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TRANSMISSION OF REPERTORIES / CONTAMINATION OF STYLES:

THE CASE OF LITURGICAL MUSIC IN SOUTHERN ITALY (9TH-13TH CENT.)¹

My project at the Italian Academy has, as its point of departure, my doctoral dissertation (*Il repertorio neo-gregoriano del Proprium Missae in area beneventana*, University of Rome "La Sapienza", 2001). I am working at the realization of a book containing the complete edition of the neo-Gregorian chant repertory for the Mass in southern Italy (9th-12th cent.), and a prefatory essay in which I analyze stylistic features of texts and melodies, patterns of diffusion of the repertory in medieval sources, and issues of oral and written transmission.

Neo-Gregorian chant is the corpus of melodies not belonging to the international repertory of Gregorian chant. In southern Italy these non-standard melodies were composed sometime after the acquisition of Gregorian chant (8th cent.) and are found in liturgical manuscripts from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries. Manuscripts produced in the ancient

¹ This paper has been originally conceived for the Luncheon Seminars of the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America at Columbia University. Its content will become part of my forthcoming book *Music from the South: An Edition and Study of the non-Standard Proper Mass Items in Beneventan Manuscripts* (provisory title).

Lombard Ducky of Benevento are particularly significant to detect this repertory because of their nature and number and because of the many studies and reference material already published on the musical traditions of the region.

The manuscript sources are identifiable for the use of a distinctive handwriting, defined ‘Beneventan’ by Elias Avery Loew (1980). This script first appeared probably towards the middle of the eighth century, perhaps at Montecassino, and gradually came to be used throughout the area comprising the ancient Lombard Duchy of Benevento, the territory north of that as far as Paliano, and eastwards into the region of Marche. Missionaries and traders exported the script to Dalmatia, and we know of many manuscripts produced there in monasteries in Zadar, Šibenik, Trogir, Split, Dubrovnik, and so forth. The latest examples were copied by Benedictine nuns at Naples in the second half of the sixteenth century.² But the region is also well-known to musicologists for the use of a proper musical writing, the so-called Beneventan notation, which was in use approximately between the tenth and the thirteenth century.³

Liturgical manuscripts produced in southern Italy in the Middle Ages, however, are not only important under the perspective of Latin and musical paleography: they contain an extraordinary stratification of different traditions that reflect the complex political and cultural history of the region. Successive waves of invasions by Lombards, Gauls, Romans, Byzantines,

² The fundamental study on this script is Elias Avery loew, *The Beneventan Script. A History of the South Italian Minuscule*, second ed. enlarged by Virginia Brown. Sussidi eruditi, 33-34 (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1980). Virginia Brown has significantly contributed to the discovery of new Beneventan manuscripts. See hers “A new List of Beneventan Manuscripts II, III, IV.” *Medieval Studies* 50 (1988): 584-625; 56 (1994): 299-350; 61 (1999): 325-392.

³ On Beneventan notation see the introduction to *Le Codex VI. 34 de la Bibliothèque Capitulaire de Bénévent (XI^e-XII^e siècle): Graduel de Bénévent avec prosaire et tropaire*. Paléographie Musicale, 15 (Solesmes: Abbaye Saint Pierre, 1937-57). Eugène Cardine had been directing a study group at the Pontificio Istituto di Musica Sacra in Rome for several years. The most significant results had been published in Nino Albarosa, “La scuola gregoriana di Eugène Cardine I and II,” *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia* 9 (1974): 269-297 and 12 (1997): 136-152.

and Normans left both a political and liturgical impress that is recognizable also in the choice of texts and music employed for the rites of the Latin Church.

In order to understand better the cultural connections displayed by the melodies contained in Beneventan liturgical books, I will describe briefly the most important events that brought about the creation of European liturgical chant. In particular, I will focus on the international repertory used for the celebration of the Latin Mass with special emphasis on the Italian context.

According to the most accredited theories on the history of chant, the music employed in liturgical celebrations in medieval Europe was highly differentiated region by region up to the beginning of the eighth century. The distinction applied to various aspects of the liturgy and consequently to the choice of texts and the style of melodies. Inside the Italian peninsula, we can discern at least five different repertories of chant, namely: Roman, Ambrosian, Beneventan, and the chants of Ravenna and Aquileia. For the last two of them we have only sparse traces left in the manuscripts sources still surviving. Moreover, we can be certain of the existence of at least three non-Italian repertories used in the Latin liturgy: the Gallican in France, the Mozarabic in Spain, and the Anglo-Saxon in Great Britain.

