Birgittine Circles

People and Saints in the Medieval World

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This book contains the proceedings from the Fourth International Birgitta Conference, held in August 2021 in Stockholm and Vadstena. The theme for the conference, Birgittine Circles, focuses on Birgittine networks and the importance of individuals, places, and objects associated with the Birgittine Order. The concept of circles also applies to ideas, physical objects, travels, and exchange between different orders. The ten contributions collected in the present volume range from Birgitta’s influence on late medieval culture in England, the spread of the Birgittine Order around the Baltic Sea and its importance in places as widely separated as Norrland and Spain, predecessors and successors such as Margery Kempe, and Birgittine spirituality linked to objects and texts.

**KEYWORDS**
Saint Birgitta, Vadstena Abbey, the Birgittine Order, medieval history, medieval literature, medieval manuscripts, medieval art, monasticism, theology, nuns, liturgy, church art, textual networks
The question concerning who created the Birgittine sisters’ Divine Office liturgy, the *Cantus sororum*, is a topic that has attracted much attention among Birgittine scholars. This Office is a repertoire structured as a weekly cycle, consisting of some 200 Gregorian chants and created for exclusive use in the Birgittine Order. It is the only liturgical repertoire that has ever been compiled to be performed exclusively by women. The presumed author, when it comes to the creation of the *Cantus sororum*, was Magister Petrus of Skänninge (d. 1378), who was Birgitta’s confessor as well as her collaborator in drafting the organization of the Birgittine Order, though no sources of the *Cantus sororum* from Petrus’ own time exist. The first preserved sources are from the middle of the 15th century and written in Vadstena Abbey. Earlier sources from other abbeys of the Birgittine Order are not preserved. Petrus’ authorship has been debated, contested, and accepted by scholars to various degrees. The question of the *Cantus sororum*’s origin has been burdened with ideological claims concerned with authenticity, seeking to place the sources as close to Birgitta as possible, and a lack of careful source reading. One early example is Carl-Allan Moberg, influential professor of musicology at Uppsala University, who in a text from 1932 named Magister Petrus as the author of the *Cantus sororum*. According to Moberg, Magister Petrus, following the normal medieval procedure, compiled the music for the Office mainly from other plainchants.\(^1\) Though acknowledging compilation rather than newly composed chants as central to the *Cantus sororum*, Moberg considered Magister Petrus in every

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\(^{1}\) Moberg 1932, p. 401. However, Moberg emphasizes that all hymns and melodies are borrowed, which until this day remains an uncontested fact. The hymn repertoire is treated by Ann-Marie Nilsson in her Ph.D. thesis, see Nilsson 1991, pp. 92–120.
aspect to be the mastermind behind the repertoire. This perspective is typical for much of the research that considers the *Cantus sororum*. In short it is described as a work compiled of both unique compositions from within the Birgittine Order and borrowings from the common stock of Gregorian chant, and that the compilation of this repertoire is attributed to Magister Petrus. The problem with this assumption is that there are no preserved sources from his time, a fact that is seldom taken into consideration. That this general presumption of individual authorship is still widespread is, for example, indicated by musicologist Hilkka-Liisa Vuori’s claim that all chants not known outside the Birgittines (or are obvious reworkings of previously known melodies) are to be considered the work of Magister Petrus.¹

Other scholars have had a more nuanced view of Magister Petrus’ authorship in relation to other possible contributors. Birgit Klockars, Tryggve Lundén, and Viveca Servatius are, for example, scholars who have opened up the possibility that Magister Petrus had assistance, and that the work was not completed by the time of his death in 1378.² In particular, musicologist Viveca Servatius has discussed this question most thoroughly from a musicological viewpoint.³ She addresses, among other questions, the problem with the verbs that refer to composing activities. *Dictare*, *componere*, and *compilare* are all verbs used in medieval sources to describe activities of composing music, but these words have little to do with the romantic concept of composing a piece of art out of a single person’s unique inspiration, as the concept developed during the 19th century.⁴ Rather, composing was to be seen as an act of intertextuality where the composer freely borrowed in order to achieve something new in a world where copyright was not an issue.

