Abbán's founding of monasteries in Connacht is false. Hence, while the possibility of three of Abbán's monasteries existing in Moyne cannot be proven in any great depths, neither is there any evidence to contradict Abbán's monastic work in Connacht.

by the author of the Life. Therefore, Abbán's dossier would suggest that his Connacht cult did exist at one point; but the relatively late origin of the extant landscape evidence (as noted in the last footnote) and its probable irrelevance to Abbán's cult, would suggest that his cult gradually diminished and subsequently became obsolete at a point in time before the twelfth century; (approximately, the earliest period to which the extant ecclesiastical site has been dated). Interestingly, this implication is further supported by a reference to the death of secular figure also named Abbán in the Annals of Ulster. Accordingly, this Abbán individual died in the following manner in the mid-late ninth century:[45]

<u>The Annals of Ulster: 867.5</u>

Abán son of Cinaed, heir designate of Connacht, was killed with fire by Sochlachán son of Diarmait.

The uncommon attestation of the name Abbán in the Irish textual record more widely, would certainly give reason to believe that 'Abán son of Cinead' was named after St. Abbán. This death-date would further suggest that Abbán's Connacht cult was attested up until a point in time before the Norman period. However, the fact that the extant landscape evidence of Moyne tells us nothing about Abbán would suggest that this cult ultimately became obsolete.

Munster

Elsewhere, a similar form of evidence is what maintains the memory of Abbán's cult in the province of Munster. In the aforementioned parish of Ballyvourney, there stands a well that is dedicated to Abbán (Tobar Abán) and a cist, bullaun and standing ogham stones. The latter three archaeological landmarks surround what is claimed to be Abbán's grave.[46] The earliest textual evidence for Abbán's Munster cult is most likely *VSA*, which tells of seven monasteries / churches the saint founded and built; the first of which is the aforementioned foundation of Cell Achaid Conchinn, in the modern-day barony of Magunihy towards the south-east of Co. Kerry. From this location, Abbán is depicted travelling into the barony of Muskerry West in Co. Cork, where he built a monastery, now known as Ballyvourney.[47] While the

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[45] *Annals of Ulster - https://celt.ucc.ie//published/T100001A/* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020).

[46] For bibliographical references on the details concerning the archaeological and landscape evidence for Abbán's cult in Munster; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=367* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). Cf. Jennett, *Munster*, p. 113. In spite of the precise dating of this landscape evidence, it can most certainly be perceived as a representation of modern-day commemoration of Abbán's Munster cult. Nevertheless, *VSA* implies that Abbán's place of burial is somewhere in Laigin; which ultimately contradicts the claim of Abbán's grave being in Ballyvourney.

[47] There are also references to a number of other places in the scenes (i.e. §22 of *VSA(D)* and §11 of *BA*) which tell of Abbán's monastic career in Connacht and Munster, such as dynastic regions and townlands. However, the

aforementioned SS. Conchinn, Fínán and Gobnait are also connected to these foundations, their connections are only recognisable through Abbán's prior founding of the two foundations, as is told in *VSA* and *BA*.[48] Since both foundations are not mentioned in any other hagiographical dossier, this means there is less possibility of finding other textual evidence that contradicts Abbán's monastic relations with both foundations. Outside of Abbán's hagiographical dossier moreover, little else is known about any of his Munster foundations, let alone the Cell Achaid Conchinn and Ballyvourney foundations. As inferred from Abbán's Connacht origins, this circumstance may indicate that his Munster cult has some historical basis. In contrast to his Connacht cult however, a larger number of monastic / church foundations, (all of which are identified by placenames), are cited in Abbán's hagiographical record. Potentially, this may explain why Abbán's Munster cult outlasted his cult in Connacht, which only emerged from one location and three monasteries which are now unidentifiable.[49]

After surrendering Ballyvourney to St. Gobnait, Abbán is depicted as building two foundations located in the east of Co. Cork; namely: Cell Cruimthir and Cell na Marbhan:[50]

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author of Abbán's Life merely cited some of these places for the purpose of informing his audience of the geographical landmarks in which Abbán enacted monastic work. For example, in an attempt to pinpoint Cell Achaid Conchinn, *VSA(D)* specified that the foundation is located in a western region of Munster called Corco Duibhne. Hence, while this location is cited in Abbán's hagiographical dossier, there is no further detail underlying Abbán's connection with the actual region of Corco Duibhne; the region is cited in *VSA* merely for the purpose of informing its audience of the precise location of Abbán's foundation. Therefore, such locations will not receive a great deal of focus in the present chapter. However, if it is a major region, such as a dynastic kingdom (for which no specific foundation or townland is mentioned) where Abbán's enacts some form of work, then that particular region would receive the same consideration as places which are directly connected Abbán's cult and / or individual activity, such as Cell Achaid Conchinn. Moreover, we need not offer further commentary on the significance of Cell Achaid Conchinn and Ballyvourney, because their connections with SS. Conchenn, Fínán and Gobnait have already been discussed in chapter two of this thesis.

[48] The fact that St. Conchenn's name is recognisable from the placename Cell Achaid Conchinn would suggest that this saint subsequently became the patron saint of the foundation after Abbán surrendered it to Conchenn; in which case the historical origin of Cell Achaid Conchinn would resemble that of Ballyvourney; as for Fínán, *VSA* tells that Abbán prophesised of Fínán's birth in this foundation,.

[49] The chief reason for the prominence of Abbán's Munster cult to that of his Connacht cult stems from the fact that Abbán's cult is commemorated in Cork. This modern-day commemoration is particularly recognisable from the landscape evidence from the parish of Ballyvourney attributed to the saint; see: the last few footnotes of this chapter.

[50] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 17; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 8; Vol. 2, p. 7. Once again, we may take note of the places that are merely geographical landmarks for clarifying the location of Abbán's foundations; Uí Lythain, Cul Collinge, Desi, Feara Muighe and Brí Gobann (modern-day parish name: 'Brigown'). In relation to the Cul Collinge (modern-day place-name: 'Kilcullen') foundation, *VSA(S)*, further names the location: Cell Chinni; see: *VSH(S)*, p. 264; *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 17, fn. 9; Cf. *Monasticon Hibernicum-* *https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=1197* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020), which tentatively identifies Cell Chinni as the modern-day parish of Kilcrumper, located within the baronies of Condons & Clangibbon / Fermoy in Co. Cork. Moreover, Mac Shamhráin has identified two (Cell Cruimthir) Kilcrumper locations, one of which he tentatively traced to the barony of Barrymore in the east of Co. Cork (*Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=1376*); whilst the other Kilcrumper location to the barony of Fermoy, towards the north-east of Co. Cork; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum-*

> 'Next, Abbán arrived in the Uí Lythain dynastic region, where Abbán built a church called Cell Cruimthir, which is near the city of Cul Collinge. Abbán left his disciples here and travelled through the borderline of the Desi and Feara Muighe. Nearby the Desi borderline and Feara Muighe, Abbán built a church in the city of Brí Gobann called Cell na Marbhan, meaning 'The Church of the Dead'. Abbán built this church as a tomb for the dead, where the faithful men were left behind.' [51]

Cell Cruimthir

The etymology of the Cell Cruimthir place would suggest this foundation was a church that belonged to a priest (Cruimther).[52] Hence, like St. Conchinn's potential relationship with the Cell Achaid Conchinn foundation, *VSA* may also be implying that Abbán was the original founder of Cell Cruimthir, but subsequently surrendered it to a cruimther (priest).[53] Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin and later Pádraig Ó Riain identified this priest as a saint by the name 'Cruimthir Fraech'.[54] While Mac Shamhráin suggested that Cell Cruimthir is thus Cruimthir Fraech's foundation; Ó Riain has shown that his primary foundation is in fact, in Co. Leitrim in the north-west of Ireland.[55] Moreover, of the three Cell Cruimthir foundations Mac Shamhráin associated with Abbán, only one of them did he associate with St. Cruimthir Fraech.[56] This particular foundation (Cell Cruimthir Fraeich) is located in the barony of Fermoy towards the

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https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=1378 (Both Websites Last Accessed 24th September 2020). The significance of the latter two Kilcrumper locations will be discussed in due course in this chapter.

[51] The reference to 'the faithful men' would imply that these are the men who assisted Abbán in founding and building monasteries in Connacht and Munster, and who subsequently became his servants/disciples.

[52] Cf. *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, p. 319; see: under the headword 'Ce(a)ll Cruimthir'. For a list of entries containing the noun: *cruimther*: *eDIL*- *http://dil.ie/13223* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020).

[53] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, p. 319. More generally, *VSA* may be attempting to demonstrate the precedented origins of Abbán's Munster cult to those whose primary foundations and cults are primarily or only chiefly known in Munster; see for example: St. Gobnait whose primary foundation is Ballyvourney. Cf. Rice, An Historical and Topographical Sketch of the Parish of Kilcrumper, p. 14. More generally, the placename 'Cell Cruimthir' would imply that priesthood became a significant religious practice in this location.

[54] The implication of Cruimthir Fraech being an important priest can be discerned from the attestation of his name (*Froechan*) under the list *De Sacerdotibus* (of Priest's) in LL; see: LLdip., Vol. 6, p. 1656.

[55] *Monasticon Hibernicum*-*https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=1378* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020); Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 353-354. Ó Riain does not however, mention anything about Abbán founding Cell Cruimthir in his biographical discussion on St. Cruimthir Fraoch (Ó Riain identifies this saint under the name 'Fraoch'). Potentially, Ó Riain may not have identified this foundation with Cruimthir Fraoch. On a general note, this demonstrates how a saint can have prominent cultural connection with places that are not located in the same province as his/her primary foundation(s). For instance, Abbán's primary foundations are in Laigin, but his cult can evidently be traced to other locations in Munster.

[56] Cell Cruimthir Fraeich is the full name of the Cell Cruimthir foundation he linked to Cruimthir Fraech and Abbán; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum*- *https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=1378* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020).

north-east of Co. Cork.[57] The second Cell Cruimthir foundation, which is also identified as Cell Chinni in *VSA(S)*, was traced to the border of the baronies of Fermoy and Condons and Clangibbons; whilst the third Cell Cruimthir foundation was tentatively traced to the barony of Barrymore, which is located below the Fermoy and Condons & Clangibbons baronies.[58]

Despite the number of different Cell Cruimthir foundations identified by Mac Shamhráin, we may observe that Abbán builds Cell Cruimthir in the dynastic region of Uí Lythain and in the city of Cúl Collinge according to *VSA(D)*. The fact that this dynasty and Cúl Collinge have both been traced to the Barrymore barony would suggest that it is the Cell Cruimthir foundation from this barony which Abbán's dossier cited.[59] This would mean that Abbán and Cruimthir Fraoch are associated with two different Cell Cruimthir foundations; which would thus dissuade one from assuming that Abbán and Cruimthir Fraoch were contemporaries; particularly since Cruimthir Fraoch is not even cited in Abbán's dossier.[60] At the same time, it would be difficult to believe that all three Cell Cruimthir foundations are completely unrelated to Cruimthir Fraech; particularly due to the etymology of the place-name. The fact that these three foundations are located within the north-east region of Co. Cork would imply that they subsequently merged into one place-name overtime. This theory may also be supported by *Logainm*, who have only been able to identify one Kilcrumper (Cell Cruimthir) location in the entirety of Ireland, let alone Co. Cork.[61]

Hence, even if Abbán and Cruimthir Fraoch were not contemporaries, it would still be difficult to treat their connections with Cell Cruimthir as separate matters. Furthermore, because Mac Shamhráin's identification of the three Cell Cruimthir foundations is of a tentative nature, and

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[57] *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=1378* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020).

[58] See: *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=1197*; Cf. *VSH(S)*, p. 264; for the other Cell Cruimthir foundation from the barony of Fermoy, see: *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=1376* (Both Websites Last Accessed 24th September 2020).

[59] For a view of the geographical location of the Uí Lythain dynasty, but also other dynasties and medieval regions over laid on a map of the south of Ireland from the tenth century; see: Byrne, *Irish Kings*, pp. 172-173; Cf. Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland 400-1200*, p. 13. Though Mac Shamhráin did not refer to Cúl Collinge, he does nevertheless trace a foundation named *Cúil* to the Barrymore barony; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=2967* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). The fact that Cúil is identical to the Cúl word from Cúl Collinge would imply that Mac Shamhráin is essentially referring to the same location. Moreover, the potential existence of multiple places of the same name (Cell Cruimthir) may explain why Abbán's hagiographer felt the need to clarify the geographical location of the Cell Cruimthir foundation which Abbán reputedly built.

[60] The very fact that Cruimthir Fraoch does not have his own hagiographical account means we are unable to determine whether Abbán's original association with Cell Cruimthir is a one-sided claim (on behalf of Abbán's hagiographer) or was an authentic account in the sense that it was something that happened in actuality; see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 353-354.

[61] This Cell Cruimthir townland appears to be the Cell Cruimthir townland located in the Barrymore barony; see: Logainm-*https://www.logainm.ie/en/601?s=kilcrumper* (Last Accessed 31st July 2020).

they are all located within the north-east of Co. Cork; this means there is room for speculating that there may only have been one main Cell Cruimthir location. On that note, we may also suggest that Abbán's connection with Cell Cruimthir preceded Cruimthir Fraoch's. For Cell Cruimthir to become a foundation of Cruimthir Fraoch's, Abbán's role in building the church would inevitably have occurred beforehand; because in order for Cruimthir Fraoch to acquire an association with the location, a church (cell) would have to be, at least, standing in the location.[62] In that regard, the foundation may only have become known as Cell Cruimthir as a result Cruimthir Fraoch becoming its primary saint, meaning that the name was applied to the foundation long after Abbán had built the church.[63] For Abbán nevertheless, his association with Cell Cruimthir is comparatively more traceable, due to *VSA* and *BA* overtly stating that he built this church.

Cell na Marbán[64]

VSA and *BA* also state that Abbán built a church (Cell na Marbán) in the city of Brí Gobann (Brigown).[65] However, the implication that he subsequently developed an important cultural connection with Brí Gobann is supressed by other evidence, which claims that Brí Gobann is the primary foundation of another saint, namely, Findchú of Brí Gobann.[66] In contrast to Cruimthir Fraoch, a Life of Findchú does survives, which was written in the vernacular and is

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[62] Elsewhere, we may also take note of Lisa Bitel's study of monastic labour work, which implies that saints of Ireland were typically incapable of building and construction; see: Bitel, Isle of the Saints, 135.

[63] At the same time, we need remember Cruimthir Fraoch's primary foundation (Cluain Chonmhaicne) in Co. Leitrim; see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 353-354. Moreover, the fact that Ó Riain says little about Cruimthir Fraoch's connection with *Cell Cruimthir* implies that his cultural connections with Munster were one of his minor connections. The implication is also supported by Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin, who only traced one Munster foundation to Cruimthear Fraoch; namely: Cell Cruimthir Fraeich; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/search.php?search=Cruimthir&submit=Quick+search#results* (Last Accessed 31st July 2020).

[64] Cell na Marbán is also known as 'Cell Droma', see for example: *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=1510* (Last Accessed 23rd January 2021). Cf. Power, *Crichad an Chaoilli*, pp. 22 & 81

[65] Moreover, the need to clarify that Abbán's foundation (Cell na Marbán) is located in the city of Brí Gobann could potentially be, as Richard Sharpe noted, a reflection of the tendency of the *VSH(D)* redactor to insert additional geographical detail about the locations mentioned in the *Vitae*, see: Sharpe, Medieval Irish Saints' Lives, p. 363.

[66] Ó Riain, A Dictionary, pp. 335-337; Cf. p. 336 which explains that 'Cúil Mhuilt' was the original name of the location and that it was renamed Brí Gobann after seven blacksmiths requested the prophesier of Findchú's birth (Fionn, son of Cumhall) to change the location name. For a very recent study on the textual history of the Life of Findchú of Brí Gobann, see: Waidler, Sanctity and Intertextuality, pp. 293-312. Waidler demonstrates that two conflicting identities of Findchú can be elicited from his *Betha*: one depicting Findchú with an ability to fight in battle and the other, portraying him as a saint who enacted an ascetic lifestyle. For a read on some of the older scholarship on Cell Cruimthir, but also Cell na Marbán, see: Moore, Ecclesiastical Antiquities of the Parish of Brigown (Mitchelstown), Diocese of Cloyne, pp. 221-224 & Rice, *An Historical and Topographical Sketch of the Parish of Kilcrumper*, pp. 14-15. Moreover, the fact that VSA explains the meaning of Cell na Marbán, demonstrates my aforementioned point from the Episode 1 section of Connacht; whereby the hagiographer typically gives the vernacular placename and then translates into Latin.

now preserved in five different manuscripts, including the well-known The Book of Lismore.[67] In comparison to the textual history underlying *VSA*, Findchú's *Betha*, in its extant format, was probably produced 'in the late twelfth or early thirteenth centuries, though it appears that it relied on older traditions and sources'.[68] There is no mention of Findchú in Abbán's *Vita* nor is Abbán mentioned in Findchú's *Betha*. If Findchú's hagiographer was aware of Abbán via *VSA*, the claim that Abbán built a church in Brí Gobann in the *Vita* was what potentially struck him as most noteworthy, as it would imply that there was a cult of Abbán in Brí Gobann. Thus, the fact that there is no reference to Abbán or his church (Cell na Marbán) in Findchú's *Betha*, may merit some thought.

On the one hand, this could suggest that Findchú's hagiographer deliberately chose not to cite Abbán or Cell na Marbán in order to pre-empt the possibility of Abbán's association with Brí Gobann receiving primacy over Findchú's.[69] But equally so, may the same scenario underline the lack of any reference to Findchú in Abbán's hagiographical dossier.[70] This scenario was firstly interpreted as a matter of precedence by two earlier and non-contemporary scholars, named Courtenay Moore and J. Rice.[71] While Moore suggested that Findchú's Munster origins precede Abbán's, the latter suggested otherwise.[72] However, neither possibility can be determined, due to the lack of annalistic evidence for Abbán's time of existence.[73] But even so, it is unlikely to be a matter which concerns the historical identities of SS. Abbán and Findchú; rather, it is a matter that most likely derives from the political concerns and interests

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[67] Stokes, *The Book of Lismore*, pp. 84-98 & 231-246. Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 336, which dates The Book of Lismore version of Findchú's Life to the fourteenth century, but further notes that the Life may even have a later origin. For details on the housing and dating of these five manuscripts, see for example: Waidler, Sanctity and Intertextuality, pp. 296-297. However, we need also mention that after this publication, The Book of Lismore was donated by the Trustees of Chatsworth House to University College Cork in 2020.

[68] Waidler, Sanctity and Intertextuality, p. 312.

[69] See for example: Gwynn & Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses Ireland*, p. 375, which associates Brigown (Brí Gobann) with Abbán over Findchú. This potentially demonstrates a scenario which Finnchú's hagiographer did not wish to see come to fruition.

[70] While Findchú's *Betha* may be later than *VSA*, this does not mean that the cults of Abbán and Findchú emerged in the same order. Evidence of a saint's cult needs to have already existed, in order for a hagiographer to be able to write a Life on the saint.

[71] Moore, Ecclesiastical Antiquities of the Parish of Brigown (Mitchelstown), Diocese of Cloyne, pp. 221-224; Rice, *An Historical and Topographical Sketch of the Parish of Kilcrumper*, pp. 14-15.

[72] Moore, Ecclesiastical Antiquities of the Parish of Brigown (Mitchelstown), Diocese of Cloyne, pp. 221-224; Cf. Moore's contemporary description of the Cell na Marbán location and how it also became known as Boher-na-Marbhan (The Road of the Dead). Rice, *An Historical and Topographical Sketch of the Parish of Kilcrumper*, p. 15.

[73] Hence, even though Findchú's obit (653) is attested in The Annals of Tigernach, the chronologically varied death-dates attributed to most of Abbán's contemporaries and the fabricated origin of their depictions demonstrates Findchú's obit cannot be a sufficient means for discerning whether his primary connection with Brí Gobann preceded Abbán's role in building Cell na Marbán. The significance of Abbán's contemporary relationships was the main point of discussion in chapter two of this thesis. For a scholarly reference to Findchú's obit, see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 337, fn. 16.

of the saint's ecclesiastical settlements. This is particularly apparent from the Early Modern Irish text *Críchad an Chaoilli*, which provides insight into the boundary and territory divisions within the lands of Brí Gobann.[74] Though Brí Gobann gained a notable reputation of fame during the Anglo-Norman period, its historical record from the pre-Norman period is comparatively less well-known.[75]

Furthermore, it has been noted by Sarah Waidler that most of the Brí Gobann lands associated with Findchú in his *Betha*, are comparatively smaller than the lands typically associated with saints, for whom Lives survive.[76] This would suggest that the cult of Findchú was minor or mainly local before the Anglo-Norman period. Thus, to promote such a cult, but also the saint's connection with a region (Brí Gobhann) growing in size and power during the Anglo-Norman period, this may explain why the hagiographer of Findchú's *Betha* may not have been willing to acknowledge any other (pre-)existing cults within Brí Gobann.[77] The fact that Abbán's Life tells us that he built a church (Cell na Marbán) in the city of Brí Gobann, reflects the hagiographer's concern in maintaining Abbán's cult in Brí Gobann. As for the name of his church: Cell na Marbán; while *VSA* says that it was a basement tomb in which the dead were buried, Patrick Power put forward the idea 'that Marbán was used to signify a donation of lands, "in mortmain," to a church'.[78] The implication therefore is that Abbán's depiction in building Cell na Marbán was encoded with this underlying message.[79] If so, then it may be understandable why Findchú's hagiographer was displeased towards the idea of a church (Cell na Marbán), not belonging to the cult of his patron saint (Findchú), but located in the saint's city (Brí Gobann), was gaining its own individual ecclesiastical power.

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[74] *Críchad an Chaoilli* is a topographical tract on the kingdom of Fir Maige Féne or *Caílle (Caoille)*, see: Power, *Críchad an Chaoilli*; Cf. Waidler, Sanctity and Intertextuality, p. 295, fn. 5, which suggests that *Críchad an Chaoilli* represents a situation from or based on the thirteenth century.

[75] Waidler, Sanctity and Intertextuality, p. 295.

[76] Waidler, Sanctity and Intertextuality, p. 295.

[77] It was argued that the hagiographer of Findchú's *Betha* as it survives today, was borrowing its material from earlier sources, see: Waidler, Sanctity and Intertextuality, pp. 297-302, which examines the language and structure of Findchú's *Betha*. Therefore, we need not imply that the content of Findchú's *Betha* derives solely from one individual hagiographer.

[78] Power, *Crichad an Chaoilli*, p. 82. Power informs us that this was told to him by T.F. O' Rahilly.

[79] On a more general note, this is a classic example of the contemporary purposes of Hiberno-Latin hagiography; for a read on this matter; see: Picard, Structural Patterns in Early Hiberno-Latin Hagiography, pp. 67-82; Cf. the following sentence from Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*, p. 2: 'The hagiographical text thus bears an encoded message about the milieu in which it was compiled and received'.

St. Beccán

At the same time, we must acknowledge that Abbán's *Vita* mentions nothing about Findchú or his connection with the region. Potentially, Abbán's hagiographer may also have feared it would demean Abbán's identity in his own hagiographical record, particularly since Findchú's cult was connected with a broader region. In the scenes pertaining to the subsequent Munster locations in *VSA(D)*, however, Abbán's hagiographer seems to have had a change of heart; as the latter part of §22 of *VSA(D)* focuses notably on the life of a saint named Beccán.[80] In comparison to the aforementioned scenario of Cell Cruimthir and Cruimthir Fraoch, Abbán builds a monastery called Cluain Aird Mobeboc, which subsequently becomes Beccán's primary foundation.[81] This places Abbán approximately somewhere within the barony of Clanwilliam towards the south-west of Co. Tipperary or the bordering barony of Small County in the east of Co. Limerick.[82] In contrast to Cruimthir Fraoch however, Abbán's hagiographer appears to acknowledge that Beccán is the patron saint of Cluain Aird Mobeboc, despite Abbán's precedented role in building this monastery. Hence, after building Cell na Marbán, Abbán travelled upwards into the north side of a mountain called Crott, from which point, he completed the latter part of his monastic career in Munster:

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[80] As the ongoing discussion will soon explain, Abbán's hagiographer is merely reflecting on the ascetic lifestyle St. Becan endured. The fact that Abbán or Becán do not interact in any shape or form in *VSA* means that we cannot elicit any implication that they were contemporaries. While *BA* does suggest they did interact, the reference is extremely brief and the fact that *VSA*'s longer discussion makes no such claim removes such implications. Therefore, the significance of Becán was not discussed in chapter two of this thesis, where the focus was centred on Abbán's contemporary relationships.

[81] In *BA*, the hagiographer merely states that Abbán 'left Becán' in this location; see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 8, §11; Vol. 2, p. 7, §11.

[82] While Charles Plummer opted for the Tipperary barony (see: *VSH(D)*, p. 320), the aforementioned Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin has shown how the anglicised version of this place Cluain Aird Mobeboc (Kilpeacon) is attested in both baronies; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=963*; for the Kilpeacon location of Tipperary; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=2594*; Cf. *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=962*, which refers to a Tipperary townland named Toureen (or Pekaun); but like the other Kilpeacon location from Tipperary, Toureen has also been located in the barony of Clanwilliam (Websites Last Accessed 24th September 2020). The fact that Mac Shamhráin traced the *Crott* Mountain to a barony (Iffa & Offa West) located directly below the Clanwilliam barony of Co. Tipperary, could suggest that the Kilpeacon location from Co. Tipperary was the location which Abbán's hagiographer had in mind when writing Cluain Aird Mobeboc; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=2934* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020); Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 93, which also suggests it is the Tipperary Kilpeacon location which is being cited in Abbán's dossier. In any event, the question of whether Cluain Aird Mobeboc is cited in Abbán's dossier refers to the Kilpeacon location from the Limerick or Tipperary barony need not cause us a great deal of concern; particularly since they are neighbouring baronies.

> 'At the foot of Crott, Abbán built a monastery called Cluain Aird Mobeboc. He then built another monastery in Cluain Finglaisse. Then, the author refers back to Cluain Aird Mobeboc tells stories of a the places patron saint, Beccán who lived an ascetic lifestyle. Beccán would for instance, crucify himself to a stone cross early every morning regardless of the weather. Beccán had a monastery called 'Cell na Der' meaning 'The Church in which we Lament'. The author then draws out attention back to Abbán's monastic work in Munster, informing us that Abbán built monasteries in a place called Cluain Finglaisse, which pierces through the River Siur in the west of the plain of Femin. The author further informs us that a monastery in the plain of Femin was built by Abbán and is called Cluain Conbruin.'

While the *VSA(D)* version centres mainly on the author's reminiscence of Beccán's ascetic lifestyle, a closer reading of this section (§22 of *VSA(D)*) further shows it is an after-thought on behalf of Abbán's hagiographer. After building the Cluain Aird Mobeboc monastery, the next point of concern, is the monastic work which Abbán completed in a place called Cluain Finglaisse. At this point, we would expect to read a discussion on this matter; but instead, we receive a somewhat sudden reference back to Cluain Aird Mobeboc, at which point, Abbán's hagiographer expresses his desire to talk about St. Beccán.[83] The manner in which the storyline of Beccán is introduced into the overall plot; i.e. Abbán's monastic career, may also imply that Abbán's hagiographer initially forgot to incorporate the storyline of Beccán into the scene which told of Abbán building the Cluain Aird Mobeboc monastery. To compensate, he attempted to recapture this original intention by shoe-horning the storyline into a later part of the overall plot of §22 of *VSA(D)*.

If this was an almost forgotten attempt to acknowledge that Cluain Aird Mobeboc is Beccán's primary foundation, Abbán's hagiographer could be forgiven for this minor error; particularly in his subsequent attempt to express his familiarity with Beccán's cult and textual profile.[84] For

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[83] More generally, the hagiographer's attempt to associate Beccán with Cluain Aird Mobeboc ultimately demonstrates that Beccán is the patron saint of this foundation.

[84] On another level, this lends support to the unlikeliness of Bishop Ailbe of Ferns being the original author of the scenes pertaining to Abbán's Munster career. A twelfth to thirteenth century Laigin prelate would hardly have been capable of showing such familiarity, let alone interest, in the life of a potential seventh century saint (See: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 94, fn. 10), whose cult was relatively minor and did not extend to the Diocese of Ferns. Moreover, the reference to Beccán's church (Cell na Dér) which is in fact, located in Co. Kerry, supports this idea; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=2177* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). *Cell na Dér* will be the next point of discussion in the main text of this chapter.

instance, the depiction of Beccán regularly engaging in vigils is also recognisable under his feast-day (26 May) description from FÓ: Béccán carais figle / 'Béccán who loved vigils'.[85] Elsewhere, the reference to Beccán's stone cross appears to be an authentic representation of his cult, given the survival of similar archaeological evidence located in the site of Cluain Aird Mobeboc.[86] But perhaps the most intriguing aspect of Beccán's story-line from this section of *VSA(D)* is the claim that Beccán's monastery (Cluain Aird Mobeboc) is also called Cell na Der. This implication was, however, contradicted by Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin, who traced the Cell na Der foundation to the aforementioned barony of Magunihy, in Co. Kerry.[87] The fact that Abbán's hagiographer sets the storyline of Beccán in Cluain Aird Mobeboc from the outset, suggests that Cluain Aird Mobeboc and Cell na Der are not being treated as separate foundations in *VSA(D)* and thus *BA*.

Despite this geographical inaccuracy, we ought to remember the hagiographer's main purpose in referring to both foundations; which was, to disclose the Munster cults of Abbán and Beccán. Hence, while two separate foundations are being identified as one, it does not interfere with the hagiographer's attempt to broadcast Beccán's cultural status. Indeed, Abbán's hagiographer goes beyond the idea of merely acknowledging Beccán's connection with a monastery that was originally built by Abbán. While Abbán's faithful and steadfast lifestyle is also exemplified from the outset of *VSA* and *BA*, it is evidently outmanoeuvred by a comparatively shorter but more detailed account on Beccán's. The probability of Beccán's ascetic lifestyle being a focal point of interest to Abbán's hagiographer is also discernible from the etymology of Cell na Der, meaning 'The Church in which we Lament'.[88] The fact that weeping and crying is one of the characteristics of Beccán's ascetic lifestyle could mean that Cell na Der also served as a metaphorical representation of the saint's lifestyle. In that regard, claiming that Cluain Aird

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[85] *FÓ*, p. 126. Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 93, fn. 5. More generally, this demonstrates the availability and accessibility of various sources to Irish hagiographers; that do not solely concern the saint on which they are producing a Life.

[86] For more details on the stone cross and inscribed stone evidence from this site; see: Okasha & Forsyth, *Early Christian Inscriptions of Munster: A Corpus of the Inscribed Stones*, pp. 290-329.

[87] *Monasticon Hibernicum-* https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=2177; *Onomasticon Godelicum-* https://www.dias.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/E-Onomasticon_Text.pdf , p. 827 of pp. 1-2943, entry number 8046 (Both Websites Last Accessed 24th September 2020). The Magunihy barony was where Abbán had previously built the Cell Achaid Conhinn foundation; the first Munster location, to which Abbán travelled. Potentially, the fact that Ó Riain says nothing about a connection with Kerry in his biographical discussion of Beccán may imply that the Cell na Der foundation (if its location in the Magunihy barony of Kerry is correct) is a lesser-known aspect of his cult; see: Ó Riain *A Dictionary*, pp. 93-94. On a side note, the implication of Abbán's hagiographer being aware of and having access to a ninth century martyrology (*FÓ*) would imply that Abbán's original Life stemmed from this period too.

[88] The fact that Abbán's hagiographer offers a Latin translation of the vernacular placename, demonstrates why his decision not to translate Campus Cé/Triudi from the section pertaining to Abbán's monastic career in Connacht may thus, be unusual.

Mobeboc was also called Cell na Der may have been an underlying attempt to explain how the site gradually became a cultural landmark of Beccán's status.

At the same time, we need consider also that the importance attributed to Beccán is only discernible from Abbán's hagiographical dossier. The fact that Beccán has no *Vita* or *Betha* of his own, means the significance of his status relies upon that of another saint. Therefore, the fame of Beccán's cult is in fact, relatively minor. In contrast to the aforementioned St. Findchú and his absence from Abbán's dossier, this is perhaps why Abbán's hagiographer was willing to cast such light upon Beccán's status. Regardless of the extent to which Beccán was admired by Abbán's hagiographer, it would never elevate to a scale that sufficed to surpass Abbán's status. This is because Abbán's cult was comparatively more extensive than Beccán's in actuality.[89] Since Abbán's dossier was the primary source of evidence for Beccán's cultural status, this means that it would inevitably reflect back on the importance of Abbán's cult, but also his hagiographical dossier. Abbán's dossier is undoubtedly an integral source for uncovering such insight. His dossier not only informed its audience of the historical development of the churches and monastic sites Abbán originally built and founded but also topographically visualised Abbán's monastic career from Connacht to Munster and throughout.

Cluain Conbruin

The latter role is particularly discernible from the reference to the final Munster foundation (Cluain Conbruin) Abbán built in the aforementioned location of Cluain Finglaisse. From the aforementioned barony of Clanwilliam in Co. Tipperary, Abbán travelled to the very south-east of the county into the Iffa and Offa East barony and built Cluain Conbruin.[90] Explaining that this foundation 'pierces through the River Siur in the west plain of Femin', demonstrates that geographical clarification was an important point of consideration to Abbán's hagiographer when writing the scenes pertaining to the saint's monastic career in Munster. On the one hand, this reflects the thorough effort of the hagiographer for ensuring his audience can follow the geographical route of Abbán's career. Alternatively, it implies that the audience were largely unfamiliar of the locational landmarks of Abbán's Munster foundations otherwise. The probability of Abbán's original non-extant Life being produced in Laigin could imply that

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[89] Compare, for example, the number of foundations associated with Abbán to that of Beccán; *Monasticon Hibernicum - https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/search.php?search=abban&submit=Quick+search#results* & *https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/search.php?search=beccan&submit=Quick+search#results* (Both Websites Last Accessed 24th September 2020).

[90] *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=2651* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020).

its audience would mainly have come from this province, meaning that they could hardly have known *all* of the places to which Abbán travelled in Munster.[91] Hence, references to more famous dynastic regions or kingdoms, such as the aforementioned Uí Lythain dynasty or the Eoganacht may certainly have sufficed to pinpoint the precise Munster locations through which Abbán completed his monastic career.

Episode 2- Éile (§§23-26 of *VSA(D)* and §12-13 of *BA*)

Though it is unlikely that the author of *VSA* (potentially Bishop Ailbe of Ferns) invented the scenes pertaining to Abbán's career in Connacht and Munster, it may have been him (a prelate of Laigin) who felt the need to make these geographical clarifications to a late twelfth to early thirteenth century audience; not only because of their probable Laigin origins but most importantly, because the majority of this audience were probably people of Anglo-Norman origin.[92] The fact that the following four sections of *VSA(D)* tell of the time Abbán spent in a kingdom (Éile) which was located in the same region in which Bishop Ailbe originally came from, could imply these sections were largely invented by Bishop Ailbe to justify his own contemporary affairs. In that regard, Bishop Ailbe would need to have read the preceding (Connacht and Munster) and subsequent (north Laigin) sections of Abbán's Life to ensure that the scenes pertaining to Éile did not fragment the transitionary points of the final scenes of the Connacht and Munster episode and those of north Laigin.[93] Hence, *VSA(D)* notes towards the very end of the scenes pertaining to Munster that 'Abbán' went to the northern region of Munster and from there, continued his journey on to Éile'.[94]

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[91] The very fact that both of Abbán's primary foundations (Cell Abbain and Mag Arnaide) are located in Laigin would certainly imply that Abbán's original Life was written in this province.

[92] There are nevertheless, a few other scenes from *VSA* which can be perceived as clearer indications of Bishop Ailbe producing *VSA* for an international or Anglo-Norman audience. These scenes will be addressed in chapter four of this thesis.

[93] Moreover, this would also suggest that Bishop Ailbe attempting to shoe-horn material from his own time, the (post) Norman period, into already existing material (scenes pertaining to Connacht and Munster) which was already a couple of centuries old by the time Bishop Ailbe decided to produce a contemporary Life of Abbán (*VSA*).

[94] *VSA(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 18. In *BA*, nothing is said about Éile until the author discusses the scenes pertaining to the dynastic kingdom; see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p, 8; Vol. 2, p. 7.

In Éile, the first event ensues in the following manner:[95]

§23 of *VSA(D)* and §12 of *BA*

> 'When Abbán arrived in Éile, he discovered the people in this region were still pagan. As he preached to them about God and Heaven, the leader wanted proof that his word of God was accurate. The leader steered Abbán's attention towards a stone, asking Abbán to say whether the largest part of the stone is embedded into the ground or is above the ground. Abbán replied that the stone is equally in the ground and above the ground. The king immediately ordered people of Éile to start digging to see if Abbán was correct, who confirmed that Abbán had guessed correctly. As a result, the people of Éile decided to receive baptism and Abbán received the village of 'Raith Becain', meaning 'The Court of Becan'. Abbán subsequently became the patron of this nation.'

Being depicted as a Christian converter is perhaps one of the highest levels of holiness and virtue which can be attributed to a saint.[96] It requires, not only an ability to conduct monastic work and enact miracles, but thus, an overall ability to execute perseverance. This is why Abbán had to prove the authenticity of his faith to the king and people of Éile beforehand, as they reacted sceptically to Abbán preaching the words of God. Nevertheless, it was Abbán's correct estimation of a stone which helped him succeed in proving the authenticity of his faith, which subsequently prompted the king and people of Éile to receive baptism from the saint. As for the kingdom in question (Éile), it is by no means an unfamiliar region to the broader Irish record. There are plentiful references to Éile in the Annals from the sixth right up to the

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[95] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 18. In *BA*, we are provided with an abbreviated version of this scene, but the one detail that is completely left out in *BA* is the reference to the property (Ráith Becáin); see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 8, §12; Vol. 2, pp. 7-8, §12.

[96] This subject-matter has been discerned from various historical and textual milieus from the records of almost thirty different Irish saints', including Abbán's; see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, 646. Hence, the commonplace nature of a saint enacting the role of a preacher means the general significance of the trope need not be considered in any great detail. For Abbán nevertheless, his depiction as a preacher and Christian converter may also be compared to the basic concept of the pre-Patrician claim; that being: the implication that there were saints in Ireland practising Christianity before the arrival of St. Patrick. Hence, the idea of Abbán converting the people of this dynastic region adheres to the claim that when Palladius landed in Ireland in 431, the people of the nation were already practising Christianity in Ireland; see: Mommsen, *Prosper of Aquitaine, Epitoma Chronicon*, p. 473. It does not however, concur with the wider variety of Irish source material that claims Patrick converted the nation of Ireland in 432 and subsequently became the apostle of Ireland; See for example *Chronicon Scotorum- https://celt.ucc.ie//published/T100016/index.html*, which tells of Patrick's arrival in Ireland and role in converting the nation (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). Cf. *FÓ*, p. 82, which identifies Patrick as *apstal Hérenn hóge* / 'the apostle of virginal Erin'. However, given the possibility of the scenes pertaining to Éile being the original work of Bishop Ailbe of Ferns, the depiction of Abbán converting the people of this nation is most likely an invented literary trope, for which the idea was indirectly borrowed from a similar type of trope from the records of one of the numerous Irish saints attributed pre-Christian connotations or one of the three saints most famously characterised as pre-Patrician saints; namely: SS. Declan of Ardmore, Ailbe of Emly and Ciarán of Saighir.

fifteenth centuries, which tell of the various historical battles and deaths of individuals that occurred in this kingdom.[97] In addition, Éile is frequently cited in Irish hagiography, as is indicated by references to the location in the Lives of almost several saints' (including Abbán) from *VSH(D)*.[98]

Raith Becain

In hagiography, the acquisition of property is a familiar storyline from scenes set in Éile. The depiction of Abbán being offered the property of Raith Becain is a prime example.[99] On that note, we may remark upon a parallel with a similar scene from the *Vita* of St. Ruadán. Whilst Abbán was awarded Raith Becain as a result of converting Éile, Ruadán was awarded property from Éile (Tulach Ruadain) after resurrecting an individual in the kingdom.[100] This could be perceived as a reflection of the commonplace nature of the manner in which contemporary concerns in property rights were encoded into hagiographical scenes.[101] By no means is it a peculiar feature from Abbán's dossier, owing to the probability of Bishop Ailbe of Ferns being the author of *VSA*, whose political concerns largely revolved around property rights. Hence, like the aforementioned property of Find Mag, which King Cormac son of Diarmait handed over to Abbán, Raith Becain may have been an ecclesiastical site over which Bishop Ailbe was willing to acquire a degree of ownership. Hence, to claim that Abbán was awarded Raith Becain

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[97] See for example: *The Annals of Inisfallen- https://celt.ucc.ie//published/T100004/index.html* & *The Annals of the Four Masters- https://celt.ucc.ie//published/T100005A/index.html* (Both Websites Last Accessed 24th September 2020).

[98] On a general note, kingdoms and dynastic regions appear more frequently in saints' lives than local townlands or foundations.

[99] See for example: Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin, 2013, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 335. Cf. *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=4705;*
https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=4706
& *https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=4707*, which trace the Raith Becain property to Counties: Offaly, Tipperary and Meath (Websites Last Accessed 24th September 2020). While Éile's location in Tipperary would suggest *VSA(D)* is referring to the Raith Becain of Tipperary, the fact that Abbán is associated with the River Brosna in the subsequent section of the *Vita* would suggest that a cult of Abbán subsequently emerged from the Raith Becc location of Co. Offaly. As for the Raith Becain of Co. Meath, its more probable connection with the aforementioned St. Beccán of Cluain Aird Mobeboc (owing to the etymology of the placename) may also have intertwined with Abbán's founding of the Cell Ailbe foundation in the Meath Diocese. Moreover, it is noteworthy how the etymology of this property indicates that it does in fact, belong to the aforementioned St. Beccán. While several different saints named Beccán have been identified by Pádraig Ó Riain; see: Ó Riain, A Dictionary, pp. 92-94, the probability of the Raith Becain foundation of Co. Tipperary belonging the aforementioned Beccán of Cluain Aird Mobeboc (also Cell na Dér; see Episode 1 of this chapter for clarification on these foundation names) derives from the Tipperary origin of Cluain Aird Mobeboc and Raith Becain. Once again, this lends support to the claim of Abbán's hagiographical dossier being the main source of evidence for Beccán's cult; particularly since no *Vita* or *Betha* of Beccán of Cluain Aird Mobeboc survives or is at least, unknown.

[100] For the *Vita* of Ruadán; see: *VSH(D)*, p. 251; *VSH(S)*, p. 166; Cf. *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 327, §21; Vol. 2, p. 318, §21.

[101] Furthermore, it demonstrates that the hagiographers regularly envisaged motifs and tropes about saints who came from different worlds or eras to that of their hagiographer, regardless of whether the hagiographer was working at a point in time between the seventh to eleventh centuries or the Norman or post-Norman period.

after converting a region, would certainly have sufficed to demonstrate why a bishop of Ferns would be the rightful owner of the site.[102]

Furthermore, the claim that Abbán became the patron of their nation merits some remarks; particularly since it contradicts the implication that Abbán is the patron saint of two Laigin foundations (Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain).[103] The fact that the two subsequent sections of *VSA(D)* tell of another series of miracles Abbán carried out in Éile would imply that Bishop Ailbe was eager to promote the claim that Abbán had a high-profile connection with the kingdom. After taking the land of Raith Becain, the people of Éile then asked him tackle the problem of a dangerous monster that posed a threat to the kingdom:[104]

§24 of *VSA(D)* and §13 of *BA*

> 'Abbán defeats a venomous cat-like monster that had previously killed numerous people and cattle in Éile. Abbán bounded the monster to the banks of the River Brosna. Only a miraculous sign of the monster appears once every seventh year. Abbán's resolution filled the entire region with much joy.'

Éile and The River Brosna

Since Bishop Ailbe was most probably familiar with hagiography and its ability to affirm 'title to property', this would imply that he must also have been familiar with some of the typical miracle motifs and tropes of Irish hagiography. [105] In this scene, we are presented with the

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[102] This is because Abbán's south Laigin foundation (Mag Arnaide) lay within this Diocese. The extent to which Bishop Ailbe would have been the rightful owner of this Tipperary site in actuality however, is challenged by a reference to Raith Becain in the *Vita* of another saint, whose primary foundation is located in the same county as this property; namely: St. Crónán of Roscrea. Crónán's *Vita* implies that Raith Becain was an important place, because it was by a Munster king named Finghin son of Áedo Duib; see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 234; Cf. *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. lx. The fact that Crónán's cult is particularly prominent throughout the kingdom of *Éile* would imply that Raith Becain's connection with his cult bears more historical truth than its connection with Abbán's. At the same time, the etymology of the Raith Becain suggests it is connected to the cults of neither saints'; but St. Beccán of Cluain Aird Mobeboc. At any rate, regardless of which cult (Abbán or Crónán) upholds a more genuine connection with Raith Becain, the manner in which the site is referred to in Abbán's dossier indicates that it more likely originates from the invented works of Bishop Ailbe.

[103] The evidence for Abbán's Laigin foundations is discernible from the latter part of *VSA* (more details to be followed up on later in the present chapter), the title of *VSA(S)*: *Vita Sancti Abbani Abbatis de Mag Arnaide et Cell Abbain* (The Life of St. Abbán Abbot of Moyarney and Killabban); see: *VSA(S)*, p. 256; and the aforementioned genealogical evidence which identifies Abbán as a patron saint of both Laigin foundations; see: chapter one of this thesis.

[104] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 18-19; for the abbreviated version of this section from *BA*; see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 8, §13; Vol. 2, p. 8, §13. Moreover, the depiction of the monsters only appearing once every seven years most likely reflects the authors understanding of the Biblical significance of the number seven. For instance, according to Genesis 1; 2: 1-2, after God had spent six days creating Heaven and Earth, he subsequently rested on the seventh day after completing this task.

[105] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 333. Moreover, the depiction of a saint confining a monster to a lake have been traced back to the lives of three other saints'; namely: SS. Kevin, Molua and Samthann; see: Bray,

depiction of a dangerous monster, which is a relatively common trope in Irish hagiography. Thus, the frequent appearance of this trope lends support to the possibility of Bishop Ailbe being aware and knowledgeable of this trope. Elsewhere, the reference to the River Brosna undoubtedly shows his familiarity with the topography outside the parameters of Éile.[106] The fact that Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin suggested that Bishop Ailbe was born in a territory in the west of Offaly called Fir Chell would explain where Bishop Ailbe's familiarity with Éile stems from.[107] On the other hand, associating Abbán with tropes concerning water motifs and water landmarks (River Brosna), could also embody an underlying attempt to follow up on Abbán's connection with water; which we examined from a select group of scenes in chapter two.[108] The saint's power over water is also discernible from the following scene which depicts Abbán baptising a baby, for which the outcome is somewhat unconventional in the milieu of Irish hagiographical writing more generally:[109]

§25 of *VSA(D)* and §13, Part 28 of *BA*

> 'Another time, there was a very old man of noble class in Éile who only had a daughter, but wanted a son to seek his heir, and had no other brothers or grandsons. Abbán miraculously changed his daughter into a son. The king and his wife were delighted and the son and his seed were destined to serve Abbán and would become kings of the land of Éile. Abbán had founded churches there and wanted to spend the rest of his life there. However, an angel told him that he must move on to Laigin'.

A List of Motifs, p. 88. Indeed, there are other tropes which contextualise monsters elsewhere in the Irish hagiographical record.

[106] The River Brosna also appears in the *Vitae* (*Dubliniensis* version) of two other saints', whose primary foundations are located within close proximity to *Éile*; namely: SS. Ciarán of Saighir in the south of Co. Offaly and the aforementioned Crónán of Roscrea in the north of Co. Tipperary; for details on the precise sections of their *Vitae* which tell of their association with the River Brosna; see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, p. 317, under the headword: *Brosnach*. More generally, this shows how the topographical landmark is not frequently cited in Irish hagiography. Hence, its record in the *Vitae* of SS. Ciarán and Crónán would imply that the River Brosna is a more authentic landmark of the cults of these saints', as oppose to Abbán; particularly since the primary foundations of Ciarán and Crónán are closely located to the River Brosna.

[107] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 310. Mac Shamhráin made this assumption based on the wide-attestation of Bishop Ailbe's surname (O' Molloy) throughout Co. Offaly. Cf. Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 335, fn. 97 & Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 352, which notes that Bishop Ailbe 'may have regarded Abbán as personal patron'. Moreover, the fact that Fir Chell was ruled by the O' Mulloys would support the probability Bishop Ailbe most likely being the inventor of the scenes pertaining to Éile; see for example: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 164.

[108] See for example, pp. 110-115 of this thesis.

[109] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 19-20. While *VSA(D)* tells that Abbán travelled onto Laigin after spending some time in *Éile*, *BA* tells that Abbán travelled directly to Ros Mic Triuin (New Ross); see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, pp. 8-9, Part 28 of §13; Vol. 2, p. 8, Part 28 of §13. Abbán's connection with Ros Mic Triuin will be discussed under Episode 4 of this chapter, where the broader significance of his south Laigin cult will be explored.

Éile

In this section, Abbán's connection with water is displayed through his ability to change the gender of the old man's baby daughter. The change of gender is perhaps one of the uncommonest tropes not only from Abbán's dossier, but from the Irish hagiographical record more widely.[110] This trope has only been traced back to the Life of another Irish saint; namely: St. Gerald of Mayo.[111] However, the fact that Gerald's *Vita* has been dated to a period later than *VSA* would imply that the trope originated from Abbán's dossier, or was invented by Bishop Ailbe.[112] Hence, while this specific trope from *VSA(D)* may not have been directly borrowed from another saint's Life, the question remains as to what source material inspired Bishop Ailbe to compose such a narrative; not only the scene which envisages Abbán changing the gender of a baby through baptism, but those which comprise the entire narrative of Éile. Up until this point, there have been three sections which comprised this narrative, for which the overall subject-matter can be summarised in the following manner:[113]

§23- Abbán miraculously guesses the correct size of a stone in Éile which convinces the king and his people that Abbán is worthy of receiving baptism from, resulting in the king and people of Éile offering the saint the land of Raith Becain. As a result, Abbán, became the patron of Éile.