It is well known that a fundamental policy of the early Carolingian monarchy was an intense program to unify Europe culturally, as well as politically. As a significant part of this strategy Pippin the Short (751–768), and lately Charlemagne (768-814) and his successors, promoted an intense program of uniformity in worship and, consequently, in liturgical chant.⁴ This program of liturgical uniformity was pursued through the suppression of local practices and

⁴ For a general perspective on the creation of Gregorian chant and the role played by Carolingians in the process, see David Hiley, *Western Plainchant: A Handbook* (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 514-523.

the superimposition of Roman tradition in every church of Europe, with the exception of the diocese of Milan, where Ambrosian chant has been preserved until today. The necessary texts were imported through books compiled in Rome for the use of Frankish churches. Manuscripts copied from these archetypes still survive today and have been published in transcription by dom Hesbert.⁵ As for the melodies, however, it was a totally different affair. At a time when no practical system of notation existed, the only way to transmit music was through oral tradition. Hence the only possibility to introduce Roman chant into the Carolingian realm was through the exchange of cantors and masters between Rome and France. In 760 Pippin's brother, Bishop Remigius of Rouen, went to Rome to ask that a Roman teacher of chant should be allowed to come north, while monks from Rouen learned the chant directly in Rome under George, the *primus scholae*. Accounts written by exponents of the Frankish and Roman parties about these music 'master-classes' tell us how hard it was to pursue the transmission of the repertory. Frankish cantors accused the Romans of teaching purposely altered melodies, while the Romans accused their transalpine colleagues of not being able to reproduce the elegance of the Roman style.⁶

This animosity, nevertheless, is a significant hint of an undeniable fact: Romans and Franks belonged to two totally different musical cultures with divergent, if not opposite, musical tastes. There is enough evidence to argue that the Roman melodies underwent a sensible process of structural and stylistic transformation according to transalpine musical taste. The sources still surviving clearly show strong melodic differences between the Frankish and Roman versions of

⁵ *Antiphonale Missarum Sextuplex*, ed. René-Jean Hesbert (anast. repr. Rome-Freiburg: Herder, 1985).

⁶ These accounts are published in *The Early Christian Period and the Latin Middle Ages*, ed. Jamens Mc Kinnon, in *Source Readings in Music History*, ed. Oliver Strunk (New York-London: Norton, 1998), pp. 178-183.

the same chant. We cannot be absolutely sure how this process of stylistic transformation occurred, but we can confidently affirm that it was an effect of the divergence between the musical cultures of the North and the South. Another factor that might have contributed to the stylistic remodeling of musics is the acquisition of the Byzantine theory of the Eight Modes in Frankish territories, in particular at Metz. The theory of the Eight Modes, or Oktoechos, is a system according to which melodies are classified depending on their melodic characteristics, and in particular on the hierarchical value assumed by certain pitches, such as the dominant center (the note most often heard in a piece) and the *finalis* (the note on which a piece ends). It is highly likely that some of the melodic contaminations occurred to the Italic melodies could also be owing to the need to accommodate Roman chant to the dictates of Byzantine musical theory.⁷

The product of this complex process of stylistic remake of Roman chant is exactly what today we call 'Gregorian chant'. This extraordinary repertory, created between the middle and the end of the eighth century and transcribed for the first time in French and German manuscripts during the ninth century, has nothing to do with pope Gregory the Great to whom it owes its name. Such an attribution stems from a later medieval legend that sees in the great pope the composer of this repertory of chant since, quite simply, the chant needed to acquire an aura of sanctity and untouchability.

⁷ The most recent contributions on the problem of the creation of Gregorian chant and its relationships with the Roman and Gallican traditions are James McKinnon, *The Advent Project. The Later-Seventh-Century Creation of the Roman Mass Proper* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); see also additions and corrections in Joseph Dyer's review published in *Early Music History* 20 (2001): 279-321; Kenneth Levy, "A New Look at Old Roman Chant I and II," *Early Music History* 19 (2000): 81-104 and 20 (2001): 173-198; "Gregorian Chant and the Romans," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 56 (2003): 5-42; Andrew Hughes, "Charlemagne's Chant or the Great Vocal Shift," *Speculum* 77 (2002): 1069-1106.

Thus, Gregorian chant can be described as the result of the aesthetic dialectic between the Carolingian pursuit of uniformity and the need to preserve the local musical culture of the Franks. The cantors must have played an extremely important role in the preservation of this rich repertory, which amounted to at least one thousand pieces. As a consequence of the strenuous efforts to maintain this articulated corpus of chants, cantor might have felt the need to experiment systems of music writing. The invention of music notation in the West in fact may be connected with the aim to preserve unaltered the melodies for the rites of the Latin Church. And, since all sources of Gregorian chant do not show major melodic variants among themselves, we can imagine that the diffusion of the repertory through European lands must have happened through the mean of written transmission.