**The Problems**

One problem with the attribution of the *Cantus sororum* to Magister Petrus is that chants only found in the Birgittine Order—these are termed unique—have not been analysed from a music analytical viewpoint. Such an analysis could reveal if there exists a certain musical style that could be attributed to one single person, such as, for example, Magister Petrus. According to Vuori, chants without concordances outside the Birgittines are chants composed by Magister Petrus. However, it is impossible to make such assumptions, since no sources from Petrus’ time are preserved. Since

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¹ Vuori 2017, p. 66.
³ Servatius 1990.
⁴ Musicologist Thomas Forrest Kelly has pointed out that “fecit” [“made”] is the most common word describing what we would call the act of composing music. See Kelly 2010, p. 112.
Petrus is not known for any musical works outside the Birgittines that could be used as comparison, this theory must be regarded as a dead end.

A second problem is that much scholarship—although not all, as seen above—takes for granted that a fully developed Cantus sororum existed at Magister Petrus’ time. This view does not take into consideration that liturgical repertoires are developed over long time spans in tandem with their practitioners. A third problem concerns the source situation. As already mentioned, there are no notated Cantus sororum manuscripts earlier than around the middle of the 15th century, and there are several threads to follow when examining the origin of the Cantus sororum. Against this background, the problems I seek to address can be summarized as follows:

1. According to medieval sources, and what can be called the Birgittine narrative, the Cantus sororum was composed by Magister Petrus.

2. The title of a corpus is not a table of contents. It is impossible to determine whether the Cantus sororum mentioned in the earliest sources is identical to what has come down to us in notated form. The following example may serve as an illustration. In 1407, two men travelled from Pirita to Vadstena, asking for a copy of the Cantus sororum for the new foundation. These men asked for privileges, relics, and a copy of the Song of the sisters—a Cantus sororum. The problem with such a request is that the analysis does not take into consideration the actual content of the liturgy. We do not know what kind of material they brought back to Pirita.

3. From a more sociological and ethnomusicological perspective, liturgies are made for practical use and are repertoires intended to help people in their daily prayer and devotion. This means that a liturgy cannot be a top-down product from a single person but needs to be reworked in conjunction with its users. No liturgy is complete from the beginning but is negotiated with its practitioners. A person from the community in question can be the (appointed) driving force and editor and the person who puts his or her name under the repertoire, but it is very unlikely that this person could achieve a work on his/her own. I will examine two groups of people of importance for this argument.

4. There is not one single source with musical notation earlier than c. 1450, which is about 70 years after the death of Magister Petrus. There are no written documents

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6 The procedure in medieval times is difficult to trace, but examples of how monastic liturgies emerged in modern times after the Second Vatican Council are discussed in Strinnholm Lagergren 2009.

7 The foundation is Vallis Mariæ/Mariantal in Pirita, Estonia.

8 DV 149.

9 See Strinnholm Lagergren 2009 for a discussion on contemporary conditions.

10 For a detailed discussion on composing activities in the Middle Ages, see Kelly 2010.
that give us information on what the liturgy and chant looked like at the consecration of Vadstena Abbey in 1384.

The four above-mentioned points form the structure of the present study. I will address the historiography of the *Cantus sororum* and discuss what can possibly be known about the origin of this Office. I will in particular treat the period from which there are no liturgical notated sources and present some alternative views. I will argue that the work was initiated by Magister Petrus and Birgitta, but it was carried out over a long period of time by other Birgittines and eventually settling as a fixed liturgy in the form as we know it as the *Cantus sororum* in 1430. I will lastly propose a chronology for the process of a completed *Cantus sororum* in the form as it is known from the earliest sources. But before addressing these points, a few words on the Birgittine liturgy are provided as contextual background.