§24- Abbán ensures that a venomous monster no longer threatens the people of Éile

§25- Abbán transforms an old man's baby girl to a boy through baptism and prophesied that the baby boy would subsequently rule Éile, which came through. Abbán subsequently built churches within the parameters of this kingdom.

The probability of *VSA* being adapted from an original non-extant Life of Abbán, means that Bishop Ailbe would need to have familiarised himself with the Life before producing a later version (*VSA*); and most certainly before he could insert additional sections that he invented. Hence, we need consider whether Bishop Ailbe modelled the scenes pertaining to Éile on those

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[110] On a more general level, this trope may also express a contemporary concern in maintaining hereditary lineage. The next section not only suggests so, but also implies that the concern originates with Bishop Ailbe.

[111] see: Bray, *A List of Motifs*, p. 106; For a read of the full Latin text of Gerald's *Vita*; see for example: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, pp. 107-115.

[112] See for example: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 360. After noting that Gerald's *Vita* was most likely composed after 1370, Ó Riain then notes that the *Vita* is 'extant only in the *Insuliensis* collection', but subsequently cites the *Dubliniensis* version in a footnote, alongside Charles Plummer's discussion of the *Dubliensis* version of Gerald's *Vita* and John Colgan's edition of the *Insuliensis* version of the *Vita*; see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 360, fn. 5 under the name 'Garailt of Mayo (Maigh Eó)'. Hence, to suggest that Gerald's *Vita* is 'extant only in the *Insuliensis* collection' in the main text of his biographical discussion of the saint is somewhat misleading.

[113] These sections derive from *VSA(D)*; see: *VSA(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 18-20.

which derived from the original Life. On that note we may compare these scenes to those which tell of the time Abbán spent in a heathen city, of which there are four sections to consider:[114]

§13- Abbán proves the authenticity of his Christian faith by miraculously lighting a candle with his breath. This amazes the king and people of the heathen city.[115]

§14- Abbán resurrects the king's wife. This convinces the people of this city to receive baptism from Abbán.[116]

§15- Abbán killed a lion-like beast which had threatened the people this city.

§16- Abbán managed to force beasts to dwell into depths of a lake forever.[117]

The comparisons between the scenes pertaining to Abbán's time in a heathen city (§§13-16) and those which tell of his career in Éile, would imply that Bishop Ailbe used §§13-16 as an exemplary source for producing a narrative on Éile.[118] Ascribing such a detailed account on Éile most certainly suggests that Bishop Ailbe had interest in the kingdom. This is particularly recognisable from the author's attempt to envisage Abbán with a desire to spend the rest of his life in Éile, but for which he consequently could not as his predestined place of resurrection was in Laigin.[119] However, the implication that the author was about to transition to the scenes pertaining to Abbán's career in Laigin is contradicted by a somewhat final unexpected reference to another event which unfolded in Éile, which is told in the following manner:[120]

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[114] In *VSA(D)*, Abingdon is depicted as the heathen city. In *BA* however, the heathen city is Padua. This contrast will be examined in chapter four of this thesis. Equally so will the broader significance of these scenes; which are centred on Abbán's journey and stay in Rome.

[115] This scene resonates with §23 of *VSA(D)* which tells of Abbán's ability to guess the size of a stone in Éile, which also convinced the people of this kingdom.

[116] Like the latter part of §23, Abbán's capability of correctly guessing the size of the stone also prompted the king of Éile and his people to receive baptism.

[117]§24 of *VSA(D)* also tells of a dangerous monster that poses a serious threat to society.

[118] We need mention also, Ó Riain's implication of the scenes pertaining to Abbán's time in the heathen city (Abingdon) originating with Bishop Ailbe, which would imply that the scenes pertaining to Éile were modelled on earlier scenes that were also created by Bishop Ailbe; see: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 160-161; Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, pp. 352-353; Cf. Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 334 which acknowledges Ó Riain's claim, but suggests the depiction of Abingdon as a heathen city is perhaps one of the vague indications of Bishop Ailbe's 'imprint on the *Vita S. Abbani*'. Abingdon will receive more focus in chapter four of this thesis.

[119] This may also reflect that Bishop Ailbe could only make a certain number of modifications, so long as they did not contradict or tinker with the original evidence for Abbán's primary connection with Laigin.

[120] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 20. This scene is not told in *BA*. The depiction of Abbán acting as a protector in this section has been traced back to the lives of thirteen other saints'; see: Bray, *A List of Motifs*, p. 93. Hence, the commonplace nature of this trope means its connection with Abbán need not be considered in any great detail.

§26 of *VSA(D)*

> 'There remained one member of the royal family of Éile who had planned to ambush
> Abbán. However, when this tyrant planned saw Abbán, he instantly put his arms on the
> ground and walked towards Abbán in a humble manner as Abbán had prophesised
> beforehand. This tyrant then received baptism. The tyrant became a monk of Abbán's
> and stayed with Abbán. Abbán then told him that his sons of sons will be powerful
> leaders that will rule powerfully over Abbán's monastery, the one in which he will be
> buried and await resurrection. The author then claims that he himself (the author) is a
> descendant of these sons. The author further claims that he wrote the Life of the most
> blessed Abbán and is a descendant of the former tyrant's children of whom Abbán had
> prophesied.'

Considering the probability of Bishop Ailbe being the inventor of the Éile narrative, we may
suggest that here, he has employed a relatively common trope and exploited it as a means of
furthering his connection with Abbán. To claim that he himself, is a living descendant of the
tyrant whom Abbán baptised undoubtedly fulfils this role; but to claim that *Ego autem qui
vitam beatissimi patris Abbani collegi et scripsi…* / 'Moreover, I who gathered the material for
and composed the life of the most blessed father Abbán….', is a matter that merits some
thought.[121] This is perhaps the only part of *VSA(D)* which sheds light upon the question of the
authorship of Abbán's original Life. After suggesting that the prayer/charm from §17 of
VSA(D) originally belonged to the end of § 19, Pádraig Ó Néill suggested that the author of
VSA may have 're-arranged episodes and quotations', and this possibility is further supported
by the author's claim that 'he had collected materials about Abbán before he composed the
Life'.[122] This places some contradiction upon the claim that *VSA* 'was produced in its original
form'.[123] Based on Ó Néill's remark, it becomes difficult to believe that this material did not
represent some form of an original Life of Abbán, from which Bishop Ailbe transcribed and
produced his own contemporary version (*VSA*).[124]

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[121] See: Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 105, fn. 34. This footnote is cited for the purpose of providing a translation of a precise line from the section which essentially tells that the author is claiming to have non-biological but hereditary connection to the saint.

[122] Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 105, fn. 34.

[123] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 159. Moreover, Ó Néill's suggestion of Bishop Ailbe collecting materials on Abbán for composing the life, could be perceived as a presentation of important evidence for *VSA* being a copy and elaboration of an original non-extant Life; despite the fact that Ó Néill shares the same views as Ó Riain in relation to the origin of Abbán's Life; see: Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 100.

[124] In the context of Welsh hagiography, the theory of late (eleventh to thirteenth century) Lives being copies of originals was alluded towards in the following words of Wendy Davies: 'it is hard to read the earliest Welsh Latin

Episode 3- North Laigin (§27 of *VSA(D)*)

Moreover, Charles Doherty has put forward some cases to suggest that Bishop Ailbe was not the author of *VSA*; one of which was in relation to the scenes pertaining to Abbán's death. These scenes reveal tension between the communities of Cell Abbain and Mag Arnaide over ownership of Abbán's relics.[125] It is difficult to interpret this scene as suitable testimonial evidence for Bishop Ailbe's attempt to re-claim properties from William Earl Marshal.[126] Given that circumstance, it is more probable that the death scenes are a fossil from the original non-extant Life of Abbán. The first of the primary foundations to be mentioned in *VSA* is Cell Abbain. After the saint's dealings with the tyrant in Éile, Abbán then travelled to the north of Laigin:[127]

§27 of *VSA(D)*

> 'After these events, Abbán, alongside his disciples entered the Uí Bairrche dynasty located in the ends of Laigin. The people of this region greeted Abbán joyfully. Abbán was grateful for this greeting, and his arrival resulted in people of this region being healed from many different diseases and are perfected by miracles. Abbán then left Uí Bairrche and moved to the Uí Buide dynasty, where he built a great monastery for the sake of his honour and he called the church Cell Abbain, which means 'The Church of Abbán'.'

Without knowledge of Abbán's primary foundations, Cell Abbain may initially be perceived as one of the many churches the saint founded throughout Laigin, according to the *Vita*.[128] From this section, the only indication of Cell Abbain being a primary foundation of Abbán's, can be recognised from its etymological meaning. Up until this point, our only knowledge of Cell Abbain being a primary foundation of Abbán's is known from the saint's genealogical

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Lives without feeling that they are continuations of an older tradition'; see: Davies, Property rights and property claims in Welsh *Vitae* of the eleventh century', pp. 517-518. As noted from the introduction of this thesis, similar theories have been applied to the chronology of Irish hagiography; see: pp. 8-9 of this thesis.

[125] Doherty, Analysis of the "life" of Abbán, p. 4 of pp. 1-10. The death scenes will be addressed in chapter five of this thesis.

[126] See: pp. 18-20 of this thesis.

[127] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 20-21. This scene is not attested in *BA*. Moreover, we may also take note of the hagiographer's attempt to explain the etymology of Cell Abbain. In relation to the aforementioned scenes pertaining to Connacht, we may note that a similar type of explanation is lacking for Abbán's monastic location in Connacht, discussed on pp. 150-154 of this thesis.

[128] Cell Abbain (now Killabban) is a parish located in the barony of Ballyadams in the south-east of Co. Laois; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum*- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=827 (Last Accessed 24th August 2020). Another *Cell Abbain* from the Meath Diocese was firstly identified by Mervlyn Archdall; see: Archdall, *Monasticon Hibernicum*, p. 550. In §27 of *VSA(D)*, the *Cell Abbain* foundation of Co. Laois is evidently being cited, and this made clear from the reference to the Uí Bairrche and Uí Buide dynasties of north Laigin.

record, discussed in chapter one of this thesis. Otherwise, Cell Abbain and the broader dynastic regions through which the saint travelled in north Laigin may be perceived as equally important to the career he upheld in Munster and Éile.[129] At the same time, we need remember that north Laigin was the region in which Abbán is believed to have been born, owing to his father's reputed headship over the Dál Messin Corb dynasty. This is reminiscent of the claim that Abbán is 'of Mag Arnaide' but 'from Cell Abbain' in the genealogies.[130] Hence, this scene may also be perceived as the saint revisiting the broader region from which he came, but that his place of patronage (Mag Arnaide) awaits Abbán's presence.[131]

Episode 4- South Laigin (§§28-31 & 34-36 of *VSA(D)* and the Latter Part of §§13 & 14-15 of *BA*)

The implication that the Mag Arnaide foundation reflects a more important connection with Abbán is particularly recognisable from the depiction of an angel telling Abbán of the precise place of his resurrection in the south Laigin dynasty of Uí Cennselaig in §28 of VSA(D).[132] The Vita also tells of churches and monasteries Abbán built in Uí Cennselaig:[133]

The Latter Part of §28 of *VSA(D)*

> 'Some of the great churches and monasteries Abbán built in the region of Uí Cennselaig include a great monastery by the River Barrow called Ros Mic Treoin. The author further explains to us that this is where the body of St. Éimhin lies. Other monasteries

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[129] Since little detail concerns Abbán's association with Connacht, it thus, seems inappropriate to suggest it attributes a similar amount of importance to Abbán's cult as do the scenes pertaining to Munster and Éile. Evidence of Abbán's cult in north Laigin may originally came from a local church record in the parish but was subsequently copied into a pre-existing Life of Abbán from the ninth to eleventh centuries and subsequently copied into the earliest extant Life, *VSA*. Indeed, the same hypothesis may well apply to the Abbán's church foundations throughout Munster for instance, as discussed earlier, meaning evidence for Abbán's cult/church foundations more broadly, survived through the course of nearly several different centuries and thus, changing political landscapes.

[130] See for example *CGSH* and *LMnG*; further details on the significance of this claim and the bibliographical details can be found from my discussion under the 'Tracts of Saints' Genealogies (Pre-Norman Origin)' and the 'Post-Norman Tracts of Saints' Genealogies' sections on pp. 45-81 of this thesis.

[131] However, the fact that there is no reference to his precise homeland (which the beginning of *VSA(D)* implies is within the parameters of the Dál Messin Corb dynasty) resonates with the ideology of an individual not being allowed to visit their family or family homeland after rejecting their noble inheritance in order to pursue a career servicing God; see: Bitel, *Isle of the Saints*, pp. 101-104.

[132] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 21, §28. This section is not attested in *BA*; *BA* only tells us that Abbán travelled to Ros Mic Treoin. Moreover, see: Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 335, which notes that the depiction of a saint being guided by an angel to the place of their resurrection 'is a common hagiographical motif'.

[133] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 21, §28. Moreover, we already encountered a scene which told of Abbán's farm in Camaross being plundered by a king (Cormac son of Diarmait) of Uí Cennselaig. Hence, the foundation need not be considered in any great detail in this chapter.

include Drum Cain Cellaig and Camaross, all of which Abbán built in honour of the Lord.'

All three foundations are located in the Ferns Diocese. *VSA* is the only *Vita VSH(D)* and *VSH(S)* which refer to two of these foundations, namely: Drum Cain Cellaig and Camaross.[134] As we explored in chapter two of this thesis, Abbán's encounter with the Uí Cennselaig King (Cormac son Diarmait) was set in the latter location.[135] While Camaross's modern-day location can be traced to the barony of Shelmaliere West towards the south of Co. Wexford, Drum Cain Cellaig is unidentifiable.[136] But perhaps the foundation which merits most thought is Ros Mic Treoin (modern-day New Ross) and the author's need to explain that St. Éimhín is buried at this foundation. As noted from chapter one of this thesis, the fact that Éimhín's primary foundation (Ros Glas / Monasterevin) is also connected to some of Abbán's supposed brothers in the genealogical record, implies that there is an underlying attempt to connect the cults of SS. Abbán and Éimhín.[137] The implication is thus, supported by *VSA(D)*'s claim of Abbán building the great monastery of Ros Mic Treoin , but also by the *Vita* of St. Mo Lua, which further claims that Abbán founded the foundation for Éimhín. The hagiographical evidence for this claim led Richard Sharpe to suggest that this claim was invented by the redactor of the *Dubliniensis* collection of Hiberno-Latin Lives.[138]

However, the ability to discern a connection through Abbán's genealogical record may indicate that the relationship between Abbán and Éimhín is a matter that does not originate solely from a hagiographical milieu.[139] Perhaps their relationship resembles a similar scenario to Abbán's contemporary relationship with the aforementioned St. Gobnait for instance; whereby Abbán

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[134] These two foundations are not mentioned in the *Vitae* of any other saint from the *Salmanticensis* nor *Dubliniensis* collections of Hiberno-Latin saints' Lives.

[135]See: pp. 127-130 of this thesis.

[136] For details on the geographical location of Camaross; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=724* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). There is also a Camross townland in the barony of Upperwoods in the west of Co. Laois; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=723* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). Nevertheless, the Camaross townland of Co. Wexford is perhaps a more authentic embodiment of Abbán's cult, as Camaross is, as *VSA* specifies, located in Uí Cennselaig in the south of Laigin. For scholarly references to Drum Cain Cellaig; see: Gwynn & Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses Ireland*, p. 381; Culleton, *Celtic and Early Christian Wexford*, p. 100; Herity, *Ordnance Survey Letters Co. Laois*, p. 117 & Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 336.

[137] The primary foundation of another saint is also located in the modern-day Monasterevin parish; namely: Dúthracht of Oghil; see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 278.

[138] Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 353.

[139] Cf. Gwynn & Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses Ireland*, p. 399, which suggests that Abbán is confused with Éimhín and Ros Mic Treoin (New Ross) is confused with Ros Glas (Monasterevin). However, the fact that they are identified as two separate saints in *VSA(D)* and the *Vita* of Molua hardly suggests the hagiographers were unable to distinguish between Abbán and Éimhín.

was the founder of Ros Mic Treoin, but Éimhín's cult emerged in Ros Mic Treoin and subsequently gained more fame.[140] This fame was possibly assisted by the foundation's development in importance from the early thirteenth century, owing to the Marshall family overshadowing the townland, which subsequently aided the development of religious houses 'with English communities'.[141] This allows room for speculating that Éimhín's Ros Mic Treoin cult may have developed within an Anglo-Norman milieu and that Abbán's reputed precedented association with Ros Mic Treoin in *VSA* and Mo Lua's *Vita* was an attempt to diminish the power of an early thirteenth century Earl Marshall townland (Ros Mic Treoin).[142] In that regard, we may tentatively suggest that this attempt was the work of Bishop Ailbe; indicating that he played a part in the production of the *Dubliniensis* collection.[143]

Still the question remains, as to why some of Abbán's 'brothers' (Tomdenach, Lithgean, Senach and Dubán) are connected with Éimhín's primary foundation (Ros Glas/Monasterevin). Though there is confusion surrounding Éimhín's individual genealogical record, none of the content alludes towards Éimhín bearing any form of genealogical relationship with Abbán's 'brothers'.[144] This removes the implication of Abbán and Éimhín having any form of ancestral connection, but also the implication that their genealogists shared the same concerns or interests.[145] Outside of the genealogical and martyrological records, there is little other evidence for the cults of Abbán's brothers, let alone their connection with a foundation (Ros Glas / Monasterevin), better known for its connection with Éimhín.[146] On a broader scale, this may also be interpreted as a representation of nodal points between the cults of lesser known or local saints (Abbán's 'brothers') and saints whose cults are better known or more prominent (Éimhín).[147] Potentially, it may be a mere coincidence that Abbán's connection with Éimhín is recognisable through two literary genres; genealogies and hagiography. The extent to which

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[140] Cf. Doherty, Analysis of the "life" of Abbán, p. 7, which notes that apart from the hagiographical evidence for this claim, Abbán's cult is non-existent in New Ross (Ros Mic Treoin) today.

[141] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 335.

[142] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 335.

[143] The fact that Richard Sharpe also tentatively suggested that Bishop Ailbe may have begun the production of the collection in the first place, supports the claim too; see: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, pp. 354 & 362.

[144] See: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 291.

[145] For instance, both saints could be descendent from a kindred, but at the same time, not linked with 'the dominant dynastic group through blood', nor may either saint be biologically related to each other. For a further read on the meaning of dynastic ancestry; see: Johnston, *Literacy and Identity*, p. 83.

[146] A similar remark was also made by Ó Riain, in his biographical discussion on St. Dubán of Ros Glas / Monasterevin; see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 275.

[147] See: pp. 56-61 of this thesis. On the other hand, the brothers' association with Ros Glas / Monasterevin may be perceived as a connecting point for the cults of Abbán and Éimhín, for reasons which may have preceded the Anglo-Norman period in Ireland; particularly since the genealogical entries which tell of Abbán's siblings can be traced back to the pre-Norman Rawlinson B 502 manuscript;

the shared foundation (Ros Glas / Monasterevin) does in fact, embody an underlying connection between Abbán and Éimhín cannot be discerned in any further detail; particularly due to the fact that no Life of Éimhín survives.[148]

Hence, it is possible that the connection between Abbán and Éimhín in *VSA* and Mo Lua's *Vita* embodies a different historical matter to that which may be discerned from the genealogical evidence for Abbán's brothers' and their connection with Ros Glas / Monasterevin. While this matter may derive from the Anglo-Norman period, as implied earlier, we ought to take note of the broader setting into which this matter is being contextualised; namely: Abbán's career and activity in south Laigin. On the one hand, this is because the place of concern (Ros mac Treoin) to the author (potentially Bishop Ailbe) of *VSA* lies in this part of the province. However, the fact that it does not tinker with the overall attempt to explain the origins of Abbán's south Laigin connections means that the author of *VSA* embedded his concerns into this scene in a discreet manner. The ability to effortlessly transition into the next section / chapter of Abbán's south Laigin career demonstrates the author's success in not fragmenting the overall theme. The next section is where we receive our first mention of Abbán's south Laigin foundation of Mag Arnaide:[149]

§29 of *VSA(D)*

> 'The author then tells us that he will now talk about the miracles in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit that the senior Abbán enacted from when he lived in the city of Mag Arnaide right up until his death.'

This is the first point in the *Vita* which tells us that the saint is now an elderly person, and Mag Arnaide is where he spent the latter stages of his life, meaning that Mag Arnaide will be the place of his resurrection. Moreover, this section also appears to be part of an overall attempt to explain why Abbán should subsequently become the patron saint of this foundation.[150] The

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[148] The implication that Éimhín is nevertheless a saint of important status is indicated by an approximately twelfth century claim that Éimhín wrote a Life of Patrick; see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 292, fn. 10.

[149] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 21. This section is not attested in *BA*. Moreover, we may also observe how Mag Arnaide is identified as a 'city' whereas his north Laigin foundation (Cell Abbain) is a church landmark. This may allude towards an underlying attempt to express preference towards Abbán's south Laigin foundation. On a more general note, this lends support to the possibility of the author of Abbán's original non-extant Life being an abbot from within the parameters of the Ferns Diocese, where Mag Arnaide is located. At this point, I am hesitant to suggest that the original Life was produced in Mag Arnaide due to Ó Riain's argument that the foundation would not have been wealthy enough or have the financial resources to produce a Life on the saint; owing to the lack of any annalistic references to the church; see: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 162-163. Ó Riain's argument will nevertheless, be occasionally revisited in chapters four and five of this thesis.

[150] Furthermore, in comparison to the aforementioned foundation of Ballyvourney, archaeological and landscape evidence for the cult of Abbán in Mag Arnaide survives, including a well, an oval shaped graveyard, but perhaps

attempt is also discernible from the subsequent section, which adheres to §29's intention to discuss the miracles Abbán enacted when he lived in Mag Arnaide:[151]

§30 of *VSA(D)* and §14, Part 29 of *BA*

> 'Abbán miraculously crossed the River Barrow dryshod and rescues the little boy upon whom the river had closed but had miraculously remained dry'.

The River Barrow is a relatively well-known place in the Irish record. Aside from its attestation in the *Vitae* (*Dubliniensis* version) of six other saints', the topographical landmark is perhaps best known for its depiction in the *Dinnshenchas* corpus.[152] Abbán's association with the River Barrow in this section need not come as a surprise, given its previous reference from §28 of *VSA(D)*. As for the miracle Abbán enacts, it has received some noteworthy focus, the first of which was from Charles Doherty. While §30 undoubtedly presents us with a plot primarily comprising miracle motifs and tropes, Doherty indicated that the scene may have been invented during the early thirteenth century. This is because a bridge was built in New Ross during this period, called *Ponus Novus, villa Willelmi Marescalli* (The New Bridge, a town of William Marshall).[153] Subsequently, Doherty tentatively put forward the idea of the building of the bridge influencing the *VSA* author to produce such a scene.[154] While Doherty does not suggest that Bishop Ailbe of Ferns is the author of *VSA*, this observation does nevertheless promote the

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most significantly, a Latin cross in green stone, known as St. Abbán's cross, which has been dated to the eighth century See: Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland: An Iconographical and Photographic Survey*, p. 337; Cf. *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=4460* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). On a more general level, this explains why the saint's cult remains prominent in this region of Co. Wexford.
[151] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 21-22. While this scene is also told in an abbreviated manner in *BA*, the events unfold by the banks of the River Siur; see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 9, §14, part 29; Vol. 2, p. 8, §14, part 29. In *VSA(D)*, River Siur was cited as a topographical landmark for specifying the location of Cluain Finglaisse from Co. Tipperary, where Abbán built monasteries; see: *VSA(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 17-18, §22 & my discussion from Episode 1 of this chapter. In any event, this contrast is unlikely to embody any significant underlying meaning, particularly since both Rivers are mentioned *VSA(D)*. The fact that the River Siur flows into the River Barrow shows this difference does not place any major contradiction upon the manner in which the scene is narrated in *VSA* and *BA*. A fuller summary of this scene can be consulted in Appendix 1 of this thesis.
[152] See for example: Stokes, *The Prose Tales in the Rennes Dindshenchas*, pp. 304-305 which explains the etymology of the name *Berbha* from the River Barrow. Aside from *VSA*, the River Barrow is also mentioned in the *Vitae* of Ailbe of Emly, Comgall of Bangor, Fintan of Clonenagh and the aforementioned SS. Moling, Mo Lua and Munnu. The fact that the cults (or parts of their cults) of each of these saints are within close proximity to different sections of the River Barrow implies on a more general level, that the river's connection with these saints' may not be entirely fictitious. For instance, while St. Comgall's primary foundation is in the north of Ireland, part of his cult is also attested within the north region of Laigin; see for example: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 218; Cf. *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=3439* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020).
[153] Doherty, Analysis of the "life" of Abbán, pp. 8-9 of pp. 1-10, fn. 43. Cf. Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 329-330.
[154] Doherty, Analysis of the "life" of Abbán, p. 9.

probability of Abbán's original non-extant Life being transcribed and notably adapted and modified within the Anglo-Norman milieu of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

Pádraig Ó Néill on the other hand, studied this scene in light of the overall manner in which *VSA* envisages the saint as having tutelary power over water. Though there are some elements from this scene which are commonplace in Irish hagiography, such as Abbán's ability to cause the river to recede, Ó Néill argued the entirety of this 'plot is otherwise unattested in Irish hagiography'.[155] Ó Néill did however, acknowledge other hagiographical parallels with the River Barrow plot from *VSA(D)*. He remarks upon St. Colmán of Lynally's ability as a child to remain under water for an entire day and night, whilst being entertained by water animals.[156] Ó Néill compares Colmán's role to that of the young boy remaining underwater but nevertheless remaining unharmed, from §30 of *VSA(D)*.[157] However, Ó Néill subsequently argues that the most significant parallel can be made with the Life of a Continental saint named: Nicholas of Myra, specifically the scenes pertaining to the 'golden cup story'.[158]

This story tells of a young boy falling into the sea from a ship in an attempt to retrieve his father's precious cup, which he had accidently dropped into the sea having dipped it into the sea to cool it in the first place. Assuming their son had drowned, his parents were devastated, and once they sailed to a site of land, they rushed to the church of St. Nicholas and when they made an offering to the saint, their son suddenly arrived safely, holding the cup in his hands. The son explained to his parents that when he fell into the sea, an old angelic man appeared to him, telling the young boy not to be afraid and led him out of the sea. The son finally explained how the old angelic man told him how to get to the church in which his parents were praying to St. Nicholas.[159] Though this story is based in a completely different historical and cultural context to the River Barrow scene of §30 of *VSA(D)*, Ó Néill's attempt to uncover some points of comparison from both narratives led him to conclude that the *VSA* author (potentially Bishop Ailbe of Ferns) was using 'the golden cup' episode from Nicolas's Life as an exemplar for the

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[155] Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 108.

[156] Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 108, fn. 44. This scene can be found in the vernacular Life of Colmán (*Betha Colmáin Lainne*); see: Daly & Meyer, *Life of Colmán of Lynn*, pp. 22-23, §§13-14.

[157] Furthermore, the boy's ability to remain dry-shod was compared to Moses and Joshua's ability to cross the water dry-shod from the Bible; Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 108.

[158] Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 108; see: fn. 46, for manuscript details of the 'golden cup story'. Cf. Bray, *A List of Motifs*, p. 108, which traces the trope of a saint causing water to recede to the Lives of fifteen other saints' (this does not include Abbán).

[159] Ó Néill, pp. 108-109. Elsewhere, Ó Néill suggested that Abbán's tutelary power over water more generally was invented by the author (potentially Bishop Ailbe of Ferns) of VSA in an attempt to convey an Anglo-Norman audience in Ireland that Abbán's has the most prominent connection with water. Undoubtedly, VSA and also BA envisage as a saint with an important connection with the element of nature throughout. This matter will be revisited in due course.

River Barrow scene.[160] While the young boy manages to remain dry-shod from the river flood according to *VSA*, the young boy who fell into the sea, from Nicholas's Life, miraculously managed not to drown. This was due to the assistance of an angelic old man, whose role was enacted in a similar manner to that of Abbán's in rescuing the young boy who fell behind Abbán and the saint's disciples after attempting to collect stones along the riverbed.[161]

While §30 most likely belongs to an underlying strand of importance concerning Abbán's power over different water-based landmarks, it is also one of the many miracles Abbán enacted during the latter stages of his life in Mag Arnaide. The latter relates to the chief concern of the author; which is to demonstrate why Abbán will subsequently become the patron saint of Mag Arnaide.[162] Since the next section tells of a miracle the saint enacted with wolves demonstrates that the author is more concerned about telling his audience of the miracles he enacted whilst living in Mag Arnaide, as implied by §29 of *VSA(D)*, than he is with the saint's envisaged power over water:[163]

§31 of *VSA(D)* and §15, Part 30 of *BA*

> 'One day in the Region of Ronan, shepherds decided to stop herding cattle and began to play games. Suddenly, wolves came to attack to calves. Although Abbán was not physically there, he could miraculously sense it from within his church, where he shouted: 'desist and guard'. Surprisingly, the wolves followed Abbán's order even though they could not physically see or hear him. Abbán's brothers in the church, then understood that Abbán had fulfilled the biblical prophecy that the wolf shall lie down with the lamb. Lastly, the author informs us that no shepherd was ever forced to herd the cattle, but only a wolf. From that stage onwards no Christian ever hurt the wolves and no wolf ever attacked the cattle.'

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[160] Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 109. Ó Néill also argues that 'the golden cup' episode was an exemplar for the *VSA* scenes which tell of the miracles Abbán enacted in Abingdon, in the county of Oxfordshire in England. The significance of *VSA*'s reference to this location will be considered in chapter four of this thesis.

[161] Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 109. Elsewhere, the twelfth century *Vita* of St. Modwenna tells of a scene where the saint miraculously crossed the sea and revived an individual who had drowned in a river, see: Bartlett, *Geoffrey of Burton*, pp. 84-91.

[162] This concern will become particularly apparent in chapter five of this thesis, where we will explore the scenes pertaining to Abbán's death and Mag Arnaide's and Cell Abbain's dispute over ownership of his relics.

[163] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 22-23. This scene is drastically abbreviated in *BA* and neither is the placename 'Region of Ronan' given; see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 9, §15, part 30; Vol. 2, p. 8, §15, part 30.

The attempt to embed the biblical prophecy/reference of 'the wolf lying down with the lamb' into the Life of a local Irish saint is noteworthy. The author of *VSA* is envisaging an Irish equivalent of this more famous biblical plot. Depicting a pack of wolves acting passively towards an animal which it would instinctively attempt to kill in reality, means the author was attempting to present Abbán as an enactor of spiritual morality. More generally, this also demonstrates that the Bible served as an exemplary source during the author's contemporary period; and the everlasting and unnatural role of the wolves in guarding and protecting the cattle can be perceived as a successful outcome of Abbán fulfilling such teachings. At the same time however, the widespread knowledge of the Bible meant that monks and ecclesiasts throughout Insular and Continental Europe were conspicuously aware of Biblical content, but also capable of employing such content as a model for hagiography. Subsequently, commonplace motifs and tropes emerged and spread alongside the development of hagiographical writing.[164] Abbán's ability to tame the wolves in the first place, is a common trope from Irish hagiography, having been traced back to the Lives of fifteen other Irish saints.[165]

But perhaps the greatest point of concern from this section is the uncertainty concerning the place in which this scene is set; namely: 'The Region of Rónán'.[166] Though §29 of *VSA(D)* implies that 'The Region of Rónán' is somewhere within the parameters of Mag Arnaide, no place-name scholarship has been able to pinpoint its precise location.[167] Potentially, the author may be implying that this is a region to which the cult of a saint named 'Rónán' was prominent. Pádraig Ó Riain has identified several different saints named 'Rónán'.[168] While the primary foundations of each of these saints are not located within Co. Wexford, the primary foundation of a saint named Rónán (or Colum Crom) of Lorum, which is located within the barony of

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[164] For a brief but concise read on the origins of hagiography and the writing of miracles; see: Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, pp. 16-26.

[165] See: Bray, *A List of Motifs*, p. 89. Nevertheless, this trope is evidently not the main theme of §30 of *VSA(D)*; rather it is a contributory factor for Abbán in acquiring the ability to spiritually interact with the wolves and warning them to guard the cattle.

[166] This location is not mentioned in the Life of any other Irish saint; see for example: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, p. 339, see under the headword: 'Ronani Regio'. Moreover, while this scene is attested in *VSA(S)*, it does not mention 'The Region of Ronan', nor is it set in any place.

[167] For instance, Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin's *Monasticon Hibernicum* database did not provide an entry for this place-name; see for example the place-name entries that appear under Abbán: *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/search.php?search=abban&submit=Quick+search#results* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). Neither does the *Onomasticon Godelicum* database provide an entry for 'The Region of Rónán' placename. The database does however, provide an entry (no. 23659) for the place-name 'Rón', for which it lists four possible locations; two from Co. Tipperary, one from Co. Waterford whilst the other is from Co. Tyrone; see: *Onomasticon Godelicum- https://www.dias.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/E-Onomasticon_Text.pdf* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020), p. 2453 of pp. 1-2943.

[168] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp 538-541.

Idrone East in Co. Carlow, towards the northern region of Laigin may be a potential candidate to whom 'The Region of Rónán' is referencing.[169] If so, then the author was merely attempting to show that this was the region in which Abbán spiritually interacted with the wolves. Furthermore, the fact that Lorum is located in Laigin would mean that it would not have been a very distant location for a resident (Abbán) of Mag Arnaide to travel to.

A more sceptical view would suggest that the reference to a 'region' would imply that no particular townland or foundational landmark is being cited in §31. If the author was referring to a place named after a saint named 'Rónán' we would most likely be given the vernacular version, which would include a spelling such as 'Cell Ronain' (The Church of Ronan) or in this case, 'Mag Rónáin' (The Plain of Ronan).[170] Evidently, this is not the case in *VSA(D)*. On that note, we may also consider the possibility of Ronán representing the name of a dynastic figure. The reference to a 'region' could imply that it was ruled or under the headship of a particular king. Byrne's study of kingship in medieval Ireland identified an Uí Cennselaig king named Rónán son of Colman, who reputedly died in 624.[171] Though little else appears to be known about this Rónán individual, the origin of his dynastic career makes him a more probable candidate for whom 'The Region of Rónán' is named after, because this where Mag Arnaide is located.[172] Moreover, referring to a region under the rule of a seventh century king would suggest that the origin of the scene precedes Bishop Ailbe's probable production of *VSA*.

While the precise etymology of 'The Region of Rónán' cannot be proven to any greater extent, this consideration of the potential individuals from Laigin does nevertheless, offer the first solution. In any event, the fact that it contextualises motifs and tropes concerning wolves as opposed to Abbán founding a monastery means the scene is unlikely to have left a landmark in the so-called 'Region of Rónán' for one to discover today. Once again, it is essentially part of a series of miracles Abbán enacted whilst living in Mag Arnaide. Another one of these miracles

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[169] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 541 & 214.

[170] Moreover, this may present a similar scenario to the aforementioned Campus Cé/Triudi location from the scene which told of Abbán's monastic career in Connacht. Potentially this Connacht region and 'The Region of Rónán' were the equivalent of modern-day Irish baronies but comprised particular regions which are not defined by any particular name today.

[171] Byrne, *Irish Kings*, pp. 137 & 290. Cf. *The Annals of Ulster- https://celt.ucc.ie//published/T100001A/* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020).

[172] Once again, this may be perceived as another example where the author is envisaging a hagiographical motif about a potential seventh century figure, in accordance with the author's contemporary interpretations and evidently later interpretations, either from the ninth to eleventh centuries and the Norman period.

tells of Abbán's ability to guide his clerics home to the city (Mag Arnaide) during a dark and cold night:[173]

<u>§34 of *VSA(D)* and §16, Part 32 of *VSA(D)*</u>

> 'Abbán and one hundred and fifty followers were guided home on a cold and dark night by a miraculous candle'.

The depiction of an angel helping Abbán presents a relatively well-known hagiographical trope; which has been traced back to the Lives of thirteen other saints'.[174] Identifying Mag Arnaide as a city once again, indicates the author's preference towards Abbán's south Laigin foundation over Cell Abbain, which is merely recognised as a church landmark. The implication that Abbán is content to spend the latter part of his life in south Laigin is particularly augmented in two subsequent scenes, which inform us of a hermitage or retreat which Abbán regularly attended and was fond of:[175]

<u>§§35 & 36 of *VSA(D)*</u>

> 'Next, the author tells us about a retreat which Abbán and one of his followers would often live in, where they would fast and pray. This retreat was called Dísert Cenndubhain, into which Abbán and his brother would enter. This retreat was named after his follower Dubán. Dubán lived there and cared for this retreat all of his life, even after Abbán died. Every day, angels of God would come to visit Abbán and speak to him in this solitary place.'

> 'On another day in this retreat, Abbán had left his book (the Gospel) behind in the retreat and it had snowed heavily that night in Ireland. The following day however, Abbán's messengers discovered that the book miraculously remained unharmed by the snow'.

Despite its relatively frequent appearance in Irish hagiography however, we may tentatively suggest that the trope from Abbán's *Vita* could also be part of an underlying attempt to promote Abbán's tutelary power over water; particularly since snow would inevitably melt. Potentially, the author of Abbán's Life may have (in)directly borrowed this trope from Adomnán's Life of

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[173] *VSA(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 24. *BA* provides a very similar, though slightly shorter version of this scene; see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 9, §16, part 32; Vol. 2, p. 9, §16, part 32.
[174] Bray, *A List of Motifs*, pp. 97-98.
[175] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 24-25. This scene is not attested in *BA*. The depiction of a book being miraculously unharmed by snow from §36 of *VSA(D)* is recognisable from the Lives of seven other saints'; see: Bray, *A List of Motifs*, p. 104.

Colm Cille; specifically, §§8-10 from Book Two of Colm Cille's Life, which tell of a book that water and snow was unable to damage and of Colm Cille's ability to draw water from a hard rock.[176] In any event, the main point of concern from §§35 and 36 of *VSA(D)* is Dísert Cenndubhain, particularly since the placename is not attested in the Life of any other saint. A *dísert* (hermitage or a retreat) is not an uncommon type of location cited in Irish hagiography. As §36 of *VSA(D)* indicates, they are normally linked with a particular ecclesiastical figure or a saint.[177] In *VSA(D)* this retreat was eventually named after one of Abbán's followers (Dubán). Perhaps the first matter to strike one is the fact that 'Dubán' was also the name of one of Abbán's 'brothers' from the genealogical record (Dubán m. Laignig).[178] Potentially, it may be sheer coincidence that two individuals named Dubán were claimed to be contemporaries of Abbán.[179] The unlikeliness of the Dubán individual from §36 being Abbán's brother (Dubán m. Laignig) however, owes largely to the fact that there is no evidence of Dubán m. Laignig's cult extending to the parameters of Abbán's south Laigin foundation.[180] As for the other Dubán individual referenced in §36, we are unable to discern further detail about his identity from *VSA*, aside from the simple fact that he was one of Abbán's loyal disciples.[181] On that note, Dubán was merely a commodity for enabling the author of Abbán's Life to offer a sound etymology for Dísert Cenndubháin.[182]

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[176] See: Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, pp. 160-162.
[177] Cf. *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, pp. 322 & 325 which list the saints whose Lives refer to *dísert* type of locations.
[178] See: pp. 56-61 of this thesis.
[179] The name 'Dubán' is not nevertheless, identified as one of the commonest names from the medieval Irish record; see: O' Brien (Ed. Baumgarten), *Old Irish Personal Names*, p. 232.
[180] See: pp. 56-61 of this thesis; Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 275
[181] Nevertheless, the implication that Abbán's disciple 'Dubán' was a prestige individual may be discernible from the *Cenn* element of the placename; meaning: 'Head'; see for example: *eDIL* - *http://www.dil.ie/8622* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020), see: Entry number 13 'Of persons, chief, head person, leader'.
[182] This location has been tentatively identified as the modern-day parish of Templeludigan, in the barony of Bantry towards the west of Co. Wexford; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=3094* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). At the same time, we need also acknowledge the possibility of this Dubán being St. Dubán of Hook Point and Churchtown in the barony of Shelburne, in Co. Wexford; see: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 274-275. Though neither *VSA* nor the record of Dubán of Hook Head suggest Abbán bore a contemporary relationship with him, let alone was the Dubán whom Abbán's retreat was named after; it would seem inconsiderate not to mention this saint; particular since his primary foundation lies in the south of Co. Wexford as does Dísert Cenndubháin and of course, Mag Arnaide.

Episode 5- Mide (§32 of *VSA(D)*)

Ultimately, the author of Abbán's Life has attempted to demonstrate the series of events that unfolded during the saint's time in Mag Arnaide. The places to which Abbán travelled during his stay however, were not solely confined to the parameters of south Laigin. After Abbán's time in 'The Region of Ronan', (which we argued is most likely somewhere within Uí Cennselaig), the next section tells us that Abbán travelled upwards to the medieval province of Mide, where he founded monasteries and interacted with the nun Segnith and St. Finnian of Clonard:[183]

§32 of *VSA(D)*

> 'Abbán foes to Mide and founds Cell Ailbe in the east of the province and Cell Abbain in the north. In the monastery of Cell Ailbe, the blessed virgin Segnith cared for nuns under Abbán's management. In Mide, Abbán also visited Finnian. Abbán baptised Finnian as a child'.

While both Cell Ailbe and Cell Abbain (from this section) have been traced to the Diocese of Meath, these precise foundations, let alone their geographical landmarks, are far from well-known.[184] The fact that Cell Abbain is being cited a second time in *VSA(D)* would strike one as peculiar, because it implies, at first glance, that the author is referring back to Abbán's north Laigin foundation, which is ultimately not the case. Though it appears to be a different foundation bearing the same name as Abbán's north Laigin foundation, the author most certainly does not stress the difference between the two Cell Abbain foundations. The probability of two different Cell Abbain foundations being cited *VSA(D)* has caught the attention of only one scholar; namely: Mervlyn Archall. Similarly, Archdall acknowledged that this northern landmark in the province of Mide is essentially the only detail that can be discerned from the Cell Abbain foundation of Mide; otherwise nothing else is known about the

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[183] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 23. This scene is not attested in *BA*. Since Segnith and her relationship with Cell Ailbe have already been discussed as has her relationship with Abbán, but also Abbán's contemporary relationship with Finnian, they need not be considered in this chapter.

[184] See: *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=873* & *https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=828* (Both Websites Last Accessed 24th September 2020). While Pádraig Ó Riain identified Cell Ailbe as the modern-day parish of Clonalvy, in the parish of Duleek Upper in Co. Meath (Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 164), Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin noted that this parish represents an anglicised version of Cluain Ailbe; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=2587* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). The fact that Duleek Upper is located in the east of Co. Meath, contradicts *VSA(D)*'s claim of Cell Ailbe being located in the centre of the province of Mide.

foundation.[185] Essentially, this leaves us with little option but to suggest that the Cell Abbain foundation from Mide was a by-product of Abbán's north Laigin foundation, which essentially received no degree of fame. The fact that no landscape or archaeological evidence for Abbán's cult is attested within the Meath Diocese or any knowledge of modern-day commemoration of his cult would support this claim.[186]

Episode 6- The Ambiguous Locations (§§38-41 & 43 of *VSA(D)* and §§17-20 & 22 of *BA*)

The last episode of scenes to be explored in this chapter moreover, cast little or no light on Abbán's cultural origins. They tell us about the types of miracles Abbán enacted, most of which are centred on the process of healing. In *BA*, the healing motifs appear in a clustered manner towards the end of Abbán's *Betha*.[187] In Irish hagiography more generally, most saints tend to have prominent connections with certain motifs and tropes. For Abbán, he is most notably associated with those centred on water, rivers and the ocean.[188] Healing motifs and tropes however, are perhaps of less significance in Abbán's hagiographical dossier. This is mainly because most of Abbán's healing motifs and tropes are set in places which are now geographically unidentifiable, which inhibits us from discerning any significant connection with the cult of Abbán.

Nevertheless, the implication that the saint is within the parameters of Mag Arnaide is discernible from that fact that the sections to be discussed under this episode are based on the latter stages of Abbán's life, as explained for §29 of *VSA(D)*. Abbán enacts the first of these miracles on a priest who had lost his voice. Abbán was able to bring his voice back by feeding

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[185] Archdall, *Monasticon Hibernicum* , p. 550. Elsewhere, another Cell Abbain foundation by the River Sullane of Counties Cork and Kerry was claimed to be another one of Abbán's monastic foundations. However, the only evidence to support to claim is older scholarship; see: Kelly, Saint Gobnata and her Hive of Bees, p. 104 & Ó hÉaluighthe, St. Gobnet of Ballyvourney, pp. 43 & 46. Hence, there is no attested primary evidence for Abbán founding or establishing a church named Cell Abbain in the province of Munster. On a more general level, saints' whose cults can be traced back to two or more locations bearing the same placename are typically famous saints, such as Patrick, Brigit and Colm Cille. For Patrick, there are three Ard Patraicc foundations, each located in counties Louth, Limerick and Waterford; see: *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/search.php?search=Patrick&submit=Quick+search#results*; The majority of the geographical locations traced to the cult of Brigit are called Cell Brigte: *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/search.php?search=Brigit&submit=Quick+search#results*; For Colm Cille, two foundations named Paráiste Cholaim Cille have been identified in counties Longford and Kilkenny: *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/search.php?search=Colum+Cille&submit=Quick+search#results* (All Three Websites Last Accessed 24th August 2020). This may be a mere reflection of how the saint's cult subsequently expanded throughout the centuries on a broader scale; particularly since the cults and textual profiles of these three saints are comparatively earlier and extensive to most of the other Irish saints.
[186] See for example: *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=873* & *https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=828* (Both Websites Last Accessed 24th August 2020).
[187] *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, pp. 9-10; Vol. 2, pp. 9-10.
[188] See for example, the scene pertaining to Abbán's ability to prevent the river flood from overwhelming the young boy at the River Barrow under Episode 4 of this chapter.

him an apple, from which point, the priest began to sing psalms.[189] Afterwards, Abbán healed a leper by sealing the sign of the cross over the leper.[190] Here, we are presented with a cluster of well-known hagiographical motifs centred on the concept of healing or curing the ill.[191] As Dorothy Ann Bray has shown, such a cluster of recurrent motifs and formulaic scenes reveals that the hagiographer was 'so shamelessly borrowing from one Life to another'.[192] As these two sections from *VSA(D)* show, this reveals a rather banal series of motifs, which ultimately prompts one to suggest that the healing motifs from Abbán's dossier uphold the least significant connections to his cult, in which case the motifs are told solely for the purpose of providing a full hagiographical account.[193]

As for the names of the places in which some of these healing motifs are set, their precise geographical location is essentially unclear or unknown. This situation is made particularly challenging by the lack of references to such places outside of Abbán's dossier. The subsequent scene is a prime example, which depicts Abbán healing a man of multiple ailments in a place called 'Mag na Taibse'.[194] The etymology of this place 'The Field of the Phantoms' would imply that it has negative connotations. The fact that this location is not given an entry in Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin's database (*Monasticon Hibernicum*) would imply that it is a bogus place-name, the purpose of which was merely to provide a pseudo-geographical context for Abbán's envisaged ability to heal.[195] A similar scenario possibly concerns the subsequent section (§41), which envisages Abbán as a peace-maker between two leaders on the verge of fighting in a place called 'Achadh Huabhair' meaning 'The Ford of Pride'.[196] In contrast to the Mag na Taibse location however, the geographical landmark of Achadh Uabhair has been considered by some scholars. Initially, it was identified as the monastic community of 'Achad Fobuir'

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[189] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 25-26, §38; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 9, §17, part 33; Vol. 2, p. 9, §17, part 33. In *BA*, we are told it was a dumb man who was cured after eating the apple Abbán gave him.

[190] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 26, §39. This scene is also told in a similar, although abbreviated manner in *BA*; see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 10, § 19, part 35; Vol. 2, p. 9, § 19, part 35.

[191] See for example: Bray, *A List of Motifs*, p. 95, which traces the depiction of a saint healing a leper (§39 of *VSA(D)*) to the Lives of eleven other saints', whilst the depiction of a saint healing a mute (§38) has been traced to the Lives of eight other saints.

[192] Bray, The Study of Folk-Motifs, pp. 276-277.

[193] Cf. Bray, Miracles and Wonders in the Lives of the Early Irish Saints, p. 142, fn. 27.

[194] *VSH(D)*, Vol.1, p. 26, §40; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, pp. 9-10, §18, part 34; Vol. 2, p. 9, §18, part 34.

[195] *Monasticon Hibernicum-https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/search.php?search=abban&submit=Quick+search#results* (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). There is no reference to Mag na Taibse under the list of foundation names of this database. Hence, Mag na Taibse is unlikely to have been a historical place to which the cult of Abbán could be traced.

[196] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 26-27; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 10, §20, part 36; Vol. 2, p. 9, §20, part 36. The fact that *BA* notes they were *comfoccus do Abban* / 'in Abbán's neighbourhood' implies that the place, despite its potential bogus origins, is intended to be within the parameters of Mag Arnaide. Moreover, this scene is similar in content and style to a scene which envisages Abbán's time in Rome. This scene will be discussed in chapter four of this thesis.

located in Co. Mayo.[197] Elsewhere, the *Wexford Placename Project* located it to Co. Wexford.[198]

Hence, while valid possibilities for the geographical landmark of Achadh Huabhair have been elicited, a more thorough study of Abbán's Life reveals that it was intended to serve the same role as Mag na Taibse, that being, to provide a banal series of motifs for further providing a full hagiographical account for Abbán. The scenario surrounding the next section (§31) however, places obstacles in our way in coming to the same conclusion. Like the scene told in §38, Abbán enables a mute man to speak.[199] The name of the place in which Abbán enacts this cure is called 'Loch na Corr', for which *VSA(D)* explains it etymological meaning: 'The Lake of the Cranes'.[200] While the author implies that Abbán was spending this stage of his life within the parameters of Mag Arnaide, the possibility of Loch na Corr being the modern-day Loughnagore townland in the barony of Trughancmy of Co. Kerry, challenges this assumption.[201] While it would not have been impossible for a saint to travel from the south-east to the south-west of Ireland in actuality, it would nevertheless, seem unusual for the author to bring Abbán back to a province (Munster) which was already an earlier focal point in the saint's *Vita*. Regardless of whether Loch na Corr is the modern-day Loughnagore Kerry townland or was a bogus location, the significance of Abbán's connection with the motif means it is unlikely to qualify as an authentic representation of his cult.

