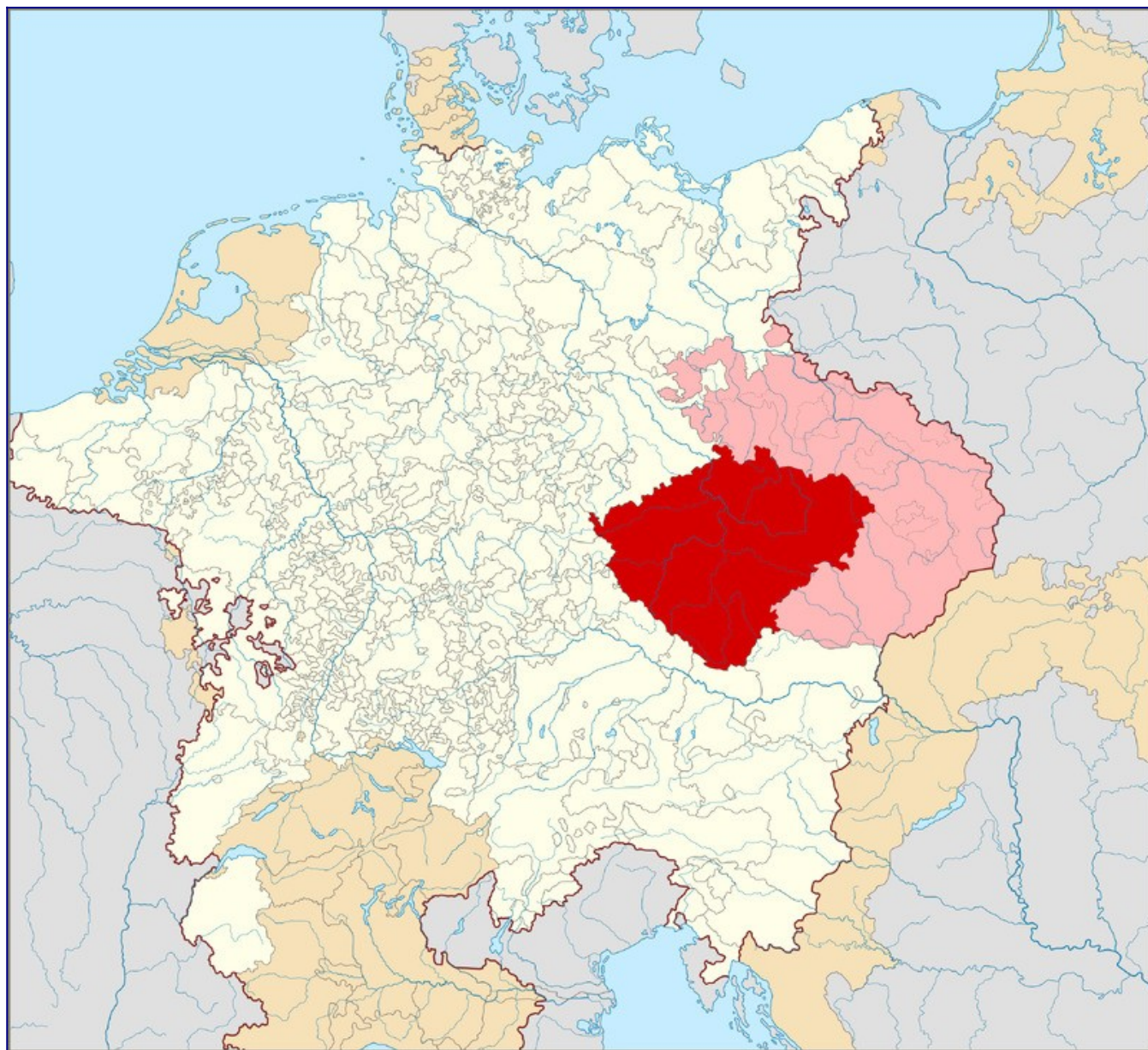


# Introduction: Encoded Empires



***Encoded Empires: A Digital Exploration of Royal Correspondence*** is a digital humanities project that investigates how medieval women, specifically queens, used letters to assert power, navigate politics, and communicate authority. At its heart, this exhibit is a learning endeavor and an interpretive journey through historical texts, digital methods, and feminist inquiry.

The primary goal of this project is to build familiarity with XML file structures and TEI (Text Encoding Initiative) standards, while also gaining hands-on experience with digital humanities tools, such as Voyant Tools for textual analysis and visualization, Oxygen XML Editor for TEI encoding, Dublin Core for metadata tagging, and Omeka Classic for digital exhibition. Along the way, I explored how these tools and methods can help us tell meaningful stories about women in history.

This exhibit centers on four letters written by **Constance of Hungary**, Queen of Bohemia from 1199 to 1230. Born c. 1180 and living until 1240, Constance was a politically active queen whose correspondence provides valuable insight into the roles women played in medieval governance. These letters matter because they disrupt common assumptions that medieval women were passive or invisible in public life. Instead, Constance emerges as a woman of status, rhetorical skill, and political agency, as she actively participated in the affairs of the realm and engaged with men and institutions as a sovereign force.

In the next three sections, you will find three different pathways through which to explore the words of Constance of Hungary. Each path highlights different aspects of her letters but looked at together show a deeper, more intricate view of the queen and how she expressed herself and her rule in 13th century Europe.

These paths are:

- **Plain Text Letters:** Modern English translations of four official letters authored or co-authored by Queen Constance, allowing you to read her letters as narrative documents of political and spiritual authority.
- **TEI Letters:** XML-encoded versions of the same texts using the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) standard, revealing the structured roles, places, institutions, and rhetorical strategies embedded in each document.
- **Voyant Analysis:** Data visualizations and keyword studies, which uncover word frequency, recurring themes, and patterns in the queen's political language.

Taken individually, each of these approaches offers a distinct lens on Constance's authorship and agency. Together, they illuminate how digital methods can deepen our understanding of medieval women's voices, bridging historical context with modern tools. Whether you are diving into the plain texts, the encodings, or the analyses, each path invites you to engage with Constance's words in new and meaningful ways.

Note: You can also view the full Dublin Core metadata for each uploaded item by clicking on any image or linked text within the exhibit pages. This will take you to the individual item page where the metadata is displayed.

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*Encoded Empires*. Created and maintained by Jessica Powers.

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