**Brief Notes on the Birgittine Liturgy**

As mentioned in the introduction, the *Cantus sororum* is constructed as a weekly cycle in the form of a ferial Office with one office a day devoted to the Virgin Mary and her role in salvation history. The listing below summarizes the content of each day in the *Cantus sororum*:

- **Sunday**: Creation, joy in the Triune God. Mary as the ideal model for creation.
- **Monday**: Beauty and fall of the angels. Mary venerated by the angels.
- **Tuesday**: Fall of Adam, the Patriarchs. Mary as premediated protector of the fallen.
- **Wednesday**: Birth of Mary and childhood. The Conception.
- **Thursday**: Incarnation of the Word. The Annunciation.
- **Friday**: Suffering and death of Christ. Mary’s suffering.
- **Saturday**: The Virgin’s faith in Christ. Mary’s death and Assumption.\(^{11}\)

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\(^{11}\) After Urberg 2016, p. 28. Theologian Alf Härdelin has treated the theological content of the *Cantus sororum* in Härdelin 1998, pp. 249–273.
Texts and chants all mirror these themes, making it a mariocentric liturgy. Taken together, the *Cantus sororum* is a mixture of chants and texts borrowed from the standard repertoire of plainchant, chants unique to the Birgittines without external concordances, and reworkings of borrowed material. This results in an Office with a varied repertoire containing chants in many different styles: syllabic, melismatic, narrow range, wide range, etc. This Office was always the same in all Birgittine abbeys and changed very little during the liturgical year, in contrast to the Birgittine brothers who observed the liturgy that was in use in the diocese in which the abbey was situated. The brothers’ role was to offer in-house assistance by celebrating Mass and hearing confessions, and they were also, in contrast to the sisters including the abbess, allowed to move outside the abbey. They offered an important spiritual function in that they completed the sisters’ Marian devotion with a liturgy that to a greater extent observed the liturgical year. Together these two liturgies created a so-called “greater liturgy”, in musicologist Ingmar Milveden’s terminology. Sisters and brothers not only formed a spiritual but also an administrative unit, a so-called double abbey, where the brothers and sisters resided within the same cloistered area though separated within it. Though double monastery is a more common term for this construction, I prefer double abbey since an abbess and not an abbot was the head of a Birgittine abbey. Thus, in their abbey church, the groups had separate spaces when celebrating their liturgies, which were said in succession with the brothers’ Office said first, followed by the sisters’. The brothers’ liturgy is in no source attributed to Magister Petrus, which is to be expected since it followed the diocesan liturgy, and thus will not be treated here.

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15 The architecture of the Birgittine abbey church is outlined by Eva Lindqvist Sandgren in ‘The organization of the Birgittine abbey church in Vadstena: An innovative recycling of established concepts’ in this volume.
16 The custom is established in chapter 18 in the *Revelaciones Extravagantes*. See Morris & Searby 2015, p. 242, and *Rev. Extr.*, p. 129.
The medieval sources on Magister Petrus and the Birgittine narrative

Not much is known about Magister Petrus before he was appointed Birgitta’s confessor and accompanied her to Rome in 1349.\textsuperscript{17} It is in Vadstena Abbey’s memorial book, the \textit{Diarium Vadstenense}, that we find the earliest known reference to the \textit{Cantus sororum} on the item on Magister Petrus’ death in 1378, stating that “hic dictavit Cantum sororum” [“he dictated/composed the \textit{Song of the sisters/Cantus sororum}”].\textsuperscript{18} Was this a general description of the repertoire that the sisters were to sing, or was this the assigned title of a codified set of texts and melodies? We do not know. What the \textit{Diarium Vadstenense} further tells us is that Magister Petrus took up activities as a singing teacher in the community in Vadstena after his return from Rome in 1374, a position he can only have held for four years at the most.\textsuperscript{19}