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[197] Bitel, *Isle of the Saints*, pp. 152 & xvi; Cf. *Onomasticon Godelicum*- https://www.dias.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/E-Onomasticon_Text.pdf , p. 42 of pp. 1-2943, entry number 426 (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). However, this is very unlikely, owing to the fact that §41 is part of the overall theme of Abbán's time in *Mag Arnaide*.

[198] *Wexford Placename Project*- http://www.traceyclann.com/files/WT%20Wexford%20Placename%20Project.htm (Last Accessed 24th September 2020). In addition, this project tentatively identifies Achadh Huabhair as 'Achadh Ibhair'. The latter would mean 'The Field of Íbar', which would be traceable to Bishop Íbar of Beggerin Island in the barony of Shelmaliere East in Co. Wexford, who is envisaged as a maternal uncle of Abbán in Abbán's hagiographical dossier, as discussed in chapters one and two of this thesis. However, *VSA(D)*'s etymological explanation of Achadh Huabhair ('The Ford of Pride') says nothing about Íbar.

[199] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 27; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 10, § 23, part 39; Vol. 2, p. 10, §23, part 39. Like the *BA* version of the aforementioned scene which depicts Abbán curing a mute priest, *BA* identifies the mute individual from the present scene as a dumb man.

[200] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 27. In *BA*, the scene is not set in any particular geographical location, nor are any of the preceding sections from Episode 6; see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, pp. 9-10; Vol. 2, pp. 9-10.

[201] See: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, p. 333; Cf. *Onomasticon Godelicum*- https://www.dias.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/E-Onomasticon_Text.pdf, p. 2084 of pp. 1-2943, entry number 19983, (Last Accessed 24th August 2020).

Conclusion

In an overall attempt to examine the broader significance of Abbán's cult, the aim of this chapter was to closely scrutinize Abbán's connection with the many Irish locations mentioned in his hagiographical dossier. This subsequently entailed consideration of the extent to which they could be perceived as genuine representations of his cult, as opposed to ambitious but baseless claims on the part of the author of *VSA*.[202] The locations which fell into the former category were typically those in which Abbán had built or founded a church or monastery, according to his dossier. Identifying these particular locations enabled us to discern how active the cult remained throughout subsequent centuries of the medieval period. The most notable examples are his primary south Laigin foundation *(Mag Arnaide)*, but also the foundation which he allegedly surrendered to St. Gobnait; namely: Ballyvourney. Alongside the evidence from Abbán's dossier, the significance of Abbán's cult in these foundations remains known today, owing to the survival of archaeological and landscape evidence. Hence, while there is no annalistic evidence for knowing when Abbán travelled to these locations, the prominence of his cult in such locations at least alluded towards the possibility Abbán's monastic work being an event which happened in actuality.

On a broader scale, this resonates with an underlying point I attempted to elicit in chapter one of this thesis; whereby for a cult to exist in a particular location; a church or monastic site would need to have been built there. For a saint's cult to emerge in the first place, an individual saint must surely have had some form of physical existence in that particular location. This circumstance makes it difficult to believe that most of these 'saints had no existence as historical persons', in spite of the evidence for Irish saints generally not being historically reliable or contemporary with his/her actual life. [203] While there may be textual evidence to suggest that a saint's cult did exist in a particular location, the cult may only have survived up to a particular point in time of the medieval period, meaning that there would be no recollection of the cult in that location today. The Campus Cé/Triuidi region from Connacht was a prime example. While Abbán's dossier informs us that he built a monastery in this region, not a trace of his cult is known in this province today. This would suggest that Abbán's cult did exist at one point, but the ecclesiastical power of its church or monastic landmark ultimately did not last.

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[202] Evidently, the locations mentioned in the scenes pertaining to Abbán's birth, childhood and early adulthood were not considered in this chapter, as they were already examined in chapters one and two of this thesis.
[203] Ó Riain, Irish Saints' Genealogies, pp. 24-25.

Since no name is given to the particular three monasteries the saint supposedly founded; this throws up further problems for considering the origin of Abbán's now obsolete Connacht cult. In other cases, however, the claim of Abbán founding a church can be open to doubt. The fact that the reputed Cell Abbain foundation from the Mide province bears the same name as Abbán's primary foundation in north Laigin would prompt one to suggest that the Cell Abbain foundation of Mide is spin-off from the comparatively more prominent cult and patronage in the north of Laigin. As for places in which Abbán is merely envisaged as an enactor of miracles, such scenes are ultimately invented by the hagiographer. But while such scenes may not be genuine representations of the saint's actual cult, a closer reading of such scenes can reveal the hagiographer's contemporary concerns and interests with that particular location. Éile seems to been a place of focus to the author (potentially Bishop Ailbe of Ferns). Envisaging Abbán as an enactor of miracles, converting the people of Éile and for the author to claim he is a descendant undoubtedly suggests so.

Similar to the over-arching questions we considered in chapter two of this thesis, the present chapter was, at times, concerned with attempting to identify the scenes which derived from an original non-extant Life of Abbán and those which were invented by Bishop Ailbe of Ferns. In some cases, it is also possible that Bishop Ailbe may have made some modifications or adapted some of the already existing material from Abbán's original non-extant Life. An important example that this chapter briefly alluded to was the thorough geographical explanation provided for the numerous monastic foundations Abbán built and founded throughout the province of Munster. The fact that Abbán's Munster cult casts little or no light on the contemporary affairs or life of Bishop Ailbe however, removes the implication of Bishop Ailbe inventing the sections which tell of his monastic career in Munster. There are nevertheless, better examples from *VSA(D)* which show that its author is providing a detailed geographical description of a particular region or foundation. Indeed, these examples will now be explored in the next chapter. As for the present chapter, we can conclude that this critical exploration of Abbán's association with the numerous geographical/topographical locations of Ireland provided deeper insight into the extent to which each connection can expose a historical and/or fictional representation of his cult.

Chapter 4

The Wider Dimensions of Saint Abbán's Cult

In occidentali plaga tocius est insula possita cuius nomen Hybernia dicitur. Eadem uero insula est magna et clara atque amena terra, in qua continentur maxime quinque prouinchie, in qua etiam nulla bestia venenosa, nec genus vllum serpentinum habitat; set terra sana est, morbis carens, habitabilis valde, fructifera in diuresis fructibus, tam in aquis, quam in terries et lignis…………………………………

Cultores vero Hybernie probati sunt in fide catholica, et in dogmatibus ecclesiasticis; et plus omnibus nacionibus hospitalitatem sectantur.[1]

'In the western region of the whole globe an island is placed, the name of which is spoken of as Hibernia. The same island in truth is a great and bright and lovely land, in which are contained five very great provinces, in which also no poisonous beast not any serpentine race dwells, but the land is healthy and lacking in diseases, especially fit to dwell in, fruitful in diverse fruits, as much in waters as in lands and trees……………….

The inhabitants [with play on 'worshippers'] of Hibernia are in truth approved in the Catholic faith and in ecclesiastical teachings. And more than all other nations they practise hospitality.'

In the *Dubliniensis and Salmanticensis* collections of Hiberno-Latin Lives, most of the *Vitae* typically commence with an introduction detailing its subject's birth, family members and his/her place of origin. Abbán's (§1 of *VSA*) on the other hand, commences with a prologue detailing the topography of Ireland and the culture of its people.[2] The fact that it is presented in a notably descriptive manner would imply that its presence in *VSA* was by no means incidental.

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[1] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 3, §1. For the English translation; see: Howlett, The prologue to the *Vita Sancti Abbani*, p. 28. Cf. Bitel, *Isle of the Saints*, p. vi, which provides the following translation from the *VSA(S)* version: 'On the western edge of the world there is a certain island called Ireland …. From the first, the converted natives of this island were firm in faith, and toward the church of God-but especially to the Roman *curia* - passionate in their devotion … On this island there have been so many men of extreme holiness that it is appropriate to call it "isle of the saints". The topographical prologue is not attested in *BA*.

[2] Another *Vita* that commences with a similar type of prologue is that of St. Berach (*Vita Sancti Berachi Abbatis de Cluain Coirpthe*); see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 75, §1. However, Abbán's prologue from *VSA(D)* is comparatively more detailed and longer than the prologue from Berach's *Vita*.

This type of ethnographic writing is nevertheless, known outside of Ireland. In relation to the prologue's similarity with another potential source, *Topographia Hibernica* (*TH*) is perhaps the most obvious source to consider. *TH* is a historical account on the topography of Ireland, written by Gerald of Wales (Giraldus Cambrensis) during his four visits to Ireland 'between 1183 and 1204'.[3] Evidently, this source and the *VSA* prologue discuss an identical subject-matter. *TH* is arguably one of the most important albeit controversial sources for offering insight into the society and culture of medieval Ireland. *TH* provides a narrative of Ireland's topography and the culture of its people that gained popularity amongst Anglo-Norman audiences. This may explain why subsequent medieval writers, such as the author of the *VSA* prologue, would have been tempted to borrow *TH* material and copy its writing style.[4] Hence, in light of this potential circumstance, but also the compositional date (the late twelfth to early thirteenth century) of *TH*, the *VSA* prologue was most likely composed by Bishop Ailbe of Ferns; the supposed author of *VSA*.[5] The probability of Bishop Ailbe being familiar with *TH*, would certainly suggest that *TH* served as an exemplar for him when producing the *VSA* prologue.[6] Therefore, he was staking a claim to being a literary/historical writer of the same standard as Gerald of Wales.[7]

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[3] See: Ó Néill, The Impact of the Norman Invasion on Irish Literature, p. 182. For more precise dating of *Topographia Hiberniae* (1188 or 1189); see for example: Wada, Gerald on Gerald: Self-Presentation by Giraldus Cambrensis, p. 229, fn. 20. The fact that *TH* was broadcasted widely throughout England would suggest this was where Gerald was attempting to seek his main audience. For instance, Gerald had read *TH* aloud to Baldwin, the archbishop of Canterbury during his tour throughout Wales in 1188. Later, Gerald also published 'it orally at Oxford'; for a further discussion on a subsequent series of events; see: Wada, Gerald on Gerald: Self-Presentation by Giraldus Cambrensis, pp. 229-246. Cf. Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, p. 263, which explains that *TH* was first read in 1188.

[4] See for example Comyn, Vol. 4, *The History of Ireland by Geoffrey Keating*, p. 153, which tells of how writers in Ireland generally wrote 'in imitation of Cambrensis' (Gerald of Wales). Cf. the following sentence from; Brewer & Dimock, *Topography of Ireland*, Vol. 1, p. xl: 'we are exclusively indebted for all that is known of the state of Ireland during the whole of the middle ages'.

[5] Hence, the prologue is unlikely to have derived from the original non-extant Life of Abbán. The fact that *VSA* was probably written in the early thirteenth century would place *VSA* and *TH* in a relatively close timeframe; see: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170, which dated *VSA* to approximately 1218. Though Richard Sharpe shared similar viewpoints with Ó Riain (see: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, pp. 349-353 & 361-363; the latter pages draw brief attention to the topographical prologue of *VSA*), Sharpe, in fact, dated *VSA* to the late thirteenth century; see: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 3.

[6] The very fact that Bishop Ailbe was an important prelate of status would also promote the probability of Bishop Ailbe being knowledgeable of *TH*.

[7] See for example: Barry Lewis, *The Impact of the Anglo-Norman Conquest* - *https://www.dias.ie/2016/12/14/watch-the-2016-statutory-public-lecture/* (Last Accessed 26th September 2020); see 51:19 - 52:08 which refers to *VSA*'s topographical prologue and a similar, but shorter one from the *Vita* of St. Berach (See: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 75). Lewis also refers to older English sources which contain similar kinds of topographical discussions, including Gildas, Geoffrey of Monmouth and also Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People; see: McClure & Collins, *Bede The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. The fact that topographical discussions are more commonly attested in English sources than ones of Irish origin would imply that the literary theme derived from England. This provides room for suggesting that the topographical prologue of *VSA(D)* derived from an international milieu. This suggestion will be the next point of discussion.

However, the fact that Gerald was not an Irish man, means that *TH* offers an international perception of Ireland. It may thus, seem peculiar that an Irish writer (Bishop Ailbe) would be willing to embed an 'international' record of his own country into the *Vita* of an Irish saint (Abbán) whose cult would be otherwise, largely unrecognised overseas.[8] The implication would be that Bishop Ailbe was willing to attribute Abbán international status, which would ultimately enable Bishop Ailbe to express his ability to compose a similar writing style to Gerald's.[9] As we established from the outset of this thesis, Bishop Ailbe is believed to be the author of *VSA*; not because he admired the saint but because he believed Abbán's Life would serve as a source of worthy testimonial evidence for solving his dispute with William Marshal.[10] Moreover, the Anglo-Norman milieu in which *VSA* was probably produced, further indicates that Abbán's cult was not confined entirely to a Gaelic audience, but also expanded via political matters concerning the Irish-Norman relations; meaning that his cult had the potential for international fame.

The Norman, Insular and Contemporary Origins of St. Abbán's Textual Profile

Perhaps among the most noteworthy matters Pádraig Ó Riain elicited from his examination of Abbán's Life, were those centred on the Norman origins of *VSA*.[11] These derived from hagiographical episodes that tell not only of Abbán's association with international geographical locations, but as the aforementioned discussion implied, episodes that also

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[8] Elsewhere, see: Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 337, which notes how Brigit's well-attested 'international status, is quietly placed further down' below that of SS. Abbán, Moling and Kevin in §2 of *VSA(D)*. This section was discussed under the 'Episode 1' section on pp. 94-99 of this thesis. In relation to the present point of discussion, this would suggest that a saint such as Brigit may have been a more suitable and worthy candidate to consider, for having a Life commencing with a prologue influenced by the writing style of *TH*. Moreover, while Abbán's cultural identity is 'largely unrecognised on overseas', there is possible evidence for his cult spreading overseas to Knapdale and the Isle of Man.

[9] While this chapter will argue that the topographical prologue was produced by Bishop Ailbe, the probable author of *VSA*, David Howlett suggested that the prologue was written by 'a thirteenth century editor of the *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*'; see: Howlett, The Prologue to the *Vita Sancti Abbani*, p. 27. Even so, the fact that Richard Sharpe tentatively suggested that Bishop Ailbe initiated *VSH* would suggest that the composition of the prologue may possibly have originated with Bishop Ailbe either way; see: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*, pp. 354-362.

[10] See: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 164-165; Cf. Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans 1169-1333*, pp. 295-296, which tells of the dispute between Bishop Ailbe and Marshal, but also of Bishop Ailbe excommunicating Marshal, having been enraged with Marshal subsequently obtaining two manors, which Bishop Ailbe believed rightfully belonged to him.

[11] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170. Cf. p. 164 where he briefly refers to the topographical prologue as a form of evidence for suggesting *VSA* was not written by a hereditary abbot of Abbán's south Laigin foundation (Mag Arnaide).

demonstrate *VSA* was not being written solely for an Irish audience.[12] The fact that Irish hagiographical production became a prominent activity during the Anglo-Norman era more widely, would initially suggest that indications of an Anglo-Norman milieu from Abbán's *Vita* are merely reflective of the general contemporary affairs from that historical era.[13] As we will soon explore however, there are significant examples from Abbán's dossier, like the topographical prologue, which suggest his *Vita* had a notably 'political edge in a colonial situation'.[14] The episodes which cast light on this important context include scenes which provide descriptions of the geographical landmarks of a particular location, but also those that envisage Abbán travelling overseas. [15] On one level, these types of scenes are merely symbolic of Bishop Ailbe's biblical knowledge and what scholars would term today, his 'pseudo-historical' knowledge of Ireland; which he professionally encoded into a hagiographical text (*VSA*) that was of interest to him.[16] Considering his relations with William Marshal however, it is also possible to discern Bishop Ailbe's concerns and general negative outlook on the Anglo-Normans from most of these scenes.

At the same time, we ought to remember the main argument this thesis has attempted to put forward from the outset; that being, *VSA* (the earliest surviving version of Abbán's Life) was probably copied from an original non-extant Life of Abbán. In comparison to chapters two and

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[12] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 164; Cf. pp. 164-166 which discusses Bishop Ailbe's involvement with William Marshal in relation to the two disputed manors possibly located in the modern-day Wexford parish 'Templeshanbo', which is believed to be the Senboth Ard location cited in *VSA(D)*.

[13] This relates to matters concerning the chronological development of hagiographical writing in medieval Ireland, which remains characterised by Sharpe's and Herbert's arguments that the *Vitae* from *VSH* are later copies of original pre-Norman Lives and Ó Rian's view that the *Vitae* were written in their original form during the Norman period; see pp. 8-9 of this thesis.

[14] Lewis, *The Impact of the Anglo-Norman Conquest*-see: 53:51-54:14. Lewis notes that *VSH(D)*, like *VSA*, 'has a political edge in a colonial context'. Elsewhere, the fact that Abbán's prayer/charm from *VSA* was transcribed into a thirteen to fourteenth century Anglo-Norman manuscript (MS 405 Corpus Christi College, Cambridge) that originates from the south-east of Ireland, would promote the probability of Abbán's textual profile acquiring outside interest in the new political order; see: Ó Néill, St Abbán's Charm, pp. 95-101 for a study of the prayer's recording in the Cambridge Manuscript. Cf. pp. 110-115 of this thesis where I review Ó Néill's analysis of the historical and textual significance of Abbán's prayer.

[15] Another noteworthy comparator regarding the idea of a Norman author/hagiographer re-writing a contemporary version of a saint's Life from earlier Lives concerns the twelfth century Lives and Miracles of St. Modwenna; see Bartlett, *Geoffrey of Burton*, pp. xiv-xxvi. In contrast to Abbán however, there is evidence which demonstrates that Modwenna's twelfth century hagiographer Geoffrey of Burton was employing earlier material. Like the case underlying the origin of *VSA* however, the *Vita* of Modwenna was revised and geographically expanded.

[16] For an important read on the pseudo-history of the origins of Ireland and the Irish; see: Carey, *The Irish National Origin-Legend: Synthetic Pseudohistory*. While the frequent attestation of Biblical analogies in Irish hagiography is by no means an uncommon finding, consideration of the specific Biblical genre or source is often necessary for further recognising the manner in which hagiographical writers consulted and recorded Biblical material more generally; see for example: Herbert & Mc Namara, *Irish Biblical Apocrypha*. Moreover, for examples of Biblical analogies from Abbán's hagiographical dossier which we have already visited; see for example the scene which envisages Abbán walking Christ-like over the sea to catch up with the boat travelling to Rome on p. 109 of this thesis.

three of this thesis, the present chapter will continue to present an ongoing attempt in differentiating between the hagiographical detail invented by Bishop Ailbe and the detail which appears to be a fossil of an original non-extant Life. Hence, scenes like the topographical prologue, which appear to have been invented during the Anglo-Norman period are less likely to have derived from the non-extant Life of Abbán. This chapter will examine the scenes which are believed to have been composed during the Norman and Post-Norman period. It will also continue to consider the manner in which these scenes are adapted in *BA*. As we observed in the latter two chapters of this thesis, *BA* tends to present a similar, but abbreviated version of the *VSA* scenes, and in most cases, omits much of the content from *VSA*. In this chapter however, we will consider one noteworthy example, where *BA* substitutes the geographical setting of a scene which envisages Abbán travelling overseas.[17] On a broader scale, this example would suggest that vernacular hagiography from the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries should also be understood in its own historical context and not simply as a derivative of its Latin sources.[18]

Hagiography however, is not the only textual genre to be considered in this chapter. Some of the scenes from Abbán's Life will also be compared to the Irish Litanies, which akin to vernacular hagiography, were reputedly 'products of private devotion'.[19] Both the Irish Litanies and Abbán's hagiographical dossier refer to the saint's association with Rome, implying that one textual genre was borrowing its content from the other. The larger quantity of Abbán's Life may initially imply that it was the writer of the Irish Litanies who carried out the borrowing of content. If so however, then the tenth century dating ascribed to the Irish Litanies would suggest that the derivative source cannot have been *VSA*, owing to its probable early thirteenth century origin.[20] Hence, it is more likely that the exemplar would have been Abbán's non-extant original Life, which (as I suggested from the outset of this thesis), may originate from the pre-

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[17] *VSA(D)* sets the scene in Abingdon, a modern-day townland in the county of Oxfordshire in south England, whereas the scene is based in Padua, a city in the Veneto region of north Italy. Further bibliographical details of this example will be given at a later point in the present chapter.

[18] Cf. my discussion under 'The Irish Context' section from pp. 5-9 of this thesis, where I discuss the chronological development of hagiographical writing and the changing contemporary interests that accompanied this development in more detail.

[19] The manner in which Abbán is cited in the Irish Litanies implies that his litany entry was originally a form of prayer which its devotee(s) read in the first-person singular case or aloud to an audience at a religious ceremony, such as mass; see: Plummer, *Irish Litanies*, p. xv & Kathleen Hughes, *Church and Society in Ireland*, Ch. 13, pp. 305-331. Cf. Plummer, *Irish Litanies*, p. xv, fn. 3. While Charles Plummer suggested that the Irish Litanies were prayers people read to themselves, he also suggests this cannot be absolutely proven for all of the litanies.

[20] See: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170.

Norman period.[21] But perhaps the most intriguing element of Abbán's Insular identity are his supposed connections with Knapdale and the Isle of Man. The evidence for these connections is only discernible from medieval vernacular forms of three placenames which are linked to Abbán's name and also that of his patronymic. These vernacular spellings can be traced back to three modern-day geographical locations: Keills and Eilean Mòr (two Knapdale parishes in the county of Argyll in the east of Scotland), and Keill Abban (meaning 'The Church of Abbán', but now known as St. Luke's Church in the parish of Kirk Braddan towards the south-west of the Isle of Man). According to a variety of medieval vernacular documentary sources, the two Knapdale parishes were originally identified by chronologically different versions of Abbán's patronymic (Moccu Corbmaic). This source material dates to various timeframes throughout the medieval period.

The fact that neither region is mentioned in *VSA* or *BA* questions the extent to which Abbán's cultural connection with these three parishes is authentic; particularly since Abbán's Life serves as the main source of evidence for his cult. On the other hand, however, this may suggest that the saint's Life is not necessarily an all-inclusive record of his entire cultural identity. Potentially, the original evidence for Abbán's cultural connections with Knapdale and the Isle of Man were preserved in church records within these communities. This could imply that knowledge of this Insular cult found no way of reaching the author of Abbán's original non-extant Life which was most likely produced in Laigin in Ireland. This would explain why these Knapdale and Isle of Man parishes did not merit inclusion in his hagiographical dossier.[22] Nevertheless, it also demonstrates a potential need to reveal underlying layers of evidence beneath Abbán's Life. The layer that the latter two chapters of this thesis have attempted to discern, is one that embodies pre-existing Life. But while this approach will also be considered in the present chapter, consideration will also be given to the possibility of evidence for Abbán's cult extending beyond the hand of his hagiographer.

This owes largely to the fact that the Knapdale and Isle of Man parishes are not cited in Abbán's hagiographical dossier. At the same time, evidence from elsewhere should not be instinctively regarded as something that does not provide food for thought. It is possible that Abbán's connections with Knapdale and the Isle of Man may represent an archaic cult that is now obsolete. Like the international locations cited in Abbán's Life, the aim is to understand the

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[21] For a read on the period but also textual origin of the Litanies of the Irish Saints'; see: Sanderlin, The Date and Provenance of the 'Litany of Irish Saints, pp. 251-262.)

[22] Nevertheless, it is not possible to confirm what material a pre-existing Life may have preserved.

milieu(s) from which the saint's association with each of these locations derived.[23] The most apparent is the Anglo-Norman milieu; given the early thirteenth century date of *VSA*.[24] Nevertheless, it is not only the scenes that envisage Abbán's association with a location from overseas which attribute to him an international identity. As implied from the outset of the present chapter, there are also scenes such as the topographical prologue, which appear to have drawn some of their information from other international sources.[25] This means that the present chapter will also case some attention on the 'international' elements of the saint's textual profile as well as his cult.

Methodology

Understanding Abbán's textual profile will involve an examination of the scenes from Abbán's hagiographical dossier which seem to have originated from the Anglo-Norman period. Two sections from *VSA(D)* will be considered; the aforementioned topographical prologue, but also a subsequent section which provides a description of the topography of a south Laigin townland named Beggerin Island, in the barony of Shelmaliere East in Co. Wexford.[26] The implication that the aforementioned *TH* served as an exemplar for both of these scenes from *VSA(D)*, may initially suggest these scenes were invented by Bishop Ailbe of Ferns in an attempt to produce what is now *VSA*. In this regard, consideration of the contemporary life and political activity of Bishop Ailbe will be necessary for attempting to understand his reason(s) for making any modifications or editorial changes to Abbán's original non-extant Life. As we already elicited from chapters two and three of this thesis, one of these reasons stems from his unpleasant relationship with William Marshal over two manors.[27] In this chapter however, we will attempt to identify other reasons that did not solely revolve around Marshal. This will involve pondering the following research questions:[28]

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[23] This is akin to the third research question considered in chapter three of this thesis: 'From what historical milieu(s) may the geographical origins of Abbán's cult have originated?'. Evidently, the present chapter will apply this consideration to the international elements of his geographical orientation.

[24] See: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170.

[25] The main source to be examined for discerning the Norman origins of Abbán's *Vita* is *TH*.

[26] For a more detailed reference to the modern-day geographical location of Beggerin Island; see for example: *Monasticon Hibernicum - https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=609* (Last Accessed 25th September 2020).

[27] Perhaps the most notable scene explored up until now, which casts light on this contemporary concern, was the depiction of Abbán resurrecting his friend Conall in the Senboth Ard location; see: my discussion under the 'Episode 9' section from pp. 140-142 of this thesis.

[28] Though it would seem more convenient to be citing 'Bishop Ailbe' as oppose to 'the author of Abbán's Life' in these questions, I have chosen to cite the latter because these questions will also be applied to content which cannot be guaranteed to fall under the authorship of Bishop Ailbe, and which may derive from the original non-extant Life of Abbán. For instance, the fact that the Irish Litanies. refer to Abbán's association with Rome, as does his Life would indicate that the reference to Rome pre-dates Bishop Ailbe's authorship.

1. Was the author drawing on a particular exemplar(s) when producing and adding these topographical descriptions to Abbán's Life?

2. Why did the author write these topographical descriptions?

This will enable us to understand the extent to which Bishop Ailbe was using *TH* as a derivative source when writing the topographical prologue and the description of Beggerin Island. Equally so, will it enable us to understand how his own contemporary standpoint may have prompted him to compose topographical descriptions and also to identify his targeted audience. As noted from the outset of this chapter, the fact that topographical descriptions such as the *VSA(D)* prologue are uncommon in Irish hagiography could suggest that Bishop Ailbe was targeting an international audience; most probably of Anglo-Norman origin, given the milieu in which *VSA* was probably written. This may also be interpreted as an underlying possibility for some of the international locations set in episodes from *VSA*. Once again however, the ongoing attempt to distinguish between Bishop Ailbe's invented work and that which derives from an original non-extant Life of Abbán will continue to be considered in the present chapter. This will help to clarify how much of Abbán's international identity was invented by Bishop Ailbe. This would suggest that the international dimensions are more telling of the production of his extant *Vita* as opposed to the saint's actual cult.

Abbán's supposed association with Knapdale and the Isle of Man on the other hand, is unlikely to fall into this category. This is because neither region, nor the specific Knapdale and Isle of Man locations that are supposedly connected to Abbán's cult, are mentioned in his hagiographical dossier. Hence, like the research question considered in chapter three of this thesis, this chapter will ask the following in relation to Abbán's international identity:

3. From what historical milieu(s) may Abbán's connection with the international locations have originated?

The fact that there are no hagiographical references to the Knapdale or Isle of Man locations in *VSA* or *BA* would imply that these locations developed their connection with Abbán independently of hagiography. However, the lack of other evidence means that attempts to discern the origin of Abbán's cultural connections with Knapdale and the Isle of Man are not probable. Overall, however, this demonstrates that there are various dimensions concerning the international origins of Abbán's cult and textual profile. This chapter will go beyond merely pinpointing the international places cited in Abbán's record. It will also attempt to explain how the evidence can be telling of the saint's international fame. This content will be divided into

three separate sections according to the type of evidence it presents for Abbán's international identity.

Topographical Descriptions

The Prologue to VSA(D)

The first of these sections concerns the scenes detailing the topography of Ireland and of the aforementioned Beggerin Island. As shown from the outset of this chapter, the first few sentences from the topographical prologue (§1 of *VSA(D)*) describe the precise landmark and geographical landscape of Ireland:[29]

§1 of *VSA(D)*

> 'In the western region of the whole globe an island is placed, the name of which is spoken of as Hibernia. The same island in truth is a great and bright and lovely land, in which are contained five very great provinces, in which also no poisonous beast not any serpentine race dwells, but the land is healthy and lacking in diseases, especially fit to dwell in, fruitful in diverse fruits, as much in waters as in lands and trees'.[30]

The very fact that the first part of *TH* presents a discussion on the geography and natural history of Ireland would ultimately suggest it was this particular part of *TH* which Bishop Ailbe drew on when writing the prologue.[31] At the same time, we ought to remember that *TH* is not the only source of evidence to provide a contemporary topographical account. An earlier, but equally famous narrative is Bede's eighth century 'Ecclesiastical History of the English People'.[32] Though it may seem more likely that Bishop Ailbe was using *TH* as an exemplary source as opposed to Bede's ecclesiastical history, evidence of the latter source indicates, more

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[29] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 3; Howlett, The Prologue to *Vita Sancti Abbani*, p. 28. Cf. pp. 27-30, which presents a numerical analysis of the sentences from the topographical prologue. This discussion attempts to demonstrate that the prologue is intrinsically written and 'reveals an array of compositional techniques'. Howlett noted for instance, the fact that the prologue comprises sixteen lines is reminiscent of Abbán's 16 March feast-day; see: Howlett, The Prologue to *Vita Sancti Abbani*, p. 30. However, as the next chapter of this thesis will show, Abbán has two feast-days (16 March and 27 October) and only the October feast-day is mentioned in *VSA*. Moreover, this topographical prologue does not appear in *BA*. For the *VSA(S)* version; see: *VSA(S)*, p. 256, §1. This version is comparatively more compressed, whereby it is merged with the scene depicting Patrick prophesying the three chief Laigin saints: Abbán, Kevin and Moling, which appears under §2 of *VSA(D)*. *VSA(S)* does nevertheless, tell that the inhabitants of Ireland were firm in faith towards the Roman Curia (Curiam Romanam); *VSA(S)*, p. 256, §1. This landmark receives no mention in *VSA(D)*. On a general note, identifying Ireland as being 'in the western region of the whole island' evidently shows that this prologue was composed during an era before America had been discovered.
[30] *TH*, pp. 13-38.
[31] Moreover, given the probable influence of Gerald's work, he may also have been actual inspiration of the Templeshanbo story from §47 of *VSA(D)*, discussed on pp. 140-142 of this thesis.
[32] See for example: McClure & Collins, *Bede The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*.

generally, that the composition of topographical accounts was more commonly conducted in an English, as opposed to Irish, milieu.[33] In that regard, it would be difficult to treat the topographical prologue of *VSA* as a source without wider Insular origins. This would open room for suggesting that the prologue was thus written for such an audience; and the probable early thirteenth century origin of *VSA* would imply that this audience comprised Anglo-Norman people. This theory is particularly augmented by the subsequent part of §1 of *VSA(D)*, which tells of the international fame of Ireland and the pseudo-history of the island and its people:[34]

§1 of *VSA(D)*

> 'Its dwellers, however, are named by a twofold name, that is from the river Ebro it is called Hibernia. And from Hibernia they are called Hibernians. They are spoken of as Scots in truth from Scota, mother of the same race, who was a daughter of a king of Egypt. In what manner the same woman came from Egypt to Hibernia we omit for the sake of brevity, because enough is found about that woman in books that narrate in what manner in the earliest times Hibernia was dwelt in.'

While *TH* also attributes much of its focus to the inhabitants of Ireland, this part of the *VSA(D)* prologue appears to have been modelled on *Lebar Gabála Érenn* (The Book of the Invasions of Ireland), which provides a pseudo chronology of the origins of Ireland and the Irish people.[35] In comparison to the first part of the topographical prologue, this part demonstrates how the author (Bishop Ailbe) was attempting to provide an explanatory discussion of Irish pre-history. An Irish audience would hardly need to be informed of such well-known information via a

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[33] Moreover, the very fact that Bede's account is more focused on English history removes the implication of Bede's account being used as a derivative for the topographical prologue of *VSA*. The fact that topographical descriptions are uncommon features of Irish hagiography indicates that these descriptions were only applied to a select number of hagiographical texts during the Anglo-Norman era. This section of the *VSA(D)* topographical prologue is nevertheless, similar to a section from Bede's history which compares the climate of Ireland to Britain, referring to the lack of reptiles or as the prologue notes 'venomous creatures' and how Ireland contains plenty of vines, fish and birds. For more details, see: McClure & Collins, *Bede The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, pp. 11-12. Hence, it is possible that Gerald of Wales received his inspiration to visit and explore Ireland from Bede's historical accounts of Ireland.

[34] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 3; Howlett, The Prologue to the *Vita Sancti Abbani*, p. 28.

[35] *VSH(D)*, Vol 1, p. 3, fn. 4; for the *TH* content; see: *TH*, pp. 75-110. Claiming that there is no need to discuss the history of Scota in any further detail demonstrates that Bishop Ailbe's targeted audience is already well-familiar with the 'history' of Ireland. Cf. Mac Shamhráin, 2013, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 337. In light of the topographical prologue, but also the subsequent section of *VSA*, which envisages Patrick prophesying Abbán, Kevin and Moling, Mac Shamhráin suggested the author (most likely Bishop Ailbe) was attempting to prepare 'a Leinster legendary'. This would imply that Bishop Ailbe was also creating a hagiographical version of *Lebar Gabála Érenn* (*LGÉ*) which would ultimately have ascribed historical importance to *VSA* and thus, elevated the status of Abbán's Life.

saints' Life. The probability of *Lebar Gabála Érenn* being more famous and earlier than *VSA* would suggest that Bishop Ailbe's contemporary audience was already familiar with Ireland's pseudo-historical origins.[36] However, the fact that *TH* also drew on *Lebar Gabála Érenn* content would suggest that even an Anglo-Norman audience would not have been entirely unfamiliar with Ireland's pseudo-history. This questions the extent to which the topographical prologue was in fact, employed as an educational tool for an Anglo-Norman audience willing to learn about Ireland.[37] Potentially, Bishop Ailbe was attempting to provide his own exemplary account of Ireland. This may be because he was dissatisfied with some of the negative commentary Gerald of Wales wrote about the Irish people.[38]

The fact that Bishop Ailbe paints an image of the Irish people which contrasts to the image elicited by Gerald of Wales would allude towards Bishop Ailbe's dissatisfaction with Gerald's portrayal of the Irish. At the latter part of the topographical prologue of *VSA(D)*, Bishop Ailbe talks about the inhabitants of Ireland in a positive manner:[39]

> 'The inhabitants [with play on 'worshippers'] of Hibernia are in truth approved in the Catholic faith and in ecclesiastical teachings. And more than all other nations they practise hospitality.'

Moreover, this circumstance offers insight into Bishop Ailbe's overall negative outlook on the Anglo-Normans in Ireland. One of these examples was discerned from his own encounter with William Marshal in relation to property rights concerning two manors Before encountering Marshal however, there is also reason to believe that Bishop Ailbe's potential dislike towards

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[36] Cf. Pádraig Ó Riain, 1986, St. Abbán, p. 165. Evidently, this type of 'history' would be classified as pseudo-history today, owing to the fact that *LGÉ* attempts to connect the timeframe of Ireland's origins with Biblical narratives; for an important source of scholarship on the textual history of *LGÉ*; see: Carey, The Irish National Origin-Legend: Synthetic Pseudohistory, pp. 1-27; In relation to the *LGÉ* material being earlier than *VSA* and being more widely used throughout Ireland; see: Ó Corráin, Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy, p. 67, which tells that *LGÉ* material was being employed in ecclesiastical schools of the seventh to eighth centuries in Ireland; Cf. Ó Corráin, Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy, pp. 51-96 for a fuller read on how *LGÉ* material was embedded into some Irish genealogies.

[37] On a broader scale, the ability to draw comparisons with other source material demonstrates that Bishop Ailbe did not simply copy material from a possible pre-existing Life of Abbán, but researched other source materials for producing his own contemporary but perhaps more elaborate and version (*VSA*) of Abbán's Life. Cf. Bartlett, *Geoffrey of Burton*, p. xx, which notes how Norman hagiographers like Geoffrey but also Jocelin of Furness would often complain about 'the inadequacy' of the style and structure of the earlier source material.

[38] See for example: *TH*, pp. 90-91, which describes the inhabitants of Ireland as sinful and the most ignorant people of the Christian faith who conducted evil and treacherous acts. For a scholarly review on the wider significance of Gerald's depiction of the Irish; see: Ó Corráin, *The Irish Church, its Reform and the English Invasion*, pp. 47-50

[39] This is the latter part of §1 of *VSA(D)*; see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 3; For the English translation; see: Howlett, The Prologue to the *Vita Sancti Abbani*, p. 28. For instance, claiming that the hospitality skills of the Irish trump those of any other nation demonstrates Bishop Ailbe's attempt to counteract Gerald of Wales's opinion on the Irish.

Gerald was mutual. During a synod held in Dublin in 1186, Bishop Ailbe explained that the English and Welsh clergy in Ireland have 'a corrupting influence on the Irish clergy'.[40] This was taken note of by Gerald, who was supposedly present at the synod, where he criticised the Irish clergy.[41] This would indicate that producing a topographical prologue represents one of Bishop Ailbe's many imprints on Abbán's Life where he would seize the opportunity to express his concerns in relation to the Anglo-Normans in Ireland.

Beggerin Island (§9 of *VSA(D)*)

But even if such incidental evidence enables us to discern the underlying concerns encoded into the topographical prologue, we must note that the prologue is not the only feature of *VSA* which is capable of offering this kind of insight. As Barry Lewis has remarked, a full read of the entire *Vita* discloses 'a remarkably sustained expansive polished piece of rhetoric'.[42] While the descriptive nature of the prologue supports Lewis's remark, a clearer indication is perhaps more discernible from the aforementioned §9 of *VSA(D)*, which tells of Abbán's parents sending him to Beggerin Island. One part of this section details Bishop Ailbe's topographical discussion of the monastic landmark and the general significance of Beggerin Island; akin to the topographical prologue:[43]

§9 of *VSA(D)* and §3, Part 8 of *BA*

> 'At the time when Abbán went to Bishop Íbar, many holy monks, clerics and nuns also received their training under the direction of Bishop Íbar, who had many monasteries based in many locations throughout Ireland. However, his own personal and most favourite monastery was the aforementioned 'Beggerin Island', which is walled in by the sea, located in the southern part of Uí Cennselaig.'

In contrast to the prologue however, Bishop Ailbe does not appear to be directly drawing this material from any other particular source.[44] The need to offer such a precise description

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[40] Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*, p. 353.
[41] Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*, p. 353, fn. 15; Cf. Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 165, fn. 181.
[42] Lewis, *The Impact of the Anglo-Norman Conquest on Hagiography in Wales and Ireland* - see 50:12 - 50:17.
[43] *VSA(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 8. The detailed writing of this section is more recognisable from the edited Latin version (*VSH(D)*). While *BA* does provide an abbreviated version of the content from §9 of *VSA(D)*, this topographical description of the landmark of Beggerin Island is not told in *BA*; See: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 4, §3, part 8; Vol. 2, p. 4, §3, part 8.
[44] In relation to the topographical prologue, similarities between *TH* and *LGÉ* are apparent enough to suggest Bishop Ailbe was drawing on these comparatively more well-known sources. At the same time, his probable knowledge of *TH* and *LGÉ* material would suggest that these sources further influenced and prompted Bishop Ailbe to write this description of Beggerin Island. Moreover, we need note that such full explanations of placenames are prominent features that run throughout most the *Vitae* from *VSH(D)*; for a fuller discussion on

suggests that it was being aimed at an outside audience who were unfamiliar with the region. In its entirety, this section reads as 'an extremely elaborate and well-thought out piece of descriptive writing'.[45] Though the author typically provides explanations/translations for the meanings of various place-names mentioned throughout the *Vita*, this discussion of Beggerin Island stands out as the most detailed.[46] Bishop Ailbe's reference to the etymology of Beggerin Island (meaning 'Little Ireland') would suggest it was a landmark that embodied important past events and affairs.[47] As *VSA* implies, Beggerin Island was a monastic school that many ecclesiastical figures are reputed to have attended.[48] But perhaps what further elevated the fame of Beggerin Island, were the Viking raids it endured throughout the ninth century, which were significant enough to merit inclusion in the Irish annalistic record.[49] Hence, Bishop Ailbe may have identified the hagiographical reference to a place (Beggerin Island) of reputed historical significance, as an opportunity to continue asserting his elaborate literary and writing style.[50] The probability of his audience being of Anglo-Norman as well as Irish ethnicity may also have resulted in Bishop Ailbe being assigned the convenient task of producing a contemporary account on Beggerin Island.

VSH(D); see: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, pp. 93-227 & 347-367. Nevertheless, the more lengthy and elaborate detail from certain sections of *VSA* (the topographical prologue and Beggerin Island) places this *Vita* under the spotlight; Cf. Lewis, *The Impact of the Anglo-Norman Conquest* – see: 53:15 - 53:31.

[45] Lewis, *The Impact of the Anglo-Norman Conquest on Hagiography* – see: 50: 26 - 51:18, for a review of the discussion of Beggerin Island in *VSA(D)*. Moreover, see: my discussion under the 'Episode 3' section from pp. 106-110 of this thesis, for a discussion of the other parts of this section, which tell of Íbar's relics, Íbar coming from Ulster, but being chosen for the people of Laigin and that Abbán was a twelve year old boy when he was sent to Beggerin Island to be educated under Íbar.

[46] William Heist has identified the reference to Beggerin Island in the vernacular (Becc Eriu), as a source of evidence to support the claim that *VSA* must translate from 'an Irish original'; see: Heist, Over the Writer's Shoulder, p. 80. The implication here, is that he is referring to an original *Betha* as opposed to the extant early modern *BA*. While, I too, have suggested that the original non-extant Life of Abbán was possibly written in the vernacular (see in particular my discussion under the 'Episode 6- St. Abbán's Punishment upon the Wrongdoers, his Healing Powers and his Saintly Brotherhood' section from pp. 127-133 of this thesis), place-name spellings in the vernacular is less likely to be a convincing source of evidence for Abbán's original non-extant Life being written in the vernacular. Irish places would firstly be recognised by their vernacular spellings before being translated into a more universal language (Latin).

[47] Hence, it may have been deemed insensitive to Bishop Ailbe's contemporary audience if he did not ascribe further attention to Beggerin Island's citation in Abbán's Life. The very fact that *VSA* is the only *Vita* from *VSH* which cites Beggerin Island could also explain the author's need to present an ambitious and detailed geographical description of the monastic landmark.

[48] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 7-8; Cf. Gwynn & Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses Ireland*, p. 30.

[49] The main annalistic source of evidence for this claim however, is the relatively late seventeenth century; (see for example: McCarthy, The Irish Annals - Their Origin and Evolution V to XI sec., p. 618). The Annals of the Four Masters which claim that Beggerin Island was plundered by the Vikings in 819; see: *The Annals of the Four Masters- https://celt.ucc.ie//published/T100005A/index.html* (Last Accessed 25th September 2020); Kenney, *The Early History of Ireland*, pp. 311-312. Cf. Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans*, p. 86, which tells of prisoners being put on Beggerin Island during the time in which Strongbow reigned from the beginning of the Anglo-Norman era.

[50] Indeed, the aforementioned topographical prologue (§1) of *VSA(D)* was the first section where Bishop Ailbe's elaborate and detailed writing style can be discerned.

The International Locations

<u>Norman Matters</u>

Abingdon

The implication therefore is that Abbán's Life partly became an educational tool, shaped and framed according to Bishop Ailbe's own interests. In a later part of *VSA*, this exploitation becomes particularly visible in the scenes which purport to explain the etymology of the town of Abingdon. According to *VSA*, Abingdon was originally a heathen city before Abbán arrived and converted its people. These scenes are centred on a series of events which comprise relatively common miracle motifs and tropes. These scenes (§§13-16 of *VSA(D)*) occur directly after the scenes which tell of Bishop Íbar attempting to prevent Abbán from travelling to Rome with him.[51] During the first stage of their journey to Rome, Bishop Íbar, Abbán and the crew members landed in a heathen city in the south of Britain. The king of this city would only allow them to pass through until they had performed a miracle to prove their Christian worthiness:[52]

<u>§13 of *VSA(D)*</u>

> 'Abbán, Íbar and his disciples/crew travelled through the south of Britain, they arrived in a heathen/pagan city. The told the king of the city that they were travelling to Rome and began to preach to word of God. The King then asked them to prove their Christian worthiness by miraculously kindling a candle with their breath. Neither Íbar or his disciples were incapable of doing so. They then asked Abbán, who was not only capable, but set a light that remained very strong until the candle burnt out. While the king and his citizens were shaking with fear after what they just saw, Bishop Íbar and his disciples gave thanks to God.'

As mentioned in chapter three of this thesis, these events are reminiscent of Abbán having to guess the correct size of a stone in Éile in order to prove to the people of Éile that he is a worthy individual to receive baptism from.[53] While baptism is also the eventual outcome of the time Abbán spent in this heathen city in south Britain, the first outcome was the heathen city being

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[51] See p. 109 of this thesis.
[52] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 10-12.
[53] See: pp. 165-172 of this thesis. Moreover, the depiction of Abbán's breath kindling a flame has been traced back to the lives of five other saints'; see: Bray, *A List of Motifs*, p. 106.

named after Abbán. What subsequently prompted the city to convert to Christianity was Abbán's ability to resurrect the king's deceased wife:[54]

§14 of *VSA(D)*

> 'This city was named 'Abbaindun' meaning 'The Fort/Hill of Abbán' after St. Abbán had kindled a powerful flame on a candle. Around the same time, the heathen king's had died. When Abbán went into the house where the wife's body was laid out, Abbán for her soul and she miraculously came back to life. The king was so pleased with this situation that he agreed that he and his people would convert to Christianity'.

Though the resurrection of the dead is an extremely common motif from Irish hagiography, here, it is being employed to provide a full etymological explanation for the history of Abingdon.[55] In light of Bishop Ailbe's negative comments on the English and Welsh clergy at the Dublin Synod in 1186, envisaging an Irish saint converting an English townland may be perceived as an allegorical representation of these comments.

These scenes pertaining to Abingdon would appear to have been invented by Bishop Ailbe. Hence, it is clear that there is no historical basis for associating Abbán with Abingdon. Initially, this may come as no surprise, given the fictional nature of hagiography more generally. However, Abbán's connection with Abingdon may have resulted in his identity being incorrectly merged with another individual bearing a similar, but unidentical name. This individual was reputedly named 'Abben' who, according to *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon* (The Chronicle of the Monastery of Abingdon), was an Irish monk that founded a monastery in this location, as thus implied by the latter part of §14 of *VSA(D)*.[56] The probability of Abbán not being identical with Abben lies in the fact that Abben was supposedly a contemporary of the time of the third century Roman Emperor Diocletian.[57] Furthermore, Margaret Gelling's research on British place-names showed that Abingdon in fact bears no

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[54] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 12.

[55] We may note moreover, that Abingdon is not mentioned in any other *Vita* from *VSH(D)* or *VSH(S)*; nor is it cited any *betha* from *BnÉ*. As I will later explain in this chapter, the same scenes are set in a different place in *BA*. Cf. Heist, Over the Writer's Shoulder, p. 83, which notes that these scenes are 'of the *dinnsheanchas* type, explaining the origin of the name Abingdon'.

[56] Hudson, Vol. 1 of 2, *Historia ecclesie Abbendonensis*, p. lxxxvii.