There is good reason to suppose that Gregorian chant reached southern Italy at a relatively early date, probably between the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century at the latest. By this time, the region had already developed an articulated repertory of liturgical chant that can be distinguished into two main layers:

1. The first is represented by the Beneventan chant itself, a repertory attributable to the Lombard people who ruled the region between the sixth and the eleventh centuries. This chant shares incontrovertible stylistic resemblances with the Ambrosian chant sung in Milan, the other Lombard territory in the peninsula.
2. The second layer is an adaptation of Greek texts and melodies to the Latin liturgy and is lined with the political influence exerted by the Byzantines on Italian territories after the military campaign of Emperor Justinian in the South in the sixth century.

The superimposition of Gregorian chant in the zone of Benevento probably happened during the reign of Arichis II, duke of Benevento from 758 to 787. This was the period when the influential Paul the Deacon was teaching in the court school at Benevento. A great intellectual figure and the first historian of the Lombards, Paul seems to have played a crucial role in the assimilation of Romano-Frankish liturgy in southern Italy, according to Thomas Forrest Kelly.⁸

In order to better understand the differences between Gregorian and Beneventan chant it may be useful the confrontation of two genres belonging to the two repertories. A Beneventan *ingressa* and a Gregorian introtit: the two initial pieces of the Mass in both liturgies can be considered as a good example of the ways in which Beneventan and Gregorian chant differ in their liturgical structure and musical style. *Ingressae* are sung during the incensing of the altar, while Gregorian introtits during the entrance procession of the priest; they have different structure: introtits have psalmody and Doxology (the *Gloria Patri*), while *ingressae* don't; and they are clearly different in the style of melodies.

A Beneventan *ingressa* presents a wide use of melismas (long ornamentations on a single syllable) and a peculiar wavelike melodic contour in which short scalar segments figure significantly as ornamentation of the modal chords. The Gregorian repertory of introtits, instead, shows a characteristic neumatic style, that consists in short ornamentation of two to six sounds per syllable; also, an introtit usually shows a precise recurrence of modally significant pitches, such as C and F, according to the system of the Eight Modes. This last trait is the truly distinctive feature of Gregorian melodies. Italian repertories, instead, prefer to insert short ornamental

⁸ On the traditions of chant in southern Italy see his *The Beneventan Chant* (Cambridge, Ma: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

figures around the modal chords F and C. Such ornamental figures consist in the interpolation of the lower and upper note. I will discuss later this technique, which depends on local modal sensibility and is highly represented in neo-Gregorian compositions from southern Italy.

Given the perceptible liturgical, structural, and stylistic differences of the two repertoires, which reflect, in fact, two different musical languages, it would be natural to think that the inroad of Gregorian chant in southern Italy might have provoked an aesthetic reaction in local cantors comparable to the one occurred in Frankish lands. Nevertheless, the redaction of Gregorian chant in Beneventan manuscripts is very close to that of French and German sources and it demonstrates that the adoption of the 'foreign' liturgy did not produce significant stylistic changes. This circumstance confirms the idea that the adoption of Gregorian chant in southern Italy was realized through written transmission.⁹ We do not have any archetypes of this supposed written transmission, but the uniformity of musical versions is self evident. This means that local musicians, unlike their transalpine colleagues, did not adapt foreign melodies to their own musical taste. This also means, however, that Beneventan musicians had to find different ways to express their own creativity.

In fact, the sources document an intense musical activity that, far from being interrupted by the inroad of Gregorian chant, was primarily devoted to the accretion of the recently acquired liturgy and chant. This accretion was accomplished in two ways:

⁹ Kenneth Levy, "Charlemagne's Archetype of Gregorian Chant," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 40 (1987): 1-30.

1. through the composition of Tropes and Sequences as additions to the Gregorian mass formularies;¹⁰
2. and through the development of the neo-Gregorian repertory itself.

As I said above, the neo-Gregorian repertory consists of chants for the Mass Proper composed after the acquisition of Gregorian chant: these new items were intended to be integrated into the imported liturgy according to the local saint's cult or the introduction of new liturgical feasts. They are liturgically and structurally compatible with Gregorian chant, but stylistically close to other repertories of chant.¹¹ Through the comparison of the content of Beneventan liturgical books and the main sources and editions of Gregorian chant (including the volumes of the *Paléographie Musicale* (1889-), the *Antiphonale Missarum Sextuplex* by René-Jean Hesbert (1935), the catalogue of manuscripts of the Biblioteca Capitolare in Benevento by Jean Mallet and André Thibaut (1997), the *Graduale Triplex* (1979), the *Offertoire Neumé* (1978), the thematic catalogue of Alleluias by Karl-Heinz Schlager (1965), and the *Index of Gregorian chant* by John Bryden and David Hughes (1969)), it is possible to isolate approximately 200 pieces not belonging to the standard repertory.