Further investigations in the authorship of Magister Petrus leads to a most interesting source: an \textit{ordo cantus} or \textit{ordinarius} (instructions on the performance of chant and liturgy) informing us that Magister Petrus had not completed \textit{Cantus sororum} at the time of his death. Written in Vadstena, the \textit{ordo cantus} is written in Latin and dated 1481. The document is a translation of another document written during the second half of the 15th century, according to Latinist Monica Hedlund, and has a complicated transmission history. The translation was done in Danish not long after 1450 in either Vadstena or in a Danish Birgittine abbey. This document in turn was based on an ordinal from 1450.\textsuperscript{20} The task of completing the \textit{Cantus sororum} was accomplished, according to this source, by one of the brothers who was among the oldest who first entered the abbey.\textsuperscript{21} Unfortunately, no more precise information is given on what this work of continuing Magister Petrus’ work comprised or who undertook it. But there is a potential candidate. In October 1384, the same year that the abbey officially opened, Brother Kettilmund died. He is mentioned as one of the first brothers in Vadstena and an excellent choir leader. He was the one who first taught the sisters to sing, according to the \textit{Diarium Vadstenense}.\textsuperscript{22} Kettilmund is mentioned as being a vicar before the

\textsuperscript{17} Historian Helge Nordahl has tried to gather all available information about Magister Petrus, see Nordahl 2007.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{DV} 35. A more thorough investigation of medieval sources mentioning Magister Petrus is found in Servatius 1991.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{DV} 104.
\textsuperscript{20} Hedlund 1981, pp. 122–123, 127.
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{DV} 41.
relics arrived at Vadstena (1374). Kettilmund was thus in Vadstena before 1378 when Magister Petrus died, and had a direct link to him. Kettilmund might have been this composing brother, but it is something on which we can only speculate.

What is really interesting is that this information is not found in other documents, nor is it addressed by modern scholars apart from Hedlund and Servatius. The copy of now-lost original documents opens for a possibility that the scribe in c. 1450 had misinterpreted the information. Another possible interpretation is that this shared compositional activity does not weave the genius of Magister Petrus into the Birgittine narrative. Moreover, the canonization process for Magister Petrus that was initiated shortly after Birgitta’s death was never completed. Two vitae were written in probably 1426–1427 and 1486, but only one of them mentions that Magister Petrus was responsible for composing (here “dictare” is used) the Cantus sororum.

MAGISTER PETRUS AND THE CANTUS SORORUM IN BIRGITTA’S REVELATIONS

The Cantus sororum is also mentioned in Birgitta’s Revelations. Again, we do not know if this mention refers to the general singing of the sisters or to a specified repertoire. Whatever the case, Birgitta speaks in favour of Petrus’ skills. One example of Birgitta’s praise can be found in Birgitta’s Revelations, where Christ praises the piety of Magister Petrus, the Virgin Mary asks Birgitta to tell Magister Petrus that “he [Magister Petrus] is one of the priests whom God loves most in the world. This is why he was given the gift of composing the chant that is the gold that will give comfort to many people”.

What is more interesting is that there are four direct references to chants, in the form of two hymns and two antiphons, that can be found in the Rule and in the Extravagantes in Birgitta’s Revelations. Of these four chants, only one has something unique; the rest are common Marian chants. The hymn Ave maris stella, the antiphon Salve regina, and the antiphon Ave Maria are all standard chants from the common stock of Gregorian chants. The hymn Sponse jungendo is a different matter. This hymn is a contrafact of Veni creator spiritus, meaning a new text added to an already existing melody. The text is unique to the Birgittines and might very well have been written by Magister Petrus, but the melody is one of the most well known melodies in the Grego-