[57] See for example: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 160-161. Moreover, Ó Riain also noted that the reference to Aebba comes from the late thirteenth century manuscript version of *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, whilst an early-mid twelfth century version mentions nothing about an Irish monk founding a monastery in Abingdon. A time-frame between the fifth to seventh century is more likely to have been when Abbán lived than the third century, owing to the death dates of most of the saints depicted as Abbán's contemporaries in his hagiographical dossier. However, this is not even a reliable means to assess when Abbán, let alone most of the Irish saints may have lived.

relation with the name 'Abbán'. Abingdon refers to the Anglo-Saxon name 'Aebba', alongside the 'don' element meaning 'hill' or 'fort'. This would translate into 'The Hill/Fort of Aebba' as opposed to 'The Hill/Fort of Abban' as implied by *VSA(D)*.[58] In addition, one would usually expect a placename that translates as 'the fort/hill of Abbán' to be something like *Dún Abbáin* in Irish, because the lexical elements that form the compound would be reversed in order.[59]

Therefore, the historical etymology of Abingdon shows that Abbán's association with Abingdon was a later invention by Bishop Ailbe of Ferns. Before Ó Riain's theory on the authorship of *VSA* emerged, suspicion that the scenes pertaining to Abingdon 'represent an English interest' had already being observed by William Heist.[60] Since then, Ó Riain's theory prompts one to consider why Bishop Ailbe may have felt that depicting Abingdon as a heathen city converted by an Irish saint, was an effective means of expressing his dislike towards the Anglo-Normans.[61] Further indications of the hagiographical reference to Abingdon being the work of Bishop Ailbe may also be recognised from the fact that the actual monastery of Abingdon was Benedictine. The Benedictines were a significant religious order from which the Cistercian religious order later branched. Since Bishop Ailbe was a Cistercian abbot in Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow before being elected as the Bishop of Ferns in the early thirteenth century, he could possibly have had some former connection with that Benedictine monastery in Abingdon. This may have motivated him politically, to write about Abingdon in a Hiberno-Latin Life. [62] Conveniently for Bishop Ailbe, the placename was orthographically similar to

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[58] Gelling, *The Place-Names of Berkshire Part Two*, pp. 432-434. Moreover, we may also note that in *VSA(S)*, the spelling of the placename (*Villa Albani*) does not give much of an impression that the hagiographical author is referring to Abingdon; see: *VSH(S)*, p. 261, §8. Elsewhere, this Abben/Aebba individual has also been incorrectly entangled with 'The Two-Abbán Theory': see: De Buck, *De SS. Abbanis Kill-Abbaniensi et Magharnuidhiensi*, pp. 274-276. This entanglement was firstly observed by Charles Plummer (*VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. xxv, fn. 5) and later agreed by William Heist (Heist, Over the Writer's Shoulder, p. 77), both of whom agreed that Abbán of Abingdon is 'a mythical Abingdon'.

[59] See: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 12, §14, which reads '*in ciuitatem que dicitur Abbaindun vel Dun Abbain*' (in the city that is called Abingdon or the Hill of Abingdon').

[60] Heist, 1976, Over the Writer's Shoulder: Saint Abbán, p. 83.

[61] At the same time, we may take note of Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin's suggestion that the story of Abingdon may not present the clearest indication of Bishop Ailbe's imprint on *Vita Sancti Abbani*; see: Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 334. In light of Bishop Ailbe's probable encounter with Gerald of Wales nevertheless, it would suggest that the scenes pertaining to Abbán's time in Abingdon is a noteworthy example of Bishop Ailbe's imprint. On that note, we may speculate that Bishop Ailbe's specific target (in depicting Abingdon as a heathen city) was Gerald of Wales; particularly since Gerald had painted a negative image of Ireland in *TH*.

[62] See: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 164; Cf. Gwynn & Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses Ireland*, pp. 127-128 for a review of Baltinglass's history; see in particular: p. 127, for a reference to Bishop Ailbe's emphasis on the English and Welsh clergy being a bad influence on the Irish during his abbacy in Baltinglass. A year later, Bishop Ailbe was accordingly made a Bishop of Ferns.

the name of one Irish saint who had a primary foundation that lay within the Ferns Diocese; namely: Abbán.[63]

While there appears to be sufficient incidental evidence for suggesting that Abbán's association with Abingdon was invented by Bishop Ailbe, we may also note how the subsequent sections mirror a scene (§24 of *VSA(D)*) which details the saint's encounter with a venomous monster in the region of Éile. After converting to people of Abingdon to Christianity, *VSA(D)* tells of two final incidents Abbán confronted before leaving the city:[64]

§15 of *VSA(D)*

'Abbán kills a lion-like monster that had besieged the city'.

§16 of *VSA(D)*

'Brings other dangerous beasts into the deepest part of the lake and ties then there to ensure they dwelled there forever and never hurt anyone in Abingdon'.

Although set in different contexts, the manner in which these events unfold resembles those which concern Abbán's time in *Éile*, as discussed in chapter three of this thesis. While the precedented occurrence of the scenes pertaining to Abingdon (§§13-16 of *VSA(D)*) would imply that they served as an exemplar for the composition of the scenes detailing Abbán's activity in Éile (§§23-26), the scenes related to both locations seem to have originated with the works of Bishop Ailbe.[65] As we saw in chapter three, Bishop Ailbe's surname (Ua Máel Muaid/O' Mulloy) is identical with the name of the rulers of the Fir Chell kingdom near Éile and the fact that he was a native within the parameters of this region would explain his desire to insert Éile into Abbán's *Vita*. But equally so may Abbán's role in founding and converting Abingdon, have been invented by a prelate (Bishop Ailbe) who was gradually becoming more infuriated with the Anglo-Normans interfering in Ireland's ecclesiastical affairs.[66]

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[63] This foundation is Mag Arnaide.

[64] *VSA(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 12-13.

[65] Hence, neither set of scenes derived from the original non-extant Life of Abbán, meaning that neither set of scenes bears an earlier origin than the other.

[66] The last straw for Bishop Ailbe was most likely his loss of the two manors to William Marshal, which resulted in Bishop Ailbe excommunicating the Marshals; see for example: Orpen, *Ireland Under the Normans*, pp. 28-32.

Ecclesiastical Matters

Rome

Bishop Ailbe's awareness of the role of hagiography 'in affirming title to property' reflects his deep familiarity with the hagiographical genre.[67] Thus, there would be little reason to suggest that he was incapable of creating scenes that fitted in snugly with the genre. The depiction of a saint travelling to Rome would most certainly fall into this category.[68] According to *VSA*, Abbán travelled to Rome three times. The scenes pertaining to his first journey to Rome centre around the time Abbán, Bishop Íbar and his crew members spent in a pagan city which was subsequently named Abingdon. Abbán's second journey to Rome informed us of a tsunami-like wave and devil-like creatures attempting to kill him, after he had converted Abingdon.[69] One particular element of this section (§17 of *VSA(D)*) that the caught the attention of Pádraig Ó Néill was the prayer/charm occurring towards the end of the section.[70] Ó Néill argued the prayer originally belonged to the section (§19) which tells of Abbán becoming the leader of one hundred and fifty clerics in three boats sailing to Rome, after a storm had becalmed them.[71]

Subsequently, Abbán made his third journey to Rome where he was ordained by Pope Gregory, as had been prophesised by an angel after Abbán was challenged by the tsunami-like wave according to §17 of *VSA(D)*. Interestingly, this prayer is contextually similar to a description of Abbán from the Irish Litanies. Like the prayer, the Irish Litanies refer to Abbán travelling to Rome with 'thrice fifty other pilgrims':[72]

> - *Trí choicait fer gráid, fir-rig-laich cach hae, do Gaedelaib, lotar i nailithri i noen snenud im Abbán mac hÚi Chormaic,*

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[67] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, p. 333.

[68] See for example: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, p. 339, which lists the number of *Vitae* in which Rome is mentioned from the *Dubliniensis* collection.

[69] See: pp. 110-113 of this thesis.

[70] To recap, this prayer reads as follows: *Curach Abbain ar a lind Muinnter fhinn Abbain ind* / 'Abbán's boat on the ocean, Abbán's blessed community on board'. This English translation is taken from Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 103.

[71] Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, pp. 102-106. Cf. my discussion under Episode 4 on pp. 110-117 of this thesis, for my review of Ó Néill's theory.

[72] Plummer, *Irish Litanies*, pp. 60-61. While Plummer suggested that Letha from this litany entry refers either to Rome or Armorica in the north-west of France, he suggested that it is more likely to be Rome; see: Plummer, *Irish Litanies*, p. 116. Plummer's inference towards Rome is more probable, particularly since *Letha* (or known in the vernacular as Lazio/Latium) comprises a broader region of the mid-south west of Italy, in which Rome is located. In relation to the 'men of Rome' part of this litany entry, Sarah Sanderlin noted this could possibly be referring to Irish men following the Roman liturgy, as opposed to actual men of Roman nationality; see: Sanderlin, The Date and Provenance of the 'Litany of Irish Saints, p. 255.

Tri choicait aillther aile, dollotar la Abban i nErinn di fheraib Róman 7 Letha,

- 'Thrice fifty men of orders, true royal heroes each one of them, of the Gaels, who went on pilgrimage in one company with Abban Mac hÚi Chormaic;'

'Thrice fifty other pilgrims who went with Abban to Erin of men of Rome and Letha;'

The Anglo-Norman origin of *VSA* and the supposed tenth century origin of the Irish Litanies would imply that the latter was employed as a source by Bishop Ailbe when writing §19 of *VSA(D)*.[73] As for the Irish Litanies, we may take note of Kathleen Hughes' remark in saying that the Irish Litanies mainly refer to the saints who travelled abroad.[74] The implication however, would be that the Irish Litanies accessed such information on these 'pilgrim' saints from earlier sources. Litanies were a form of prayer used for private devotion and/or an assembled religious service such as Mass.[75] A close reading of Abbán's litany entry would imply that its audience would already know of Abbán; and specifically of his pilgrimage to Rome. Of the three journeys Abbán made to Rome, the one which this litany entry appears to be referring to is the third and final journey, which tells of the saint becoming the leader of one hundred and fifty clerics that travel to Rome. This would indicate that the Irish Litanies drew their information from the original non-extant Life of Abbán and that Abbán's association with Rome does not entirely derive from Bishop Ailbe's hand.[76]

The similarity with the Irish Litanies would imply that §19 of *VSA(D)* represents a fossil from the original non-extant Life. In that regard, the last section (§21) pertaining to Abbán's third association with Rome may merit some thought. This is particularly due to its structural and

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[73] See: Sanderlin, The Date and Provenance of the 'Litany of Irish Saints', pp. 251-262, for a discussion on the tenth century origin of the Irish Litanies.

[74] Hughes, *Church and Society in Ireland*, Ch. 13, p. 309. Cf. pp. 305-317, which also attempts to show that the Irish Litanies were firstly written in Lismore, a townland in the barony of Coshmore and Coshbride in Co. Waterford. The southern origin of the Irish Litanies and also the southern origin of Abbán's Mag Arnaide foundation and thus, his cult, may also explain how the saint's incorporation into the Irish Litanies would have been inevitable.

[75] We may note how Charles Plummer opted for identifying the former role as being the main reason for why the Irish wrote and used Irish Litanies (Plummer, *Irish Litanies*, p. xv), mainly because most of the litany entries are written in the first-person singular case. In relation to Abbán's litany entry and those preceding and appearing after his entry, there is no specific reference to a first-person singular case throughout; see: Plummer, *Irish Litanies*, pp. 60-75. Hence, the entry to Abbán may well have served both roles: for an ecclesiastic for his own private prayer and/or for religious attendees reading the prayer aloud.

[76] Moreover, in light of Pádraig Ó Néill's theory of Abbán's prayer originally belonging to what now appears as §19 of *VSA(D)* and being attached to the end of §17 (see: Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, pp. 102-106), this would also explain how Bishop Ailbe was in a situation where has was able to move around certain content in a manner that diverged from its layout from Abbán's original non-extant Life.

contextual resemblance with §41 of *VSA(D)*, which, like §21, tells of Abbán preventing two leaders from fighting:[77]

§21 of *VSA(D)*

> 'Before Abbán set to return Ireland after making a third visit to Rome, he saw to armies poised for battle at the Monastery of St. Peter. Abbán pacified both armies and then returned to Ireland.'

As shown in chapter three of this thesis, §41 is part of a cluster of recurrent miracle motifs set in pseudo-locations or places for which its modern-day geographical landmark is ambiguous.[78] The extent to which this cluster derives from Bishop Ailbe's imprint on Abbán's Life would seem unlikely, owing to the uncertainty surrounding the geographical locations but also because nothing is said about Abbán founding monasteries or receiving property. Hence, it would be difficult to discern any matters which resonate with the contemporary life and political activity of Bishop Ailbe from this cluster of motifs. §41's contextual similarity with §21 would suggest that both sections stem from Abbán's original non-extant Life. The contextual similarity of both scenes moreover, would be due to the author re-applying the narrative structure of §21 to a later scene (§41) that is situated within a series of similar and recurring miracle motifs.[79] Even if the author was merely recycling material, this does, nevertheless, enable us to look beneath Bishop Ailbe's imprint and reflect upon the potential role of the author of Abban's non-extant Life. This is equally applicable to the similarity of content and structure between Abbán's litany entry from the Irish Litanies and the section (§19) which details Abbán's third journey to Rome.

Padua

For each of the three journeys Abbán made to Rome, the hagiographical author attached a significant event; the first was centred on Abbán founding and converting a heathen city (Abingdon) in south Britain, the second was centred on the saint's confrontation with a tsunami-like wave, whilst the third involved Abbán becoming the leader of one hundred and

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[77] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 16-17. As for the monastery of St. Peter where the armies attempt to fight, this could possibly represent the modern-day location of St. Peter's Basicilia in the Vatican in Rome. Otherwise nothing else about this monastery is said, nor is it cited in any of the other *Vitae* from *VSH(D)*.

[78] See: pp. 186-188 of this thesis.

[79] Cf. Bray, The Study of Folk-Motifs, pp. 276-277, which notes that a cluster of reoccurring motifs indicates that the author was 'so shamelessly borrowing from one Life to another'.

fifty clerics sailing to Rome, where he was eventually ordained a priest and an abbot by Pope Gregory. At this point, we can tentatively trace the scenes pertaining to Abbán's third journey to the original non-extant Life, owing to the similarity of its content with Abbán's entry in the Irish Litanies; whilst the second journey presents a combination of content from the non-extant Life and Bishop Ailbe's imprint. As for Abbán's first journey, the attempt to make Abbán the subject of a pseudo-etymology of Abingdon most likely originates with Bishop Ailbe. Interestingly however, it is Abbán's first journey to Rome which seems to have struck a chord with the writer of *BA*. Normally, *BA* presents a shorter version of the *VSA* version. While Abingdon is envisaged as the heathen city Abbán converted before completing his first journey to Rome, Padua, a city in the Veneto region of north Italy, is envisaged as the heathen city in *BA*.[80]

As I explained in the introduction of this thesis, *BA* (i.e. the extant copy) was most likely produced at some point between the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries and derived its material from *VSA*. Vernacular hagiography from this period is believed to present sources of devotional literature. This would suggest the writers did not employ saints' Lives for fulfilling concerns or needs from their own contemporary standpoints. However, the geographical substitution from Abbán's hagiographical dossier appears to challenge that assumption. [81] Like the reference to Abingdon from *VSA(D)*, Padua is rarely cited in Irish hagiography.[82] However, Pádraig Ó Riain observed that the only times Padua is cited in Irish hagiography is in connection with saints who uphold a historical connection with Padua, such as Anthony, 'a Franciscan friar'.[83] This prompted Ó Riain to suggest that it was the hand of a Franciscan scribe

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[80] Since the scenes pertaining to Abbán's first journey to Rome in *BA* present an abbreviated version of the manner in which Abbán's first journey to Rome is told in *VSA*, it will not be necessary to present the full edited and translated *BA* version in this chapter; For bibliographical details; see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, pp. 5-6, §§4 (part 11) - 7 (part 16); Vol. 2, pp. 4-6, §§4 (part 11) - 7 (part 16).

[81] Cf. Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 89, where he cautions us about the tendency of dossier studies of individual saints to assume that each recension of a saint's Life casts light on the different contemporary interests in the saint's Life and suggests that they reveal more about general 'changing tastes in hagiographical material and style'. Thus, the difference in quantity between Abbán's *Betha* (*BA*) and *Vita* (*VSA*) is unlikely to be a matter that is related entirely to the saint or matters concerning his cult. This is because similar types of differences are also recognisable from the *Bethada* and *Vitae* of other Irish saints. In light of the reference to Padua in *BA* however, we may suggest that although changing interests generally had nothing to do with the actual saint, this example from Abbán's hagiographical dossier presents an unusual case; because vernacular hagiography generally tends not to alter the hagiographical content from which it is borrowing its material. Therefore, the reference to Padua in *BA* would imply that Sharpe's over-arching statement is accurate but does not *always* suffice to explain contextual differences between a saint's *Betha* and *Vita*. Indeed, the idea of each recension casting light on the different contemporary interests in the saint's Life may certainly be a desirable finding for a dossier study.

[82] Padua does not appear in any of the *Vitae* from *VSH(D)* (See: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, p. 337) or *VSH(S)*. *BA* is the only *Betha* in which Padua is cited in *BnÉ*; see: *BnÉ*, Vol. 2, p. 377.

[83] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, p. 162.

who erased Abingdon and inserted Padua into *BA*.[84] Evidence of Franciscan Friaries existing within Ferns and New Ross, in Co. Wexford between the thirteenth and the seventeenth centuries may further indicate that this was where the unknown Franciscan writer produced *BA*; particularly since Ferns represents the diocese from which *VSA* was possibly produced.[85] If it was a Franciscan who produced a vernacular copy (*BA*) of *VSA* within the Ferns Diocese, this may also open room for speculating that substituting Abingdon for Padua embodied an underlying attempt by the so-called 'Franciscan' author to promote what was perhaps a recently re-established Franciscan Friary with the Diocese. The implication that the author was working in the sixteenth century is supported by evidence for Wexford Friaries being re-established during this period after being dissolved for some time beforehand.[86]

If the hagiographical reference to Padua is evidence of Franciscan authorship, it could also be interpreted as another source of evidence for the fourteenth to sixteenth century origin of *BA*.[87] But even if this work does originate with an Irish-Franciscan hagiographer who was keen to promote the status of Franciscan Friaries in Wexford, citing Padua in the *Betha* of a single saint was hardly the only means of fulfilling this criteria. Even if the hagiographer did find value in this approach, references to Padua would surely be traceable from a larger number of Irish saints' Lives as a result. In addition, Padua would have been a place of ecclesiastical importance and relevance to a Franciscan hagiographer. This is because its patron saint (Anthony) was a key figure associated with the Franciscan Order. Hence, it would seem ironic that a Franciscan hagiographer would be willing to portray such a significant city as being of heathen origin. Depicting Abbán as the enactor of the conversion on the other hand, would most certainly have elevated his cultural status. However, there is little other evidence for identifying the author of *BA*. This means it is difficult to determine whether the depiction of

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[84] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 161-162.

[85] Gwynn & Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses*, pp. 240-241 & 257. For a read on *VSA*'s place of origin; see: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 162-163.

[86] Gwynn & Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses*, pp. 240-241.

[87] The very fact that seventeenth century compilers and scribes of hagiography such as Mícheál Ó Cléirigh and John Colgan were also Franciscans would suggest that Franciscan origins for *BA* would not have been incidental. See: pp. 12-15 of this thesis. Moreover, it is very unlikely that Ó Cléirigh inserted Padua into *BA* himself; particularly since his primary goal was to transmit a quantity of lives into a manuscript collection. This means that he would hardly have had the time to closely scrutinise the content of the Lives, to the extent that he was willing to re-write some of the content. Cf. Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, pp. 35-36, which tells that vernacular manuscripts were aimed at the lay audience. Sharpe's point was reviewed under 'The Irish Context' section on pp. 5-9 of this thesis. For a brief, but important read on the significance of John Colgan's role in broadcasting the identity of Irish saints throughout Europe; see: Gillespie, The Irish Franciscans, 1600-1700, pp, 62-63.

Padua was an attempt to promote matters related to his contemporary affairs or if *VSA* or its subject was a topic of genuine interest to the 'Franciscan'.

Toponymic Evidence: A Cult outside of Ireland?

The references to Padua and Abingdon are highly unlikely to be authentic representations of Abbán's actual cult. Rather, they are more telling of the historical development of Abbán's textual profile. Even so, their attestation in Abbán's hagiographical dossier means their association with Abbán remains traceable. Up until now, chapter three of this thesis and the present chapter have demonstrated that Abbán's *Vita* serves as the main source of evidence for discerning the origins of his cultural identity both in Ireland and overseas.[88] Though this proved to be a challenging task at times, it also elicited the typical characteristics of extant cults and those which appear to be obsolete.[89] Particular challenges emerge when evidence for a cult cannot be traced back to any hagiographical material. Alas, this situation concerns Abbán's alleged connection with two Insular regions; namely: Knapdale and the Isle of Man. Neither region is cited in Abbán's *Vita* nor his *Betha*. The evidence for Abbán's connection with these regions can be detected from chronologically varied vernacular names of parishes within Knapdale and the Isle of Man that contain Abbán's patronymic: 'Mac Cormaig'.[90]

Knapdale: Keills and Eilean Mòr

Knapdale is a region located in the centre of Argyll which comprises most of the south-west of Scotland. Keills and Eilean Mòr are the specific Knapdale parishes where a cult of Abbán is believed to have originally existed at one point. This matter was brought to the fore by Doughlas Mac Lean.[91] Most significantly, Mac Lean revealed a variety of documentary sources, including charters, maps and statistical accounts, originating from different periods between the thirteenth and late eighteenth centuries. From these various sources, Mac Lean

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[88] Take note also of chapter three, which essentially demonstrated how Abbán's geographical orientation embodies his cult in Ireland.

[89] See for example: my discussion under 'Episode 1' from chapter three which attempted to show how Abbán's cult has remained known in Ballyvourney in Co. Cork up until present day, whereas the lack of any modern-day commemoration of his Connacht cult, nor any other textual evidence outside of Abbán's hagiographical dossier would suggest that it dissolved at a point long before the Anglo-Norman era in Ireland; Cf. Charles-Edwards, Irish Saints' Cults, pp. 79-102 for a thorough comparison of local cults to that of more regional cults; For a read on the developments of cultural identities of Scottish saints; see: Clancy, Scottish Saints and National Identities, pp. 397-421.

[90] See for example: *Corpus Genealogiarum et Sanctorum Hiberniae* (*CGSH*), pp. 46-47 & *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* (*CGH*), p. 35. Cf. pp. 49-50 of this thesis.

[91] Mac Lean, Knapdale Dedications, pp. 49-65. The first part of this article also comprises a discussion on the archaeological and landscape evidence in the Keills and Eilean Mòr parishes; see: Mac Lean, Knapdale Dedications, pp. 49-51; Cf. Fisher, Early Christian Archaeology in Argyll, p.191 for a reference to Abbán's possible connection with both Knapdale parishes.

uncovered nearly twenty different vernacular spellings of Abbán's patronymic and specified which Knapdale parish each spelling referred to:[92]

Origin of Source	Title of Source	Vernacular Spelling of the Knapdale Parish
1260's	The Mentieth Charter	Keills – 'Kylmachornat' (may derive from 'Kylmachormac')
1300's	*Chronica Gentis Scotorum* (Chronicles of the Scottish People)	Eilean Mòr – 'Helant Macarmyck'
1507	Royal Confirmation of a Lost Early 13th Century Charter	Keills Church – 'Chillmacdachormes'
1551	*Registri Secreti Sigilli Regum Scotorum* (The Register of the Privy Seal of Scotland)	Keills – 'Kilmakcorme'
1581	" " " "	Keills – 'Kilmococharmik'
1597	*Registri Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum* (The Register of the Great Seal of Scotland)	Eilean Mòr – 'Insula de Sanct-Makchormik'

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[92] I have laid out this evidence according to the chronological order of the documentary source from which each vernacular spelling derives; for a full read of Mac Lean's review of this evidence; see: Mac Lean, Knapdale Dedications, pp. 49-65. Since Mac Lean's work, this evidence has been inserted in the 'Saints in Scottish Place-Names' database; see: Thomas Owen Clancy et al. 2010-2013, *Saints in Scottish Place-Names- https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/* (Last Accessed 25th September 2020). While Mac Lean and hence, the main text of this chapter attempted to distinguish between the vernacular place-name evidence that refer to Keills and Eilean Mòr, this evidence is distinguished under three Knapdale place-names in the 'Saints in Scottish Place-Names' database: *Cill Moccu Chormaic*; see: *https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/place.php?id=1331125957&name_id=26665*, *Eilean Mòr*: *https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/place.php?id=1331122252&name_id=26660* and St. Cormac's Chapel: *https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/place.php?id=1331124657&name_id=26669* (All Websites Last Accessed 25th September 2020). These websites present a list of the vernacular place-name evidence and also provide access to different geographical mapping images of the precise landmark of these three locations.

1621	The Acts of Parliament of Scotland	Keills – 'Kilmachormuk'
1662	" " " "	Keills – 'Kilmakcharnik'
1628	The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland	Keills – 'Kilmichocharmik'
1654	The Map of Jura in Blaeu's Atlas	Churches at Keills and Eilean Mòr – 'Kilmacharmik'
1703	A Map from 'A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland'	Eilean Mòr – 'Makarmig'
1791-1799	The Statistical Account of Scotland	Keills Church – 'Killvick O Charmaig'
" " " "	" " " "	Keills Church – 'Kilvicoharmaig'
" " " "	" " " "	Eilean Mòr – 'Ellanmorekilvicoharmaig'
" " " "	" " " "	Keills – 'Mac Charmaig'
" " " "	" " " "	Keills – 'Mac O Charmaig'

Also, indications that the cult of 'St. Mac Cormaig' (i.e. potentially Abbán Mac Cormaig) spread to the Isle of Islay (located to the west of Keills and Eilean Mòr) can be recognised the words of Martin Martin (a seventeenth to eighteenth-century writer of the 'Description of the Western Islands of Scotland' record). Martin claimed that after he had given 'an Alms' to a poor woman in the Isle of Islay, 'she made "three ordinary Turns' sunwise around him and gave him the blessing of "Mac-Charmaig, the Patron Saint of the Island'.[93]

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[93] See: Martin, *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*, 118; Mac Lean, Knapdale Dedications, pp. 52-53. Though Mac Lean did refer to other such oral story-telling evidence to Keills and Eilean Mòr, the reference to the story concerning the Isle of Islay is noteworthy. This is because there is no other evidence to suggest 'Mag Cormaig' or Abbán's cult extended to the Isle of Islay. In any event, the significance of Abbán's association with the two Knapdale parishes (for which there is evidence, in contrast to the supposed connection with the Isle of Islay) awaits further consideration in the present chapter.

Though it would seem possible that St. Mac Cormaig of these Knapdale parishes is identical with Abbán, we must also note that Abbán's name is not cited in these vernacular spellings. Mac Lean remarked that it was not unusual for medieval Scottish sources to refer to a saint's patronymic as opposed to his/her Christian name.[94] As for the 'Cormac' element of the 'Mac Cormaig' identity however, its ubiquitous appearance in the Irish textual record more widely, may counteract Mac Lean's observation.[95] Amongst the undoubtedly expansive number of Irish saints Ó Riain traced from various textual and documentary sources, he identified six different saints bearing the name 'Cormac'.[96] One of these saints: Cormac of Durrow, in the barony of Ballycowen in Co. Offaly, was identified with the obscure 'Mac Cormaig' saint of Keills and Eilean Mòr, according to J.M Mac Kinlay.[97] Perhaps what would bolster MacKinlay's theory is the fact that both Knapdale parishes lie more broadly within the Columban World.[98] In addition, the fact that Cormac of Durrow appears frequently in the three *Vitae* of Colm Cille may heighten the probability of these parishes being dedicated to a Columban saint.[99]

At the same time, this would not be a satisfactory solution, because the problem remains in explaining the origin of the 'mac' element from 'Mac Cormaig'. The fact that 'mac' is part of most of the spellings of Mac Cormaig from the aforementioned vernacular sources supports this concern.[100] Aside from Abbán, Mac Lean also identified another saint whose patronymic name is Mac Cormaig; namely: Baetan of Clonmacnoise.[101] Sharing the same patronymic name means the probability of Keills and Eilean Mòr being dedicated to either Abbán or Baetan is equal. The 'Saints in Scottish Place-Names' project however, have opted for Abbán.[102] A

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[94] Mac Lean, Knapdale Dedications, p. 54.
[95] See for example: O'Brien (Ed. Baumgarten), Old Irish Personal Names, p. 232, which tells that the name 'Cormac' has been identified with one hundred figures from the Irish record.
[96] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 225-228.
[97] Mac Kinlay, *Ancient Church Dedications in Scotland: Non-Scriptural Dedications*, pp. 90-92; Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 226, fn. 9.
[98] See for example: Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*, p. 312, which presents a map view of the focal points of the Columban world in the sixth and seventh centuries, in which Knapdale appears as a notable area. Cf. Mac Lean, Knapdale Dedications, p. 60.
[99] See for example: Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona*, p. 395. See under the headword: 'Cormac Ua Liatháin', for the section numbers of the three *Vitae* of Colm Cille in which this Cormac individual appears.
[100] Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 412-424, which presents biographical discussions of the saints whose names begin with the 'mac' element.
[101] Mac Lean, Knapdale Dedications, p. 54. Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 86 for a biographical discussion of the saint's identity and textual profile. Ó Riain does not however, say anything about Baetan having a connection with Knapdale or Scotland.
[102] *Saints in Scottish Place-Names- https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/place.php?id=1331125957&name_id=26665, https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/place.php?id=1331122252&name_id=26660* and *https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/place.php?id=1331124657&name_id=26669* (All Websites Last Accessed 25th September 2020).

further clue for discerning preference towards Abbán can also be discerned from a martyrological reference to Abbán's two feast-days (16 March and 27 October). In *MRW.Add*, 27 October refers to Abbán of Ireland, whilst Abbán under the 16 March calendar date is identified as *saynt Abbane/ called also saynt Kyryne* (St. Abbán also called St. Kyrne).[103] Though *MRW.Add* is a late medieval source, only originating as far back as the sixteenth century, it suggests that medieval scholars identified Abbán as the Mac Cormaig saint of Keills and Eilean Mòr. In any event, the ubiquitous appearance of the name 'Cormac' and even 'Mac Cormaig' suggests that 'Mac Cormaig' individual from this toponymic evidence for Keills and Eilean Mór could be referring to any past individual.

Isle of Man: Kirk Braddan

While Abbán's connection with the Isle of Man is also discernible via toponymic evidence, it is through Abbán's name as opposed to patronymic, where we can identify his connection with the Isle of Man.[104] Once again, the evidence for his connection with the Isle of Man can be found in vernacular documentary sources, but can only be traced back to two Manx sources, dating to different periods from the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. Both of these sources name a church in Kirk Braddan (a parish located towards the south-east of the Isle of Man) 'Cronyk Keeill Abban', which translates into The Hill of Abbán's Church'.[105]

Origin of Source	Title of Source	Vernacular Spelling of the Isle of Man Parish
1429	Manx Statutes Killabane	'Killabane'
1735	Court Document Tynwald	'Kell Abban'

Like the Knapdale evidence, these Manx sources tell mainly of political events occurring within Kirk Braddan at different stages throughout the medieval period. While they tell us nothing about Abbán's cultural identity as such, both sources can be treated as evidence that is indicative of Abbán's cult spreading to the Manx parish.[106] A further clue for suggesting that

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[103] The Additions from the Martiloge of Richard Whytford (*MRW.Add*), pp. 42 & 169. The implications this may have in relation to Abbán's reduplicated feast-days will be considered in chapter five of this thesis.
[104] Knowledge of Abbán's connection with the Isle of Man was especially brought to the fore by J.J. Kneen, who published the following comprehensive collection: Kneen, *The Place-Names of the Isle of Man*.
[105] Kneen, *The Place-Names of the Isle of Man*, pp. 185 & 188.
[106] Cf. Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, 52, fn. 15.

Abbán Moccu Corbmaic is being referenced in these Manx placenames is supported by the claim that the parish celebrated 'St. Abbán's day' on 16 March.[107]

The implication therefore, is that Abbán had a genuine cult in the Isle of Man. This is further supported by the etymological meaning of the Manx placenames from the Manx sources: 'Killabane' and 'Kell Abban', indicating that a church and cult of Abbán was prominent in Kirk Braddan at one point. According to J.J. Kneen, a church of Abbán did exist in the parish at one point, but the cult ultimately became obsolete as the church landmark later became known as St. Luke's Church.[108] A similar scenario may also underlie the origin of Abbán's possible, although not likely, connection with the aforementioned Knapdale parishes. The key problem however, is the lack of any references to Abbán's Knapdale or Isle of Man origins in his hagiographical dossier. A saint's Life serves to explain its subject's cult. Hence, it is difficult to understand how Abbán's cult may possibly have emerged in Knapdale or the Isle of Man in the first place. This may prompt one to suggest that a saint's Life is not always an entirely reliable account of the entirety of a saint's cult. Either Abbán's hagiographer was genuinely unaware of his cultural connections with the Isle of Man and Knapdale or he deliberately omitted these connections to pre-empt the possibility of this cult trumping his Laigin origins.

Conclusion

The only indications of connections with Insular and Continental Europe in Abbán's extant Life can be discerned from the scenes which provide topographical descriptions and those which envisage Abbán travelling via Abingdon, Padua and to Rome. Though the vernacular evidence for Knapdale and the Isle of Man origins can only be traced as far back as the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, the archaeological and landscape evidence, some of which has been dated as far back as the seventh century, may well embody a now obsolete cult of Abbán in Knapdale.[109] Its lack of inclusion in Abbán's hagiographical dossier not only means we are lacking any sufficient explanation for Abbán's potential Scottish or Manx origins, but subsequently prevents us from attempting to discern the over-arching question that the present chapter and chapters two and three of thesis have pondered: 'which hagiographical material derives from the original non-extant Life of Abbán and which originates from Bishop Ailbe's

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[107] Kneen, *The Place-Names of the Isle of Man*, p. 188; Cf. Paton, Manx Calendar Customs (Continued), pp. 193-194; Paton, Manx Calendar Customs (Continued), pp. 41-42.
[108] Kneen, *The Place-Names of the Isle of Man*, p. 188.
[109] See for example: Mac Lean, Knapdale Dedications, p. 49, which tells of seventh century slabs and cave carvings in Eilean Mór.

imprint?' More broadly, it indicates there are historical and textual layers underlying the origins of Abbán's cultural identity and his extant textual profile.

The majority of matters concerning the saint's 'international' identity seem to originate from the Anglo-Norman milieu, owing to Bishop Ailbe's evident involvement with such affairs. His probable understanding of the role of Irish hagiography in expressing his contemporary concerns and interests seems clear. This was a matter we saw not only in this chapter, but also in the previous two chapters of this thesis.[110] While chapters two and three imply that Abbán's Life was employed as a source of testimonial evidence for property rights, the present chapter has revealed additional purposes which the saint's Life served for Bishop Ailbe. The topographical descriptions of Ireland and Beggerin Island were the most apparent examples. Its detailed and explanatory writing style concerning the precise location of these places imply he was writing for an international audience too. The similar writing style of the contemporary *TH* would suggest it served as an effective exemplary source for Bishop Ailbe; but less so, for Bishop Ailbe's concurrent dislike towards the Anglo-Normans. Most notably, *TH*'s negative portrayal of the Irish people and their mannerisms would by no means, have quenched Bishop Ailbe's animosity towards the Anglo-Norman influence upon Irish society.

Hence, the fruitful description of Ireland's topography and the generous and caring nature of the Irish people in the prologue (§1 of *VSA(D)*), could be perceived as an attempt to provide a revived account of Ireland and its history; one that not only contradicted *TH*'s documentation of Ireland, but one that also promoted and broadcasted Bishop Ailbe's desire to rid Ireland of the Anglo-Norman clergy, as he undoubtedly indicated at the Dublin synod in 1186. The implication is particularly evident from the hagiographical scene which depicts a south British town (Abingdon) as a heathen city in *VSA(D)*. Though a saint converting a location or group of people would not be an uncommon trope in Irish hagiography more generally, this particular scene from *VSA(D)* appears to be an allegorical message from Bishop Ailbe's concerns with the Anglo-Norman clergy. In light of the Anglo-Normans advising that the Irish church is in need of reforms, the hagiographical reference to Abingdon envisages an opposite scenario. An ideal image, which Bishop Ailbe was attempting to express via hagiography, probably concurred with the claims he made at the Dublin synod. Moreover, this could also mean that

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[110] See for example my discussion under the 'Episode 9' section from pp. 140-142 of this thesis, which discussed the significance of the hagiographical scene set in Senboth Ard and the probability of this place representing an actual location in which two manors of conflicting interest to Bishop Ailbe and William Marshal stood.

he was willing to heavily annotate and modify Abbán's Life to the extent where he may have omitted certain material that did not sit well with his concerns and interests.

In that regard, Abbán's alleged connections with Knapdale and the Isle of Man may have been mentioned in the saint's original non-extant Life but were eventually omitted. If Abbán's Life was employed as a source of testimonial evidence for Bishop Ailbe's dispute with William Marshal, evidence for a Laigin saint having cultural connections with wider Insular regions may have been perceived as a way of jeopardizing his chance of re-claiming the two manors. Even so, Bishop Ailbe was ultimately unsuccessful. However, this is sheer speculation, because there is little way of proving that the Knapdale and the Isle of Man parishes were connected to Abbán's cult, let alone claiming that the cited in an original Life that no longer survives. This situation does not necessarily suggest that Abbán's connection with these international regions was untrue. Its means we are lacking an explanation for the origin of Abbán's potential connection with Knapdale and the Isle of Man in his hagiographical dossier. It is difficult to trace the origins of two possible international cults when the main source of evidence is of a toponymic type from documentary records, which otherwise say nothing else about Abbán. Though we cannot confirm that these cults are genuine, we can say nevertheless, that they did not contribute to the formation of a *Vita* that expressed underlying concerns in Irish-Norman relations namely: *VSA*.

Chapter 5

The Death and Feast-Days of St. Abbán

Introduction- Recap

In the Lives of Irish saints, the use and adaptation of formulaic scenes can often reflect the historical considerations of the writer. Throughout the last three chapters of this thesis, I have attempted to trace these considerations back to two main sources: Bishop Ailbe's imprint on Abbán's Life and the original non-extant Life of Abbán. This involved tentatively distinguishing between the *VSA* scenes which cast light on the concerns and interests from Bishop Ailbe's contemporary standpoint and those that bear little or no relationship with the era in which Bishop Ailbe probably wrote *VSA*.[1] An examination of the hagiographical scenes which appear to be fossils from the original non-extant Life, enabled us to explore the role they served in explaining the origins and development of Abbán's cultural identity. At this point, we have established the significance of Bishop Ailbe's probable role in modifying Abbán's Life. But perhaps what remains is a need to further consider matters related to the saint's individual identity, which are not solely confined to his hagiographical record. In this regard, we need to refer back to the chief underlying theories concerning the origin of Abbán's cult and textual profile; namely, 'The Two-Abbán Theory' and 'The Double-Cult Theory'.

As explained from the outset of this thesis, both theories stem from the fact that a double strand of obscure meaning runs through the entirety of Abbán's dossier. The first theory suggests that records of two different individual saints named Abbán were merged into one over a certain period of time, whilst the second suggests that two different cults emerged from the same saint. Insight into this double strand was particularly noticeable in chapter one of this thesis, where Abbán's genealogical record was the focal point. Alongside other examples of ancestral misrepresentation explored in this chapter, a comparative consideration of the genealogical, but also hagiographical evidence for Abbán's family revealed conflicting depictions of Abbán's maternal uncle.[2] The fact that the primary foundations of Abbán's two uncles are located within the same regions as each of Abbán's primary foundations (Cell Abbain and Mag Arnaide) would suggest their familial depictions in Abbán's record, present individual

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[1] As we established from the outset of this thesis, *VSA*, in its extant format, was probably written in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century; see: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170; Doherty, Analysis of the 'life' of Abbán, pp. 1-10.

[2] The Genealogies envisage Abbán's maternal uncle as St. Kevin of Glendalough in north Laigin, whilst St. Íbar of Beggerin Island in the south of the province fulfils this familial role in *VSA* and *BA*.

embodiments of the saint's double-patronage.[3] This has implications for the possibility of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain being the focal points from where two distinct cults of Abbán emerged. Still, the idea of both foundations masking the original existence of two different saints; namely: 'Abbán of Mag Arnaide' and 'Abbán of Cell Abbain', requires some thought.

The Death of St. Abbán

Though Bishop Ailbe's notable imprint on *VSA* would mean that it is more difficult to identify matters from the *Vita* which are related to 'The Two-Abbán Theory' and/or 'The Double-Cult Theory', a review of the references to Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain throughout *VSA*, discloses an underlying form of division between both foundations.[4] This becomes particularly clear from the latter few scenes of *VSA(D)* which tell of the events surrounding Abbán's death, which according to *VSA(D)*, occurs in the following manner:[5]

> One day, Abbán blessed a sterile cow, which miraculously gave birth to two twin calves, which according to Abbán would not remain on earth longer after his death. As Abbán's death was soon approaching, he only told the provost of his monastery in Mag Arnaide. However, because the provost was originally from Cell Abbain, he felt that Abbán should be buried in Cell Abbain, because Cell Abbain was located in the region in which Abbán was born. Subsequently, the provost and his helpers brought Abbán's body to Cell Abbain after his death, with the help of two oxen attached to a cart. The following morning, the community of Mag Arnaide made a devastating discovery and decided to confront Cell Abbain. The tension escalated between both communities as they prepared to fight one another. Suddenly, the oxen carrying Abbán's body miraculously formed a duplicate. This meant two pairs of oxen were now standing, but more importantly, there were now two bodies of the same saint, one of which went to

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[3] From the perspective of 'The Two-Abbán Theory', this would suggest that Bishop Íbar was the maternal uncle of one saint named Abbán (Abbán of Mag Arnaide), whilst Abbán of Cell Abbain was the nephew of Kevin. However, the fact that Abbán does not appear in Kevin's genealogical record would lessen the possibility of Abbán and Kevin being biologically related in actuality; see: pp. 61-69 of this thesis. See in particular where I draw attention to the fact that the *CGSH* and *LMnG* entries note that Abbán is of Mag Arnaide but from Cell Abbain. The fact that Abbán is born within the parameters of a north Laigin dynasty (Dál Messin Corb) according to *VSA*, would imply that Cell Abbain commemorated his place of origin, as opposed to being a place of which he became the patron saint.

[4] See for example my discussion under the 'Episode 3- North Laigin' and 'Episode 4- South Laigin' sections on pp. 173-184 of this thesis, which tells of people of Uí Bairrche benefitting from Abbán's visit and of the saint building Cell Abbain within the parameters of this dynasty. Take note also of the subsequent reference to Mag Arnaide being the place of Abbán's resurrection, as prophesised by an angel. After telling his audience of the time Abbán spent in north Laigin, the author instantly transitions to a discussion of Mag Arnaide becoming Abbán's place of resurrection in an attempt to pre-empt Cell Abbain from being placed under the spotlight.

[5] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 27-28 & 30-33, §§44 & 48-52.

Cell Abbain, whilst the other went to Mag Arnaide. Abbán subsequently became the patron saint of both foundations. As for the oxen moreover, they disappeared into a place called 'Áth Daim Dhá Cheilt'. The people then realised that these oxen were the twin calves whom Abbán had said would not remain on earth long after his death.

Abbán's death evidently represents political tension between Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain, concerning Abbán's relics. Moreover, tension between two Laigin communities would have been an irrelevant subject-matter to a prelate (Bishop Ailbe of Ferns) concerned with property rights and Irish-Norman relations more widely. [6] Thus, it is probable that the scenes pertaining to Abbán' death relate to a historical matter preceding the hand of Bishop Ailbe of Ferns.[7] Whatever matter that may be, the fact that Abbán becomes the patron saint of two foundations fits accordingly with the two theories concerning Abbán's dual image. This image is further enhanced when we consider, once again, the conflicting depictions of Abbán's maternal uncle in the genealogical and hagiographical records. St. Kevin of Glendalough fulfils this familial position in Abbán's genealogical record, where the emphasis is placed on Abbán's north Laigin origins, whilst St. Íbar of Beggerin Island is the maternal uncle in Abbán's Life, which seems to express authorial preference towards Mag Arnaide. This apparent distinction underlying the saint's two primary foundations opens room for considering whether it embodies the amalgamation of records of two different saints named Abbán or two distinct cults emerging from the same saint.

Relics and *Translatio*

To fully consider this matter, we must firstly take a close look at the content from the death scenes, for which some interesting points of comparison can be made with other sources. Disputed relics is a relatively common trope both within an Insular and Continental milieu.[8] In Abbán's case, his relics became a matter of dispute because they were originally translated

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[6] Neither would it have served as an appropriate form of testimonial evidence for claiming the two manors, supposedly in Templeshanbo rightfully belonged to Bishop Ailbe.

[7] Elsewhere, Charles Doherty identified this issue as a reason for why Bishop Ailbe was not the author of Abbán's Life; see: Doherty, Analysis of the 'life' of Abbán', p. 4.

[8] For a concise review of the significance of disputed relics on the Continent; see: Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, pp. 324-332; Cf. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, pp. 88-94 for read on matters concerning the translation of relics (*translatio*). For a comprehensive read on the history of relics in Ireland and also references to relics and *translatio* from Irish hagiography; see: Wycherley, *The Cult of Relics*. For a concise discussion of examples of people quarrelling over rightful ownership of saints' relics from the eleventh up until the fifteenth century; see: Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, pp. 324-327. For examples from Irish source material; see: Wycherley, *The Cult of Relics*, pp. 31, 76, 78 & 83. In relation to the matter of disputed relics, St. Denis of France is a noteworthy case in point. In the *Parlement de Paris* in France, a heated dispute between the canons of *Notre-Dame de Paris* and the monks of St. Denis over St. Denis's relics took place during the early fifteenth century; for further details on the event; see: Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, p. 327.

(moved) from one different location to another. This represents an important example of *translatio,* the translation or movement of saints' relics. On the Continent, there historical evidence for *translatio* is sufficient, perhaps one of the earliest concerning the fourth century Bishop Ambrose of Milan, who had moved relics from the shrine of SS. Felix and Nabor to a new basilica which Ambrose had built for himself.[9] Elsewhere, reasons for enacting *translatio* were not always because of political tension between certain geographical locations. For example, the relics of St. Colman of Lynn were found in the early-mid twelfth century in a shrine hidden under the ground of Lynn to prevent the relics being destroyed by Vikings when they were raiding Ireland.[10] Thus, the relics of Colman had been transferred for maintaining their protection and pre-empting their potential destruction.

Moreover, the determination of the provost and his helpers to keep Abbán's relics in Cell Abbain presents a classic example of how 'the identity of the patron saint was intrinsic to the identity and status of the community'.[11] As *VSA* remarked earlier, the preservation of Bishop Íbar's relics in Beggerin Island meant they would offer spiritual protection for the people of Laigin and intercede for them when it came to Judgement Day.[12] From a political standpoint moreover, the preservation of his relics in Beggerin Island as oppose to his birthplace, Ulster, meant that his relics would boost the economic interests of the province (Laigin) in which the monastery of Beggerin Island stood, as opposed to those of Ulster.[13] Therefore, if a church could claim possession of a saint's body, this would ultimately promote such matters for a church, through the promotion of pilgrimage, the sale of prestigious burial plots and the production of contact relics. For instance, the large numbers of pilgrims who regularly visited the grave of St. Flannán at Killaloe, according to *Vita Sancti Flannani Episcopi in Cell Dalua*, resulted in Flannán's relics being translated and thus consecrated.[14] The economic interests of

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[9] See for example: Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, pp. 36-37.

[10] See: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 197, fn. 3.

[11] Wycherley, *The Cult of Relics*, p. 166.

[12] See: pp. 106-110 of this thesis.

[13] The reference to Íbar's relics was addressed on p. 107 of this thesis. For a reference to the *translatio* of shrines as a result of plundering in Beggerin Island and Dairinis Caemhain, which is recorded under the year 819 in The Annals of the Four Masters; see: Wycherley, *The Cult of Relics*, p. 98. Hence, while the activity of plundering was what resulted in *translatio* in Beggerin Island and Dairinis Caemhain according to The Annals of the Four Masters record, the activity unfolds in *VSA* as a result of one community (Cell Abbain) believing they are the rightful owners of Abbán's relics. For an earlier read on the different kinds of relics from early medieval Ireland; see: Lucas, The Social Role of Relics and Reliquaries in Ancient Ireland, pp. 6-11. Cf. Herbert, Hagiography and Holy Bodies, pp. 239-260, for a study of hagiographical texts from the pre-Viking era, including the *Vitae* of the three national saints of Ireland: Patrick, Brigit and Colm Cille.

[14] See: *VSH(S)*, pp. 299-300, §34. For a more detailed read on the political value that relics upheld in the Irish church; see: Wycherley, *The Cult of Relics*, pp. 101-158.

Abbán's north Laigin foundation (Cell Abbáin) may have been a concern underlying the provost's desire to bring Abbán's relics to his home place (Cell Abbáin).

Possible Derivative Sources for the Death of St. Abbán

Another point worthy of comment is the manner in which Abbán's hagiographer envisages the oxen as the central characters from the outset of the death scenes and throughout. §44, bovine animals feature regularly in Irish hagiography.[15] Some saints are connected with bovine animals more often than others. A notable example is St. Ciarán of Clonmacnoise, whose *Vita* (*Vita Sancti Ciarani Abbatis de Cluain mic Nois*/The Life of St. Ciarán Abbot of Clonmacnoise) regularly envisages the saint spending time with cattle and giving cows to poor people.[16] But perhaps the saint who is best known for their association with cattle, is the female national saint of Ireland St. Brigit of Kildare.[17] This is an apparent theme that runs throughout most of the Brigidine hagiography. In one of the most important Brigidine texts, the ninth century *Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae*, the hagiographer tells of a white cow being solely capable of nourishing Brigit as a child without causing her to vomit.[18] It would be difficult to envisage Abbán's hagiographer writing about a sterile cow miraculously conceiving twin calves without having any awareness or knowledge of this motif from Brigit's earlier hagiographical dossier. It is probable that Abbán's hagiographer was borrowing (in)directly from Brigit's dossier.[19]

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[15] See for example: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 638-640 & 644 which identifies the number of saints connected with calves, cattle and oxen in Irish hagiography.

[16] see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 200-216; For an English translation; see: Ó Riain, *Four Offaly Saints*, pp. 14-15, 17-19 & 22.

[17] See: Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 123-125 for a brief review of her cultural identity and textual profile. For a full study on the life and cult of Brigit; see: Kissane, *Saint Brigid of Kildare Life, Legend and Cult*.

