

# Mapping Birgitta of Sweden and Other Medieval Mystics of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries

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## Abstract

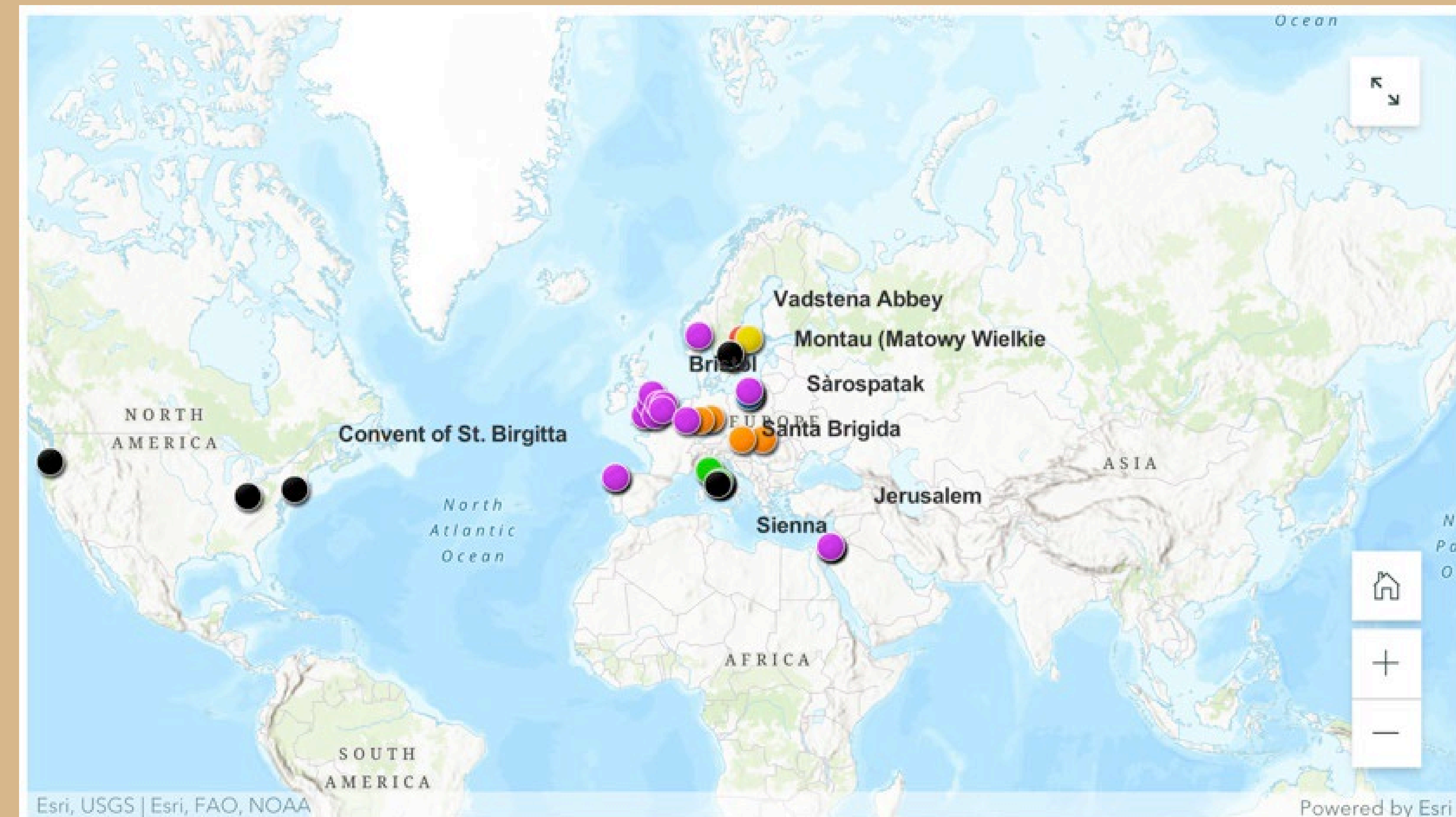
Over the course of my time with McNair, much of my research has focused on female saints of the Middle Ages, as well as medieval religious literature written for and by women. This semester I decided that I wanted to explore the ways in which female mystics of twelfth through fifteenth centuries are interconnected. For example, Dorothea von Montau's hagiography and *The Book of Margery Kempe* reference Birgitta of Sweden. As such, Birgitta is the focal point of my project. In order to demonstrate this interconnectedness, I used ArcGIS, a digital mapping software, to create an interactive map of the lives of these women including Catherine of Siena, Elizabeth of Hungary, and Catherine of Vadstena. This map visually demonstrates trends that these women took part in such as chaste marriages, pilgrimages, and participation in ascetic practices. Additionally, this interactive map provides links to sites that have more information on the process of canonization, religious orders, and the Avignon Papacy.



Birgitta of Sweden



## Figure 1



Legend: Birgitta of Sweden (red); Catherine of Sweden (yellow); Dorothea von Montau (blue); Elizabeth of Hungary (orange); Catherine of Siena (green); Birgitta's Legacy (black); Margery Kempe (purple)

Figure 1: Screenshot of the base map containing the locations of each woman's travels, as well as locations of of current Bridgettine monasteries and churches named after Birgitta.

## Selected Bibliography

- Bridget, Marguerite Tjader Harris, Albert Ryle. Kezel, and Petrus Olai. *Life and Selected Revelations*. New York: Paulist Press, 1990.
- Johannes von Marienwerder, *The Life of Dorothea von Montau, A Fourteenth-Century Recluse*, trans. Ute Stargardt (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1997)
- Kempe, Margery. *The Book of Margery Kempe*. London, England :: Penguin Books, 1994.
- Wolf, Kenneth Baxter. *The Life and Afterlife of St. Elizabeth of Hungary: Testimony from Her Canonization Hearings*. Oxford :: Oxford University Press, 2011.

## Methodology

I began by compiling timelines of each of the women's lives, paying special attention to their travels. Using Google Maps, I collected the coordinates of their various locations and created spreadsheets which I uploaded to ArcGIS in order to generate a base map for each woman so that I could create separate map tours using the story map feature. Figure 1 is a combination of each layer which demonstrates the overlapping travel routes of these women.

## Conclusions

This map provides its audience with an interactive experience that will help them to better understand female mystics of the Middle Ages and the ways in which they influenced each other, as well as contemporary religious traditions, such as religious orders and medieval Church politics.