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23 DV 41.
25 English translation in Morris & Searby 2015, p. 235. “... quod ipse est vnus de illis sacerdotibus, quos Deus maxime diligit in mundo, propter quod dabatur ei illum cantum dictare, qui est aurum, quod erit multis in solacium.” Latin quote from Rev. Extr. 6:2.
rian hymn repertoire. It is odd that nothing more original was put forth in these influential, canonical texts that could be attributed to Magister Petrus’ own creativity. For example, why is there not a great responsory mentioned in Birgitta’s Revelations, of which there are several not found outside the Birgittines and which are longer pieces and musically more challenging? Perhaps it was more important to stress the common element in the Birgittine liturgy instead of pointing to its originality. We must remember that in the 14th century, a new monastic order had to compete with many already well-established orders on the monastic map. In this landscape, I argue that the Birgittines needed to find their own relevance and legitimacy. Pointing to common traits instead of its originality can have been a tactical strategy.

**BIRGITTA’S HOUSEHOLD IN ROME AND THE FORERUNNERS IN VADSTENA**

One group that probably was highly influential but has remained in the shadows is Birgitta’s household in Rome. We know the names of a few of these people, and these names allow us to reflect on the possibility of liturgical contributions on their part. A list of known names is as follows:

*Petrus Olavi*, prior in the Cistercian Alvastra Abbey.

*Gudmar Fredriksson*, priest. According to the *Diarium Vadstenense*, he was Birgitta’s house chaplain and followed her to the Holy Land in 1372, as well as one of those who brought Birgitta’s relics from Rome to Vadstena, where he resided until his death.²⁶

*Magnus Petri* (Tre liljor) later became a Birgittine brother and eventually ended up in the Birgittine Maria Paradiso Abbey in Florence.

*Ingeborg Dannäs (Bielke)*, noblewoman and good friend of Birgitta.²⁷

Furthermore, Birgitta’s daughter Katarina spent periods in Rome, and servants also belonged to the household whose names we often do not know. These people were all capable of contributing to the working out of the liturgy, in particular Petrus Olavi and Gudmar Fredriksson, who both had liturgical training.

According to the *Revelationes Extravagantes*, chapter 65, Birgitta’s household was to function as a miniature abbey: “How Birgitta’s Servants should Arrange their Daily Life in Rome”:

²⁶ *DV* 48.

²⁷ Stolpe 1974, pp. 10–11.
- 4 hours of sleep before midnight
- 4 hours of sleep after midnight
- 4 hours of prayers or other devotions, and useful work
- 2 hours at table
- 6 hours for necessary tasks
- 2 hours for vespers, compline, and devotional prayers
- 2 hours for mealtime and suitable relaxation.  

The similarity with a monastery is obvious, which is why I think we need to think of Birgitta’s household as a place where daily duties and tasks could be tested and later used as a model for the life in Vadstena.

Parallel to Birgitta’s household in Rome, a group in Vadstena likewise led a semi-monastic life. We do not know when they started to live together but there existed some kind of community when Magister Petrus arrived there with Birgitta’s relics in 1374. It is reasonable to assume that this group had been there from the year 1370 when papal approbation for the Order was given, or perhaps even earlier, since Birgitta’s monastic visions and plans for the future abbey were already initiated in the 1360s. When it comes to origin of the liturgy used in Vadstena in the 1370s, we can only speculate, but two strong candidates are 1) the secular cathedral liturgy in Linköping or 2) the among lay people popular hours for the Virgin Mary, commonly called *Horae de Beate Marie Virginis* or *Officium parvum beate Marie Virginis* (here called *Horae de BMV*); or a mix of both liturgies. *Horae de BMV* was an Office of which there existed numerous variants in the Middle Ages but no standard version. It was an Office structured around texts in honour of the Virgin Mary and it is therefore not possible to say exactly which version formed the basis for the *Cantus sororum*. My point is that the *Cantus sororum* is based on an idea that was common to many people in the Middle Ages and that idea was eventually transformed into a repertoire unique to the Birgittines. Seen in the light of what we know about the sisters’ and brothers’ liturgies from preserved Vadstena sources, the most likely alternative is that the men observed the Linköping liturgy as the brothers did in the fully developed abbey from 1384, and the women the