[18] Connolly, Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae, p. 16, §11. This emerges from the story of how Brigit as a child would always throw up the food that was fed to her by the druid because the food was 'unclean'. This resulted in the druid entrusting a cow to feed Brigit her milk, which Brigit successfully consumed. The same story is told in the ninth century vernacular Life *Betha Brigte*, which also notes that the cow had red ears, see: Stokes, *Lives of the Saints from The Book of Lismore*, pp. 37 & 185. More broadly, a white red-eared cow is perceived 'as a distinct breed' mentioned in only certain famous texts like *Bethu Brigte*, *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (The Cattle Raid of Cooley) and *Vita Sancti Albei* (The Life of St. Ailbe); Cf. Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, pp. 33-34. For a brief review on the ninth century origin of *Bethu Brigte*; see for example: Herbert, Latin and Vernacular Hagiography, p. 340. For a recent study on background, origin and content of this *Vita*, see: Dawson, Brigit and Patrick, pp. 35-50. While authorship on most of the extant Lives of SS. Patrick, Brigit and Colm Cille is known, the author of *Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae* is anonymous, see: Herbert, Latin and Vernacular Hagiography, p. 35; Dawson, Patrick and Brigit, pp. 37-38. Moreover, while Seán Connolly provides an examination of the historical background and English translation of the *Vita*, most of the Brigidine hagiography still awaits a modern edition, see: Herbert, Latin and Vernacular Hagiography, p. 335.

[19] While Abbán's hagiographer may have used *Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae* as a derivative source for this particular trope from *VSA*, it is also possible that his inspiration to write about a sterile cow was influenced by a series of miracle motifs and tropes from different saints' Lives, associated with bovine animals more widely. Even so, the depiction of the sterile cow giving birth to twin calves in *VSA(D)* was evidently being employed for an important narrative which the author saves for a later point of *VSA(D)*; that being, the scenes pertaining to Abbán's death. The author creates anticipation for his audience, which he subsequently places in suspense in saying that the future significance of the calves will come to fruition at a later point in *VSA*. It is not until after three subsequent

Though we cannot confirm from what century of the pre-Norman period a pre-existing Life of Abbán may have been written, the fact that most of the Brigidine Lives dates to seventh and ninth centuries in their extant format, would suggest the depiction of oxen in Brigidine Lives precedes such depictions from Abbán's Life. But perhaps a more comparable hagiographical source originating from the seventh century, is Múirchú's Life of Patrick. Similarity, death scenes from Múirchú's Life also envisage two oxen as the central characters of his place of burial.[20] According to the death scenes from Múirchú's Life, the decision of Patrick's place of burial depended on the place to which a wild pair of oxen should subsequently travel.[21] This resonates with the oxen from Abbán's Life contributing to the saint's place of burial. Unlike the oxen from Múirchú's Life however, the oxen from Abbán's Life are envisaged as obedient animals with a tame and meek temperament.[22] This would suggest that the story of Abbán's relics was borrowed from already existing hagiographical narrative pertaining to relics, for explaining the uncertainty surrounding Abbán's double patronage. In that regard, some parallels can be drawn from the death scenes of *VSA* and those from Muirchú's Life of Patrick, a seventh century *Vita*.[23]

In both of these *Vitae*, there is political tension between two to three geographical regions, who wish to keep the relics of the saint.[24] Oxen are at the heart of this political tension in both *Vitae*, too. They both transfer the bodies of Abbán and Patrick to the desired place of burial. In Muirchú's Life, however, the oxen do not follow the orders of any living individual in deciding where to lay Patrick's body to rest. As an angel had prophesised, two untamed oxen will decide where Patrick's resting place will be, which was ultimately: Dún Lethglaisse (Downpatrick),

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events when the author decided to bring that matter to the fore. The latter three events were: Abbán's encounter with St. Colm Cille and his monks (§45 of *VSA(D)*), Abbán's long conversation with St. Brendan of Clonfert (§46) and Abbán resurrecting his friend 'Conall' (§47).

[20] See: Bieler, *The Patrician Texts*, pp. 62-123.

[21] Bieler, *The Patrician Texts*, pp. 120-123; *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, p. 224. Oxen enact a similar role in the *Vita* of St. Mo Lua (*Vita Sancti Moluae Abbatis de Cluain Ferta Moluae* (The Life of St. Molua Abbot of Clonfertmulloe), see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 2, pp. 206-225.

[22] Oxen of this kind of temperament were regarded as highly valuable animals for draughting on farmland. According to Fergus Kelly, bullocks (a castrated male cow or oxen) would normally be slaughtered for meat after the age of one or two; but the odd oxen who had a docile temperament was kept permanently by the farmer for draughting. Highly trained oxen also had a financially high value; see: Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, pp. 48-49. Hence, the depiction of docile oxen from Abbán's Life also tells of an ideal type of farm animal from a past society of medieval Ireland.

[23] For a discussion on the origin of Muirchú's Life of Patrick and also Tírechán's Life of Patrick; see for example: Herbert, Latin and Vernacular Hagiography of Ireland, pp. 330-331.

[24] In Muirchú's Life of Patrick, three dynastic regions from the north of Ireland, wish to keep Patrick's relics; namely, the Uí Neill, the Airgialla and the Ulaid; see: Bieler, *The Patrician Texts*, pp. 120-121.

in the barony of Lecale Upper, in Co. Down. [25] In *VSA*, this decision was made by the provost of the Mag Arnaide Monastery, which inevitably devastated the people of Mag Arnaide. However, the oxen from *VSA* miraculously formed a duplicate, which solved the dispute and alleviated the growing tension between the and communities of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain. Comparative consideration of the death scenes from Muirchú's Life of Patrick would suggest Muirchú's Life was used by Abbán's hagiographer as a derivative source for most of the death scenes of *VSA*, given the seventh century origin of Muirchú's Life in its extant format.

Though the deaths scenes from Abbán's and Patrick's *Vitae* do not present an identical series of events, the employment of particular tropes, such as the depiction of the oxen transporting the body remains of its saint, imply that Abbán's hagiographer borrowed and altered some of the tropes from the death scenes of Muirchú's Life. For instance, the depiction of the oxen from Abbán's *Vita* forming a duplicate, is akin to the oxen from Muirchú's Life, misleading those from the Uí Neill, Airgialla and Ulaid dynastic kingdoms into seeing a false illusion of the oxen and a cart carrying the relics of Patrick.[26] This was an attempt to prevent the people of these three kingdoms from fighting, as was also the aim of the oxen from *VSA*, when the communities of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain attempted to fight. As the elusive oxen from Muirchú's Life subsequently disappeared by a river called 'Cabcenne', the duplicate oxen from *VSA* also disappeared into the fords of river known as 'Áth Daim Dha Cheilt'.[27]

It may be possible also that Abbán's hagiographer was, to some extent, attempting to present a more ideal version of some of the tropes from the death scenes of Muirchú's Life. One apparent example is the attempt to show that the story of the oxen disappearing into the fords of a river also provides an etymological meaning. This is because Abbán's hagiographer subsequently gave the fords a placename: Áth Daim Dha Cheilt.[28] Furthermore, while the illusive oxen from Muirchú's Life tricked the people of Uí Neill, Airgialla and Ulaid into

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[25] See: *Onomasticon Godelicum- https://www.dias.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/E-Onomasticon_Text.pdf*, Entry number 14943, on p. 1568 of pp. 1-2943; *Monasticon Hibernicum- https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/showrecord.php?id=3525* (Both Websites Last Accessed 25th September 2020).

[26] See: Bieler, *The Patrician Texts*, pp. 120-123.

[27] For Muirchú's Life; see: Bieler, *The Patrician Texts*, pp. 122-123.

[28] This is also reminiscent *VSA* attempting to show how Abingdon was named after Abbán, discussed on pp. 204-207 of this thesis. Áth Daim Dha Cheilt however, is unlikely to be an actual geographical location; particularly since it is based on a literary trope which is relatively commonplace in Irish hagiography. This would suggest that Abbán's hagiographer has essentially provided a pseudo-etymology for a pseudo placename, in comparison to some of the aforementioned ambiguous locations examined in chapter three of this thesis, such as Mag na Taibse; see: pp. 186-188 of this thesis.

believing they were taking Patrick's body, the oxen from Abbán's Life were less deceitful. They not only presented Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain with an actual body, but did in fact, present two bodies. Similarly, after the Welsh St. Teilo died, there were three different churches (Penally, Llandeilo and Llandaff) who each believed they were the rightful owners of Teilo's body remains. This resulted in the people leaving the decision to Jesus Christ, who was expected to give them a sign of his decision. Jesus's sign was discovered the following morning when the people of these churches found three identical bodies of Teilo. This meant that each of the churches had a body which they could each bury and preserve within their own church properties.[29]

Like Abbán's hagiographer, Teilo's attempted to find a solution for the problem of two or more ecclesiastical communities claiming rightful ownership, meaning that hagiography was capable of providing a literary response to a critical situation in reality.[30] Moreover, the attestation of the same trope from Abbán's Life removes the implication of the death scenes from Muirchú's Life of Patrick being the only derivative source used for the composition of the death scenes from Abbán's. It demonstrates how such tropes were commonly employed by hagiographers in an attempt to offer an explanation for a saint having more than one place of origin.[31] But even if the death scenes of *VSA* comprise familiar motifs and tropes from other saints' Lives, we ought to note that they are being employed for constructing their own distinctive version of the individual identity of its saint. The oxen act as the mediators of the political tension between Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain in *VSA*. This depiction is also reminiscent of the role performed by cattle in what is perhaps, one of the most famous sagas from the corpus of Irish literature: *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (The Cattle Raid of Cooley).[32] This

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[29] See: Evans & Rhys, *Vita Sancti Teliavi*, pp. 116-117.

[30] Cf. Herbert, Hagiography and Holy Bodies, p. 241, which reminds us that the purpose of hagiography was not solely to promote the cult of its subject but could also provide 'literary responses at particular historical moments' or 'reactions to change or threat to the saint's legacy'. The deaths of SS. Teilo and Abbán present interesting examples of such societal concerns from the medieval period.

[31] Furthermore, it may be more than a coincidence that St. Teilo is now the patron saint of three different places and also has three feast-days; see for example: Baring Gould & Fisher, Vol. 1, *The Lives of the British Saints*, p. 64. As we will see in chapter five of this thesis moreover, Abbán has two feast-days. It can hardly be a mere coincidence that he is also the patron saint of two foundations (Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain).

[32] Like the oxen from *VSA*, two bulls are at the heart of a battle between Ulster and the rest of Ireland, which was initiated by Queen Medb of Connacht and her husband 'Ailill'. To access an English translation of the Book of Leinster version of *Táin Bó Cúailnge*; see: *Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster-https://celt.ucc.ie//published/T301035/index.html* (Last Accessed 25th September 2020). We need not concern ourselves with the content of *Táin Bó Cúailnge* in any further detail. The purpose of referring to the saga is merely to elicit an analogy with the oxen from Abbán's Life.

analogy would imply that Abbán's hagiographer used a select number of derivative sources in an attempt to create a sophisticated narrative.

Another potential derivative source may be Jocelin's Life of Patrick, in which the trope of a duplicated pair of oxen attached to a cart, is also attested. Interestingly, this duplication does not happen in the earlier Patrician source, Muirchú's Life. [33] The probable pre-Norman period in which Abbán's pre-existing Life was written and the unlikeliness of Bishop Ailbe inventing the death scenes means we cannot rule out the possibility of Jocelin being aware of the duplicated oxen trope from a pre-existing Life of Abbán. On the other hand, however, the similar period (late twelfth to early thirteenth century) from which Jocelin's Life and *VSA* (the earliest extant version of Abbán's Life) originate, could mean that it was Bishop Ailbe or the redactor of *VSH(D)* who borrowed the duplication trope from the death scenes of Jocelin's Life and thus added the trope to an already existing storyline of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain quarrelling over Abbán's body from a pre-existing Life. Though Bishop Ailbe's interest in Abbán's Life stemmed mainly from his concern in property rights and Irish-Norman relations (as outlined in chapter four of this thesis), he or the manuscript redactor may also have reviewed another contemporary *Vita* (Jocelin's Life of Patrick) to contemporise certain sections of Abbán's Life.

The Feast-Days of St. Abbán

This review of the potential derivative sources demonstrates that the scenes pertaining to Abbán's death present tropes and miracle motifs that are commonplace in the Irish, Insular and the Continental record more widely. In Abbán's case however, such common features serve a purpose, which is, to explain the origin of Abbán's patronage. Thus, the storyline goes beyond being part of a continuous attempt to fully depict Abbán 'as an exemplar of holiness', as was the original intention of hagiography.[34] It may also be interpreted as a source of evidence for the factors, explored thus far, that elicit a dual image from Abbán's identity, which are, the conflicting depictions of his maternal uncle and being a patron saint of two locations. This image becomes even clearer when we consider the evidence for Abbán's feast-day, which according to the epilogue of *VSA(D)*, was 27 October:

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[33] Jocelin of Furness's Life of Patrick is a late twelfth to early thirteenth century *Vita*, see for example: Blyth, *The Life and Acts of Saint Patrick*, p. 215.

[34] Herbert, *Iona, Kells & Derry*, p. 1.

'post ecclesias fundatas, post leprosos mundatos, post cecos illuminatos, post surdos et

claudos sanatos, post mortuos suscitatos, post omnes morbos adiutos, felicissime sexto

kalendas Nouembris inter choros angelorum ad regna celestia migrauit' [35]

'after founding churches, after cleansing the lepers, after illuminating the blind, after healing

the deaf and the lame, after resurrecting the dead, after aiding all diseases, he migrated

successfully, amongst a choir of angels, to the kingdom of heaven on 27 October'.

This calendar date is also recorded as the saint's feast-day in the Irish martyrologies, indicating that 27 October 'commemorated the death of a saint'.[36] However, most of the Irish martyrologies also record a second feast-day for Abbán; that being, 16 March.[37] As a result, the Irish martyrologies record two feast-days for Abbán, which ultimately obscures the idea of a feast-day representing the anniversary of a saint's death-date.

Up until this point, most of the focus has been centred on Abbán's hagiographical dossier. From comparing and contrasting the Latin redaction (*VSA*) and vernacular adaptation (*BA*) of Abbán's Life, recognising potential similarities with other source material and identifying the different contemporary standpoints from which the authorship of Abbán's Life derives, these methods have proven to be invaluable for uncovering a more thorough image (than what already exists) of Abbán's full cultural identity. Though the Irish martyrologies are equally valuable sources, they provide a different textual record of saints. Originally, martyrologies

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[35] These sentences are from the epilogue (§53) of *VSA(D)*; see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 33. Cf. *VSH(S)*, p. 274, for the *VSA(S)* version. The English translation of these sentences are my own work.

[36] Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, p. 128. In saying this, Bartlett is focusing mainly on Continental martyrs and saints. Nevertheless, it is just as applicable to Irish martyrological recordings of saints, as the Irish martyrologies ultimately derive from martyrologies of Continental origin. See for example: Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, pp. 1-2; Follett, *Céli Dé in Ireland*, p. 128, fn. 156. Both Ó Riain and Follett talk about the oldest Irish martyrology, The Martyrology of Tallaght (MT) and how the Continental Hieronymian Martyrology is its primary derivative. This would inevitably have resulted in MT compiler(s) borrowing and thus, embedding Continental concepts surrounding saints' deaths and burials into the Irish martyrologies.

[37] The seventeenth-century *Genealogiae Regum et Sanctorum Hiberniae* (*GRSH*), addressed in chapter one of this thesis, implies that 16 March is Abbán's only feast-day. As this is a late genealogical source, the genealogical compiler derived this material from the Irish martyrological record. Potentially, he inserted Abbán's feast-day at the end of the saint's pedigree because he was looking for additional material to supplement the genealogical entry attributed to Abbán (in that regard, it is probable that he was attempting to offer as much supplementary detail for all of the genealogical entries he was compiling). In an attempt to look for Abbán's feast-day therefore, the March calendar-date was the first month under which the genealogical compiler spotted the saint's name. Thus, assuming that most saints only have one-feast-day and that it commemorates the anniversary of a saint's death, the *GRSH* compiler possibly assumed that this calendar-date was Abbán's sole feast-day and placed it under the saint's genealogical entry; see: *GRSH*. p. 85. The compiler most likely drew from a contemporary martyrology or a martyrology produced during his time, such as, The Martyrology of Donegal (MD). The fact the MD only records Abbán's March feast-day further implies that the *GRSH* compiler derived 16 March calendar date from MD. The origin of MD and potential reasons for why it only records one of Abbán's feast-days will be discussed in due course in this chapter.

were texts into which the feast-days of martyrs were recorded.[38] When martyrological production became a point of interest in Ireland however, the names of Irish saints' or confessors were also added to these texts.[39] Irish martyrologies (*matarlaig*) or calendars (*féliri*) record the names of saints under each day of each month of the year. Typically, this day commemorates the saint's death date, which then becomes known as the saint's feast-day. In some cases, however, a saint's full name can be recorded under two or more calendar dates in a martyrology and provide no explanation for what the additional feast-day(s) may commemorate other than the saint's death.[40] Therefore, we must consider all possible events or matters the additional feast-day(s) may commemorate.[41]

Typical Reasons for Reduplicated Feast-Days

More generally, reasons for a saint having reduplicated or multiple feast-days relate mainly to three separate areas of a saint's identity:

- **A Saint in Actuality**

Since hagiography is a literary genre, it can be difficult to discern which elements of a Life reflect the historical saint. Nevertheless, the annalistic evidence for the death-dates of some Irish saints', shows that the Irish textual record did not completely fictionalise a saint's identity. Hence, in consideration of a saint's actual life, perhaps the most likely event a second feast-day may commemorate, aside from a saint's death-date, is his/her *nativitas* (birth-date). In the Irish martyrologies, both the birth and death dates of some Irish saints are overtly stated separately under two calendar dates.[42] No doubt, this would explain why a saint's full patronymic is recorded under two calendar dates in a martyrology. However, for most Irish saints with two feast-days, it is unlikely that one of their two feast-days represents his/her

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[38] Ó Riain. *Feast-days of the Saints*, p. xvii.

[39] Ó Riain. *Feast-days of the Saints*, p. xvii. In a Christian context, the term 'confessor' is applied to saints whose names are recorded in the martyrologies, but who were not martyred. Cf. Bartlett *Why can the Dead*, p. 639.

[40] For example, Abbán's full name (Abbán Moccu Corbmaic) is recorded under 16th March but also 27th October calendar dates in MT, *Félire Óengusso* (*FÓ*) and The Martyrology of Gorman (MG).

[41] More broadly, multiple feast-days are a feature of Medieval hagiography. St. Martin of Tours, for example, has four feasts: 4 June (translation), 4 July (ordination), 11 November (feast-day) 18 November (octave). In this case, explanations are provided for Martin's feasts, but in cases, like Abbán's, where no explanation is provided in the martyrologies, a closer review of the saint's entire record is necessary.

[42] For example, the nativity of St. Colman Ela is recorded under 3 October in the MT, which also records his death date as 26 September; see: MT, pp. 74 & 76. The nativity of St. Colm Cille is recorded under the 7 December and his death date is recorded under 9 June in the MG; see: MG, pp. 112-113 & 234-235. Cf. The Annals of Tigernach, which record the birth year of St. Colm Cille as 520 AD; *The Annals of Tigernach* - *https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T100002A/index.html* (Last Accessed 25th September 2020). For a brief discussion on the possibility of a second feast-day commemorating a saint's actual *nativitas*; see: Ó Riain, Towards a Methodology in Early Irish Hagiography, pp. 155-156.

nativitas. In cases where *natalis* is cited under one of a saint's two feast-days, it generally refers to a saint's birth into Heaven. [43] Therefore, it is simply another way of referring to a saint's death-date and has nothing to do with a saint's actual date of birth.

Originally, reduplicated or multiple feast-days may have commemorated the deaths of two or more different individual saints with the same name, all of whom may now be identified as one saint. The wide attestation of saints' names such as 'Aed' and 'Colmán' for example, would imply that many different saints shared the same names.[44] Moreover, in cases where there is insufficient genealogical detail to accompany a saint's name under his/her two calendar dates, the idea of two different saints bearing the same name under separate calendar dates, presents a valid argument. The same argument was made for Abbán by Victor De Buck in 1867. Though the name 'Abbán' is not a common Old Irish name, De Buck made the argument based on the martyrological attestation of two feast-days (16 March and 27 October), but also for the fact that Abbán is the patron saint of *two* locations (Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain). Subsequently, De Buck argued that two separate Lives of two different saints named Abbán originally existed and were merged into one *Vita* over a certain period of time.[45]

On the other hand, the idea of multiple feast-days referring to the same saint under different guises, was considered by Pádraig Ó Riain. He attempted to show that there are various hypocoristic names of Colm Cille under numerous calendar dates of the Irish martyrologies.[46] This would suggest that different names in the martyrologies could in fact, represent numerous guises of one famous individual saint. However, the implication that all of these names (or 'hypocorisms') represent one saint (perhaps unfairly) trivialises the cultural identities of lesser-known saints whose names may be identified as hypocorisms. This is because they are being viewed solely through interests in the origin of one saint: Colm Cille. Ó Riain also suggested that Abbán is a hypocorism of 'Ailbe' (Ailbe of Emly), which led him to suggest that both saints were originally the same individual.[47] However, this approach does not take full account of the contrasting records of SS. Abbán and Ailbe. Thus, the linguistic origin of a saint's name

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[43] This term is also cited under Abbán's October feast-day (27 October) in *FÓ* and The Martyrology of Drummond/Drummond Missal (MDr). In due course, I will explain why this term is unlikely to be referring to Abbán's actual birth-date.

[44] See for example; MT, pp. 231 & 237-238; Cf. M.A. O'Brien, 1973, Old Irish Personal Names, p. 232. Alongside many other commonly attested names throughout the Irish textual record, 'Aed' and 'Colmán' are enlisted as one of the 'commonest names' in M.A. O'Brien's work. For another reference to the frequent appearance of the name 'Colmán'; see: Pádraig Ó Riain, 2002, Irish Saints' Cults and Ecclesiastical Families, p. 293, fn. 12.

[45] De Buck, De SS. Abbanis Kill-Abbaniensi et Magharnuidhiensi, pp. 270-293.

[46] Ó Riain, Cainnech alias Colum Cille, pp. 20-35.

[47] Ó Riain, Towards a Methodology in Early Irish Hagiography, pp. 152-153.

is not always equivalent to his/her cultural identity or relationship with another saint. In essence, there are two ends to the spectrum for a saint having multiple feast-days; one, these feast-days may represent two or more different saints with the same name, as De Buck proposed for Abbán, or two, as Ó Riain suggests, the one saint may carry multiple feast-days under different guises, i.e. hypocorisms of his/her name.

- A Saint's Cultural Identity(ies)

Alternatively, having two feast-days and being a patron saint of two locations could mean that two separate cults emerged from the same saint. Though De Buck's theory (The Two-Abbán theory) offers a solution for the long length of Abbán's *Vita* for example, we must also account for the fact that his theory derives largely from the idea that hagiography presents a full factual account of a saint's actual time of existence. Due to the thematic similarities and uncertain chronological nature of Irish hagiography, it has since been established that hagiography is more telling of a saint's cult or later reputation.[48] Alongside being depicted 'as an exemplar of holiness', Irish hagiography is also known for attributing a saint with numerous monastic foundations within various locations throughout Ireland.[49] As noted for instance by Niamh Wycherley, this can expose a problem for identifying and thus, understanding the significance of a saint's geographical associations.[50] The numerous geographical attributions could also result in the saint's cult being re-localised.

Localisation of a saint's cult could occur due to an ecclesiastical community claiming that a saint founded a church within their community and eventually making him/her their patron saint. This would be an overall attempt to confine the saint to the particular geographical location in which the community was based. These are also the aims of the North Laigin community of Cell Abbain in *VSA*, which ultimately results in a confrontation with the opposing South Laigin community of Mag Arnaide. Such attempts to provide one saint with an alternative locale may have resulted in the saint receiving a new identity, designated by the community's church. A likely undertaking that would also have aided with the development of the saint's re-localisation, would be the attribution of a feast-day, regardless of the church's awareness of the saint already having an existing feast-day in another ecclesiastical locale.[51]

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[48] For a historical review of hagiographical scholarship and ideologies; see: Herbert, Hagiography, pp. 79-91.

[49] Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*, p. 1.

[50] Wycherley, *The Cult of Relics*, p. 167. In making this point, Wycherley refers to hagiographical scenes which cast light on the societal value of relics, from the *Vitae* of SS. Molua, Áed mac Bricc and Abbán.

[51] Elsewhere, I have suggested that this may be an underlying scenario concerning St. Ailbe of Emly's reduplicated feast-days (12 September and 30 December); see: Ganly, Commemoration or Corruption?, pp. 180-184

In more complex cases, attempts to spread a saint's cult could result in the mis-attribution of a feast-day, which may originally have belonged to a different saint. In this regard, Pádraig Ó Riain discussed the potential roles ecclesiastical families could enact in diffusing a saint's cult and its subsequent diminishment of another cult.[52] The most relevant part of his discussion to the matter of reduplicated feast-days, is his explanation of how Ailbe of Emly's 10 September feast-day was mis-commemorated by the local community of Shancough as the feast-day of a different saint named Ailbe, patron of Shancough, in the 'barony of Tirerrill, Co. Sligo'.[53] This mis-commemoration occurred due to Ailbe of Shancough being 'forgotten in his own parish', and only being remembered by the early nineteenth century, at which point Ailbe of Shancough was incorrectly attributed 10 September feast-day.[54] Ó Riain suggests that the cult of Ailbe of Emly was connected to the region of Shancough through the development of ecclesiastical families between Emly and Shancough.[55] No doubt, this clarifies the distinction between SS. Ailbe of Emly and Ailbe of Shancough. It shows how a saint's lack of historical and textual fame (Ailbe of Shancough) could result in him/her falling partly under the guise of another saint (Ailbe of Emly) bearing the same name, but evidently more fame. In Ailbe of Shancough's case moreover, falling under this guise also trapped him into a problem that originally had nothing to with him; that being: the problem of multiple feast-days.[56]

While the Irish martyrological record implies that 10 September feast-day belongs to Ailbe of Emly, and the mis-attribution to Ailbe of Shancough derives from the community's late and somewhat, desperate attempt to commemorate Ailbe of Shancough as their patron saint, there is also the possibility that the community was not entirely mistaken for doing so. The fact that the evidence for Ailbe of Shancough provides an uncertain image of his identity may but speculatively, suggest that both Ailbe of Emly and Ailbe of Shancough were originally the one saint.[57] On the other hand, the ability of ecclesiastical families, as Ó Riain has shown, to

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[52] Ó Riain, Irish Saints' Cults and Ecclesiastical Families, pp. 291-302.
[53] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 60.
[54] Ó Riain, Irish Saints' Cults and Ecclesiastical Families, p. 292. For a read on confusion of the death-dates of both SS. Ailbe of Emly and Ailbe of Shancough in the MD; see: Ganly, Commemoration or Corruption, pp. 181-182.
[55] Ó Riain, Irish Saints' Cults and Ecclesiastical Families, p. 297 & 301-302.
[56] Moreover, this example of localisation also serves as a classic example of what Thomas Owen Clancy has termed 'the disturbing phenomenon of the "Fissile Saint", the propensity for the cult of an original individual to divide over time into many separate local and localised cults….'; see: Clancy, The Big Man, the Footsteps, and the Fissile Saint: paradigms and problems in studies of Insular saints' cults', p. 4. In saying this, Clancy subsequently referred to Pádraig Ó Riain's study of potential 'hypocoristic' names of Colm Cille as an example of 'Fissile' saints; see: Ó Riain, Cainnech alias Colum Cille, pp. 20-35.
[57] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 60-61; Ó Riain, Irish Saints' Cults and Ecclesiastical Families, p. 292. Though his suggestion presents a possible case for the uncertainty surrounding Ailbe of Shancough's cultural identity, it is not unusual for Ó Riain to identify two or more saints as one.

determine the prominence of a saint's cult and lessen another, could have had implications for potentially altering the textual record of the now lesser-known saint (Ailbe of Shancough). What follows is an example of the way in which such families could potentially have altered the feast-day recordings of both SS. Ailbe of Emly and Ailbe of Shancough:

Ecclesiastical families could have diffused a saint's cult to a place that is located near the cult of Ailbe of Emly (the saint that was of interest to the family). If, however, the cult of an additional lesser-known saint (Ailbe of Shancough), evidently bearing the same name as Ailbe of Emly, lay within this diffusion, this could result in his cult being merged with the cult of Ailbe of Emly over a certain period of time. Both of the saint's cults could eventually become identified as one cult, under the kindred name of the saint that is of interest to the ecclesiastical families; namely, Ailbe of Emly. While, an earlier source(s) could originally have recorded the full kindred names of both Ailbe's under two separate calendar dates, the kindred name of Ailbe of Shancough could later have been changed to that of Ailbe of Emly to aid with the expansion of Ailbe of Emly's cult.

- **A Saint's Textual Profile**

Though this is speculation, it attempts to suggest a potential origin for Ailbe of Shancough, and more importantly, shows how the role of localisation could ascribe an additional feast-day to a saint. Aside from the saint's life and cult, reasons for a saint having reduplicated or multiple feast-days may also lie in the actual text in which the feast-days are typically recorded; that being, the martyrologies. Consideration must also be given to the typical textual features of a martyrology, but also the common liturgical traditions that surround martyrological recordings. There are two such traditions known within an Irish but also wider Insular and Continental context; namely, *tridua* and octaves. The former is essentially a celebration of religious observance that lasts for three days. For example, if a saint's two feast-days were 1 January and 4 January, both calendar dates may simply reflect celebrations at the start and at the end of the *triduum* of the saint's death. This would mean that the saint's death-date (1 January) was commemorated for three days after the day of his/her death.[58] Thus, 4 January would represent a three-day commemoration of the saint's actual death. If a saint's two feast-days represented

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[58] An interesting example of a *triduum* concerns the martyrs of Eigg: a small Isle in the Scottish Inner Hebrides. MT records the date of their martyrdom under 17 April, but their *elevatio* or the elevation of their relics is commemorated on 20 April; see: MT, pp. 33 & 34. While this almost certainly refers to their *translatio* (the transferring and relocation of relics), it also presents an interesting example of a *triduum*.

the celebration of an octave moreover, this would mean that one of the two feast-days occurred eight days after the day of the saint's death and thus, extended 'the special commemoration of the saint to a whole week'.[59] Octaves are well-attested among Continental saints', but also in some Irish martyrological recordings.[60]

In such relatively straightforward cases, the textual or liturgical origin of reduplicated feast-days lies in the calendrical gap of the saint's two feast-days. In an Irish context moreover, the attestation of multiple feast-days falling within the same timeframe could be a mere reflection 'of the tendency of Irish festivals to fluctuate'.[61] Ó Riain's example of the four September feast-days (25 – 28 September) of St. Finbarr of Cork implies that while three of these feast-days were evidently not Finbarr's original feast-day (or did not commemorate his actual death), they are likely to be secondary feast-days of the saint which were commemorated by other churches.[62] Hence, because the main feast-day was perhaps already commemorated by the church in which Finbarr's patronage was based, surrounding churches were possibly only able to choose to commemorate the saint on closely occurring calendar-dates. The two September feast-days (10 and 12 September) of the aforementioned Ailbe of Emly could also be discerned in a similar way. Aside from the possible origin(s) which the matter of re-localisation implies for the saint's 10 September feast-day, the wider martyrological attestation of 12 September feast-day may also suggest that 10 September is the saint's secondary feast-day. Like Finbarr, the origin of Ailbe's 10 September feast-day may have emerged from conflicting matters within the church. In Ailbe's case moreover, 12 September may originally have clashed with another important church event within Emly. Thus, Ailbe's 12 September feast-day was possibly moved back two days in order to avoid a clash of two important liturgical events within the same region.[63]

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[59] Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, p. 121; Cf. p. 639 where Bartlett defines an octave as 'a subsidiary feast-day celebrated a week after the main festival'. The idea that a saint's feast-day did not always commemorate his/her death is also implied by C.H. Lawrence. While noting that the latter of the two feast-days represents the end of the octave celebration, he notes how the former can also represent 'a liturgical festival', see: Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*. p. 279.

[60] For examples of Continental saints' whose feast-days represent the celebration of an octave; see for example: Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, pp. 120-122. For examples of Irish saints; see: Ó Riain, Towards a Methodology in Early Irish Hagiography, p. 156. In the Irish martyrological record, The Martyrology of Gorman (MG) was the first martyrology to popularise the use of octaves. However, the octaves are only used for Biblical and Continental figures like St. Augustine see: MG, pp. xlvi.

[61] Ó Riain, Cainnech alias Colum Cille, p. 21, n. 18.

[62] Ó Riain, Cainnech alias Colum Cille, p. 21, n. 18.

[63] For a further discussion on the origin of Ailbe's two September feast-days, but also on the origin of his 30 December feast-day, see: Ganly, Commemoration or Corruption?, pp. 180-184.

These possible scenarios suggest that the church could alter and modify the textual records of saints' feast-days. In other cases, the church could also play a part in determining the location of a saint's place of burial. Typically, this affair is known as *translatio*, which, as mentioned earlier, entails the movement or translation of a saint's body remains or relics from one different location to another.[64] Thus, it may subsequently be perceived as a likely cause for Abbán's reduplicated feast-days. Amongst Continental saints' moreover, *translatio* is typically a likely cause for reduplicated feast-days. The idea of *translatio* being an underlying factor for reduplicated feast-days is further augmented by the attestation of two main types of feasts: 'The Feast of All Saints' and 'The Feast of the Relics'. These two main types of feasts also included the saints' whose individual feast-days could not be commemorated. The relics of such saints were commemorated by the latter type of feast.[65] The large number of attested cases for saints on the Continent further shows that the locations to which and from which saints' relics were transferred were not always of a geographical type. While there is evidence of saints' relics being translated or relocated from one church location to another, *translatio* could also unfold within the same church.[66]

Although the evidence for *translatio* amongst Irish saints' is comparatively less than that of those on the Continent, the martyrological reference to the *translatio* of the famous St. Máel Ruain of Tallaght for instance, implies that the affair was not unheard of in an Irish textual milieu. [67] In this regard, we must not forget the dispute between the communities of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain over the ownership of Abbán's relics. Such desire for his relics is what ultimately causes them to be translated.[68] The common depictions of *translatio* within Irish hagiography and their possible derivation from early hagiographical texts, such as Muirchu's Life of Patrick indicates that Irish writers were well-aware of the affair more widely. While the hagiographical writers were likely to be borrowing such scenes from one another,

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[64] Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, pp. 10-13. For further examples of saints whose relics were translated, see: Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, pp. 282-296. Cf. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, p. 282 for a glossary definition of *translatio*.

[65] For a further discussion, see: Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, pp. 117-118. Evidently *translatio* would happen due to relics being highly sought throughout the Medieval period both on the Continent, but also in Ireland.

[66] An interesting example of *translatio* taking place within the same church concerns the sixth century Gaulish Bishop Gregory of Langres in the church of St. John at Dijon, whereby the Bishop's son 'Tetricius' had decided to move the Bishop's relics to an apse, which Tetricius built behind the alter of the church. For further details, see: Thacker, The Making of a Local Saint, p. 55.

[67] MT records the feast-day of Máel Ruain of Tallaght as 7 July, but the translation of his relics (*translatio*), along with many others to Tallaght, is commemorated on 10 August; see: MT, pp. 54 & 62. For a brief discussion on Máel Ruain's two feast-days, see: Ó Riain, *Feast-Days of the Saints*, p. 77.

[68] Elsewhere, within a wider Irish and Continental context, Niamh Wycherley noted how often, the translation of relics 'authenticated their worth and holiness'; see: Wycherley, *The Cult of Relics*, p. 76.

the cause(s) for associating each individual saint with such scenes, may have differed. As mentioned earlier, the hagiographical depiction of a saint's identity hinders one from ascertaining a historical profile of his/her actual time of existence and the beginnings of their cult. However, as I have attempted to show throughout this thesis, hagiography can be 'a good topic for a comparative approach'.[69] Hagiography can, for example contain narratives that are intriguingly reminiscent of matters attested in other aspects of the saint's dossier. The double patron-location and the two feast-days of Abbán is no doubt, a case in point; but what raises further suspicion is the fact that the two areas of which Abbán is the patron saint (Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain) are involved in an affair that is typically a likely cause for reduplicated feast-days; namely, *translatio.*

Methodology for discerning Abbán's Two Feast-Days

Despite the 'non-historical' genre of the source from which Abbán's *translatio* originates, it appears nevertheless, to be a fitting answer for having two feast-days. The fact that *translatio* is well-known from both an Irish and Continental milieu supports this possibility too. However, we need not forget the other possible reasons for a saint having reduplicated feast-days. These include the original existence of two different saints with the same name and the process of localisation. These reasons demonstrate that a feast-day does not always commemorate the anniversary of a saint's death. More broadly, the number of potential underlying reasons I have outlined further shows why scholars, such as Robert Bartlett, have defined a feast-day as 'the annual commemoration of a saint, or of some important event in Christian history'.[70] Whatever that 'important event' may be, it ultimately depends on the saint(s) in question. My attempt to set out three main areas of a saint's identity from which reasons for additional feast-days typically originate, forms a foundation for taking one individual saint as a case study to the problem.

Some of these reasons including *translatio*, can be recognised from particular parts of Abbán's textual profile: most notably, the scenes pertaining to his death in *VSA*. The roles enacted by the communities of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbáin during the time of Abbán's death, could reveal two opposing cultural interests in Abbán. The two feast-days could therefore be identified as separate embodiments of both interests. As I mentioned from the outset of this

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[69] See for example: Lewis, *The Impact of the Anglo-Norman Conquest* - see: 4:17 - 4:27.
[70] Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, p. 639.

chapter however, *VSA* only mentions one of these feast-days (27 October). Nevertheless, there are martyrologies older than *VSA*, which record both feast-days. This would dissuade one from impulsively assuming that the March feast-day was a later insertion into the saint's dossier.[71] Subsequently, we could assume that the author of *VSA* was aware that Abbán had two feast-days in the martyrological record but chose only to refer to his October feast-day. The author's apparent preference towards Mag Arnaide and other surrounding locations mentioned in VSA would indicate that the October feast-day embodied the interests of Mag Arnaide. In that case, the lack of preference towards the saint's other place of patronage (Cell Abbain) resulted in his other feast-day (16 March) receiving no mention in *VSA*.

The fact that *translatio* can be one of the many 'important events' commemorated by a feast-day and is also an apparent theme in *VSA*, would suggest that this is the very affair which one of Abbán's feast-days commemorated. The author's reference to 27 October being the day of Abbán's death, would further imply that 16 March commemorated Abbán's *translatio*.[72] Essentially, this is one theory (The Double-Cult Theory) for Abbán's reduplicated feast-days, which refers to the saint's cultural identity; thereby, identifying Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain as two separate cults that emerged from the same saint. The other theory (The Two-Abbán Theory) originally begun by Victor De Buck, would interpret both cults as two different historical individual saints named Abbán. This theory brings us back to the area concerning a saint in actuality. While the period from which De Buck was writing means that some of his ideologies are outdated by today's standards of hagiographical scholarship, his main argument still remains valid.

Clues such as the long length of *VSA*, the two feast-days, the double-patron location, and the genealogical division that suspiciously coincides with this dual image of Abbán; could these underlying factors be telling of the original work of an early medieval compiler, deliberately merging historical records of two different saints into one? At what point could this potential mergence have occurred? What may have been the underlying political urges for doing so? [73]

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[71] Such martyrological sources include the eighth to ninth century MT and *FÓ*. The textual origin of these martyrologies alongside the others, will be discussed in due course in this chapter.

[72] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 33. Cf. MT, p. 231, which refers to 27 October as Abbán's 'true day'. The fact that the community of Cell Abbain enact the translation of Abbán's relics in *VSA* would further augment this claim too.

[73] From the perspective of 'The Two-Abbán Theory', the preference towards Mag Arnaide would inevitably show that the 'Abbán of Cell Abbain' saint was of less interest to the hagiographical compiler. As De Buck further suggested however, this may be because 'Abbán of Cell Abbain' was a comparatively lesser-known saint. This would mean that the greater focus on Mag Arnaide was due to the attestation of more evidence for 'Abbán of Mag Arnaide'. In that regard, the greater focus on Mag Arnaide was actually due to the compiler having more evidence

While this thesis has undoubtedly uncovered two distinguished strands from Abbán's dossier, it is, admittedly, difficult to decide whether these strands embody two cults or two historical figures. Alternatively, the common attestation of Irish hagiographical depictions of *translatio*, may well suffice to suggest that Abbán's was merely invented in an attempt to make two separate saints' Lives appear as one. Ultimately, this would contradict the idea of the affair commemorating either of Abbán's feast-days, but also the implication of *translatio* bearing a historical connection with the saint. Both the 'Two-Abbán' and 'Double-Cult' theories evidently comprise a different combination of historical and literary implications for the two main strands of Abbán's dossier. As for Abbán's two feast-days, their textual record still remains to be fully examined. In an attempt to discern the extent to which the feast-days commemorate the deaths of two different saints named Abbán or two opposing cults, the remaining part of this chapter will provide a comparative consideration of the extant martyrological records of his feast-days.

The Martyrologies and St. Abbán's Feast-Days

Like most Irish feast-days, both of Abbán's are now known because of their survival into a process of textual transmission, which resulted in the production of several important Irish martyrologies. Most of these martyrologies have been dated to different periods between the late eighth and seventeenth centuries, and are intertextually related.[74] The following contents table illustrates the intertextual relationship of the Irish martyrological texts and sources.[75]

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for Abbán of Mag Arnaide over Abbán of Cell Abbain as opposed to having personal preference for one saint over the other.

[74] Key secondary sources for understanding the Irish martyrological origins and their textual history include: Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints* and Hennig, *Medieval Ireland, Saints and Martyrologies*. Cf. Follett, *Céli Dé in Ireland*, pp. 128-132 & 117-121 for an overview on the origins and other scholarly discussions of the two oldest Irish martyrologies: MT and *FÓ*.

[75] Full arrows represent the sources that are primary derivatives of the source(s) to which the arrow is pointing. For example, the full arrow connecting MG to MT means that MG derives mainly from the earlier MT. Cf. Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, pp. 155-158. As I will later explain, some of the primary derivatives may also bear some textual relations with different textual genres. Broken arrows represent the sources deriving partly from the source(s) to which the arrow is pointing. For example, while MG derives mainly from MT, it also draws some of its material from *FÓ*. Cf. Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, pp. 158-159.

Table 1

Century	The Irish Martyrological Texts and Sources			
8th-9th	**MT**	*FÓ*		
12th	**MG**	**MDr**	**MTr**	**MC**
15th	*Grev. MU*			
17th	**MD**	**MK**		

In essence, The Martyrology of Tallaght (MT) and (*Félire Óengusso*) (*FÓ*) are the main sources for most of these later martyrologies. However, MT and *FÓ* are also closely related. *FÓ* is a vernacular metrical martyrology, believed to have been written by Óengus Mac Óengobann at the Church of Tallaght, in Dublin.[76] As the aforementioned contents table indicates, *FÓ* derived most of its material from MT.[77] However, because MT is a prose martyrological text, this means that the metrical style of *FÓ* evidently does not derive from MT. Potentially, the metrical style is the original work of its author or it derived from local Irish material on local saints', which *FÓ* author had access to at the time.[78] While *FÓ* is likely to originate solely from within an Irish textual milieu, the same cannot be said for its primary derivative (MT). Since MT is the oldest and first Irish martyrology, sources from which MT extracted most of its material had to derive from overseas. The main source of which MT is a 'breviate version' is *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* (The Hieronymian Martyrology), a famous sixth century continental martyrology whose author derived his material from lists mainly of 'Roman and North African calendars as well as from a middle-eastern martyrological

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[76] Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, pp. xxiii & 328. Cf. Follett, *Céli Dé in Ireland*, p. 119, which clarifies that the evidence for this potential author derives from the later (twelfth century) *Félire Óengusso* Commentary (*FÓComm*), which names the author as Óengus mac Óengobann. The textual history of *FÓComm.* will be outlined in due course in this chapter.

[77] See: Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, p. xxiii.

[78] This idea derives from the fact that John Hennig and Pádraig Ó Riain suggest that part of MT derives its material from lists of Irish saints which no longer survive. This would also imply that the *FÓ* author also had access to the same lists, given the relatively close timeframe between the compositional dates of MT and *FÓ*.

source'.[79] In an attempt to produce the first Irish martyrology, MT was also 'augmented with the names of Irish saints'.[80]

John Hennig and Pádraig Ó Riain have noted that these names were attested in the form of 'lists'.[81] Such evidence now survives in the form of Irish martyrologies, most of which are centuries later than MT and *FÓ*.[82] While an examination of other Insular references from MT has suggested that the compiler was working from an 'Ionan copy of the Hieronymian Martyrology', no precise origin of the 'lists' which contained the names of Irish saints' is known.[83] Such lists were possibly local in origin and thus, contained local material on local saints' feast-days. Such material was potentially gathered together and brought to the church of Tallaght to assist with the compilation of the first Irish martyrology (MT). A more evident picture of these specific lists and the manner in which they were potentially altered into the Irish martyrological record would be difficult to uncover, as MT is the earliest extant evidence for Irish feast-days. In cases where no explanation is given for the origin of reduplicated feasts-days in MT, it would be tempting to speculate that the reason(s) could have been accessed in these now inaccessible lists of Irish saints' names.[84]

Nevertheless, it would be pointless to continue lingering on about what cannot be proven. It is difficult to prove the type of milieu in which saints' feast-days were recorded before martyrological recording became active in Ireland. One problem with the now surviving

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[79] Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, pp. xx & 1; Follett, *Céli Dé in Ireland*, p. 128. It should be noted however that Ó Riain probably allows too little time for transmission in his reconstruction of the pathway taken by what ultimately became MT.

[80] Follett, *Céli Dé in Ireland*, p. 128, n. 156. Cf. pp. 131-132 for Follett's explanatory review of Pádraig Ó Riain's and David Dumville's conflicting viewpoints in relation to the precise dating of the MT. Ó Riain dates MT to the early ninth century, whilst Dumville argues for a year within the late eighth century; see: Ó Riain, *Anglo-Saxon Ireland: The Evidence of the Martyrology of Tallaght*, pp. 4-13 & 21; Ó Riain, The Martyrology of Óengus: the transmission of the text, pp. 222-3; Ó Riain, The Tallaght Martyrologies, redated, pp. 21-22, 25 & 36-38; Dumville, Félire Óengusso: problems of dating a monument of Old Irish, pp. 21, 22, 37-46 & 46-47. Cf. Eyjolfsdottir, *The Bóroma*, p. 24, fn. 58, for a reference to Ó Riain's and Dumville's work on the textual history of *FÓ* and MT. For further insight into the metrical element of *FÓ*; see: Breatnach, Poets and Poetry, pp. 65-77.

[81] Hennig, *Medieval Ireland*, Ch. 1, p. 126; Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, p. xxiii.

[82] The more detailed martyrological accounts such as glosses and commentary tend to be later than most of the extant martyrological texts.

[83] See: Ó Riain, *Anglo-Saxon Ireland*, pp. 4-13 & 21. Though David Dumville disagrees with Ó Riain's approach, Dumville does nevertheless, agree that MT is based on an Ionan version of the Hieronymian Martyrology; for further details, see: Dumville, *Félire Óengusso*, pp. 37-46.

[84] However, the fact that they are supposedly lists, suggests that not a whole lot of detail could have been extracted from them. In relation to the problem of reduplicated feast-days however, the lists could have referred to two different individual saints with the same name, which MT compiler misidentified as the same figure. Alternatively, the lists may have stated the particular event that one of the reduplicated feast-days commemorated, in which case, MT compiler did not make the same clarification.

martyrologies is that the older sources tend to provide lesser detail than the later sources. This circumstance can be a problem for attempting to discern what origin(s) underlie a saint's reduplicated feast-days, as the evidence gradually becomes later than the point in time when a saint was attributed reduplicated feast-days.[85] On the other hand, it can be taken as an opportunity to explore the martyrological patterns of reduplicated feast-days and the other textual genres from which the later martyrological detail stems. For Abbán, the very fact that the martyrological record dates as far back as the eighth to ninth century reveals an early origin for his cult. It makes an important contribution to the saint's dossier, as well as his underlying dual image.

The Irish martyrological texts and sources to receive first examination in this chapter will be the oldest martyrologies, which are MT and *FÓ*. The next martyrologies to be considered will be ones which derive most of their material from these martyrologies. For example, after examining *FÓ*, The Martyrology of Drummond/ Drummond Missal (MDr), The Martyrology of Turin (MTr) and The Martyrology of Cashel (MC) will be next in line for examination because these twelfth century martyrologies are primary derivatives of *FÓ*. Therefore, the Irish martyrologies will be examined in chronological order, but also in accordance with the (primary) derivative(s) of the oldest Irish martyrologies.[86] Firstly, we will consider the manner in which Abbán's reduplicated feast-days are recorded in MT and its later primary derivatives, which are The Martyrology of Gorman (MG) and (The Martyrology of Donegal (MD):[87]

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[85] Of course, the manner in which a saint received reduplicated feast-days was unlikely to have been a straightforward matter. Likely events and causes for reduplicated feast-days such as octaves and *translatio* show that the saint received an additional feast-day over a certain period of time.

[86] See Table 1 from this chapter, for identifying the primary derivatives of each martyrological text and source. For example, the primary derivatives of *FÓ* are MDr. (The Martyrology of Drummond/Drummond Missal), MTr (The Martyrology of Turin) and MC (The Martyrology of Cashel). Thus, they will be examined separately from the sources which mainly derive from MT. While the later martyrologies tend to be primary derivatives of either MT or *FÓ*, we must also remember that MT and *FÓ* are still intertextually related. As illustrated in Table 1, *FÓ* is a primary derivative of MT.

[87] Two extant manuscript versions of MT are known, one of which is the Franciscan MS A 3, now based in University College Dublin. This is a detached folio from the famous twelfth century Book of Leinster. The other manuscript is preserved in the Royal Library of Belgium in Brussels, catalogued as MS 5100-5104, dating to 1630. Best and Lawler's edition of MT is based on both manuscript versions and this is the edition which I will use when referring MT. For MT references to Abbán's March and October feast-days, see: MT, pp. 24 & 84.