The collation of this quite extended repertory with the main European sources for the Mass Proper, allows us to formulate hypotheses about the circulation of music in different areas

¹⁰ The complete edition of Beneventan tropes manuscripts is published in *Beneventanum Troporum Corpus I: Tropes of the Proper of the Mass from Southern Italy, A.D. 1000-1250*, ed. Alejandro E. Planchart. Recent Researches in the Music of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance, vol. 16-18 (Madison, Wisc.: A-R Editions, 1994) and *Beneventanum Troporum Corpus II: Ordinary Chants and Tropes for the Mass from Southern Italy, A.D. 1000-1250*, ed. John Boe. Recent Researches in the Music of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance, 19- (Madison Wisc (A-R Editions, 1989-).

¹¹ On the neo-Gregorian repertory see Luisa Nardini, *Il repertorio neo-gregoriano* and “Neo-Gregorian Intros in Beneventan manuscripts: Compositional Strategies and Transmission”, forthcoming in the proceedings of the Conference Cantus Planus 2004, Lillafüred, 23-28 August 2004).

of medieval Europe and to highlight previously undetected connections between European regions.

In terms of similarities among Italian sources, it is possible to detect important relationships between Benevento, Ravenna, Bologna, Piacenza, and Pistoia. Kenneth Levy had already studied some similarities between Beneventan and Ravennate sources. Quite surprising are the connections between Benevento, Bologna, and Pistoia. The gradual now Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, 123 (11th cent.), usually considered as a 'pure' witness of the liturgical traditions of the city of Bologna, thanks to the results of my research, seems to be strongly connected with other Italian traditions and especially with those of southern Italy. Bologna and Benevento, along with Pistoia and Piacenza, seem to have developed intense cultural exchanges that brought them to share about 30% of the neo-Gregorian repertory.

Outside Italy, the main connections are with manuscripts written in southwest France, and in particular with two graduals now at Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 903 and lat. 776). Similarities between Benevento and Aquitaine regarding the melodic version of the international repertory of chant had already been emphasized by the monks of Solesmes in the *Graduel romain*.¹² What was unknown so far was that these sources have in common also a rich corpus of melodies composed at a later date. This implies not only common archetypes, but also significant circulation of manuscripts and/or monks between these regions after the ninth century. Most interestingly, I have found that some chants for the masses of the Holy Cross are adaptations of antiphons found in Aquitanian manuscripts with probable Gallican origins. This

¹² *Graduel romain: Édition critique par les moines de Solesmes. II: Les Sources* (Solesmes: Abbaye Saint Pierre, 1957-1962)

particular circumstance is extremely significant, because it provides new elements for the reconstruction of Gallican chant.¹³

I was also able to find similarities with the Tonary Montpellier H 159. This book, one of the most important theoretical sources of medieval music, was written for Saint-Benigne de Dijon in France under the influence of William of Vercelli who visited Benevento and Monte Gargano before the end of the tenth century. He probably contributed to the acquisition in MoH159 of some melodies heard during his stay in southern Italy.

The analysis of concordances with extra-Beneventan sources demonstrated that the diffusion of this relatively late repertory of chant underwent a much more intense process of adaptation than the Gregorian repertory itself. Melodic versions are often highly variable from one source to the other, thereby demonstrating the wish to adapt imported melodies to the local musical taste. Furthermore, it is the structure itself of pieces that had often been transformed. The comparison of offertories has demonstrated, for instance, that the reception of verses was never identical in sources of different origins. It seems likely that Offertory verses were considered as independent compositions that could be added, suppressed, or arranged in different order, according to the exigencies of the new context. Or, more simply, medieval cantors felt somewhat free to modify neo-Gregorian compositions to suit their own tastes or needs. Perhaps they were aware that this was newly composed music not affected by the aura of sanctity and untouchability surrounding Gregorian melodies.

¹³ See my forthcoming article “Aliens in Disguise: Byzantine and Gallican Songs as Mass Proper Items in Italian Sources.”

The relatively large number of extra-Beneventan similarities, however, does not cover the majority of the repertory. The main corpus of this music, about the 70%, in fact, consists of pieces that can be found only in local sources.