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28 Morris & Searby 2015, p. 283.
29 Gejrot 2007, pp. 91–94.
30 The process is described in Klockars 1976, pp. 156–162.
31 Gy has investigated the relation between the *Cantus sororum* and the *Horae de BMV* in Gy 1972. In 1495, an Office book for *Horae de BMV* was printed in Vadstena Abbey and used in the dioceses of Linköping and Skara. Though mariocentric in its character, it shows little resemblance with the *Cantus sororum* apart from very standardized elements such as Marian antiphons and hymns such as *Salve regina* and *Ave maris stella*; Hagberg 2008.
Horae de BMV; in other words, two liturgies that they were probably already familiar with. One hypothesis about how the Cantus sororum emerged is that Magister Petrus conveyed to Vadstena a fragmentary liturgy into which elements were incorporated from the Horae de BMV, which then was revised and adapted until a definitive version was reached by later generations of Birgittines.

A TITLE IS NOT A TABLE OF CONTENTS—THE QUESTION OF DATING THE CANTUS SORORUM

The question of dating the Cantus sororum and a more precise content is interesting to discuss in relation to the Responsiones Vadstenenses (in the following Responsiones). These are letters exchanged between Syon Abbey and Vadstena Abbey during the years 1426–1427.\(^\text{32}\) The letters contain questions regarding a number of issues that Syon Abbey found unclear in the Birgittine Rule and the answers from Vadstena are therefore highly interesting since they clarify these matters which sometimes are difficult to interpret. Many matters were discussed, including liturgy, and the answers are sometimes justified with the divine origin of the Order. In the Responsiones, it becomes clear that the authenticity of the Birgittine origin is important to the Order’s identity, and that the Birgittines in Vadstena are fully aware that they have a special and unique liturgy called the Cantus sororum. Two examples will illustrate this:

1. Syon Abbey asks whether the sisters are allowed to add or vary the Cantus sororum in any way. The answer is that this not is permitted since it is believed that the Cantus sororum was created by the Holy Spirit.\(^\text{33}\) In this passage, the liturgy is not mentioned in connection with either Birgitta’s or Magister Petrus’ names but is assigned an ever higher, divine origin and clearly demonstrates the view that the Cantus sororum is a divinely inspired creation in the 1420s.

2. Concerning uses during Lent, Syon Abbey asks if the sisters may sing vespers after the midday meal during Lent, in contrast to the custom of the Catholic Church.\(^\text{34}\) Vadstena answers that since the Cantus sororum is extraordinary and different from the universal chant, they are not limited to the observance of that particular custom. A difference in the character of the chant of the Birgittine sisters during Lent is also

\(^{32}\) Edited and discussed in Andersson 2011.

\(^{33}\) “Questio: An sorores possunt variare Cantum vel addere, etc. Responsio: Credimus, quod non licet, cum a Spiritu Sancto, ut creditur, sit editus, sed in officiis et missis, prout in ordinario earum traditur, per totum ordinem immutabiliter et inviolabiliter observatur.” Andersson 2011, pp. 108–109.

\(^{34}\) What is meant by the custom of the Catholic Church is unfortunately not further explained.
pointed out, where the “ecclesiastical chant during Lent is mournful and penitent, and the chant of the sisters is solemn, according to the Rule”.

These two examples show that the idea of the *Cantus sororum* as divinely inspired and a different liturgy from the rest of the Catholic Church is a notion fully embraced by the Birgittines in 1427. I think that the *Cantus sororum* to which the brothers from Syon Abbey referred is what we today know as this repertoire. The 1420s is an interesting and turbulent period in the Birgittine Order. Consequently, it is most likely that this troublesome time fostered a situation when it was important to codify a liturgical work that had been ongoing for about 50 years. This decade was followed by the dedication of the abbey church in 1430 in Vadstena. This was an important physical and symbolic event. With regard to the manuscript situation, it was now possible to make authoritative copies of the liturgy, which I believe were duly made. I claim that the dedication in 1430 was paired with the completion of the Birgittine sisters’ liturgy that would be transmitted in an astonishingly consistent form to other Birgittine abbeys. The material as well as the immaterial foundations for the Birgittine liturgy were now laid out in Vadstena as an example to follow in the foundations.