The text of MG survives in the seventeenth century MS 5100-5104 (507) in the Royal Library of Belgium in Brussels. The glosses of MG are also attested in a fifteenth century manuscript. Further details on this manuscript will be outlined at a later point in this chapter. The Brussels manuscript version of MG was edited and translated by Whitley Stokes. For MG references to Abbán's March and October feast-days, see: MG, pp. 56-57 & 204-205. MD survives in three manuscripts; two of which are preserved in the aforementioned Royal Library of Belgium: namely, the seventeenth century MS 4639 (505), which is the shorter recension and the longer recension which is MS 5095-5096 (506), dating to 1630. The third manuscript is the seventeenth century MS G 27, located in the National Library of Ireland, in Dublin. William Reeves and James Henthon Todd edited (and John O'Donovan

Table 1.1

MT – 16 March	MT-27 October
Abbani m.h. Chormaic (Abbán of the sons of Cormac)	*Abbain m.h. Chormaic* (of Abbán of the sons of Cormac)
MG – 16 March	**MG – 27 October**
Abbán	*Abban*
MD – 16 March	**MD – 27 October**
Abbán, mac Ua Corbmaic, ó Mhuigh Arnaidhe in Uibh Cennsealaigh a Laighnidh acus o Cill Abbain in Uibh Muireadhaigh allaignib, do sliocht Labradha Luirc, mic Ugaine móir dó. Miolla deirbhsiúr deaspucc Iobhair a mháthair, amail adeir a betha féin in ched cap. [Machaire Arnaidhe i nOirghiallaibh in diaecesi Ardmacha i ccondae Muineachain]. (Abbán, Mac Ua Corbmaic, of Magh-Arnaidhe in Ui-Ceinnsealaigh, in Leinster; and of Cill-Abbain in Ui-Muireadhaigh in Leinster. He was of the race of Labhraidh Lorc, son of Ugainè Mór. Miolla, sister to Bishop Iobhar, was his mother, as his own life states in the first chapter. [There is a Machaire-Arnaidhe in Oirghialla, in the diocese of Ardmacha, in the county of Muineachan.])	n/a

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later translated) the longer recension (5095-5096 manuscript) version of MD, which was published in 1864. For MD reference to Abbán's March feast-day, see: MD, pp. 76-79.

At first glance, the comparatively greater detail from MD serves as an instant reminder of later martyrologies typically containing more detail than the earlier sources. MG's reference to Abbán under both calendar dates is undoubtedly the briefest. While MT is the main source from which MG drew most of its material, MG's reference to Abbán under both calendar dates was possibly drawn from *FÓ*; particularly since the saint's patronymic is not recorded in either *FÓ* or MG.[88] The reference to Abbán's patronymic in the oldest martyrology (MT) confirms the saint's identity, and further clarifies that the same individual name was recorded under both calendar dates. To make any potential distinction between the reference to Abbán under both calendar dates from MT, it is the saint's patronymic (m.h. Chormaic) that merits consideration.

This is because there are other orthographical versions of the name 'Abbán' that frequently appear throughout MT. As an Irish word, 'Abán' or 'Abbán' typically translates into 'little abbot'.[89] In non-vernacular source material like MT however, Latin spellings of the words that are related to the meaning 'abbot' can often look similar to the spelling of the saint's name.[90] Since MT is a Hiberno-Latin source which derives most of its material from a source that is Continental in origin (The Hieronymian Martyrology), this means that names of individuals from the Continent are thus, attested in MT; some of which are similar to the name 'Abbán'. MT comprises an Irish calendar in which the names of Irish individuals are recorded and also of a Roman Calendar, which contains the names of individuals from other Insular regions, the Continent and also those who are known from the Bible. An example of the Latin genitive case of Abbán's name (Abbani) is recorded under 2 January in the Roman Calendar.[91] Though it could be mistaken for a reference to 'Abbán Moccu Corbmaic', its derivation from the Roman Calendar would suggest that 'Abbani' represented a non-Irish individual with the same name. However, the origin of 'Abbani' under 2 January was explained by Best and Lawlor to be 'an error for *abbatis*' (meaning abbot).[92] The noun, *abbatis*, was originally meant to be applied to the name 'macari', which now appears after the supposedly corrupt spelling 'Abbani'.[93]

[88] In addition, *FÓComm.* recording of Abbán's March feast-day is almost identical to The Glosses of The Martyrology of Gorman (MGgls) recordings of both feast-days. *FÓComm.* and MGls will be discussed separately from the martyrological texts as their textual origin is later than the martyrological texts (*FÓ* and MG).

[89] See: pp. 10-11 of this thesis

[90] For a list of some examples see: Stelten, *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin*, pp. 1 & 293. Moreover, the title of *VSA(S)* spells the saint's name as 'Alban' which is identical to the name of the third century 'protomartyr of Britain' Alban; See: Farmer, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, pp. 9-10 for a brief biographical review of Alban.

[91] MT, p. 4.

[92] MT, p. 132.

[93] MT, pp. 4 & 132. Thus, MT compiler was simply identifying the 'macari' individual as an abbot.

Best and Lawlor's suggestion would imply that 'Abbani' is a bogus or ghost-like figure created by an error in textual transmission. Equally so may this suggestion suffice for the attestation of what appears to be the Irish genitive case of Abbán's name (Abbain) under 24 August calendar date in MT. Whether or not 'Abbain' represents a bogus figure as does the name 'Abbani', (recorded under 2 January calendar date in MT), or an actual individual is difficult to ascertain. The MG compiler (Maél Muire Ua Gormáin) appears to have identified the name as the latter, although MG provides no poetical description of this supposed individual, as it does for most of the names recorded throughout the martyrology:[94]

Table 1.2

MT- 24 August	MG- 24 August
Abbain (of Abbán)	*Abban* (Abban)

Hence, to identify 'Abbain' as an individual, some possible origins may be outlined. Firstly, the fact that this reference derives from the Irish Calendar of MT may lessen the implication of 'Abbain' being an individual from overseas. On the other hand, the name's survival into martyrologies (MT and MG) ultimately deriving from a source of Continental origin (The Hieronymian Martyrology) could suggest otherwise. If the latter possibility is correct, then recording the name into the Irish Calendar of MT would have been a scribal error originating from the time in which MT was produced, which was subsequently copied into MG. Moreover, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the MT compiler was referring to Abbán Moccu Corbmaic under 24 August, as no details concerning the genealogy of 'Abbain' are attested.

However, given its orthographical similarity to the Latin word for 'abbot' (Abbatis), we may also be facing a situation similar to what Best and Lawlor suggested for the 'Abbani' name recorded under 2 January in MT. 'Abbain' is the last name recorded under 24 August in the Irish Calendar of MT; and its occurrence after the name 'Segini' could originally have been an occupational title meaning 'Of the Abbot Segini'.[95] Thus, the MT compiler may have had a tendency to create ghost-like figures from the Latin word for 'abbot'. According to Ó Riain there are two individuals to whom vernacular versions of the name 'Segini' are connected: St.

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[94] For a discussion on Maél Muire's role as the MG compiler, see: Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, p. 147. Best and Lawlor do not however, offer any discussion on the origin of the word/name 'Abbain' under 24 August calendar date in MT and neither do any of MGgls (to be discussed later in the chapter) attempt to clarify the origin of 'Abbain'. Moreover, MG compiler most likely borrowed this reference from MT as no reference to Abbán is attested under 24 August calendar date in *FÓ*. For MT reference to Abbán's supposed August feast-day; see: MT, p. 65. For MG, see: MG, pp. 162-163.

[95] MT, p. 65.

Séighín of Iona and St. Fáilbhe of Rathvilly.[96] Due to MT's derivation from a source that was influenced by Ionan compilers (Hieronymian Martyrology), St. Séighín's patronage of Iona and (according to the Irish genealogies) his assumption of 'the abbacy of Iona' could suggest that he is the individual represented by the name 'Segini' in MT. This would clarify that the origin of 'Abbain' is a corrupted version of *abbatis*.[97]

Nevertheless, like 'Abbain', no genealogical or patron details accompanies the name 'Segini' in MT. Elsewhere the Irish martyrological record and the Annals of Ulster record Séighín of Iona's feast-day as 12 August.[98] This rules out the possibility of 'Segini' representing St. Séighín of Iona under 24 August calendar date in MT. Ó Riain's assumption of St. Fáilbhe of Rathvilly being cited under 24 August on the other hand may bear more probability. Fáilbe, alongside another saint named 'Séighín Gabhail' both belonged to the Uí Cennselaig dynasty according to the Irish genealogical record.[99] The fact that 'Faelani' (a possible Hiberno-Latin variant of 'Fáilbe') occurs directly before 'Segini' in MT, could suggest that 'Faelani' and 'Segini' are Hiberno-Latin spellings of the names of these two Uí Cennselaig individuals.[100] Since neither individual saint was an abbot, this would remove the implication of 'Abbain' being a corrupted version of *abbatis*, meaning 'Abbain' under 24 August may represent a historical individual. The extent to which 'Abbain' represents Abbán Moccu Corbmaic however, is difficult to determine, because Abbán has no other connection with that date elsewhere in his dossier.

What inevitably helps to identify Abbán is his patronymic. This is why for instance, the reference to the saint's patronymic under 16 March and 27 October calendar dates in MT confirms that both dates are his feast-days, which ultimately confirms that the saint has two feast-days. The necessity to rely upon the saint's patronymic, also emerged in relation to his possible connection with Knapdale.[101] In this regard, no evidence for the name Abbán is attested, indicating that the 'Mac Cormaig' saint could represent any individual with this patronymic. In that regard Doughlas Mac Lean suggested the Offaly saint 'Báetán Moccu Chormaic' may also be a potential candidate.[102] Ultimately, the identity of the so-called Mac Cormaig of Keills and Éilean Mór individual cannot be confirmed. It may however, feed into

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[96] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 301-302 & 562.
[97] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 562, fn. 1, under the name 'Séighín of Iona'.
[98] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, p. 562, fn. 5, under the name 'Séighín of Iona'.
[99] Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, pp. 301-302, n. 1.
[100] MG, p. 65.
[101] See: pp. 213-217 of this thesis.
[102] Mac Lean, Knapdale Dedications, p. 54.

'The Two-Abbán Theory'. While this theory is mainly concerned with Abbán's connection with Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain, the uncertainty surrounding the 'Mac Cormaig of Keills and Éilean Mór' identity could reveal another milieu through which the Mac Cormaig saint (potentially Abbán) was confused with various saints of the 'Mac Cormaig' designation.

If Abbán's association with Knapdale was a reason for now having reduplicated feast-days, their preservation in the Irish martyrological record means they embody a complex historical origin.[103] In some cases, however, one feast-day may be recorded more often than the other.[104] As Table 1.1 shows, MD only records Abbán's March feast-day, despite the evidence of two feast-days from MT and MG. The MD compiler (Mícheál Ó Cléirigh) was attempting to produce a contemporary martyrology. Ó Cléirigh produced a calendar of Irish saints' feast-days and for most of these saints, he added supplementary material from other textual genres, such as hagiography and genealogies. Thus, MD is a completist effort to bring in all martyrologies, but also various other genres.[105] Indeed the origin of most of the content from the entry to Abbán's March feast-day is evidently taken from contemporary or earlier source material on the saint. For example, as Ó Cléirigh states himself, his reference to Abbán's mother 'Mella' and his maternal uncle 'Bishop Íbar' is material which derives from Abbán's Life.[106] The reference to 'Labradha Luirc, mic Ugaine móir' moreover, seems have derived from the contemporary *GRSH*, which records 'Labradha Loingsigh m Oilella áine m Laoighaire luirc m Ugaine móir'.[107]

Due to the relatively late period (early seventeenth century) from which MD originates and the large number of earlier sources from which the martyrology borrowed its material, MD can be regarded as a secondary martyrology. Thus, the absence of 27 October is unlikely to be a reflection of the feast-day bearing less importance than 16 March. More likely, it reflects an oversight on behalf of MD compiler. Considering Ó Cléirigh's goal however, he was attempting to produce a contemporary martyrology, but also to include brief biographical detail

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[103] At a later point in the present chapter, we will explore a martyrological source that is English in origin, where the compiler appears to identify 'Mac Cormaig' as Abbán.

[104] A prime example is St. Lommán of Trim (17 February and 11 October). While both his feast-days are recorded in MT, only 11 October is recorded in the later Irish martyrologies. For a discussion on this matter; see: Ganly, Commemoration or Corruption? pp. 175-180. Cf. Plumb, Over the Storm-swelled Sea, pp. 112-120.

[105] For further details on MD's derivatives, see: MD, pp. xiii-xx.

[106] MD, pp. 76-79. For the hagiographical evidence; see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 4; *VSH(S)*, pp. 256-257; *BnÉ*, Vol. 1, p. 3, Vol. 2, p. 3. It is more likely that Ó Cléirigh borrowed this detail on Abbán's family from *BA*, as Ó Cléirigh had also compiled a manuscript copy (MS 2324-2340) of *BnÉ* around the same time, see: pp. 12-15 of this thesis.

[107] *GRSH*, p. 85. Furthermore, the fact that 16 March is cited under this genealogical entry would have suggested to Ó Cléirigh that this was Abbán's feast-day, but subsequently did not consider the possibility of the saint having an additional feast-day (27 October) in earlier martyrological records.

on these saints; a feature which is no doubt, lacking in MT and MG.[108] For example, referring to a place in Co. Monaghan that is orthographically akin to Mag Arnaide under the March feast-day, shows that Ó Cléirigh was less concerned about the individual identities of each saint; rather, his goal was to find relevant places in the martyrology to insert additional knowledge of his own.[109] In an attempt to achieve this goal, Ó Cléirigh can be forgiven for overlooking the additional feast-day of a saint, whose cult extended nowhere near Donegal.[110] That is not to say, nevertheless, that Ó Cléirigh was unaware of saints having reduplicated or multiple feast-days. Elsewhere, he cites Ailbe of Emly's three feast-days: 10 September, 12 September and 30 December.[111] Of course, the cult of Ailbe would have been relatively famous on a national scale, meaning there would have been a higher chance of Ó Cléirigh knowing the feast-days of Ailbe than of a saint (Abbán) whose cult was less famous.[112]

This scenario supports the probability of the absence of Abbán's October feast-day being due to the oversight of a compiler who was preoccupied with the task of producing a contemporary martyrology.[113] Hence, it would be invalid to suggest that 27 October was not Abbán's 'true' feast-day based solely on its absence from MD.[114] The implication that the absence one of two feast-days is a textual matter is also recognisable from entries to Abbán's feast-days in *FÓ* and its later primary derivatives, MDr, MTr and MC:[115]

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[108] MD is also important because it contains references to some early sources 'which are no longer extant'; See: Elva Johnston, 2004, (electronic pages) p. 2 of pp. 1-19, *Munster, saints of (act. c. 450-c.700)- file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/Munster_saints_of_act._c.450-c.700%20(1).pdf* (Last Accessed 26th September 2020).

[109] MD, pp. 78-79.

[110] Cf. Follett, *Céli Dé in Ireland*, p. 113, which presents a map that pinpoints the various places to which Míchéal Ó Cléirigh visited from 1627-1629. It was perhaps in these places where Ó Cléirigh gathered detail on local saints from different texts. No place in Wexford (where Mag Arnaide lies) features on this map. This would allude to the possibility of Ó Cléirigh knowing little about Abbán.

[111] MD, pp. 244-247 & 350-351.

[112] Since Ó Cléirigh was also producing a manuscript copy of *BnÉ*, it is likely he was aware of Abbán via his vernacular Life (*BA*). However, because there is no reference to any of Abbán's feast-days in *BA*, it would have been difficult for Ó Cléirigh to discover Abbán had two feast-days, as his task was to produce contemporary copies of major sources, as opposed to researching the individual cults of particular saints'.

[113] On the other hand, it is possible that there is intentional prominence accorded to Abbán's March feast-day in MD, which could be a bye-product of his connection with Íbar, a saint best known for his pre-Patrician identity. This is because there is a constellation of Patrick-related saints clustered in the days around 17 March. I am grateful to the examiner for pointing out this suggestion to me.

[114] 'true' in this sense means, the day of the saint's actual death.

[115] *FÓ* and *FÓComm.* (the latter source will be discussed in due course) are preserved in ten different manuscripts: Two are now preserved in The Royal Irish Academy, Dublin:
- The early fifteenth century *Leabhar Breac* MS 23 P 16 (Hodges and Smith 224, 1230)
- The fifteenth century MS 23 P 3 (1242)
Another three of these ten manuscripts are preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford:
- The fifteenth century Laud Miscellany 610 manuscript, part of the Book of the White Earl.
- The sixteenth century Rawlinson B512, which provides an incomplete copy of *FÓ*.
- The fourteenth to fifteenth century Rawlinson B505 or *Codex Insulensis* (which is also one of the three main

Table 1.3

FÓ – 16 March	MDr – 16 March	MTr – 16 March	MC - 16 March
Abbán doss óir ainglech (Abbán, angelic bush of gold)	*Et apud Hiberniam, sancti confessors Abbán et leprosus Finan ad astra hoc die perrexxerunt* (And in Ireland, the holy confessors Abbán and Fínán went to the stars on this day)	*Abbain* (of Abbán)	n/a
FÓ - 27 October	**MDr - 27 October**	**MTr - 27 October**	**MC - 27 October**
Abbán abb cain clíarach	*Et in Hibernia, natale sanctorum confessorum Ercci,*	*Abbain* (of Abbán)	*[S. Abbanum] filium Hua Corbmaic de Kill-Abbain, in Hu*

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manuscript collections of *VSH*).

Another manuscript is preserved in the Royal Library of Belgium in Brussels:

- The early seventeenth century MS 5100-5104 (507).

Another manuscript is preserved in the British Library in London:

- The mid-late sixteenth century Egerton MS 88.

The last three manuscripts are preserved in three different academic institutions in Dublin:

-The fifteenth century Franciscan MS A 7, in University College, Dublin.

- The sixteenth century MS 1337, 19, which also contains the commentary of *FÓ* (*FÓComm.*), in Trinity College Dublin.

- The sixteenth century MS G 10, 2 in The National Library of Ireland. This is the only manuscript witness from which Stokes did not edited and translate *FÓ* and *FÓComm.*

For further details on these manuscripts; see: Ó Riain, *Feast-days of the Saints*, pp. 174-175. For a read of the *FÓ* records of Abbán's two feast-days; see: *FÓ*, pp. 82 & 219.

MDr survives in MS 627 in Pierpont Morgan Library, in New York. The reference to *natale* (birth) from 27 October need not be taken as a reference to Abbán's actual birth. This was merely an alternative way of referring to a saint's death-date. This is also demonstrated by the fact that 27 October is the only feast-day of St. Odrán, (see Table 1.3). Moreover, the fact that a similar type of phrasing is attested for this date under *FÓComm.* (to be discussed later in this chapter) could suggest that MDr compiler was borrowing his material from *FÓ* and *FÓComm*.

MTr: The name of this martyology was given by Ó Riain (see: Ó Riain, *Four Irish Martyrologies*, p. 121). The martyrology survives in MS D IV 18 in the National Library of Turin.

MC: The manuscript evidence for this martyrology is largely scarce, meaning that editions of the martyrology now depend on earlier printed works, such as Colgan, *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae*. Cf. Ó Riain, *Four Irish Martyrologies*, p. 162.

MDr., MC and MTr were edited by Ó Riain; see: Ó Riain, *Four Irish Martyrologies*. For a view of the records of Abbán's feast-days from these three martyrologies; see: pp. 47, 103, 140, 161 & 182.

(Abbán, an abbot fair and 'train-having')[116]	*Abban, Odran et Colmain* (And in Ireland, the birth of the holy confessors Ercci, Abbán, Ódran and Colman.)		*Murredhaigh [appelet].* (Saint Abbán of the sons of Cormac of Killabban, in Uí Muiredhaig [appelet].)

The absence of Abbán's March feast-day from MC is most likely due to the now fragmentary state of the martyrology's manuscript evidence.[117] However, the attestation of the March feast-day in *FÓ*, MDr and MTr subsequently means its original existence in MC was possible. As for 27 October, MC is the first Irish martyrological *text* which records Abbán's patronage, which demonstrates that this detail only dates as far back as the twelfth century in the Irish martyrological record. Another indication of this origin can be recognised from what appears to be MC's Hiberno-Latin translation of the *Félire Óengusso Commentary*'s (*FÓComm.*) recording of Abbán's October feast-day:[118]

Table 1.4

FÓComm. - 27 October	MC - 27 October
Aban mac ua Cormaic .i. o Cill Abain i n-Uib Muiredaig…. (Abbán, great-grandson of Cormac, i.e. from Cell Abbáin in Húi Muiredaig….)	*[S. Abbanum] filium Hua Corbmaic de Kill-Abbain, in Hu Murredhaigh [appelet].* (Saint Abbán of the sons of Cormac of Killabban, in Uí Muiredhaig [appelet].)

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[116] While Stokes translates *clíarach* as 'train-having', this translation may not provide the most logical or clearest meaning of the *clíarach*. Perhaps something along the lines of "frequented by many bands of clerics" would read better; see: eDIL. Downloadable at www.dil.ie/9480 (Last Accessed 8th January 2021).

[117] Ó Riain, *Four Irish Martyrologies*, p. 162.

[118] For *FÓComm.* reference; see: *FÓ*, pp. 228-229. For an important linguistic study on *FÓComm.*, see: Stam, *A Typology of Code-Switching*. For MC reference; see: Ó Riain, *Four Irish Martyrologies*, p. 182. Mag Arnaide is also recorded under this calendar date in *FÓComm.* However, I do not cite *FÓComm.*'s reference to Mag Arnaide, because it is not attested under this calendar date in MC, according to Ó Riain's edition. Cf. Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, pp. 216-220 for a review of the textual history of MC. The comparison of both entries in Table 1.4 supports Ó Riain's theory of MC deriving its material from *FÓComm.*; see: Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, p. 220.

Once again, if Abbán's March feast-day originally existed in MC, the possibility of its derivation from *FÓComm.* is promoted by the comparison between *FÓComm.* and MC's entries to Abbán's October feast-day. The derivatives (primary and non-primary) of *FÓComm.* are numerous and undoubtedly differ to the textual origin of *FÓ* text. While the primary derivatives of *FÓComm.* are, according to Ó Riain, the Hieronymian Martyrology, the Martyrology of Ado, the Martyrology of Usuard and MT, *FÓComm.*'s 'dependence on MG' is also identifiable from corresponding material with MG and The Glosses of The Martyrology of Gorman (MGgls).[119] Similarities between *FÓComm.* and MGgls entries to Abbán's two feast-days are also an example of this 'dependence':[120]

Table 2

Supplementary Martyrological Material			
FÓComm.		**MGgls**	
16 March	**27 October**	**16 March**	**27 October**
Abbán macc hui Chormaicc o Maig Arnaide in Huib Censelaig 7 o Chill Abbán in Huib Muridaig (Abbán maccu Cormaic, from Mag Arnaide in Húi Cennselaig and from Cell Abbáin in Húi Muiredaig)	*Aban mac ua Cormaic .i. o Cill Abain i n-Uib Muiredaig 7 o Muig Ernaidi i n-Uib Ceinnselaig .i. i n-Uib Buide, 7 mac húi Cormaic e fein, 7 feil a geine hic. Aban mac Laignig meic Cainnig meic Imchada meic Cormaic meic Concorp.*	*mac úa Corbmaic i Maigh Arnaidhe i n-Uibh Censelaigh 7 i cCill Abbain i n-Úibh Muiredhaigh* (great-grandson of Cormac, in Mag Arnaide in Húi Cennselaig and in Cell Abbáin in Húi Muiredaig)	*Abbán mac úi Corbmaic i Maigh Arnaidhe in Uibh Ceinnselaigh 7 i cCill Abbain in Úibh Muiredhaigh* (Abbán great-grandson of Cormac, in Mag Arnaide in Húi Cennselaig and in Cell Abbáin in Húi Muredaig).

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[119] See: Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, pp. 183-184.
[120] For *FÓComm.* entries, see: *FÓ*, pp. 98-99 & 228-229. For MGgls, see: MG, pp. 56-57 & 204-205. In relation to MGgls, Whitley Stokes said that the glossator's mistranslation of certain Irish words indicates 'that he wrote a considerable time after the text was composed' (MG, p. L). However, the survival of MGgls into the fifteenth century UCD-OFM A7 Manuscript (compiled by Ruaidhrí Ó Luinín), shows that the glosses date to a period no later than this century. The only MGgls which are later than this period (seventeenth century) are the marginal glosses from the Brussels manuscript in which the martyrological text (MG) survives. The interlineal MGgls at least date to the same period as this UCD-OFM A7 Manuscript or perhaps slightly earlier.

| | *Sect mbliadna delbglana déc i fuilled airme tri cét saegal Abain delbda duinn airet ro bói i coluinn.* *Abban in Huib Muredaig, hui Chormaicc hi Maig Arnaide in Huib Censelaig 7 hi Cill Abban in Huib Muredaig.* (Abbán, great-grandson of Cormac, i.e. from Cell Abbáin in Húi Muiredaig and from Mag Ernaidi in Húi Cennselaig i.e. in Húi Buidi; and a great-grandson of Cormac is he himself; and this is the feast of his nativity. Abbán son of Laignech, son of Cainnech, son of Imchad, son of Cormac, son of Cúcorp. | | |

	Seventeen pure-shaped years, in addition to the number three-hundred, the age of Abbán, shapely lord, while he was in the body).		

However, the entirety of *FÓComm.* entry to Abbán's March feast-day does not derive solely from MGgls. The poetical depiction of Abbán's life-span from *FÓcomm.* derives from the *Recensio Maior* tract of saints' genealogies in *CGSH*:[121]

Table 2.1

Recensio Maior	*FÓComm.*
287.4- *Secht m̃bliadna delb[gla]ma déc, i fulliud armi tri chét. [saegul Abb]ain delbda duind, airet robui i coluind.*	*Sect mbliadna delbglana déc i fuilled airme tri cét Seagal Abain delbda duinn airet ro bói i coluinn*

The probability of MGgls entries to Abbán's two feast-days being borrowed from genealogical material is also supported by an overall contextual similarity between MG and the Book of Leinster genealogies.[122] Thus, the Book of Leinster origins of the following *Recensio Maior* (from *CGSH*) entry to Abbán may suggest the *Recensio Maior* tract was used as a derivative for MGgls entries to Abbán's two feast-days:[123]

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[121] *CGSH*, p. 47. This comparison indicates that *FÓComm.* derived some of its material from the Irish genealogical record too; See. Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, pp. 194-195.

[122] See: Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, pp. 162-164.

[123] For the *Recensio Maior* 287.1 entry, see: *CGSH*, p. 47. For MGgls corresponding entries to Abbán's March and October feast-days; see: MG, pp. 56-57 & 204-205.

Table 2.2

Recensio Maior	**MGgls.**
287.1- *Abban Maige Arnaidhe ocus Cilli Abbain m. Laignig m. Cainnig m. Labrada m. Cormaic m. Cú Corbb.*	*Abbán mac úi Corbmaic i Maigh Arnaidhe in Uibh Ceinnselaigh ocus i cCill Abbain in Úibh Muiredhaigh*

Though both entries are not identical, the glossator of MGgls may have made his own modifications to this genealogical entry. For example, instead of copying the full pedigree list from what we now identify as *Recensio Maior* tract, the glossator simply stated that Abbán is a descendant of Cormac. Elsewhere, mentioning the dynastic regions (Uí Cennselaig and Uí Muiredaig) in which Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain are located reflects the glossator's attempt to inform his contemporary audience of the regions in which the various local foundations of Ireland were based. Such textual differences show that the glossator's modifications resulted in both an abbreviated and expanded version of a potentially earlier entry to Abbán from the *Recensio Major* tract.

Indeed, the MGgls. and *FÓComm.* entries for Abbán are the earliest extant martyrological evidence which detail the saint's patronage. Their apparent derivation from the genealogical record moreover, would suggest that the genealogies are the earliest sources for these details. But while this may bear some truth, we must not forget that Irish genealogies survive in a sparse and scattered manner in the extant manuscripts. In addition, the genealogies can often provide contradictory depictions of its individuals. Hence, while the genealogies may provide the closest route for accessing the potential origin(s) of Abbán's reduplicated feast-days, these 'unreliable' factors should advise that they may not always be the most trustworthy. The contrasting depictions which the genealogical and hagiographical records present of Abbán's ancestry is a prime example. Considering the dual image that emerges throughout the entirety of Abbán's dossier, it may also indicate that genealogical records of two different individuals named Abbán were merged into one over a certain period of time; similar to what Victor De Buck suggested also in relation to this dual image.[124]

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[124] De Buck, De SS. Abbanis Kill-Abbaniensi et Magharnuidhiensi, pp. 270-274. De Buck suggested that the so-called 'St. Abbán of Cell Abbain' conducted the monastic work in Connacht and Kerry, whilst 'St. Abbán of Mag Arnaide' founded and built the monasteries throughout Cork, Meath and Laigin. Abbán's association with these geographical regions was outlined and discussed in chapter three of this thesis. By associating 'Abbán of Cell Abbain', with a smaller number of locations, De Buck was attempting to show that this saint was less well-known than the 'Abbán of Mag Arnaide' saint. However, I did not attribute a great deal of focus to this distinction. This

Three main factors comprise this image for Abbán: the ancestral division, his double patron location and the reduplicated feast-days. While they are undoubtedly interconnected, their cause(s) for attributing this dual image to the saint remains uncertain. As I have shown from the outset of this thesis, there are two theories for explaining this origin:

1. The Two-Abbán Theory
2. The Double-Cult Theory

The reason for this dual image most likely derives from the period before the earliest extant evidence (eighth to ninth century) for Abbán's identity was produced. Thus, the evidence only contains the results of the cause(s). The cause(s) themselves originate from a period for which most of the evidence is now inaccessible. For that reason, both theories will only ever remain possible answers.

What we can confirm nevertheless, is how both theories are equally competitive in the attempts to explain the origin of Abbán's dual image. The first call for concern is the contrasting depiction of his maternal uncle: according to the genealogical record, it is Kevin of Glendalough, whereas the South Laigin St. Íbar of Beggerin Island fulfils this role in *VSA* and *BA*.[125] It can hardly be a coincidence that these two individuals are also the patron saints of locations based within the same provincial regions as Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain. From the perspective of the first theory, one would unhesitatingly say this embodies a merging of historical records of two different individuals named Abbán. In this regard, the larger number of references to south Laigin locations in *VSA* would be due to the cult of the 'Abbán of Mag Arnaide saint being better known than that of 'Abbán of Cell Abbain'. However, this may also cast light on the author's preference towards 'Abbán of Mag Arnaide'; particularly due to the tendency of Irish hagiographers to depict a saint's monastic career in a manner that parallels the locations over which the hagiographer wanted to gain a degree of ecclesiastical power.

Having such authority over a saint's textual profile would also prompt those who agree with 'The Two-Abbán Theory' to argue that the death scenes from *VSA* were invented by the author in an attempt to further disguise the conflation of the Lives of 'Abbán of Mag Arnaide' and

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is because the chief aim of chapter three was to distinguish between the hagiographical scenes which were invented by Bishop Ailbe and those that derived from the non-extant Life of Abbán. Cf. my discussion under 'The Non-Hagiographical Evidence' section on pp. 30-33 of this thesis, where I explain why De Buck's theory is to some extent, conjecture on notions of Irish hagiography that are now outdated.

[125] Indeed, the fact that neither Kevin nor Íbar share any pedigree in the genealogies contradicts any possibility of them originally being siblings. Their conflicting familial connection to Abbán via 'Mella' and the gender disparity in the Medieval Irish genealogies was discussed on pp. 61-69 of this thesis.

'Abbán of Cell Abbain'. Acknowledging the attestation of 16 March feast-day from the martyrological record, ideologies underlying this theory would thus, explain that it evidently commemorated the death of 'Abbán of Cell Abbain'. The reference to 27 October in *VSA* and its supposed exclusion of the March feast-day would imply that 27 October commemorated the feast-day of the saint whom the author preferred or whose cult was better-known; namely, 'Abbán of Mag Arnaide'. Thus, 'Abbán of Cell Abbain's March feast-day is absent, due to its commemoration of the saint who would have been an unsuitable candidate to fulfil the hagiographer's (the author who potentially conflated two different Lives) contemporary concerns. But perhaps one important matter which the 'The Two-Abbán Theory' gives less consideration to, is the general tendency of reduplicated feast-days to commemorate other events aside from the saint's actual death. In that regard, what this theory would identify as a fictional feature of *VSA*, could in fact suffice to explain the origin of Abbán's reduplicated feast-days; namely: the scenes pertaining to his death.

Indeed, this ideology would come from 'The Double-Cult Theory', which would argue that 'Abbán of Mag Arnaide' and 'Abbán of Cell Abbain' were the same individual. In relation to the connection between the reduplicated feast-days and the two communities, this theory would argue that 27 October commemorated Abbán's actual death, whilst 16 March feast-day commemorated the saint's *translatio*. This could be a potential cause for part of Abbán's dual image, particularly due to attestation of the affair in the Irish martyrological record more generally. However, the fact that the martyrologies do not specify that Abbán's relics were translated under either calendar date (16 March and 27 October), questions the extent to which it was a genuine cause for Abbán receiving an additional feast-day. The fact that *VSA* is the only evidence of *translatio* from Abbán's dossier, could suggest that the event was invented by its hagiographer; as 'The Two-Abbán Theory' would argue. But despite the frequent appearance of such death scenes in Irish hagiography, the circumstance for depicting Abbán's relics as the subject of *translatio* merits additional thought.

While 'The Two-Abbán Theory' would locate this circumstance to the hagiographer's attempt to merge historical records of two different individuals into one; 'The Double-Cult Theory' would identify the 'two different individuals' as two different communities (Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain) who shared the same interest in the same saint. In a further attempt to explain the origin of the cause of Abbán's dual image, 'The Double-Cult Theory' would further argue that before martyrological production became active in Ireland (eighth to ninth century), both communities were potentially unaware of their conflicting interests in Abbán, and subsequently

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produced their own local records or lists of the same saint.[126] By the time these records reached the Church of Tallaght in the eighth to ninth century, the MT compiler possibly identified two separate records of the same saint under two separate calendar dates, due to both records referring to the same patronymic: Abbán Moccu Corbmaic.[127]

While the different depictions of Abbán's maternal uncle suggests there were originally two individuals named Abbán, 'The Double-Cult Theory' would argue that the reference to the same patronymic under both identities contradicts this suggestion. As we have already seen, this patronymic is attested throughout most of the martyrological and genealogical records of Abbán. The lack of evidence for another patronymic would subsequently indicate that the dual image embodies two cults emerging from the same saint. Whether or not these two communities (Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain) shared political tension is uncertain, due to the fictional nature of the textual genre (hagiography) which suggests so. While both theories agree that the death scenes are unlikely to be an authentic or historical account of the saint's actual death; they clash when they attempt to identify the standpoint from which this dual image emerged. In essence, both theories present contrasting but equally valid possibilities for a cause(s) that is now unsolvable. Nevertheless, the ability to identify the factors which comprise the saint's dual image, enables us to pinpoint what aspect of Abbán's life and cult this dual image revolved around. Subsequent attempts to discern the attestation of this image is also possible from its survival into a number of international martyrological sources. Its survival into a late martyrology of English origin would suggest that Abbán's 'international' identity was also tangled into this dual image:[128]

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[126] I refer to martyrologies as opposed to the genealogies or hagiographical record of Abbán, as the martyrologies provide the earliest extant evidence for the saint. This is because the martyrologies originate as far back as the eighth to ninth centuries, and these include MT and *FÓ*. Abbán's hagiographical dossier on the other hand, can only be traced back to the thirteenth century (although I have argued for a pre-existing Life from the outset of this thesis, the fact it is non-extant, means little else can be said about the source). As for the genealogies, their historically and textually problematic nature inhibits most attempts to ascribe a precise date to the genealogical tracts and entries.

[127] The significance of localisation and the spread of a saint's cult via church networks may imply that one of Abbán's two feast-days emerged from this type of milieu.

[128] The Additions from the Martiloge of Richard Whytford (*MRW.Add*) contains source material on different saints. Accordingly, its main derivative is *catalogus sanctorum* (The Martiloge of Richard Whytford (*MRW*) & *MRW.Add*, p. xiii). *MRW.Add* is the *Addicyons* (Additions) material of the sixteenth century *MRW*. *MRW* was mostly translated from the *Syon Latin Martyrologium* which belonged to the Brigettine Monastery of Syon in Middlesex, now preserved in the fifteenth to eighteenth century Add. MS 22285 in the British Library, London. *MRW* was written for the private use of a brother of the Syon Monastery namely, Richard Whytford. *MRW* and *MRW.Add* (*MRW.Add* accompanies the content of the main martyrology, *MRW*, in Dewick's and Procter's edition and translation) was edited by E.S. Dewick and translated by Francis Procter and was subsequently published in 1893. Dewick and Procter also note that *MRW.Add* derives its material from other martyrologies, but that *MRW.Add* was applied to *MRW* 'in a somewhat careless and unsystematic manner'; see: *MRW*, p. xiii). Procter and Dewick appear to have characterised all of the English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh saints' as 'The British

Table 3

Martyrological Source(s) of English Origin	
The Additions from the Martiloge of Richard Whytford (*MRW.Add*) 16 March	The Additions from the Martiloge of Richard Whytford (*MRW.Add*) 27 October
In Scotland, ye feest of saynt Abbane/ called also saynt Kyryne / whose surname was Boniface/ and therefore of many called saynt Boniface (In Scotland, the feast of Saint Abbán also called Saint Kyrne, whose surname was Boniface, and therefore he was called Boniface by many)	*The feest also of saynt Abbany a kynges sone of Yrelond/ Yt forskaynge all the pompe of the worlde/entred religion/wherin he lyued so perfytly/ that he heled ye lepre t lame/ blynde t defe/reysed the deed/with many other myracles/t had visytacyon of aūgels t reuelacyon of his deth.* (The feast also of Saint Abbán kindred of the son of Ireland, he had forsaken all of the people of the world/entered religion/ where he laid so perfectly, that he healed the lepers, the lame, the blind and the deaf, resurrected the dead, with many other miracles, and had been visited by angels and was released of his death)

Saints', (*MRW*, p. xiv), most likely owing to the point in time in which they were editing *MRW* and *MRW.Add*. They appear to suggest also that *MRW.Add* material on these 'British Saints' derives from the aforementioned Add. MS 22285 (although not all of the *Addicyons* from the main *Latin Syon Martiloge* were transferred to *MRW*), MDr and The Martyrology of Usuard. Dewick and Procter do distinguish between the saints who are mentioned in *MRW* and *MRW.Add*. While they evidently show that the reference to Abbán comes from *MRW.Add* the manner in which Abbán is referenced under both calendar dates (16 March and 27 October) suggests that not all of the derivatives of *MRW.Add* were identified by Dewick and Procter as material that had 'no liturgical authority of any kind', (*MRW*, p xii). For 16 March entry, see: *MRW.Add*, p. 42; For 27 October entry; see: *MRW.Add*, p. 169 for the October feast-day. Cf. Hendricks, *The London Charterhouse*, pp. 309-348. This is noteworthy in relation to a now lost martyrology which was produced in Nieuwport, in Flanders namely, *Martyrologium Carthusianum Neuportense* (The Martyrology of the Nieuwpoort Carthusians). Victor De Buck's reference to Abbán's feast-days from this martyrology gives reason to believe that the saint, and perhaps other Irish saints', were at some point, recorded in this supposedly now lost martyrological source. See: De Buck, De SS. Abbanis Kill-Abbaniensi et Magharnuidhiensi, p. 271.

While it is common to see the same Irish saint being linked with Ireland and Scotland in *MRW.Add*., the reference to 'Kyryrne' from 16 March entry indicates that Abbán's link with Scotland in *MRW.Add* is more significant. Considering the toponymic evidence for the numerous vernacular placename spellings of the Keills and Eilean Mór parishes, most of which begin with the letter 'k' and are believed to be connected with Abbán via the patronymic 'Mac Cormaig', 'Kyryne', could be perceived as another variant name of either parish.[129] This would suggest that the compiler of the Add. MS 22285 manuscript was borrowing material from some of the toponymic evidence for Abbán's supposed connection with the parishes. However, the 'Saints' in Scottish Placenames' database has not identified the spelling 'Kyryne' with Abbán/'Mac Cormaig'.[130] As for the 'Boniface surname', Aidan Mac Donald identified versions of the 'Boniface' name that are typically applied to saints' names cited under 16 March calendar date in late medieval calendars, including 'Bonifacius-Kiritinus:Queritinus'.[131] 'Kyryne' is more likely to be a corruption of 'Kiritinus' or 'Queritinus' as opposed to 'Mac Cormaig'. Moreover, Mac Donald suggested that the 'Boniface surname' was an attempt to distinguish this 'Scottish Abbane' saint 'from numerous and often better-known saints' whose names present a similar equivalent. [132]

 In any event, *MRW.Add* does not identify 'Abbane' as an Irish saint; although the earlier Irish martyrologies record Abbán of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain under 16 March calendar date. *MRW.Add* appears to only recognise Abbán of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain as having one feast-day: 27 October, as does *VSA*. This would suggest that the derivative(s) for 27 October entry to Abbán in *MRW.Add* was possibly *VSA* and/or *BA* as both sources are the only ones from Abbán's dossier which identify him as the son of a king of Ireland.[133] The depiction of a 'Scottish Abbán' under 16 March and an 'Irish Abbán' under 27 October is reminiscent of matters concerning 'The Two-Abbán Theory'; but is clearly not making a distinction between the so-called 'Abbán of Mag Arnaide' and 'Abbán of Cell Abbain' individuals. Both of these

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[129] See: pp. 213-217 from chapter four of this thesis.

[130] I have been unable to find this particular spelling (*Kyryne*) from any of the other vernacular sources cited in secondary works such as Mac Lean, Knapdale Dedications, pp. 49-65 or Thomas Owen Clancy et al. 2010-2013, *Saints in Scottish Place-Names- https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/* (Last Accessed 26th September 2020); see in particular: *https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/place.php?id=1331125957&name_id=26665 https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/place.php?id=1331122252&name_id=26660 https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/place.php?id=1331124657&name_id=26669* (All Websites Last Accessed 26th September 2020).

[131] Mac Donald, *Curadán Boniface and the Early Church of Rosemarkie*, Chapter 2.

[132] Mac Donald, *Curadán Boniface and the Early Church of Rosemarkie*, Chapter, 2, p. 13. Moreover, such better-known saints' most likely include the British martyr St. Alban.

[133] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 3-33; *VSH(S)*, p. 256-274; *BA*, Vol. 1 & 2, pp. 3-10. In relation to the derivatives of *MRW.Add*, this would suggest that Dewick and Procter did not account for all of them.

individuals are identified as one under 27 October entry in *MRW.Add*. The fact that the derivatives of both *MRW.Add* entries (16 March and 27 October) appear to differ, implies that *MRW.Add.* drew on a wide variety of Insular sources. This also seems to have applied a broader dimension to the problem of Abbán's reduplicated feast-days. Two islands identified and thus, produced their own national records of the same saint. Potentially, the compilers of the derivatives for the *MRW.Add* March entry were unfamiliar with the dual image 'the Irish Abbán' already bore; and understandably so, given the lack of references to Scotland throughout Abbán's dossier.[134]

The lack of references may also suffice for explaining why these compilers did not identify 'the Scottish Abbán' as the same individual as 'the Irish Abbán'. While these compilers were merely attempting to create an image of 'the Scottish Abbán', earlier Irish martyrological evidence for 16 March calendar date commemorating the feast-day Abbán of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain already survived. This demonstrates the unlikeliness of 16 March feast-day originally representing element(s) of the saint's Scottish connections. These connections do nevertheless, ask similar questions, which we asked in relation to dual image for Abbán's Irish identity: do the toponymic connections with Knapdale, in Scotland embody a cult of Abbán Moccu Corbmaic or is it simply evidence for the existence of another Scottish saint with the same patronymic? The image is by no means clear, but even if this can be interpreted as evidence for Abbán having a cult in Knapdale, the extent to which it bears implications for his dual image is unknown. The saint's international identity, as discussed in chapter four of this thesis, bears little connection with any of the three factors (genealogical division, double-patronage and reduplicated feast-days) which comprise his dual image.

Most of the international locations referenced in Abbán's hagiographical record are more telling of the types of sources Abbán's hagiographer was deriving his material from, as opposed to the origins of the saint's cult.[135] However, as *MRW.Add* shows, the underlying history of the

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[134] Though there is toponymic evidence from various documentary vernacular sources which suggests Abbán had a cult in Knapdale, the lack of any references to Knapdale in *VSA* and *BA* is what hinders subsequent attempts to ponder the saint's potential Knapdale connections; see: my discussion under 'The Non-Hagiographical Evidence' section from 30-33 of this thesis.

[135] See for example: my discussion of the *VSA(D)* topographical prologue under 'The Topographical Descriptions' section from pp. 199-202 of this thesis, where we discussed the possibility of *TH* being employed by Bishop Ailbe of Ferns when writing the prologue.

international martyrologies can pose challenges for discerning the origins of Abbán's cult. Another example of such challenges can be recognised from *Grev.MU*:[136]

Table 4

Martyrological Sources originating from The Martyrology of Usuard	
The Grevenus of Cologne Copy of the Martyrology of Usuard (*Grev.MU*) ***16 March***	**The Martyrology of Killeen (MK)** ***16 March***
Albani episcopi & confessoris. Sitne hic Abbanus, an Abbenus, nescio (Abbán a bishop and confessor. I do not know whether this is Abbán or Aben)	*Abani* (Abbán)
Grev.MU 27 October	**MK *27 October***
n/a	n/a

The absence of Abbán's October feast-day need not come across as suspicious, given the comparatively later period from which The Grevenus of Cologne Copy of the Martyrology of Usuard (*Grev.MU*) originates. This absence may also be due to the greater Continental origin of *Grev.MU*, meaning an additional feast-day of a local Irish saint was unlikely to have been known to a Continental compiler, already preoccupied with the compilation of feast-days of Continental and more famous Insular saints'.[137] Despite this however, *Grev.MU* compiler briefly comments on the *Albani episcopi & confessoris* entry, in which he appears to be expressing his uncertainty of whether the 'Albani' name refers to 'Abbán' or 'Aben'. This serves as an intriguing reminder of the name's similarity to the Latin translation of 'Abbot',

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[136] *Grev.MU* is a late fifteenth century German manuscript version of The Martyrology of Usuard (MU). It is attested in an edition from 1714, which comprises ten manuscript versions (including *Grev. MU*) of MU completed by J.B Sollerius. *Grev.MU* martyrological reference to Abbán can be found at the bottom of p. 158 of Sollerius's edition. The Martyrology of Killeen (MK) is a later Irish martyrological manuscript version of The Martyrology of Usuard (MU), which survives in two early seventeenth century manuscripts. Though MU is its primary derivative its entries to Irish saints seem to derive from MDr; see: Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, pp. 265-266. For an edition of MK; see: Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, pp. 263-265.

[137] While *Grev.MU* is mainly Continental in origin, some of the entries to Irish saints derive from earlier Irish martyrologies such as MDr and MTr. This is apparent from the large number of cross-references which Ó Riain identifies from many of the entries from MDr and MTr; see: Ó Riain, *Four Irish Martyrologies*, pp. 38-50. The *Albani episcopi & confessoris* entry is likely to have derived from MDr; see: Ó Riain, *Four Irish Martyrologies*, p. 47). For instance, both MDr and *Grev.MU*, Fínán is also cited alongside the name 'Abbán'. The lack of any reference to Abbán's October feast-day from MK is because the martyrology only records the feast-days belonging to the months of January right down to the middle-end of July. Hence, its absence need not be further pondered here.

discussed in relation to the origin of the 'Abbain' name under 24 August entry from MT.[138] This can pose challenges for identifying a figure whose name presents a Latin equivalent of the Latin noun *abbatis*, such as 'Abbán' or 'Alban'.

In particular, the reference to 'Aben' is reminiscent of Abbán's connection with Abingdon, discussed in chapter four of this thesis. While, we do not know what particular individual *Grev.MU* compiler had in mind when writing 'Aben', the name is almost identical to the name of the supposed founder of Abingdon: Abben(us), whose identity was corruptly confused with Abbán's in *VSA*. *VSA* provides a pseudo-etymological explanation for how Abbán became the founder of Abingdon. However, an authentic etymological study (from 1974) of the place-name confirmed that Abingdon actually derives from the Anglo-Saxon name 'Aebba'. The orthographical similarity between Abbán's name and the place-name 'Abingdon' gave the *VSA* author (most likely Bishop Ailbe of Ferns) an advantageous opportunity to re-produce a historical record to suit his own contemporary concerns. Perhaps this tripped up and hindered the *Grev.MU* compiler in his attempts to identify the individual saints', whose names were being transmitted via the derivative sources he used to produce *Grev.MU*. Nevertheless, his identification of a name (Aben) which he believed may be another version of 'Albani' shows how easily such misattribution could arise in relation to the different spellings of the name 'Abbán'.

As for the reference to 'Albani', this version of Abbán's name is attested not only in *Grev.MU*, but also, in *VSA(S)*. The concurrent attestation of the 'Abbani' spelling from *VSA(D)* is striking, particularly since both *VSA(S)* and *VSA(D)* are essentially the same source. At this point of our martyrological study, it is unlikely that two different spellings of the same name would bear any explanation for his reduplicated feast-days. The 'Albani' version of Abbán's name appears to have originated from an international context; owing to the Continental origin of *Grev.MU* and the Anglo-Norman milieu in which *VSH(S)* was produced.[139] Elsewhere however, the 'Abbani' spelling is also recorded in an important south German martyrological record originating from *FÓ*:[140]

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[138] See: pp. 246-247 of this thesis.

[139] See *VSH(S)*, p. xxi. Perhaps it is also the result of previous confusion with the British Martyr St. Alban. The national and also Continental scale of his fame may have been an underlying factor of this potential confusion.

