Early Iconography of St. Birgitta of Sweden
The development of iconography of St. Birgitta of Sweden starts in Italy with the paintings of Niccolo da Tommaso which depict the Rev. VII, 21, the vision of Birth of Christ as it was received by Birgitta in the cave of Nativity in Betlehem. These panel paintings are dated between 1373 and 1376, just after Birgitta's death and more than ten years before her canonization. In the 1380's a series of luxurious manuscripts was created. These are decorated with a series of illuminations depicting scenes from Birgitta's life, mostly in connection with the revelations she received. Four of the manuscripts are preserved, they served as example to other manuscripts and panel paintings.

One of the main personalities who helped to spread Birgitta's cult was her last confessor, Alfonso of J aen. He brought the knowledge of Birgitta's work in Pisa, Siena and possibly to Genova, in whose vicinity he spent the last years of his life.

In Sweden the development of Birgittine iconography followed another path. Main part of the works extant are wooden sculptures, embroideries that come from the workshops of Birgittine monasteries and wall paintings. There is only one manuscript from the early period surviving. It's not entirely clear whether it was made in Sweden and it is a close copy of the manuscript from the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York. The works of art are often simpler and sometimes retarded in style but it is not a general rule. Works of high artistic quality are often supposed to be made abroad, as in the case of the so-called Portrait Birgitta from the Vadstena convent.

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