Other scholars have pointed out the relation between codified liturgies and the dedication of liturgical rooms. Although these correspondences between dedicated church rooms and liturgies concern quite different contexts, where Lund Cathedral is one example, this remains a hypothesis concerning Vadstena Abbey. But the sources support such a hypothesis since we have the first notated manuscripts from the middle of the 15th century. We now have access to fully notated liturgical books for both Mass and Office for the sisters. So, what did they use before this time? The answer is we cannot be certain. It might have been exactly what we find in these sources, or it might have been something else. One suggestion is the embryo theory; liturgies expanded from a smaller repertoire that grew larger over time and became richer and richer. Another hypothesis is that the first steps were a patchwork from which standardization was eventually singled out. The question is why no earlier sources have been preserved. It is very possible that the earlier versions were discarded and actively destroyed to make sure that everyone used the same, authorized liturgy, and it was important that

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35 “Questio: Utrum licet sororibus in quadragesima cantare vesperos post prandium contra consuetudinem ecclesie. Responsio: Quia Cantus sororum est singularis et distinctus a cantu universali, ideo ad illam observanciam consuetudinis, ut videtur, non artantur. Nam cantus ecclesiasticus tempore quadragesime est lugubris et penitentialis, sororum vero cantus solemnis secundum regulam.” Andersson 2011, pp. 110–111. The Lucidarium states that the Birgittine sisters always observed feasts in their Office: “Thy at systrana haffua altidh högtidh.”

[“The sisters always observe feast days”]; Klemming 1883–1884, p. 60.

no incorrect versions circulated for practical reasons. This is the core of the problem: it is an anachronism when discussing Birgittine liturgy from the 14th century to use 15th-century sources.

Once we have notated sources from Vadstena, we also find notated sources from other foundations which are remarkably consistent in their transmission. No deviations or earlier versions are found.37 There are no preserved notated sources from the earliest foundations, founded before 1430. Marienbrunn in Gdansk was founded in 1396 (closed in 1835) and Maria Paradiso in Florence was founded in 1392 (closed in 1776). We have no such early sources from these abbeys either.38 Maybe their books were “withdrawn” and replaced by the correct material.

**Presumptive chronology**

Having presented an outline of how the process leading to a codified *Cantus sororum* might have taken place, I will now summarize my arguments and propose a chronology:

- In Rome, Magister Petrus assisted by Birgitta and her household created an outline of what has become known as the *Cantus sororum*. Different solutions were tried in Birgitta’s semi-monastic household.
- From the 1370s, this liturgy was revised, expanded, reworked, exchanged, etc. This work was initiated in Rome and continued in Vadstena where inspiration was drawn from the Linköping Cathedral liturgy and the *Horae de BMV*. Here, a question can be posed: did Brother Kettilmund continue Magister Petrus’ work?
- Between 1373 and 1391, chants from the Offices *Birgitta matris inclite* and *Rora rorans bonitatem* were included in the *Cantus sororum*. I propose that this was made close to 1391, which is the year of canonization of Birgitta.
- The work continued and gradually became a corpus including the Mass repertoire and the sisters’ extensive sequence repertoire.39 The greater liturgy comprising the Masses and Offices for both sisters and brothers was created and formed one spiritual unity.
- In the 1420s, the Birgittine Order went through a major crisis where the Order was questioned both from within the Order and by papal authorities. The

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37 Further discussed in Lagergren, forthcoming.
38 The Birgittine antiphoner S-Sk: A 84 (National Library of Sweden) *Antiphonarium et hymnarium sanctae Birgitta*, from the second part of 15th century, is presumed to have belonged to the Birgittine Maria Paradiso Abbey but the provenance has not been possible to determine.
39 The Birgittine Mass and Sequence repertoire is discussed in Strinnholm Lagergren 2015.
double abbey solution was questioned by the papacy and there were conflicts within the Order concerning the question on authority. This led to a need to codify documents important for the Birgittines, in order to strengthen and achieve uniformity in their lives.