[140] Both of these German martyrological sources originate from the now lost eleventh century Regensburg Manuscript Version of *Félire Óengusso* (*Reg.FÓ*) which ultimately derived from *FÓ*. *MReg.* is a seventeenth century martyrological source. Its derivation from *FÓ* is owed to the 'Irish Benedictines' working in 'the Regensburg Schottenkloster'. See Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, pp. 231-232 for further details. The earlier

Table 5

German Martyrological Sources originating from *FÓ*	
The Martyrology of Schottenmönche of St. Jakob in Regensburg (*MReg.*) 16 March	**The Martyrology of Tegernsee (*MTgr.*) 16 March**
In Hybernia, sanctorum confessorum Abbani (In Ireland, the holy confessor Abbán)	n/a
MReg. 27 October	*MTgr.* 27 October
In Hybernia, sancti Abbani abbatis et confessoris (In Ireland, there was St. Abbán, an abbot and confessor)	*Albani* (Abbán)

Indeed, it is largely thanks to the Irish monks working in the Regensburg Schottenkloster and 'a particular interests in Irish saints' in 'southern German monasteries' (which began in the late twelfth century) that the textual record of Abbán's feast-days travelled this distance.[141] While the 'Albani' version of the saint's name is recorded under the 27 October calendar date in The Martyrology of Tegernsee (*MTgr*), the 'Abbani' version from The Martyrology of Schottenmönche of St. Jakob in Regensburg (*MReg.*) suggests that these two Latin names (Abbani and Albani) apply to the same saint (Abbán of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain). The fact that it is the older German martyrology (*MTgr*) which refers to the 'Albani' version may suggest, once again, that Abbán was firstly identified as 'Albani' from overseas.[142] The lack of additional material from *MTgr* could be a reflection of the general tendency of older martyrologies to contain less detail than the later martyrologies. As for the absence of Abbán's March feast-day in *MTgr*, we may suggest as we did for *Grev.MU*, that this is merely due to the Continental origin of *MTgr* and its 'preoccupation' with larger numbers of Continental

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MTgr. dates as far back as the twelfth century. Cf. Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, p. 334 for a stemma illustration of their connection to *FÓ*, which Ó Riain calls the 'metrical Tallaght version'.

[141] See: Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, pp. 225-229 for further details.

[142] The fact that additions to *MTgr.* were mainly 'written in a Continental hand' may further suggest that the *Albani* version of Abbán's name is of Continental origin. See: Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, p. 230.

names.[143] However, an unusual reference to 'Albani' under 22 March calendar-date in *MTgr* may contradict this assumption:[144]

Table 5.1

MTgr 22 March
Albani
(Abbán)

The fact that Abbán's name is also spelt 'Albani' under 27 October *MTgr* entry would suggest this 22 March entry is referring to Abbán. Evidently, it raises suspicion, because this calendar date is not identified as a feast-day of Abbán's in the Irish martyrological record. The calendar date's close occurrence to 16 March could suggest this was a simple scribal error on behalf of *MTgr* compiler. As Ó Riain suspected however, the timeframe between 16 March and 22 March could represent the celebration of an octave.[145] Hence, despite the absence of 16 March from *MTgr*, the attestation of a 22 March feast-day entry would suggest that this feast-day emerged from the milieu in which *MTgr* was compiled. While the timeframe between 16 March and 22 March presents a six-day gap, as opposed to one of eight-days, its close resemblance to the timeframe of an octave and thus, the extent to which it reflects an octave celebration of Abbán's March feast-day merits subsequent thought.[146]

The attestation of octaves can provide an explanation for the origin of a saint's multiple feast-days. For Abbán however, it attributes him an additional feast-day, meaning that the matter of octaves does quite the opposite of clarifying the origin of his already existing reduplicated feast-days. As for the historical purpose of attributing an octave, Robert Bartlett specified two particular circumstances for when octaves are celebrated:[147]

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[143] Cf. Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, p. 230.
[144] Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, p. 235.
[145] Ó Riain, *Feastdays of the Saints*, p. 235. n. 48. Cf. my discussion under 'A Saint's Textual Profile' section from this chapter.
[146] In his discussion on 'the movable feast', most of the octave examples which Pádraig Ó Riain lists do not in fact, commemorate an exact eight-day gap; see: Ó Riain, *Towards a Methodology in Early Irish Hagiography*, p. 156. This would suggest that octaves do not always commemorate exactly eight days.
[147] Bartlett, *Why can the Dead*, pp.120-122. In addition, the fact that there is evidence of a week-long celebration being an opportunity to 'grant indulgences', means that an octave would also have served as an advantageous time to the ecclesiastical castes.

1. For saints with a renowned reputation such as SS. Peter and Paul.

2. For churches in which octaves were a customary practice.

Though Pádraig Ó Riain's research on the history of the *Schottenkloster*s does not give any overt indications that octaves were a customary practice in the monastery which compiled *MTgr*, the latter circumstance would nevertheless appear to be the most fitting answer for Abbán's supposed octave feast-day (22 March). But even this potential circumstance is challenged by that fact that Abbán's octave is the only one which Ó Riain has tentatively identified amongst four south-German martyrologies. Thus, whether the 'Albani' name from 22 March entry happens to embody the attempts of a particular *Schottenkloster* monk attributing a local Irish saint with a certain degree of Continental fame or a monk simply recording the saint's name under the wrong calendar date of *MTgr* cannot be fully ascertained.

Conclusion

While the record of Abbán's name under 22 March calendar date in *MTgr* does appear to bear some underlying connection with his better-known March feast-day (16 March), it does not, however, offer any explanation for why most of the Irish martyrologies record two feast-days for Abbán, those being, 16 March and 27 October. No doubt, scholarship on the general significance of matters surrounding Continental and Insular feast-days provided some scope for discerning potential cause(s) for reduplicated feast-days. However, because Abbán was likely to have been attributed his feast-days at a period before the earliest martyrologies (MT and *FÓ*) were produced, inhibits our chances of acquiring a clear image for why he was attributed two feast-days. As for the evidence, Abbán's feast-days are recorded in a textual genre (martyrology) which is typically difficult to work with, owing to the limited detail and unclear history its entries so often provide. Hence, while evidence in MT for Abbán's reduplicated feast-days would be the most valuable, due to its earliest (eighth to ninth century) origin, the lack of additional detail it provides essentially gives us little material to work with. In the later martyrological record, we are often provided with additional details that tell of the saint's patronage and ancestry. However, because these later sources generally only date as far back as twelfth century, this means the more detail the martyrology provides, the later its origins tend to be.

Outside of the martyrological record however, such details appear to have derived from earlier genealogical entries and pedigrees, which we discussed in chapter one of this thesis. Though the genealogies have been dated by scholars such as Donnchadh Ó Corráin, to periods as early

as the seventh century, we must note that such scholars have also stressed the 'unreliable' nature of genealogies. Hence, while they may serve as the earliest evidence for Abbán's patronage and of course, ancestry, their complex textual history means that a seventh century origin for Abbán's patronage and ancestry cannot be confirmed. From that point onwards, the martyrological and genealogical material becomes later; meaning that such surviving evidence is merely a recording of the results of a cause that most likely pre-dates martyrological and genealogical production in Ireland. What the reduplicated feast-day evidence does highlight however, is this dual image that can be discerned throughout the entirety of Abbán's dossier. This chapter confirms that the reduplicated feast-days is one of three factors that comprises Abbán's dual image. The other factors include the ancestral division, which was discussed in chapter one of this thesis, and the political tension between the communities of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain.

While the cause(s) for Abbán's two feast-days cannot be confirmed, attempts to ponder the origin of the dual image to which the feast-day scenario is related, prompted us to consider two theories: 'The Two-Abbán Theory', first suggested by Victor De Buck and 'The Double-Cult Theory'. A separate examination of the three factors (throughout this thesis) that comprise this dual image provided equally convincing concerns for whether historical records of two different saints named Abbán were merged into one or if the dual image embodies separate cults of the same saint. The feast-day scenario does not stand alone in providing a problematic and unclear depiction of Abbán's cultural identity. Its probable relation to this greater dual image shows that the causes(s) for Abbán's reduplicated feast-days may not solely have been a matter concerning feast-days more generally. That is why such as reasons as, an error in textual transmission or octaves would not suffice to explain this reduplication from Abbán's dossier and thus, the origin for his dual image.

In any event, the ability to identify the broader picture (the dual image) from which Abbán's reduplicated feast-days derives, provides us with a possible, although tentative suggestion for its cause(s). Thus, an exploration of the textual origin of later martyrological sources was important for clarifying how they re-shaped and misidentified Abbán's cultural identity. The reference to 'the Scottish Abbane' under 16 March entry from *MRW.Add* is the most apparent example. This thesis has uncovered Abbán's potential connection with Scotland, but also a vague possibility of the connection bearing some influence upon his dual image. However, identifying Abbán as a Scottish individual based solely on a source as late as the sixteenth century (*MRW.Add*) would be inaccurate, given the earlier Irish martyrological evidence for

the 'Abbán Moccu Corbmaic of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain' identity being recorded under both 16 March and 27 October calendar dates. Overall, this exploration of the Irish and international martyrological evidence has attempted to not only paint a clearer image of the textual milieu in which Abbán's reduplicated feast-days were recorded, but subsequently of the extent to which his reduplicated feast-days relates to other aspects of Abbán's cultural identity and textual profile.

Conclusion

This thesis presents the first comprehensive study of the cult and textual profile of St. Abbán. It conducted a close examination of all the extant textual records of the saint. This was enabled by identifying the textual genres that serve as the main source of evidence for the saint and for interpreting the manner in which this evidence shaped and framed his later reputation. Abbán's Hiberno-Latin Life (*VSA*) undoubtedly presents the longest account; from its rhetorical writing style to its thorough coverage of events surrounding Abbán's background, monastic career and activity and his death, much of this detail would now be unknown without the existence of this *Vita*. My examination of the rhetorical style for instance, attempted to show how the writing style most likely originated from the hand of Bishop Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid of Ferns. Moreover, the saint's vernacular Life (*BA*) is also an important source, but it provides comparatively less detail than *VSA*. Hagiography is not, however, the only available source of evidence for Abbán's identity. The genealogical and martyrological accounts also proved to be equally invaluable sources. Whilst the genealogies gave insight into the textual records and historical origins of the saint's ancestry, an examination of the martyrologies, elicited potential connections between his death and feast-days. If for instance, one of the martyrologies noted that one of Abbán's two feast-days commemorates the *translatio* of his relics, then we would have a satisfactory explanation for the two feast-days. Evidently, this was not the case. Therefore, the genealogies and martyrologies offer supplementary evidence to Abbán's hagiographical account. A close study of all three textual genres uncovered and accentuated a range of matters related to the origins of his cultural identity.

The Two-Abbán and The Double-Cult Theories

One of the most fundamental matters concerns the dual image of Abbán's identity. Attention was first drawn to this matter by the Bollandist Victor De Buck.[1] De Buck attempted to explain that textual records of two different saints named Abbán were merged into one over a certain period of time. Though his solution presented some outdated ideologies on the historical value of hagiography, it was still nevertheless worthy of being explored as 'The Two-Abbán Theory' in this thesis.[2] After this thesis identified the main issues which relate to this dual image, subsequent consideration demonstrated that De Buck's solution still qualified as a possible

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[1] See: De Buck, De SS. Abbanis Kill-Abbaniensi et Magharnuidhiensi, pp. 270-274.
[2] While Charles Plummer also disagreed with De Buck's solution, Plummer did not disagree with De Buck due to his outdated ideologies; rather Plummer disagreed on the basis that De Buck was combining an actual historical St. Abbán and a mythical saint of the same name; see: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. xxv.

answer for the origin of Abbán's dual image. These issues can be elicited from Abbán's hagiographical, genealogical and martyrological accounts. They mainly concern the conflicting depictions of Abbán's maternal uncle, Abbán's double-patronage and his two feast-days.[3] These three issues disclosed a double-strand of inter-related matters. For instance, it would strike one as more than a coincidence that the primary foundations of SS. Kevin and Íbar are each located within the same parameters as Cell Abbain and Mag Arnaide. From the standpoint of 'The Two-Abbán Theory', this would suggest that Kevin of Glendalough was presented as the maternal uncle of the so-called 'Abbán of Cell Abbain' saint, whilst 'Abbán of Mag Arnaide' was presented as a nephew of Íbar of Beggerin Island.

At the same time, we need recall that Irish genealogies regularly throw up this type of inconsistency when studying the ancestry of any given individual. Conflicting depictions of Abbán's supposed maternal uncle was not the only problematic issue identified from his dossier. For instance, while most of the genealogical entries and pedigrees explored in chapter one of this thesis, depicted 'Cormac' as a paternal ancestor of the saint via the name 'Abbán Moccu Corbmaic' (Abbán descendant of Cormac), *VSA* and *BA* envisaged Cormac as an actual father of Abbán. It would appear therefore that Abbán's hagiographer re-envisaged his paternal ancestor as the saint's actual father.[4] This issue is akin to the contradictory evidence linked with Abbán's maternal uncle. This means that the issue with Abbán's maternal uncle is equally reflective of the common problems linked with the history of genealogical writing as well as 'The Two-Abbán Theory'. For that reason, caution was undertaken in differentiating between issues related to the textual genre and those that seem to relate to the origin of the actual saint. Nevertheless, the issue of Abbán's maternal uncle proved to bear connections with both matters, because like his double-patronage and reduplicated feast-days, the conflicting depictions of his maternal uncle also represent a double-strand. These are the main factors which contributed to Abbán's dual image.[5]

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[3] To recap, St. Kevin of Glendalough fulfils this familial role in Abbán's genealogical record. In Abbán's hagiographical dossier however, St. Íbar of Beggerin Island is the maternal uncle. These subject-matters were mainly addressed in the *Recensio Maior* Tracts of saints' genealogies originating from the pre-Norman on pp. 61-69 of this thesis.

[4] Most of Abbán's genealogical entries and pedigrees envisage 'Laignech' as his father. From the paternal pedigree of the *Recensio Maior*, it was clear that there was a strong Leinster naming pattern.

[5] Moreover, since both of Abbán's feast-days are recorded in martyrologies as early as the ninth century (see for example: MT and *FÓ*), this would indicate that this dual image originates from the pre-Norman period.

Though the original existence of textual records of two different saints named Abbán may be the solution to this dual image, the image may also embody two different cults emerging from the same saint. From the latter idea, this thesis introduced 'The Double-Cult Theory', which evidently contrasts with the ideology underlying 'The Two-Abbán Theory'. The numerous geographical locations connected with Abbán would suggest that various cults of the saint developed throughout Ireland.[6] This would also mean that Abbán's cultural identity became the subject of localisation. Hence, if a large number of communities claimed that Abbán was their patron saint, political tension was likely to ensue between some of these communities.[7] As the death scenes from *VSA(D)* imply, it was precisely this scenario which prompted the communities of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain to quarrel over Abbán's relics. This would remove the implication of the death scenes being merely invented for the purpose of merging two different Lives into one, as proposed by Victor De Buck.[8] 'The Double-Cult Theory' would suggest that the association with Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain embodies two opposing cults of Abbán, that potentially emerged from the monastery and churches which Abbán reputedly founded in these locations, according to his *Vita*.[9]

In light of SS. Íbar's and Kevin's conflicting depictions as Abbán's maternal uncle, 'The Double-Cult Theory' would suggest that they were intentionally ascribed to Abbán's dossier for further embodying the political opposition between the foundations of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain. This lessens the possibility of either Íbar or Kevin being biologically related to Abbán in actuality. As the cult of a saint developed, genealogists modified the saint's ancestral identity in ways which coincided with the contemporary concerns and interests of that genealogist. The fact that Abbán's genealogical record is more telling of his north Laigin origins overall, would explain why his genealogist envisaged a saint of importance of the same provincial region (Kevin) as Abbán's relative. The unlikeliness of this familial connection however, is supported by the lack of any reference to Abbán from Kevin's genealogical record. But while genealogies were subject to much historical fabrication, we need also remember that at the very core of an individual's genealogical record, an underlying truth has been well

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[6] The geographical origins of Abbán's cult was the main point of focus in chapter three of this thesis.

[7] Aside from Abbán's two primary foundations (Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain) from Laigin, this thesis has also shown that he has a prominent cult in Munster; see: my discussion under the 'Episode 1- Connacht and Munster' section on pp. 150-165 of this thesis. However, no inkling of any Munster location claiming that Abbán was their patron saint was discerned from his hagiographical dossier.

[8] De Buck, De SS. Abbanis Kill-Abbaniensi et Magharnuidhiensi, pp. 270-274.

[9] It is through the emergence of a cult as opposed to the saint as a historical individual, that his/her fame develops in size and importance. For a saint to become known on a local, regional or even national scale, the saint would need to have founded or built a monastery or church in a particular location that subsequently became an institution of ecclesiastical importance and fame.

embedded. In Abbán's case, it would seem that he was from north Laigin, and that Mag Arnaide embodies the place of his patronage.[10]

The implication is further supported when his father is envisaged as a king of the Dál Messin Corb dynasty in north Laigin, from the outset of *VSA*.[11] As the role of the provost from *VSA(D)* implies, birthplace was main the reason for which the community of Cell Abbain believed that they were the rightful owners of Abbán's relics. Throughout Abbán's dossier, it is evident that Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain are his primary foundations.[12] This matter is particularly brought to the fore in the scenes pertaining to his death. Nevertheless, these scenes do present motifs and tropes which are recognisable from other saints' Lives, such as Muirchú's Life of Patrick. This would suggest that the story of Abbán's relics being the subject of *translatio* (the transferring of relics) is not reflective of a past real-life situation. On another level, it discloses a milieu in which Abbán's hagiographer was not entirely familiar with how Abbán became the patron saint of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain, let alone of his death. Like 'The Two-Abbán Theory', this scenario would suggest the death scenes were literary inventions by the hagiographer. From the perspective of 'The Double-Cult Theory' however, writing the death scenes was an attempt to offer a possible solution for the origin of opposition between two opposing cults.

At the same time, it is difficult to ignore the fact that *translatio* is often a common reason for a saint having more than one feast-day. Though none of Abbán's martyrological entries specify that either of his feast-days commemorates his *translatio*, it still serves as a fitting answer for having two feast-days. The fact that *VSA* only referred to one of Abbán's feast-days (27 October) and showed comparatively more interest in the saint's south Laigin patronage would suggest that 27 October commemorated his connection with Mag Arnaide. This would mean that 16 March commemorated the cult of Cell Abbain, but perhaps also the saint's *translatio*. *Translatio* was a historical affair for which the evidence from outside of Ireland and on the Continent is particularly well-documented. Though the evidence of *translatio* in Ireland is

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[10] This matter was particularly discernible from *CGSH* and *LMnG*, which identify Abbán as a saint from Cell Abbain, but of Mag Arnaide.

[11] See pp. 99-106 of this thesis for a discussion on the scenes pertaining to Abbán's birth and early childhood. Moreover, the fact that *VSA* tells, at a later point, how Abbán was sent to Beggerin Island at the age of twelve would suggest that he was being sent from the north of Laigin, where his father was an important king. At the same time, we ought to remember that 'Cormac' from Abbán's *Vita* is actually envisaged as the saint's paternal ancestor in Abbán's genealogical account. The fact that some of the entries and pedigrees from this account date to the pre-Norman period lends support to the probability of Cormac's depiction as a paternal ancestor preceding his depiction as the saint's father in *VSA*.

[12] In Abbán's hagiographical, genealogical and martyrological accounts, he is typically identified as 'Abbán of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain'.

mainly confined to hagiography, it does not necessarily suffice to suggest that *translatio* did not happen in reality. We need also remember that there are some references to such events from the Irish martyrologies. Moreover, aside from the usage of recurrent miracle motifs, the scenes and events told in saints' Lives, can often be perceived as a window on the hagiographer's contemporary reality.

The attempt to consider the origins of this dual image and to discern whether it represents the amalgamation of records of two different saints (The Two-Abbán Theory) or two opposing cults (The Double-Cult Theory) has proven to be a challenging task. The three main issues which comprise this dual image present a combination of literary and historical connotations for studying Abbán's identity. The difficulty in determining whether it concerns the saint in actuality lies in the fact that Abbán's dossier, as it survives, is not a contemporary record of his life. The source material was written after his death, for which no annalistic records are, to my knowledge, attested. In that regard, it would seem more probable that the dual image emerged from the development of two prominent cults of Abbán. The death scenes most certainly imply that the ecclesiastical communities of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain represent those two cults. The need to invent the story of Abbán's death may well have come from a past concern related to both communities. Though the precise period from which this concern derives cannot be ascertained, it seems to have originated from a point in time during the pre-Norman period in Ireland.[13]

Hagiographical Authorship and Origins

Overlapping with the issue of Abbán's dual image are questions centred on Abbán's Life. Though Pádraig Ó Riain suggested that the extant *Vita* (*VSA*) was written from scratch in the early thirteenth century, this thesis has argued, that *VSA* is an elaborated copy of a pre-existing non-extant Life of the saint.[14] To recap, this thesis has agreed that Bishop Ailbe of Ferns was the author of *VSA*, as was originally put forward by Ó Riain. The contemporary concerns and interests of Bishop Ailbe centred largely around Irish-Norman relations and most notably, his dispute with the Anglo-Norman Earl William Marshal. Ó Riain identified some sections from *VSA* which seemed to resonate with Bishop Ailbe's affairs, which he also used as reasons for suggesting that Bishop Ailbe was the original author of Abbán's Life.[15] However, a large number of other sections from Abbán's *Vita*, remained unexamined. For the hagiographical

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[13] This is because the earliest evidence for this dual image can be discerned from source material which dates as far back as the eighth to ninth century, such as MT and *FÓ*.
[14] For Ó Riain's argument, see: Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170.
[15] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170.

sections which were not revealing of Bishop Ailbe or the Anglo-Norman period, this thesis was compelled to provide an explanation for these sections.[16] Moreover, this gap was recently observed by Charles Doherty too. However, while this led him to suggest that an Ua Caellaide Bishop was the author of *VSA*, as opposed to Bishop Ailbe, this thesis proposed that such sections are possibly fossils from the original non-extant Life of Abbán.[17]

To distinguish between the sections which were invented by Bishop Ailbe and those that originated from the non-extant Life of Abbán, this methodology was split into two over-arching research questions. These questions mainly concerned the chapters focused on Abbán's hagiographical dossier.[18] Though most of the hagiographical sections that originated with Bishop Ailbe had already been observed by Pádraig Ó Riain, a close examination of these sections further exemplified why Bishop Ailbe was the probable inventor of these sections. One striking example was the scene (§47 of *VSA(D)*) envisaging Abbán resurrecting his friend 'Conall' in Senboth Ard.[19] As Ó Riain had suggested himself, this is most likely the location (Templeshanbo) in which two important manors stood. After William Marshal seized these two manors in the early thirteenth century, Bishop Ailbe claimed the manors belonged to him, but was ultimately unsuccessful via a court case in Dublin.[20] What bolsters the probability of this scene being invented by Bishop Ailbe, is the manner in which the scene interrupts the original transition from the author bringing the story of Abbán's life to an end, to beginning a new story concerning the saint's death.[21] This thesis suggested that Bishop Ailbe invented and shoehorned the story of Abbán's friend in an attempt to express his dissatisfaction towards Marshal in gaining ownership of these manors.

The desire to use Abbán's Life as a tool for addressing contemporary affairs was the main characteristic discerned from the sections which seemed to have originated with Bishop Ailbe. Another noteworthy case were the scenes which told of the time Abbán spent in the dynastic region of Éile.[22] Associating Abbán with a region from which Bishop Ailbe had originally

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[16] The most notable example were the scenes pertaining to Abbán's monastic career in Munster. Cf. Doherty, Analysis of the 'life' of Abbán, p. 4.

[17] For a read of Charles Doherty's argument; see: Doherty Analysis of the 'life' of Abbán, pp. 1-10.

[18] This included chapters two, three and four of this thesis. Since we had established from the outset of chapter five that the death scenes probably derived from the non-extant Life and attributed most focus to the martyrologies, it was not necessary to ponder these questions in any further detail in chapter five.

[19] For a read of this scene in the original Latin text: *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 29-30.

[20] Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 329-338.

[21] From the latter part of §46 of *VSA(D)*, the author's reminiscence on remaining firm in the Christian faith, implies that the story of Abbán's Life is coming to an end. While the death scenes would certainly give that implication, the depiction of Abbán resurrecting his friend Conall, fragments that predicted transition; for more details; see: my discussion under the 'Episode 9' section from pp. 140-142 of this thesis.

[22] See: §§23-26 of *VSA(D)*; *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. 18-20.

come from himself, would imply that he was alluding towards the idea of having a historical connection with the saint. This notion became particularly apparent from the last of these sections (§26), where the author (most probably Bishop Ailbe) claimed that he was a descendant of a former tyrant who received baptism from Abbán.[23] The manner in which this claim is phrased however, suggests that Bishop Ailbe was drawing on an exemplar: 'Moreover, I who gathered the material for and composed the life of the most blessed father Abbán'.[24] This may imply that Bishop Ailbe 're-arranged episodes and quotations' throughout the Life, as suggested by Pádraig Ó Néill.[25]

In this context, it would be difficult to envisage Bishop Ailbe not copying from an original life of Abbán. In light of Sharpe's and Herbert's shared view that the *Vitae* from *VSH* are later copies of original pre-Norman Lives, it would seem likely that an original Life of Abbán did exist but was subsequently modified by the hand of Bishop Ailbe.[26] These modifications seem to have derived largely from the Anglo-Norman era. The Anglo-Norman era was a notable point of consideration in chapter four of this thesis, where elements from Abbán's Life and cult related to international affairs, were pondered. A particularly important example was the topographical prologue (§1 of *VSA(D)*) of Ireland. At first glance, it would seem counter-intuitive; but its striking similarity with the content of *TH* suggests it was used by Bishop Ailbe as an exemplar when writing the topographical prologue. In light of Bishop Ailbe's general dislike of the Anglo-Norman influence in the Irish Church and the negative picture of the Irish people portrayed in *TH*, the prologue may well embody an underlying attempt to contrast this depiction of Ireland. This was also discernible from the saint's pseudo-etymological connection with Abingdon. Depicting Abingdon as a heathen city that was converted by an Irish saint purports to imply that the Anglo-Normans in Ireland were problematising the Irish church and its status.

Indeed, the majority of the content related to Abbán's international identity was traced back to Bishop Ailbe's imprint. It evidently went beyond merely discussing the significance of Abbán's association with the various international locations mentioned in his hagiographical dossier. One of these international locations is Rome; a location which appears frequently in

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[23] *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, p. 20.

[24] This is an English translation by Pádraig Ó Néill of the following Latin sentence: *Ego autem, qui vitam beatissimi patris Abbani collegi et scripsi*; see: Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 105, fn. 34.

[25] Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, p. 105, fn. 34. This suggestion specifically stemmed from Ó Néill's hypothesis of the prayer/charm from §17 of *VSA(D)*, originally belonging to the latter part of §19.

[26] Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*, pp. 3-38; Herbert, Latin and Vernacular Hagiography, pp. 327-360.

many Irish saints' Lives. Initially, this implies that the reference to Rome in Abbán's hagiographical dossier does not possess much significance. However, the question of Bishop Ailbe's authorship and the potential pre-existence of a non-extant Life suggested otherwise. Of the three journeys Abbán made to Rome according to *VSA*, chapter four of this thesis suggested that the scenes pertaining to the latter journey, possibly derived from the pre-existing Life of Abbán. These scenes envisage Abbán on pilgrimage to Rome with one hundred and fifty clerics. The fact that the Irish Litanies also present a similar, but abbreviated version of this scene, would suggest that content was being borrowed between both sources. The tenth century dating ascribed to the Irish Litanies, moreover, would further indicate that it was the compiler(s) of the Irish Litanies who extracted the content of Abbán from an original non-extant Life of the saint. Ultimately, this would imply that the extant *VSA* version of Abbán's third journey was not invented by Bishop Ailbe in the thirteenth century.[27]

After Pádraig Ó Riain published his article on the Life of Abbán, his work only caught the attention of a small number of scholars.[28] Still, this theory of *VSA* being written 'in its original form' by Bishop Ailbe in the early thirteenth century, remained largely accepted.[29] Before Ó Riain, studies of Abbán's Life, let alone his cult and textual profile, had never received a great deal of focus.[30] Hence, when Ó Riain presented an analysis of several sections from Abbán's Life, this became the most significant secondary work of the saint. But the fact that Abbán had never become a primary point of research to any subsequent scholar, meant that any scholarly attention Abbán received would mainly rely on Ó Riain's theory. Since the aim of this thesis was to provide a dossier study of the saint's life and cult, his theory was inevitably an integral component. There can be no doubt that his theory casted important light on the textual history of Abbán's Life.

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[27] For a scholarly reference to the dating of the Irish Litanies; see: Sanderlin, The Date and Provenance of the 'Litany of Irish Saints-II', pp. 251-262.

[28] These include: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, see: p. 416, for an index of the various pages on which he presents numerous references and discussions to *VSA(D)*, *VSA(S)* and Ó Riain's article; Culleton, *Celtic and Early Christian Wexford*, pp. 97-101; Howlett, The Prologue to the *Vita Sancti Abbani*, pp. 27-30; Harvey, Varia I., pp. 229-230; Mac Shamhráin, Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid, pp. 309-338; Doherty, Analysis of the 'life' of Abbán, pp. 1-10; Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, pp. 95-112.

[29] Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170. Only Anthony Harvey and Charles Doherty have attempted to challenge this assumption. Though Richard Sharpe and Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin did not overtly state that they disagreed with Ó Riain's theory, both scholars did nevertheless, express subtle uncertainty towards his theory.

[30] This only amounts to a handful of scholars who have attempted to present an analysis of Abbán's profile, see the following secondary works: De Buck, De SS. Abbanis Kill-Abbaniensi et Magharnuidhiensi, pp. 270-276; *VSH(D)*, Vol. 1, pp. xxiii-xxvi; Heist, Over the Writer's Shoulder, pp. 76-84 and Mac Lean, Knapdale Dedications, pp. 49-65.

However, a close study of Abbán's hagiographical dossier indicated that Bishop Ailbe did not write Abbán's Life from scratch. Rather, this thesis proposed that Bishop Ailbe worked from an original non-extant Life when producing a contemporary version (*VSA*). There were sections from *VSA*, for which the content seemed to bear no relationship with the contemporary concerns of Bishop Ailbe. One significant example were the death scenes, from which political tension between the communities of Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbain was elicited. From these scenes, there is little to explain why Bishop Ailbe would be willing to depict two Laigin communities fighting in an attempt to express his overall dislike towards the Anglo-Normans imposing reforms upon the Irish Church. The death scenes are most likely part of the dual image related to Abbán, for which evidence can be traced as far back as the ninth century, given the evidence of Abbán's two feast-days in MT. Hence, if aspects of Abbán's Life can be traced back to matters concerning this dual image, it may also be an indicator of an original non-extant Life pre-dating the earliest extant Life; namely, *VSA*.

Potential Pathways for Future Research

This thesis has made an original contribution to the study of saints. It demonstrated the value of focusing exclusively on a saint who had been hitherto recognised as one of the lesser-known saints from the Irish textual record. Over the last few decades, our awareness of saints and their textual accounts has vastly improved, owing to the growth of scholarly interest and development in hagiographical ideologies.[31] This has afforded ample opportunity to conduct further research on the cults and textual profiles of a wide-ranging number of saints. Still, the research has remained largely confined to already well-known figures such as the three national saints of Ireland, Patrick, Brigit and Colm Cille as well as Brendan of Clonfert, Kevin of Glendalough and Maedoc of Ferns. While these saints have undoubtedly received their fair share of scholarly focus, a considerable number of lesser-known saints with hagiographical accounts, have lived in the shadows of these saints. Up until this point, Abbán fell into this category. However, the purpose of conducting a dossier study on this saint was not solely for bringing him to the fore; it also demonstrated the importance of examining his genealogical and martyrological sources, as well as his Life.

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[31] Currently, some of the most monumental works that have emerged from this growth and development include: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives* and Ó Riain, *Dictionary of Irish Saints*.

Although Abbán did receive some attention from scholars, such as William Heist, Pádraig Ó Riain and most recently, Pádraig Ó Néill, such works only considered certain aspects of Abbán's Life.[32] By pulling together all three textual genres (hagiography, genealogies and martyrologies), this thesis revealed significant interrelationship between these genres and elicited the fullest possible picture thus far of the saint's identity. For instance, the double-strand that runs throughout Abbán's textual record would not have fully emerged had this thesis only considered the saint's hagiographical dossier. This dual image became most apparent after his genealogical and martyrological accounts had been closely compared and contrasted with his hagiographical dossier. Though hagiography typically provides the largest quantity of detail, it will only ever provide an incomplete picture of its subject (the saint), if all available sources are not considered. This approach serves as a multi-faceted way of bringing to the fore saints who have been otherwise labelled 'minor' in comparison to saints who have been well-studied. While we are by no means close to producing comprehensive studies on *all* of Ireland's saints, this thesis has, nevertheless, provided one starting point for such an odyssey.

On that note, we may remark upon some of the saints who were envisaged as Abbán's contemporaries in his textual profile.[33] Though some of these saints need no introduction, others are relatively unknown outside of Abbán's dossier.[34] A prime example of the latter type was St. Íbar of Beggerin Island, for whom hagiographical, genealogical and martyrological accounts are attested, but await scholarly research. What may also make Íbar an intriguing topic for a dossier study is the contradictory evidence from which his relationship with Abbán can be uncovered. An examination of Íbar's ancestral detail would be insightful for recognising the extent to which his depiction in Abbán's dossier was merely to elevate Abbán's cultural status. This would also enable us to engage in matters concerning his own cultural identity. Another example of a saint who has rarely been a chief topic of research is Flannán of Killaloe. Flannán shared saintly brotherhood with Abbán according to *VSA*. Akin to Abbán's *Vita*, Flannán's was also argued to be written from scratch in the late twelfth century.[35] A close examination of Flannán's Life may help to identify the typical characteristics which indicate a saint's Life is

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[32] Heist, Over the Writer's Shoulder, pp. 76-84; Ó Riain, St. Abbán, pp. 159-170; Ó Néill, St. Abbán's Charm, pp. 95-112.
[33] Abbán's contemporary relationships with most of these saints was discussed in chapter two of this thesis.
[34] Examples of the saints from Abbán's dossier who are already well-known, include: Patrick, Kevin of Glendalough, Brendan, Colm Cille and Moling.
[35] This dating and origin of Flannán's *Vita* was suggested by Donnchadh Ó Corráin; see: Ó Corráin, Foreign Connections and Domestic Politics: Killaloe and the Uí Briain in Twelfth-Century Hagiography', pp. 213-231.

of late medieval origin and if a dossier study of Flannán's textual profile could suggest otherwise.

This means the value of conducting a dossier study on Abbán also played a fundamental role in identifying other saints who may have potential for being the subject of a similar kind of research.[36] Hence, for the purpose of future research, this thesis has also directed us to passages through which we can continue to examine the cults and textual profiles of other saints. However, there is, in my view, a gap in the field, which has prevented such research from flourishing; that being; the lack of a published English translation of *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (*VSH*).[37] Aside from some scholars who have translated a select number of *Vitae*, an English translation of the full collection is long overdue; particularly since the vernacular collection (*BnÉ*) has already been translated.[38] An English translation would enable future dossier studies to compare and contrast content between all of the extant Lives in a more accessible manner than what was available for the research of this thesis. In addition, the fact that the *Vitae* are generally more detailed than the *Bethada* would highlight the need for an English translation.[39] This would most certainly serve as an invaluable source of scholarship for dossier studies and have important potential for uncovering information about saints, like Abbán, whose identities had been hitherto overlooked.

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[36] This would include saints for whom hagiographical, genealogical and martyrological accounts survive, but have otherwise, not been brought to the fore of research on Irish saints.

[37] To my knowledge, neither *VSH(D)*, *VSH(S)* nor the Oxford manuscript version of saints' Lives have been fully translated thus far.

[38] See for example: De Paor, *Saint Patrick's World*, which provides an English translation of some Lives, such as those of the pre-Patrician saints': Declan of Ardmore, Ailbe of Emly and Ciaran of Saighir; Cf. Ó Riain, *Four Tipperary Saints*; Ó Riain, *Four Offaly Saints*. Overseas moreover, the Latin Lives of British saints' have also been translated; see: Wade-Evans, *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogiae*.

[39] For instance, this would provide an opportunity to read and discern the similarity of a motif and trope between a small number of certain *Vitae*; which would dissuade us from assuming that the motif or trope ultimately derived from the *Vitae* of a better-known saint, such as one of the three national saints' of Ireland.

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A Detailed English Summary of the Sections from *VSA(D)*

1. A prologue which describes in detail the topography of Ireland, portraying an attractive image of the island's landscape. The prologue also informs us of Ireland's fame from overseas, telling us that Ireland is called 'Hibernia' from the River Ebro in Spain and that the people of Ireland are called 'The Scots' from the famous daughter of the King of Egypt 'Scota'. Next, the author states overtly that he will not say anything else about Scota, because her relationship with the early history of Ireland is already so well-known. The final few words of this prologue tell us that the people of Ireland are also known for being firm believers in the Christian faith and that their beliefs are orthodox.

2. A continued discussion on the holiness of the island, further noting that Ireland is known for its large number of saints and on this note, the author introduces St. Abbán. Next, the author tells us when St. Patrick landed in Uí Cennselaig, St. Patrick prophesised of saints who will be the chief saints of Laigin: St. Abbán, St. Kevin and St. Moling. St. Patrick then explains that he was predestined by God to preach in the northern region of Ireland and then to convert the men of Laigin to Christianity. The author notes that he will not go into any further detail on how St. Patrick preached of St. Abbán, as he also wishes to talk about Bishop Íbar preaching of the hour of St. Abbán's birth.

3. Firstly however, the author names St. Abbán's family members, telling us that the saint's father was named 'Cormac' of the Dál Messin Corb dynasty, the king of the Laigin men, and that St. Abbán's mother was named 'Mella' who was the sister of the aforementioned Bishop Íbar. Before St. Abbán was born, the author tells us that one day, Mella was in the final stages of pregnancy and was experiencing severe labour pains. When she saw her brother Bishop Íbar walking towards her, she begged him to help her pain and to forgive her for her sins. Bishop Íbar prayed over Mella assisting with her pains, but also prophesied that she would give birth to a noble son who would be the most important sight of God and man. When Mella gave birth, this prophecy immediately came true. The

noble son was named 'Abbán' and he was expected to become the king of Laigin after his father, Cormac.

4. Next, the author tells us when Abbán was a child, he behaved like an old religious man, and from that stage of his life until his death, he would continually pray and fast. As a child, Abbán was also knowledgeable in the sacred writings of the Bible, and many men reported of how this child could speak in such a skilful manner.

5. Many people, including Abbán's parents were puzzled by Abbán's unique ability to do such pious religious deeds, which only the learned old religious men were capable of doing. However, this did not parallel with the expectations of Abbán becoming the King of Laigin after his father. Hence, some people wanted to see if Abbán truly did want to become a king. They tested Abbán by referring to him as 'a king' and spoke to him of matters concerning kingship. Abbán instantly showed his dislike towards the idea of becoming king, as he exclaimed that he did not want to become king and he had no interest in such affairs. Instead, he told these people that he wanted to live a life devoted to God. When Abbán's parents heard of this, they tried to talk him out of his preferred career, informing him that he will need to learn to ride a horse for military sports, because when his father is old, he will be needed to protect Laigin from outsiders in battle. However, Abbán replied that he did not want to be forbidden from serving God and carrying out God's practices as was prophesised of him.

6. Upon hearing such words, Abbán's father (the king) was enraged and had Abbán chained up, until he decided to become his father's heir. Abbán's father further noted that if Abbán did not change his mind, that he would have Abbán martyred. However, Abbán cried that because he is a servant of God, no power of this world could separate him from the service of God. The following night, the power of God broke the chains that bound Abbán and thus, freed Abbán. Bystanders who had witnessed this, reported it to the king. Instead of putting Abbán back in chains however, the king showed Abbán emotional empathy, and by the tearful request of Abbán's mother (the queen) to have Abbán freed, his father allowed him to devote his life to God.

7. The author states that Abbán was pre-destined by God to be a father and teacher to many people and he went to church to learn about such matters concerning religion. While this went against the initial wishes of Abbán's parents to keep Abbán under their guardianship, Abbán did not wish to leave them until he had their permission and blessing to do so. One day, the other children who were with Abbán decided to play, and they tried to play with Abbán. Abbán however, chose to worship God instead of playing games. He stood in a location where there were calves belonging to the settlement. Then a weak and thin-looking wolf with her cubs approached Abbán. While the wolf saw the calves, she chose not to instantly kill the calves, but firstly went to Abbán, looking for his permission to do so. Seeing the wolf and her cubs looking so feeble and hungry, Abbán allowed the wolf and her cubs to eat one of the fattened calves. It was a miracle that the wolves did not eat the calves until they had asked permission and equally that the calves did not run away when they saw the wolves. After the children were finished playing however, they asked for their master. They happened to walk past the location in which Abbán allowed the wolf and her cubs to eat a calf, and when the children saw the wolves covered in blood, eating the calf, they immediately blamed Abbán for the cause of this incident. The pastors were particularly fearful because the calf's mother would die without her calf. Abbán stood over the calf and prayed with emotional compassion, asking God to resurrect the calf for its mother, and made the sign of the cross over the calf. Suddenly, the calf's bones were covered in skin and flesh, and to the amazement of all surrounding the event, the calf was resurrected. Those who witnessed this event ran into the village, informing Abbán's father; the king, of this great miracle that Abbán performed. The king and the queen (Abbán's mother) were delighted to hear of this miracle, resulting in Abbán receiving permission from his parents to leave them and to spend the rest of his life serving God.

8. As a result, Abbán's parents sent him to be taught under Bishop Íbar. Bishop Íbar was delighted with his parents' decision, not so much because Abbán was the son of a king and of his sister, but most importantly because Bishop Íbar knew that Abbán was full of the holy spirit and would be a loving father to many of the future servants of God and would also convert many people to Christ. On this

note, the author reminiscences on Abbán's father binding him in chains as a result of turning away from his expected duty in order to serve Christ. The author further explains that these events serve as a good example to flee from the lusts of the world in order to serve the Lord. At the end of this section, the author states that he will now talk about the life of Abbán and the miracles of God that he enacted.

9. The author informs us that Abbán was a twelve-year-old boy when his parents sent him to Beggerin Island to be trained by Bishop Íbar, under the guidance of God. Abbán and Bishop Íbar subsequently worked together for many years. Abbán not only studied the holy scriptures but also many other writings. Bishop Íbar alongside his monks were astonished by the depth of Abbán's knowledge and wisdom. On this note, the author reminds us that this should come as no surprise, given his unique ability, as a child, to quote the divine texts since he was taught by the Holy Spirit. At the time when Abbán went to Bishop Íbar, many holy monks, clerics and nuns also received their training under the direction of Bishop Íbar, who had many monasteries based in many locations throughout Ireland. However, his own personal and most favourite monastery was the aforementioned Beggerin Island, which is walled in by the sea, located in the southern part of Uí Cennselaig. The author informs us that St. Íbar's relics now lie in this monastery and that the relics are nurtured by the Irish, because he converted the Irish heathens to Christianity and because very great miracles continue to be performed by God through him there. The author further informs us however, that Íbar came from Ulster, but that God sent him to Laigin, so that his relics would save the people of Laigin both now and in the time to come.

10. The author warns the brethren to always believe in Jesus Christ, especially in the forthcoming events where he will hear of various things which God did through his servant Abbán. The author further reassures his listeners/readers of the Christian faith by referring to Jesus, when he said 'all things are possible to him who believes'. The author also refers to three Biblical figures Jacob, Peter and John the Apostle, each of whom said that nothing could put doubt in their minds about the Christian faith and nothing could harm anyone so long as one has been a firm believer in the faith, and carried out God's work, from the moment of

one's birth right up to one's death. However, the author then warns us that for those who believe, but also oppose the Christian faith, the following events we are about to read may seem quite challenging to listen to.

(The title 'Walking over the Sea' is written between Sections 11 and 12)

11. One day, back in Beggerin Island, Bishop Íbar decided that he wanted to go on pilgrimage to Rome. As ships and other necessary equipment were being prepared for the journey, Abbán got word of this. He was burning with excitement, hoping that he too, would be going. Abbán went to Bishop Íbar, and bowed his head at Íbar's feet, with sighs and asked Bishop Íbar if he could travel to Rome with him. However, Bishop Íbar said 'no' to him, informing Abbán that he would be needed to supervise his monastery in Beggerin Island, in case Bishop Íbar never returned from the pilgrimage. Abbán did not wish to obey Bishop Íbar's order and certainly did not want to take 'no' for an answer. Bishop Íbar was angry with Abbán and ordered Abbán to go away, and Íbar promised the people that they will not allow Abbán into the boat with him. Bishop Íbar does not, nevertheless, curse Abbán, as Bishop Íbar knew that the Holy Spirit was inspiring the boy (Abbán).

12. As Bishop Íbar and his disciples/crew members were embarking on the ship, Abbán also followed them, but Bishop Íbar, once again, said 'no' to Abbán. As Abbán returned back to the monastery he began to weep. Having noticed this, Bishop Íbar caught up with him, assuring Abbán that he loved him very much, and placed Abbán's head on his chest, so that Abbán would immediately fall asleep. As soon as Abbán did, Bishop Íbar quietly placed Abbán's head on the ground. Bishop Íbar told those staying in the monastery to return home and he quickly embarked on the ship with his disciples and headed for Rome. As Bishop Íbar and his disciples travelled onto Rome, some of the disciples wondered about what to do when Abbán wakes up and discovers they left without him. One hour later, Abbán woke up, looked out to the sea, seeing the ship out in the distance. Abbán's heart was instantly filled with the desire to travel. While Abbán knew that Bishop Íbar had left without him, Abbán was filled with three desires: for pilgrimage, for his master and for the Trinity, and so he kneeled and prayed to God, saying that he is willing to serve God's mercy, which led his people through

the Red Sea and the River Jordan with dry feet, and thus, begged God to allow him to do whatever he wishes. Suddenly, Abbán ran out into the sea, accompanied by angels of God on either side of him, and Abbán continued to walk out into the sea, until he caught up with the ship. Those who remained in Beggerin Island, who witnessed this miracle, prayed to God. Over in the ship, while Bishop Íbar was talking to his disciples, they spotted Abbán running over the sea, accompanied by the angels. When Abbán landed in the ship, Bishop Íbar and his disciples became emotional and allowed him to travel to Rome with them. They then continued their journey to Rome and the first place through which they travelled was Britain.

13. As Abbán, Bishop Íbar and his disciples travelled through the south of Britain, they arrived in a heathen city. As they entered through the entrance of the city, the people of the city were astonished at their manner and speaking habits. A king was in the city, and he ordered his people to have Abbán, Bishop Íbar and his disciples brought to him. Having asked them where they came from and of the purpose of their travels, Bishop Íbar told the king that they are Irish and they are travelling to Rome to pray to the Almighty God. When the heathen king asked who God was, Bishop Íbar diligently preached of God, explaining that he is the creator of Heaven and Earth and all things visible and invisible. When the heathen king asked Bishop Íbar for his opinion on the Gods of his heathen men, Bishop Íbar replied that there is only one God, and that the heathen Gods are not real. Bishop Íbar further explained that those who believe in the Christian God carry out great acts and wonders in his name. Bishop Íbar was then put to the test, as the heathen king then asked him to carry out such an act. The king had a candle, which he asked Bishop Íbar to kindle with his breath. If Bishop Íbar succeeded, the king agreed that he and his people would convert to Christianity. If unsuccessful however, the king threatened to have Bishop Íbar and his disciples beheaded and fed to the dogs and birds. During this time, Abbán was sleeping. As Bishop Íbar tried to kindle the candle, he failed to do so. Finally, they asked for a delay, and returned an unkindled candle to the king, meaning that he was about to have Bishop Íbar and his disciples killed. In the midst of this panic, Bishop Íbar told the king that he would get Abbán to try to kindle the candle, telling the king that Abbán is the servant of God, who walked over the

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sea to catch up with their ship. Bishop Íbar and his disciples waited until Abbán woke up, and when Abbán woke up, they showed him the candle, Abbán made the sign of the cross and breathed in front of the candle, resulting in the emergence of a very bright flame. Even long after the situation had ended, the flame could not be extinguished until all of the candle was burned. While the king and his citizens were shaking with fear after what they just saw, Bishop Bishop Íbar and his disciples gave thanks to God.

14. This city was named 'Abbaindun' meaning 'The Fort/Hill of Abbán' after St. Abbán had kindled a powerful flame on a candle. Around the same time, the heathen king's wife had died after suffering a serious illness. At that point, the king was unaware of his wife's death, until a messenger came and delivered the unfortunate news to him. The king immediately went to see her body, feeling hurt and weeping bitterly. The king then returned to Abbán, Bishop Íbar and his disciples, promising them that he and his people would convert to Christianity if they resurrected his wife. Subsequently, Abbán followed the king to the house in which the wife's body was laid, where Abbán also saw a crowd singing funeral songs. Following the command of the holy Gospel, Abbán greeted her and prayed for the soul to return to the queen's body, and at that instant, the queen woke up. The queen's husband and bystanders were thrilled at the sight, but particularly towards Abbán. At that very hour, the king, his wife and the people of Abingdon were baptised by Abbán. A church was built in Abingdon and churchmen were ordained there by Abbán. Therefore, the king's servant burnt all of the city's past gentile images and gentile history.

15. Next, the author tells of a lion-like beast that lived in a den in an unknown area in Abingdon which besieged the city. The provincial army was unable to defeat the beast and three hundred people had already been killed in an attempt to kill the beast. Those who had just become Christians made the complaint to Abbán, and Abbán was directed to the place in which the beast remained. While everyone else was afraid to go near the beast, Abbán confronted the beast. And with the sign of the cross, Abbán ordered the beast to die. This instantly happened, and the people of Abingdon were joyful to know that the beast was

dead. The people were firm in their faith and returned thanks to God and to Abbán.