- In 1426 and 1427, letters were exchanged between Syon Abbey and Vadstena regarding, among other things, the Birgittine liturgy. Given the normative character of the answers, by all likelihood a corpus existed at this time that can be defined as what we know today as the *Cantus sororum*. The divine status of this Office is emphasized.

- 1430 dedication of the abbey church in Vadstena. The Birgittine liturgy for both sisters and brothers including the *Cantus sororum* is codified.

- After 1430, the transmission of this *Cantus sororum* to other foundations begins. Earlier versions are withdrawn. The first notated liturgical sources of the *Cantus sororum* from other foundations are from the last quarter of the 15th century.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Returning to the question that spurred this examination of sources and arguments, what does it mean to attribute *Cantus sororum* to Magister Petrus? Putting forth Magister Petrus as its originator places *Cantus sororum* close to Birgitta. Her charisma blends into this chant repertoire and she charges the *Cantus sororum* with divine status and legitimacy. Likewise, Magister Petrus’ work is given divine status through Birgitta’s Revelations. Birgitta’s authority was by this process transmitted into the sisters’ liturgy, functioning as a guarantee that the repertoire will not be altered since this would be an attack on its divine origin. It is not uncommon that medieval repertoires were attributed to someone who most likely or absolutely did not, in the modern sense of the word, compose them. The overall purpose of such an attribution was to give *auctoritas* to the repertoire. During the Middle Ages, many musical works were attributed to bishops, people who probably never would have the time to compose music, but rather are to be seen as people who put their name under a project they initiated. Musicologist Thomas Forrest Kelly has summarized this strategy as “famous pieces get attributed to famous people.”\(^\text{40}\) I think that Magister Petrus is a good example of this principle, and the idea of a composing celebrity furthermore fits nicely into ideas and views on authorship, creativity, and originality, current in the 19th- and 20th-century concepts of how art originates, and is in my view one reason why the idea of Magister

\(^{40}\) Kelly 2010, p. 107.
Petrus as composer of the *Cantus sororum* has been maintained throughout Birgittine scholarship.

Lastly, we must not forget the Birgittine sisters. They have not been emphasized in the source material but there is really nothing that speaks against their active participation and agency in working on the Birgittine liturgy. On the contrary, they perhaps had the most active role given that there were always more sisters than brothers in a Birgittine community, as prescribed in the Rule: 60 sisters and 13 brothers in the ideal case. This would mean that the sisters both in the capacity of being the larger community had more people who could conduct this kind of task but also because the brothers had many duties that the sisters did not have to undertake. All in all, a Birgittine abbey housed a large number of people—the sisters—who had the time to carry out work on the liturgy. The question to what extent the *Cantus sororum* is not only a repertoire for the Birgittine sisters, but also a work by the sisters themselves, is of course impossible to answer, but interesting to reflect on in the light of what we know about their activities in embroidery and book illumination where they were most active.41

My hope is that by this examination I have been able to offer an alternative look at the creation of the *Cantus sororum*. I have in particular highlighted the collective effort and the teamwork I believe was more important in the creation process. Attempts at new practices and on-going discussions in the community must have been important in shaping what is today known as the *Cantus sororum*. The result has become an Office liturgy that to this day keeps scholars busy and still offers many topics for future research.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

*Printed sources, literature, and abbreviations*


41 Two publications on this topic are Sandgren 2021 and Hedström 2009.
$DV = Diarium Vadstenense$, see Gejrot 1988.