16. Afterwards, the men of Abingdon told Abbán about these venomous beasts that dwelled in a lake in Abingdon, which killed a hundred men besides animals uncounted. Abbán followed the men to this lake, but only Abbán walked into the lake. As the violent beasts approached Abbán however, they instantly became shy and docile creatures standing at the feet of Abbán. Abbán brought the creatures to the deepest part of the lake and Abbán tied them there to ensure that they dwelled there forever, even to the end of the world. The author then connects the story-line with his contemporary time, by stating that from that very moment right up until today, the beasts were never to be seen again and thus, none in Abingdon was ever again hurt. Coming back to the story-line however, the author tells us that the people of Abingdon were relieved to see Abbán returning from the lake unharmed. After receiving Abbán's blessing, Abbán alongside Bishop Íbar and his disciples left the Christian worshippers of Abingdon and continued on to Rome. After fulfilling their own vows in Rome, Abbán, Bishop Íbar and his disciples returned to Ireland.

17. The author notes that throughout Abbán's entire life, he travelled three times to Rome in the name of Christ. On one of these occasions, Abbán was praying by a shore. He then saw a huge wave from the middle of the sea approaching him. Abbán tried to reassure himself of his safety by recalling that the lord told him not to be intimidated by the wave. However, this deep swelling in the sea and the size of this oncoming wave high on the hilly regions truly terrified Abbán. This wave dragged Abbán out into the middle of the sea, where a multitude of devil-like creatures appeared to him, shouting rude words at him and telling him that the wave would swallow up his body. These creatures were angry with Abbán for converting their people in Abingdon, for the killing and bounding of the dangerous beasts and for the destruction of the heathen images of that city. However, Abbán did not respond to their threats; instead he began to sing psalms. Having received no response, the creatures surrounded Abbán and threatened to kill him. Then Abbán said to them that they are inferior because he is the servant of God, and thus, they will never be allowed to make such a decision. Then, an

angel of God appeared, telling the devil-like creatures to go back to the depths of hell where they will abide forever, and consequently expelled them. Afterwards, the angel told Abbán that God will say to all mariners who call upon Abbán's name, the following prayer three times in the name of the Trinity: "The Coracle of Abbán on the water, and the fair company of Abbán in it". This prayer will ensure that no mariner sinks on voyage. Abbán thanked God for making this promise, which freed him from the sea. Then, the angel told Abbán that he would live for 310 years. The angel also prophesised that Abbán will found many monasteries in honour of the Lord, and that Abbán would go to Rome a third time. On this third occasion, Abbán will be ordained by Pope Gregory, the father of the Apostolic seat, and then return to Ireland, where many places will be under Abbán's guardianship which is from Christ. Finally, the angel then returned Abbán from the water to the land. From that point, Abbán embarked on his second journey to Rome and then returned to Ireland.

18. On another occasion, Abbán, Bishop Íbar and the senior St. Patrick were in a boat sailing on Loch Garman. Suddenly, a beast-like monster appeared out of the sea. The monster was ginormous, as its size extended high up into the clouds. The author describes the monster as having one hundred different head forms, two hundred eyes and two hundred ears. The monster was making huge waves so that Abbán, Bishop Íbar and Patrick were almost engulfed by the very large sea, which flows up into the River Slaney every day. When the monster spotted them, they were terrified. As Bishop Íbar and Patrick failed in their attempt to defeat the monster, Abbán modestly sat there in silence. Suddenly, the voice of God spoke to them, informing Bishop Íbar and Patrick that Abbán is meant to defeat this monster because of his prayer for mariners and thus, his special powers over the sea. As Abbán made the sign of the Cross over the monster, this instantly killed the monster. Due to the ginormous size of the monster, part of it fell on the earth whilst the other part fell into the lake. Before progressing on to the implications of this miracle Abbán enacted, the author notes that while the lake contains salty water, he is uncertain whether it is a lake or an enclosed stretch of sea. Afterwards, Bishop Íbar and Patrick thanked God and Abbán for this. When they attempted to look at the heads of the monster, of which they were fearful, they discovered that it was the devil disguised as a monster.

19. The author then tells us about the story of Abbán embarking on his third journey to Rome. Abbán spotted three equipped boats. There were fifty clerics in each boat. Abbán hopped into one of these boats. While recognising that the clerics in neither of the ships had a leader, a great storm came and the sea was in commotion from top to bottom. As they prayed to God, the storm instantly disappeared, at which point they were surrounded by sunny weather. However, as the clerics proceeded to sail, they discovered that the ships were unable to move. In the midst of their distress, the voice of God, came to them, explaining that the reason they were unable to sail was because the clerics did not have a leader, like Moses. The voice of God then told the clerics to choose Abbán as their leader. The clerics were able to identify Abbán as an angel was standing over him in the boat. The clerics promised God that they would always accept Abbán as their leader, and they continued their journey on to Rome.

20. When they landed in Rome, a kind and holy man, who was used to receiving Christ's pilgrims came to greet them with joy, and brought them to the house of guests which he owned. The other monks noticed how the man's steward honoured Abbán so dearly. They asked why, particularly since Abbán was quite a young man who did not wear excellent garments. The steward explained to the guests that an angel pointed him out to me, and that is why I do as I do. Furthermore, in the view of these guests and other monks, Pope Gregory ordained Abbán a priest and an abbot. Subsequently, Abbán and his disciples left.

21. However, before Abbán left for Ireland, he spotted two leaders, each with an army preparing to fight each other. They were standing on the right-hand side of the monastery of St. Peter. When Abbán saw the lances poised for battle, Abbán felt distressed and fell to the ground in an attempt to avoid them. He prayed to God and made the sign of the cross over the leaders. As a result, the leaders and their armies threw down their weapons and kissed each other. They became life-time friends as a result of Abbán's blessing. Afterwards, Abbán and his disciples returned to Ireland.

22. When Abbán returned to Ireland, he completed a lot of missionary work throughout the country. The first region in which he began his work was the province of Connacht. He founded three monasteries in the plain of Cé, which is in the Field of Trudi. Abbán also had many Christian men helping him build the monasteries. After these men had completed sufficient work for Abbán, he left them behind to man the monasteries he had founded. The author then goes into great detail on Abbán's monastic career in the province of Munster. In a region called 'Corco Duibhne', which is in the west of Munster, Abbán built a monastery called 'Cell Achaid Conchinn'. In this monastery, he prophesised of an abbot St. Fínán before he was born, which later came true. Next, Abbán journeyed through Muscraige and to Eoganacht. In the territory of Muscraige, Abbán built a monastery called 'Huisneach'. Abbán then surrendered this place and monastery to the virgin St. Gobnait. Next, Abbán arrived in the Uí Lythain dynastic region, where Abbán built a church called 'Cell Cruimthir', which is near the city of Cul Collinge. Abbán left his disciples here and travelled through the borderline of the Desi and Feara Muighe. Nearby the Desi borderline and Feara Muighe, Abbán built a church in the city of Brí Gobann called 'Cell na Marbhan', meaning 'The Church of the Dead'. Abbán built this church as a tomb for the dead, where the faithful men were left behind. Abbán then travelled into the north side of a mountain called 'Crott'. At the foot of this great mountain, he built a great monastery which is called 'Cluain Aird Mobeboc'. Abbán moved on from there and in the same region, he built another monastery in a place called 'Cluain Finglaisse'. Before telling us about the additional places in which Abbán carried out his missionary work, the author refers back to Cluain Aird Mobeboc, telling us about a religious man named Becán. Becán lived a remarkable life; he was always in tears, fasting, praying, genuflecting and also guided at night vigils. Becán made a stone cross for himself, and every day, early in the morning, Becán would crucify himself to that cross, regardless of the weather. Becán would sing the entire psalter, which gave him great honour. Becán enacted numerous miracles in the name of the Lord throughout his entire life. The author also informs us that Becán's monastery was also called 'Cell na Der', meaning 'The Church in which we Lament'. This is because people who ask God for tears of repentance receive them there through the merits of Becán. The author then turns the focus back to Abbán, informing us that Abbán built monasteries in a place

called 'Cluain Finglaisse', which pierces through the River Siur in the west of the plain of Femin. The author further informs us that a monastery in the plain of Femin was built by Abbán and is called 'Cluain Conbruin'. Consequently, Abbán went to the northern region of Munster and from there, continued his journey on to Éile.

23. When Abbán arrived in Éile however, he discovered that the people were still heathens. The people were in a single assembly with their leader. Abbán preached to them about matters concerning heaven and urged them to convert to the faith of God. The leader of the heathen city then asked him who God was. Abbán explained that he is the creator of Heaven and Earth, the sea and all things that are in them and he is the creator of every day and we carry out his acts. The leader then wanted to put Abbán to the test and see if he really did know his God. The leader pointed at a long stone on the ground in front of Abbán, and asked Abbán if he knew whether the largest part of the stone is embedded into the ground or is above the ground. Abbán replied that the stone is equally in the ground and above the ground. The king immediately ordered people of Éile to start digging to see if Abbán was correct. These people were sweating from the labour of digging up the stone. As the stone was brought forward to the king, it was found that Abbán's guess was correct. Then the people began to wonder about God and subsequently converted to the Christian faith as Abbán baptised them in the name of God. The people gave Abbán a village called 'Raith Becain' which means 'The Court of Becan'. They offered it to Abbán as a reward for his good doing. Immediately however, an angel appeared to Abbán, warning him not to keep the wealth, and that Abbán should give the goods to the poor but to keep the land in the service of God i.e. for a church. The people of Éile promised always to serve Abbán up to the end of the world. Abbán blessed these people and subsequently became the patron of this nation.

24. Afterwards, a herdsman made a complaint to Abbán about a venomous cat-like monster that dwelled in Éile. The beast had a fiery head, a flaming tail with huge teeth and had the longest hooves ever seen. The herdsman begged Abbán to rescue the people of Éile and himself from this monster, as it had killed far too many men and cattle. The herdsman further cried that the monster is destroying

this region, and their weapons bounced off the beast like diamonds. As the herdsman pointed at the road which would lead one to the exact location in which the monster is based, Abbán replied that he knew where exactly to go. Abbán then reassured the herdsman that now until the end of time, the beast will not hurt any man. As Abbán was given bindings, he walked to the banks of the River Brosna, where the fiery and ferocious beast met him. However, as soon as the monster laid eyes on Abbán, the monster behaved like a domestic cat that was happy of the arrival of their owner, and he came to Abbán, bowing at Abbán's feet. The people of Éile were amazed with what they had just witnessed, and Abbán caught the monster and brought the monster to a nearby lake, where he chained up the monster. Only a miraculous sign of the monster appears once every seventh year. Abbán's resolution filled the entire region with much joy.

25. Another time, there was a rich, but very old man of noble class in Éile. He married his wife at an old age and the wife bore him a daughter. This was a problem for the old man, because he needed to have a son to seek his heir and the old man did not have any brothers nor grandsons. The old man and his wife were drawn to the attention of Abbán. When the old man explained his situation to Abbán, Abbán granted him a son. The old man however, laughed, saying that he is too old to have any more children. Abbán nevertheless, explained to the old man that he will soon see the power of the Lord. Abbán baptised the old man's daughter; but as he took the child out of the pool of baptism, the child came out as a boy. Hence, the old man now had a son, meaning that he had an heir. The old man and other bystanders, were thrilled with the miracle Abbán had enacted. The old man then told Abbán that his son's kingdom will rule the region of Éile. The author informs us that these predicted events came true. Afterwards, Abbán preached around the region building churches. Abbán was so fond of this region that he wanted to spend the rest of his life here. However, an angel of the Lord promptly directed him in the direction of Laigin, which was to be the chosen region of Abbán's resurrection. Abbán blessed the people of Éile, who wept as they said goodbye to him. They did not however, prevent him from going to Laigin.

26. Then a good-hearted man who diligently cherished Abbán came to him, warning him about a pagan member of the royal family of Éile who was planning to kill Abbán. This tyrant had a reputation for snatching and killing people and living in robbery. The man further warned Abbán that the tyrant had sent out spies to find Abbán and advised Abbán to remain exactly where he is for the next few days, until the man finds Abbán an escape route. The man explained that while soldiers could guide Abbán to a neighbouring kingdom, he did not want men to be killed in Abbán's sight. Abbán's response to the man was a reference to how understanding and sweet he was for bringing this information to him. However, Abbán explained that he is already aware of this tyrant, and also told the man that this tyrant will be chosen as a son of election (to be saved). Abbán gave his blessing to this man and went his own way. When the tyrant and his crowd of soldiers met Abbán, he prepared his weapons. Abbán's companions became very afraid and ran away and hid. As Abbán had prophesised long ago, the tyrant put his arms on the ground and walked towards Abbán in a humble manner. The tyrant bent before Abbán, praying with tears and hoping to be baptised. Abbán baptised the tyrant. As Abbán said to the aforementioned good man, this tyrant was subsequently immersed in baptism. The tyrant became a monk of Abbán's and stayed with Abbán. Abbán then told him that his sons of sons will be powerful leaders that will rule powerfully over Abbán's monastery, the one in which he will be buried and await resurrection. The author then claims that he himself (the author) is a descendant of these sons. The author further claims that he wrote the Life of the most blessed Abbán and is a descendant of the former tyrant's children of whom Abbán had prophesied.

27. After these events, Abbán, alongside his disciples entered the Uí Bairrche dynasty located in the ends of Laigin. The people of this region greeted Abbán joyfully. Abbán was grateful for this greeting, and his arrival resulted in people of this region being healed from many different diseases and perfected by miracles. Abbán then left Uí Bairrche and moved to the Uí Buide dynasty, where he built a great monastery for the sake of his honour and he called the church 'Cell Abbain', which means 'The Church of Abbán'.

28. After spending some time in this region, an angel came to Abbán, telling him to go to Uí Cennselaig where he should remain, and this is the place where he hears a heavenly bell after the sun falls in the field of Mide. This will be the place of his resurrection. Abbán also built more monasteries and churches in other places located within and around Uí Cennselaig. After blessing Cell Abbain and establishing holy men to stay here, an angel pointed at the exact spot in Uí Cennselaig where Abbán would move to the heavenly kingdom. Some of the great churches and monasteries Abbán built in the region of Uí Cennselaig include a great monastery by the River Barrow called 'Ros Mic Treoin'. The author further explains to us that this is where the body of St. Éimhin lies. Other monasteries include Drum Cain Cellaig and Camaross, all of which Abbán built in honour of the Lord.

29. The author then tells us that he will now talk about the miracles in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit that the senior Abbán enacted from when he lived in the city of Mag Arnaide right up until his death.

30. One day, Abbán alongside his disciples arrived at the River Barrow. They stood on the river bank because they found no carriages to transport them across the river. Then, Abbán stepped away from the disciples and began to pray. As soon as the disciples spotted him, they also noticed the river dividing itself into two parts and then becoming dry and shallow. The upper part of the river had risen, whilst the lower part remained still. Abbán then ordered all of the disciples to walk in front of him as they crossed the river with dry feet. Abbán then came last. Amongst the crowd of disciples however was an infant boy. While everyone was crossing the river, the infant boy saw the most beautiful stones in the river bed. The boy stood behind Abbán collecting these stones. However, none of the disciples were guarding the infant as Abbán had told them all not to look behind them when crossing. Afterwards however, when the river descended, it descended into the place in which the infant stood, which flooded with water and the infant was unable to get out of there. Since none was informed about the infant, Abbán and his disciples continued to walk on. However, when the

disciples noticed that the child could not be found at mealtime, they realised that the child had not been with them all of this time. The last they had saw of him was when he went down to the river. Abbán warned the disciples that the infant boy is guarded by God and on the following day, he would rescue the boy alive and well from the river. When the following day arrived, Abbán pulled the infant boy from the river. Not only was the infant boy safe, but his clothes were dry because the water had miraculously not touched him, as the angel of the Lord had comforted the infant all this time. Afterwards, the boy himself told them how he was unable to cross the water until Abbán had rescued him and that the boy remained dry-shod. All who had heard of this also honoured Abbán.

31. On another day, in Abbán's town in the Region of Ronan, shepherds were guarding a herd of cattle. The shepherds then decided to play games, and subsequently neglected the cattle, saying that Abbán could guard his own cattle and his monks' cattle. Then wolves came to attack the cattle. Meanwhile, Abbán was sitting amongst his brothers in a church and abruptly shouted imperatively 'desist and guard'. His brothers were unsure why Abbán said these words and what exactly he meant. The brothers asked him about what he had just said. Abbán replied to them saying that he had stopped the harsh from killing the meek. While the audience at this point, knows that Abbán seems to have miraculously witnessed the shepherds neglecting to herd the cattle, we know that Abbán's brothers are still unsure about what Abbán is saying. At the same time, the brothers did not dare to show their uncertainty of what Abbán was saying. The author makes clear to us that Abbán was talking directly to the wolves, warning them to stay away from the cattle, and the wolves did so under the guardianship of Abbán for the rest of the saint's life. Abbán then informed the entire Region of Ronan that these wolves would herd the cattle under his guardianship. In this region, Abbán become known for guarding the wolves who herded his flock. Then, Abbán's brothers understood what Abbán meant when he said 'desist and guard'. The brothers saw that their elder (Abbán) had fulfilled the biblical prophecy that the wolf shall lie down with the lamb. Lastly, the author informs us that no shepherd was ever forced to herd the cattle, but only a wolf. From that stage onwards no Christian ever hurt the wolves and no wolf ever attacked the cattle.

32. Another time, Abbán visited his holy men in the region of Mide, where the people greeted Abbán joyfully. The people of Mide asked Abbán to protect them. In the region of Mide, Abbán also founded two monasteries; one in the east of Mide, which is called 'Cell Ailbe'. In this monastery, the blessed virgin Segnith cared for nuns, under the management of Abbán. The other monastery is located in the north of Mide, which is called 'Cell Abbain', where Abbán still enacts the greatest of God's miracles. Afterwards, Abbán visited the most blessed abbot Finnian, who honourably respected Abbán. The author further informs us that Abbán baptised Finnian when he was an infant.

33. On another occasion, there was a man named Cormac, who was the son of Diarmait and king of the Uí Cennselaig dynasty. Cormac wanted to plunder and take Abbán's farm in Camross and drive him out of the farm. As Cormac's guards plundered Abbán's farm, Cormac stood in the street. Two of Cormac's guards stole the greatest milk vat belonging to Abbán. They took this huge vat of milk and thrust a bar through two loops and carried the milk vat to the street to Cormac. However, when the agents put the vat down, they were unable to remove the palms of their hands from the bar. Cormac and the rest of his agents became very afraid because they then knew that God had seen their wrong doing. A message was sent to Abbán about the situation. When Abbán confronted Cormac, he bowed his head down before Abbán. Abbán then realised the two agent's hands from the bar. Seeing this miracle, Cormac and his agents unanimously offered to give Abbán whatever he desired, promising him that they would take him as their patron. As a result, this was fulfilled and Cormac gave property called 'Find Mag', meaning 'The Bright Plain', to the senior saint Abbán. Cormac and his agents then left Camross having received Abbán's blessing.

34. On another day, the senior Abbán, alongside his 150 men were returning to Abbán's monastery. Since night had fallen, they were unable to find their way back to Abbán's monastery. The road was dark and the night had become dark and cold, and there was also a dense fog. The younger men feared that the elderly men would be overwhelmed by the cold temperature as the night was also threatened by rain. Suddenly, an angel of God from Heaven appeared to them.

The angel gave Abbán a burning candle that was as bright as gold. As Abbán held the candle in his hand, Abbán's 150 men followed him as Abbán walked along. The candle not only provided Abbán and his people with light for the journey, but also illuminated a lot of space around them. When they safely arrived in the city, Abbán went into his church and placed the candle on the alter. Abbán then stood before the altar praying. Then Abbán and his men gave thanks to God for this candle which guided them home and they sang tenderly to God.

35. Next, the author tells us about a retreat which Abbán and one of his followers would often live in, where they would fast and pray. This retreat was called 'Dísert Cenndubhain', into which Abbán and his brother would enter. This retreat was named after his follower Dubán. Dubán lived there and cared for this retreat all of his life, even after Abbán died. Wild animals would come out of the woods to see Abbán and none of them ever harmed any other animal. Every day, angels of God would come to visit Abbán and speak to him in this solitary place.

36. On another day in this retreat, Abbán was reading the Gospel. This book (the Gospel) happened to be opened in front of him. On that day, Abbán was returning to his monastery, but he forgot to bring the book with him. That night, it snowed heavily on the entire region of Ireland. Miraculously however, God prevented any snow drop from falling on this, not even on the stone on which the book was laid, nor in the court where the book and stone were. Early the following morning however, the senior Abbán woke up, feeling very grieved about leaving the book in the snow, assuming the snow would have ruined the book. Abbán sent messengers to look for the book, and there in the court, they found the book in a dry and untouched state. The messengers instantly returned the book back to Abbán. Abbán was delighted to know that God prevented the book from being destroyed by the snow, and Abbán and bystanders gave thanks to God.

37. Another time, there was a noble man from the border of Ossory, who committed robbery. Alongside his agents, this man seized a large herd of Abbán's pigs. This thief was the son of St. Bercán's sister. Abbán, surrounded by his monks, then visited St. Bercán, explaining to him what had happened. Bercán respected Abbán's need to protect his livestock, and both Abbán and Bercán confronted

the thief. Bercán asked his nephew to return Abbán's pigs. This thief was an evildoer and fearing that Abbán had placed a curse upon him, the thief attempted to stab Abbán. Abbán and Bercán were both at close hand as the thief reached out to stab Abbán, resulting in the stabbing of Bercán instead, and thus, his near-death. The thief attempted to stab Abbán a second time, but his hand became withered. Bercán however, was almost dying as a result of his injury, and the sight of blood everywhere, deeply saddened Abbán. Trusting in God, Abbán put his hand on Bercán's wound to stop the blood, and the wound closed miraculously leaving only a scar. In that very same hour, Bercán got up as if he had never been wounded in the first place. As the thief saw his uncle arise, he instantly bowed his head down to the feet of Abbán and Bercán. The thief was required to do penance according to the commands of both saints. Afterwards, the thief's hand was healed and he was purified. Abbán and Bercán developed a powerful brotherhood bond, as did their monks. Abbán and Bercán also shared similar brotherhood with Saints Brendan, Moling, Flannán and Munnu. On different occasions, as Abbán would return to these four saints, they would also kiss and greet each other. Many other people have also confirmed of this brotherhood.

38. On another occasion, there was a priest, who lost his voice, resulting in him becoming mute. The priest's friends brought him to Abbán in order to be cured. Abbán reached out to the priest and ordered him to eat an apple which he held in his hand. As the priest began to eat the apple, his voice instantly came back and the priest began to sing psalms. The priest then returned home, gifting his land and his possessions to God and Abbán.

39. On another occasion, there was a leper, who heard the miracles of God enacted by Abbán. As the leper approached Abbán, he prayed over the leper, asking God to clean the leper, sealing the sign of the cross over him. Suddenly, the leper was cleansed of his leprosy, appearing well and healthy. He then glorified Abbán and gave thanks to God.

40. The author then draws our attention to a location called 'Mag na Taibse', meaning 'The Field of the Phantoms'. In this location, there lived a paralysed man, who was also blind, lame, maimed, deaf and mute. When he was brought to Abbán, the saint was moved. The people who brought this man with multiple ailments to Abbán, asked Abbán to save him with his powers from God. Abbán stated that this man will speak, walk, hear, see, have two hands and that his entire body will be versed in beauty. Suddenly, this man who used to have multiple ailments appeared handsome, having all of his senses, both of his hands, and a full functional body. This man and all of the bystanders honoured Abbán through whom God had carried out this miracle. God had allowed Abbán to perform these six miracles; one: light for the blind, two: steps for those who limp, three: hearing for the deaf, four: speech for the mute, five: hands for the maimed and the sixth miracle are for those who are deformed. This man who received these six miracles from Abbán left in beauty.

41. On another day, there were two leaders, each accompanied by their own army, preparing to fight in a location called 'Achadh Huabhair', which means 'The Ford of Pride'. Abbán happened to be travelling through this location and when he spotted them, Abbán instantly told them that by fighting, they are doing the Devil's work and that they should immediately come to peaceful terms and not enact the battle of the Devil. Suddenly, the leaders and their armies were unable to move and they were in this motionless state for a long period of time. Only when they made peace with each other did they regain their mobility. At first, the leaders and their armies were unsure of what had happened to them. However, when they saw Abbán coming towards them, they realised that it was a miracle enacted by Abbán that prevented them from fighting. From the bottom of their hearts, the leaders and their armies thanked Abbán and God and gladly returned to their own places.

42. Next, the author tells us of a famous craftsman named 'Gobán', who was skilled in all wood-making and stone-making in Ireland. The author further informs us that Gobán's fame was known until the end of time. However, many other saints were displeased with the excessive fee that Gobán would charge for the work he carried out. As a result, Gobán was blinded. One day, Abbán called him, telling

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Gobán that he wanted him to construct a building in honour of God. Gobán however, explained to Abbán that he is unable to do so because he is blind. Abbán then told Gobán that he would give him back his sight, but only long enough to build him a church. When Gobán was given his eyesight, he built a church for Abbán. After he built the church however, Gobán lost his eyesight again.

43. On another day, Abbán was by a lake called 'Loch na Corr', which means 'The Lake of the Cranes'. Here, a mute man was led to Abbán and when Abbán saw the mute, he prayed to God and blessed this mute. Then Abbán turned directly to the mute, telling him to open his mouth and speak in the name of Jesus Christ. The mute immediately opened his mouth and spoke, thanks to God and his magnificent servant Abbán.

44. Another time, a shepherd approached Abbán in his church, informing the saint about a beautiful cow in among the herd, that was unable to have calves. As Abbán was sitting in his church, he informed the shepherd that in the current year, she will give birth to two calves of gentle nature that will remain there tame. Abbán finally informed the shepherd that when he dies however, the calves will not remain on earth long after. The author informs us that this prophecy came true, only the calves were oxen when it happened. However, the author further explains that he will tell us more about this prophecy at the end of Abbán's Life because it is more appropriate to do so.

45. Another time, the most blessed abbot St. Colm Cille visited Abbán, with the intention of being assured by Abbán that the monks in his (Colm Cille's) charge would be saved. Hence, Colm Cille asked Abbán to discover God's will for these monks, because Colm Cille knew that the Angel of God spoke to Abbán daily. Since Colm Cille asked many times, Abbán nevertheless agreed that he would pray diligently to God for these monks. Later on, Abbán was in a secret place where he would pray to God and an angel of the Lord used to come to Abbán, Abbán prayed from the bottom of his heart for Colm Cille's monks to God, in this secret place. At that time, Colm Cille knew that Abbán had left to pray, and so Colm Cille went out to follow Abbán with the intention of finding him praying. When Colm Cille found Abbán praying in his secret place, he witnessed

an angel appearing to Abbán. The angel told Abbán that he had prayed enough. Abbán then asked for Colm Cille's monks to be saved. The angel said that they would obtain rest (in Heaven), and that the angel had been sent to stop Abbán praying, because Abbán had prayed harder than his physical strength could endure. The angel then left Abbán and Abbán gave thanks to God. Suddenly however, Colm Cille went back to the monks, reporting to them that he witnessed an angel speaking to Abbán. When Abbán returned to Colm Cille and the monks, Abbán sat down among the brothers, and Colm Cille asked Abbán what God had told him about the monks and Colm Cille. However, while Abbán did not want to tell Colm Cille, he nevertheless told Colm Cille and the monks that the angel told him that God will have mercy upon all of Colm Cille's monks. Then Colm Cille asked Abbán why he hid away from himself and his monks when he spoke to the angel. Colm Cille subsequently begged Abbán not to be angry with him for secretly watching him converse with the angel. All of Abbán's and Colm Cille's monks then glorified Abbán, and both Abbán and Colm Cille thanked God. The monks then rejoiced and subsequently returned to their own homes.

46. The author then tells us about a time when Abbán visited St. Brendan the navigator. At the time, St. Brendan had just returned from seeking the land of promise. When Abbán asked him about what he saw in the ocean, St. Brendan, under the command of an angel of God, told Abbán of the miraculous things that he found in the ocean. A sacred conversation between Abbán and Brendan endured for several days, in which angels would come to visit the two saints. The author then tries to demonstrate that Abbán, Brendan, the monks mentioned in the previous section and other saints mentioned in Abbán's Life are prime examples of people who always remained firm in the Christian faith throughout their entire life. After Abbán and Brendan prayed for one another, they gave each other a kiss to symbolise their inner peace, with the blessing of God.

47. Next, the author talks about a particular man who lived in a location called 'Senboth Ard' (which means 'Old High Cottage') in the Uí Cennselaig region, near Abbán's monastery. This man was named 'Conall' and he was a pious man and also a friend of Abbán's. One day, Conall's enemies confronted the man and stabbed him and consequently killed him. Conall's sons and slaves carried

his butchered body home. Conall's wife and children then sent for the senior Abbán to ask that his disciples come to fetch Conall's body to the saint for burial in Abbán's monastery, because that was Conall's wish expressed when he was alive. When Abbán heard that Conall was killed, his heart was filled with pain. Abbán was now a very old man, and a great crowd of people came to fetch Conall's body for Abbán's monastery. When Conall's wife and children told other large family households about Conall's death, they all began to wail and cry in front of Abbán. This made Abbán feel very miserable and the saint wept with them. Abbán cried out to God, asking why Conall, who was such a good man had to suffer such a horrible painful death. Suddenly, Abbán told everyone to be quiet and he went to the place where Conall's body was currently laid out. Abbán prayed to God with all of his heart and turned to Conall's body telling Conall to rise and speak, because God had given Abbán the power to save Conall. Instantly, Conall began to move and eventually, he got up and all of his wounds were healed. Conall then explained that angels and demons had fought over his soul, when a supreme angel arrived and announced that God had given orders to save your life because Abbán had asked God to bring him back to life. Then his soul was returned to his body and he came back to life through Abbán's prayer. Conall then offered to give his sons, daughters, slaves and also his own region to God and Abbán. The author then informs us that Conall's seed will service the monastery of Abbán up until the present day of the author of Abbán's Life.

48. The author then tells us that he will stop talking about the miracles of God that Abbán enacted. Indeed, the author acknowledges that there are so many other miracles Abbán enacted, but our lives are too short to talk about all of Abbán's miracles, because Abbán lived to a very old age. No doubt, every single day Abbán carried out some act that was worthy of writing down. Now however, the author notes that he wishes to talk briefly Abbán's death and burial.

49. Towards the final stages of Abbán's life, Abbán knew that his death was soon to come. He told some of his brothers and monks of the day in which he would ascend to the heavenly divine kingdom. However, the first person Abbán conveyed the day and hour of his death to, was the provost or head manager of his monastery. The provost was originally from Cell Abbáin in north Laigin, and

because Abbán had founded Cell Abbáin first, the provost felt that Abbán's body should rightfully be buried in Cell Abbáin as opposed to the saint's monastery in south Laigin. Since the provost knew the exact hour of Abbán's death, he decided to conduct a plan to steal Abbán's body and to bring it to Cell Abbáin. The provost sent messengers to Cell Abbáin, ordering the population to meet up with all of the people of north Laigin, to talk about the plan to seize Abbán's body and take it to Cell Abbáin when the saint ascends to Heaven. All of them were happy to go ahead with this plan. Next the author draws are attention to a pair of oxen which were owned by the provost. The author further explains that he had referred to these animals a few sections earlier in the Life of Abbán. He explains that the pair of oxen operated in Abbán's monastery and that Abbán had prophesised about them before they were born. The author further notes that the oxen were meek creatures and it was never necessary to force them to work, as they would do so of their own free will and that Abbán loved them very much. When the night of Abbán's death came about, the provost attached the two oxen onto a cart. Since the provost was aware of the exact hour of Abbán's ascension to Heaven, he ordered all of the monks and brothers of Abbán's monastery to go to their beds and sleep. However, the only people the provost ordered to stay awake were those who were aware of and involved with the plan to bring Abbán's body to Cell Abbáin. Afterwards, angels of God came to Abbán and Abbán's soul ascended amidst a choir of angels, to the kingdom of Heaven. Instantly, the provost and his helpers grabbed Abbán's body and placed it into the cart drawn by the pair of oxen. The author informs us the oxen knew that they were removing Abbán's body and taking it to Cell Abbáin, as they proceeded towards the north of Laigin. As the provost and his helpers travelled on the cart to Cell Abbáin, a host of angels came down from heaven, singing sweetly and rays of light, like the morning sun, shone down from them, which illuminated the entire journey until Abbán's body was buried in the ground. No doubt, the provost and his helpers wasted no time as they travelled quickly to Cell Abbáin.

50. Back in Abbán's south Laigin monastery, the brothers and monks began to wake up. Since they were also aware that Abbán had died that night, they hurried to the place where they had left him, but could not find him. They searched all of the cloisters in the monastery, but the saint was nowhere to be found. Knowing that the provost was nowhere to be seen either, they then realised that he had brought Abbán's body to his own big kingdom. The brothers and monks were devastated about this, and they shook all of the church bells ordering all of the people of the city to gather around, informing them that the provost had brought Abbán's body to Cell Abbáin. The entire city was also devastated to hear such news. The author then clarifies that the monks and secular people were even more sad about the fact that Abbán's body had been stolen rather than the fact that he had just died. This is because they knew that if they had the relics of Abbán, they would be able to free themselves from harm's way and that they could gain what they wanted through Abbán's relics. Therefore, the city made a plan to bring back Abbán's body. They sent messengers all around the region of south Laigin, in the hope that the rest of the south Laigin region would help the city fight for getting Abbán's body back. Immediately, an armed host of people came to the city, prepared to fight with the monks and brothers for Abbán, and everybody in the entire region of south Laigin followed the large army, prepped with a lot of power to fight. The other monastery however, had formed an army with the rest of north Laigin and they were more prepared for battle than the south Laigin army. As both armies met, the holy monks, clerics and wives of the sages of both north and south Laigin sensed great danger and ordered both armies to wait in their position. Abbán's body was placed precisely in middle of both armies and they were ordered by the monks, clerics and sages to negotiate in order to make peace with each other. Both armies quarrelled for quite some time and were unable to come to a peaceful conclusion. The north Laigin army argued that Abbán blessed Cell Abbáin and accepted them as the first people of his in Laigin and thus, they accepted Abbán as their patron for eternity. All men, wives, sons, daughters, servants, maids and even new-borns put their hopes in Abbán for every problem they encounter. The north Laigin army further warned the south Laigin army that they would rather die before they let him go.

51. The south Laigin army replied and stated their case, arguing that Abbán had been sent to them by God and lived with them for many years. They also argued that he built many monasteries and cloisters in their region and that he performed many miracles to God amongst them. Finally, the south Laigin army warned that they too, would all rather die before surrendering Abbán's body. Tensions subsequently began to rise between both armies, the leaders and fighters of both armies were inflamed and rose to fight in great rage. The monks and clerics on both sides however, were not allowed on the battlefield. Sensing such tension, the monks and clerics stepped back and began to cry, asking God why he is about to allow such slaughter to unfold over Abbán, who in fact prevented such battles and was God's servant. Nevertheless, both the north and south Laigin armies drew closer in great rage and enmity and rushed to fight bitterly over Abbán's body.

52. Suddenly, the oxen attached to the cart caught everyone's attention, as they formed a duplicate, meaning that there were then two identical carts, two bodies of Abbán, and two pairs of oxen, identical in colour and size. One cart carrying one body of Abbán, attached to one pair of oxen went to Cell Abbáin, whilst the other went to Mag Arnaide. This miracle of God which the oxen had enacted instantly pacified the growing tension between the north and south Laigin armies. All of the people of north and south Laigin were very joyful of this and they glorified the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and praised Abbán and they returned to their monasteries. Most importantly however, this miracle meant that both Mag Arnaide and Cell Abbáin had the relics of Abbán. Anybody who had any type of ailment in either of these cities were drawn to Abbán's relics and the people of these cities were healed. The bodies of Abbán were buried with due honour under hymns and praises after mass had been said honourably. Moreover, after the oxen had formed a duplicate, they walked through all of the people and walked around them in three circles, they mooed so loud that it was heard throughout the entire monastery (Cell Abbáin?) and the oxen ran to the nearest river. Many people from the monasteries of north and south Laigin followed the oxen. However, the oxen had disappeared into the fords of these rivers and never re-appeared to anyone. The author then explains that each of these fords are called Áth Daim Dha Cheilt, which means 'The Ford of the Two Hidden Oxen'.

Suddenly, the people realised that the oxen were the two calves that Abbán said would not live with them much longer after his death. The author then refers to his contemporary time, informing us that many uncountable miracles continued to be performed at the relics of Abbán.

53. In the final section, the author talks about Abbán's eulogy. Reminiscing on Abbán's life, the author tells of how Abbán was a humble and wise man and of pure mind and body, and he was a vessel filled with the holy spirit. The author also uses some animal metaphors, comparing Abbán's divine virtue and power to that of a lion and his gentleness and delicacy to a dove. Abbán is as cunning as a snake in opposing the devil's plots which he endured throughout his life. The author then informs us that Abbán was a very old man when he died and completed divine commands from the moment he was born right up until his death. The author reminisces on some of the key examples, including his destruction of heathen images, the conversion of heathens to the Christian faith, baptisms that he carried out in the name of the Father, the son and the holy spirit, the founding of many churches, and the numerous types of ailments he miraculously healed. After all of these miraculous acts Abbán performed, the author tells us that he then migrated to the kingdom of heaven on the 27th of October and was provided with the rewards of eternity with all of the other saints. Finally, the author speaks directly to God, asking him through the merits of the holy confessor Abbán to prevent all evilness through the power of Jesus Christ. The author then concludes his prayer, by saying 'Amen'.

Explicit Vita Sancti Abbani

Appendix 2:
# GIS Maps and Raw Data (See Attached File)

<u>Raw Data</u>

The purpose of the raw data spreadsheet is to provide an inclusive record of all the attested geographical/topographical locations associated with the cult and textual dossier of Abbán. Evidence for Abbán's association with these locations can be found in documentary and textual sources, including the saint's Life and his genealogical, martyrological and litany records. Some of Abbán's geographical connections are also referenced or discussed in a variety of secondary works, some of which are contemporary, whilst others are as early as the nineteenth century. The main source of evidence for finding these geographical connections included the saint's entire dossier, but also some earlier scholarship. The research for this Raw Data uncovered ninety-two different locations, most of which are Irish places, but a notable number are international locations. Each of the rows from the raw data spreadsheet provides a discussion of the placename, its specific landmark (if known), its connection with Abbán, the textual evidence for this connection, scholarly discussions and if attested, archaeological or landscape evidence. While most of these geographical locations are identifiable on a modern-day map of Ireland, others are largely unidentifiable. Therefore, it would not have been possible to present all of the ninety-two locations on a modern GIS map. Still, a representation of the point locations of the known or modern-day places linked with Abbán provides a strong overview of the broader regions to which these places can be traced, as is indicated by the following Irish map:[1]

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[1] The maps presented in this Appendix were completed by Dr. Ronan Foley from the Department of Geography, Maynooth University.
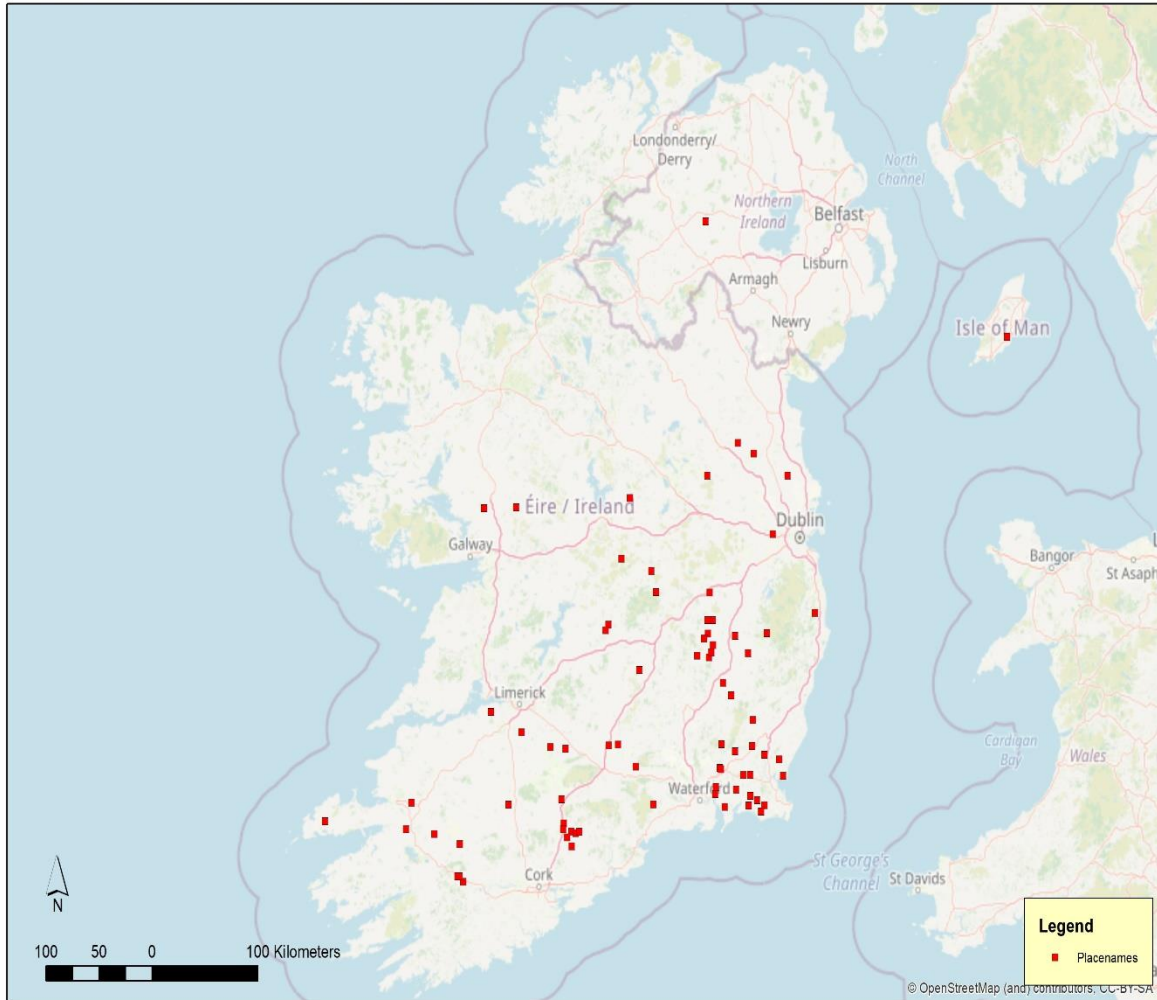
This map shows that Abbán's geographical connections are most prominent in modern-day counties Laois and Wexford, whilst a notable number are also apparent throughout counties Cork and Kerry in the south-west of Ireland. The connection with counties Wexford and Laois is due to the saint's primary foundations (Mag Arnaide, now Adamstown and Cell Abbain, now Killabban) being located in both counties, whilst the locations throughout the south-west stems from the monastic work Abbán conducted in Munster, according to the Life of Abbán. As for the international locations mentioned in the saint's dossier, they can be identified via the following European map:
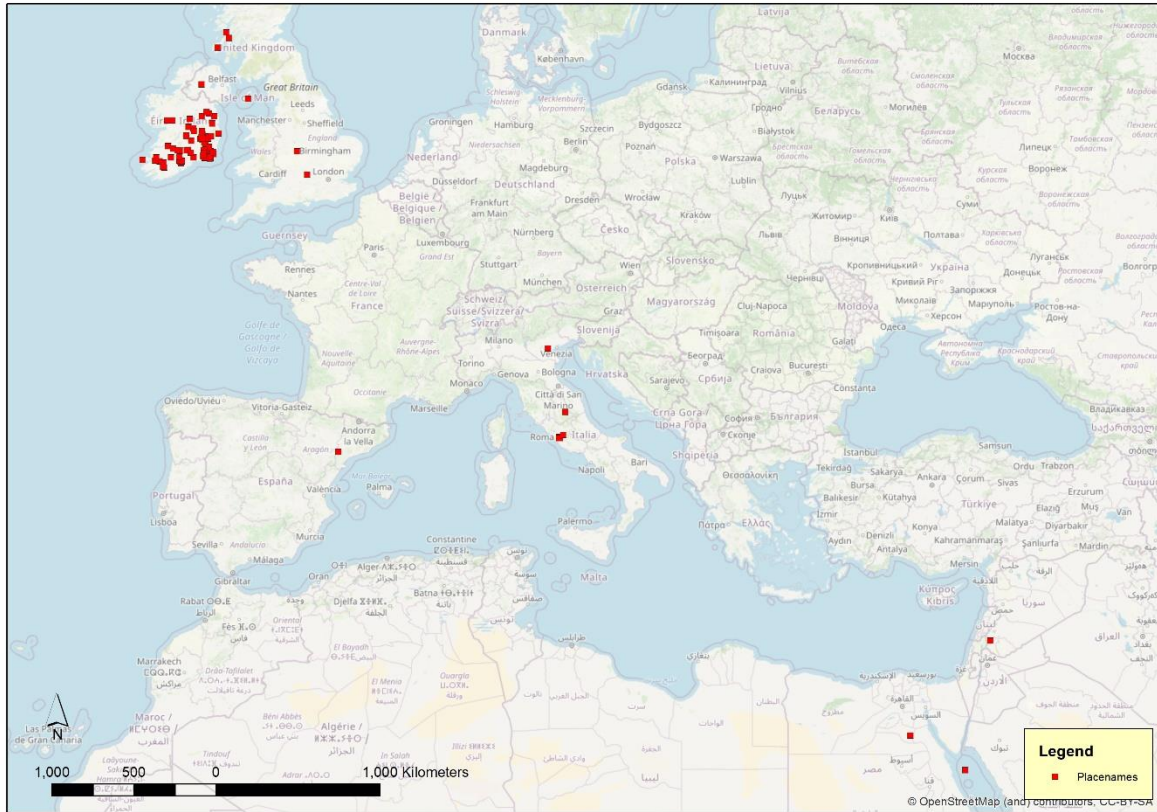
While the cluster points from Ireland evidently show most of Abbán's geographical locations can be traced back to Ireland, point locations can also be identified throughout the Isle of Man, Scotland, Spain, Italy and towards the Middle-East. However, not all the point locations represent a cult of Abbán. For example, the point location in the north-east of Spain represents the reference to the River Ebro from the topographical prologue of Abbán's *Vita*. The raw data spreadsheet clarifies the connection Abbán has with each place. This will help us to distinguish between locations to which Abbán's cult can be traced, or a location which the hagiographer mentioned in a context that was unrelated to Abbán.

<u>Methodology</u>

<u>Column A- Numerical Order of Locations</u>: The first 65 locations are mentioned in the same chronological order as they are mentioned in Abbán's *Vita* (*VSA(D)*). The subsequent locations (66-92) are cited in other hagiographical texts, documentary sources, genealogies or earlier scholarship, which are cited in alphabetical order of the placenames.

<u>Column B- Location Name</u>: The locations cited in English are universal places or places that are known on a modern-day map of Ireland or Europe. Locations cited in the vernacular mainly derive from Abbán's dossier.

<u>Column C- English Translation/Etymology</u>: For locations written in the vernacular, an English translation and if applicable, an etymological discussion of the location will ensue. The latter will mainly apply to locations that are cited in English.

<u>Column D- Location Type</u>: This column will specify whether the location is a local foundation, townland, barony, county, province or a country. Some of these locations will also be of a topographical type, such as a river or a mountain.

<u>Column E- Modern-Day Place-Name in English</u>: Some of these locations, particularly Irish foundations or townlands are identified by place-names which are unidentical to the place-name by which the location is identified today.

<u>Column F- Modern-Day Geographical Location</u>: If applicable, this column will specify the geographical landmark of the location according to a modern-day map of Ireland, Europe or outside Europe.

<u>Column G- Association(s)/Connection(s) with St. Abbán</u>: This column will describe Abbán's connection with the place. This will clarify the extent to which the association/connection is of a historical or literary origin.

<u>Column H- Textual Evidence: Genre</u>: The most common textual evidence will include hagiography, but also other textual genres such as genealogies, martyrologies or litanies. For locations where the only evidence is (older) scholarship, the term 'n/a' will be written.

Column I- Source(s): For example, if the evidence for Abbán's association with a location was Hiberno-Latin hagiography, this column would specify how many sources of this genre tell of Abbán's geographical association, which would be mainly two namely, *VSA(D)* and *VSA(S)*.

Column J- Manuscript Witnesses: This column will outline the number of manuscripts in which each source is preserved. It will specify the origin of the manuscript, the manuscript's catalogue/shelf number and the institute in which the manuscript is preserved.

Column K- Edition(s)/Translation(s)/Reference Book(s): This column will provide bibliographical details of the editions/translations of each source. It will give the fore name and surname of the author, the year in which his/her edition/translation was published and if applicable, the pages numbers of the edition/translation in which that source can be found. Further bibliographical details on these primary sources can be found in the bibliography of this PhD thesis. For documentary or toponymic evidence, reference books will be used, such as J.J. Kneen, The Place-Names of the Isle of Man.

Column L- Orthography of Place-Name: If two or more manuscript versions of the same source were edited, this column will show how each edition spells the same place-name. It will name the author of the edition, show his/her spelling of the place-name, and the page number of the edition, which will be presented between brackets.

Column M- References/Commentary: This column will show how many scholars have written about Abbán's association with each geographical location. 'Ref)' refers to scholars who have only referred to the geographical association, whilst 'Comm)' will refer to scholars who have provided a discussion on the association. Under the 'Ref)' and 'Comm)' sections, the full name, year, volume number if applicable and page number will be outlined. In cases where the secondary work has section numbers as opposed to page numbers, 's./ss' will be written.

Column N- Archaeological/Landscape Evidence: Unless specified, this column does not necessarily represent Abbán's connection with the location, it refers to the archaeological and landscape evidence on these sites that was recorded by archaeological reports. The secondary source for this evidence will also be outlined.