It is possible to classify Beneventan manuscripts according to the occurrence of neo-Gregorian chant. Books from Montecassino and related centers, for instance, present fewer instances of neo-Gregorian compositions, than books connected with Benevento or Capua. This depends on multiple factors. Some Cassinese books are lacking the summer part, the section of the liturgical year that usually presents the largest number of additions. In order to fill this lacuna, I have considered some sources probably written in Puglia and Dalmatia, but strongly affected by the usage of Montecassino, such as Vaticanus latinus 576 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Canon. Liturg. 342. These manuscripts, in particular Vat. lat. 576, confirm the impression that the composition and reception of the neo-Gregorian repertory was not a significant phenomenon in Montecassino. I believe that the reason can be found in the policy of fidelity to standardized liturgy pursued by the Cassinese abbots.

Manuscripts probably written in Benevento itself or surrounding region present a much richer repertory. New songs are mainly related to the Sanctoral that are the feast days for the saints (as for instance the feasts of saint Michael, saint Benedict, the Annunciation and Assumption of the Virgin, the Transfiguration of the Lord, the Invention and Exaltation of the Holy Cross, and so on). But there are also a goodly number of pieces composed for the Proper of the Time that comprehends the feasts of the Lord (such as the second Sunday of Lent, the Octave of Epiphany, the Octave of Easter, and Ascension among others). A large part of the repertory

consists, obviously, of alleluias spread throughout the entire liturgical year and in particular in the season after Pentecost.

But it is the attention to musical and textual aspects of this repertory that reserves the most interesting surprises. As I have mentioned above, this is music created to fit into the liturgical and formal dictates of the imported Gregorian repertory. This means that a neo-Gregorian introit, for instance, has to be perfectly compatible with the structure of Gregorian liturgy (neo-Gregorian chants are in fact often inserted in international Mass formularies). Nevertheless the analysis of melodies and texts reveals some interesting connections with obsolete repertories and this circumstance may be explained with the social and political history of the region. Barbara M. Kreutz says that : “in the early medieval period, southern Italy was in effect a giant laboratory, one in which polities were tested and where Byzantium, the Lombards, the Islamic world, and the Latin West constantly intersected.”¹⁴ This statement, concerning the political situation of southern Italy, may be applied to the cultural sphere, as well. In the case of Beneventan territories, we should also add the gradually increasing connections developed between the church of Benevento and the central power of Papal Rome. The city was raised to the dignity of metropolitan see in 929 and became finally part of the papal States in 1077.

All these political connections (with Lombards, Byzantines, Normans, and Romans), as I said, are obviously reflected in local cultural and artistic production between the ninth and eleventh centuries. As for neo-Gregorian chant, its most evident link is with old Beneventan chant, the autochthonous chant used for the celebration of Mass and Office in southern Italy

¹⁴ Barbara M Kreutz, *Before the Normans: Southern Italy in the Ninth and Tenth . Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), p. xxiv

before the acquisition of Gregorian chant, which is strongly connected with the Lombard rulers. This repertory is, as explained above, characterized by a preference for long melismas, short scalar movements, and ornamentation of the modal chord. Most neo-Gregorian compositions contained in Beneventan manuscripts present this very style blended into a Gregorian frame. Old Beneventan chant may have been pushed out the front door, but local cantors would seem to have brought in back in through the window.

A second level of influence is with the liturgical practice of Byzantium. A relatively limited number of neo-Gregorian items can be directly or indirectly connected with Byzantine music. There is evidence of a group of alleluias showing melodic features also found in the most archaic segments of Byzantine music. And there is also evidence of introits and processional songs linked with the Byzantine Trisagion.¹⁵ The Trisagion is an ordinary chant of the Eastern Christian liturgies sung prominently at Lauds and at Mass before the reading. It is first mentioned in the Council of Chalcedon (451), but the first written witnesses of the melodies are not earlier than the twelfth century. The Trisagion, however, seemed to have reached the West at an early date, since it is quoted by the Pseudo-Germanus of Paris as an Ordinary chant of the Gallican liturgy.

All the pieces for which a Byzantine links has been recognized (the alleluias and the Trisagion-related melodies) are particularly interesting not only because they testify of further connections between the chant repertories of the East and the West, but also because they give us information about the state of Greek Orthodox music before the introduction of music writing in the East.

¹⁵ Luisa Nardini, "Aliens in Disguise".

Some of the pieces showing Byzantine ties (especially the alleluias) were probably borrowed directly from the East because of the political connections of Benevento with Byzantium and because of the presence of the Greek Orthodox Church in southern Italy (especially in Calabria and Naples), but others were probably imported through the intermediation of the Franks, at the time when cantors and books from Francia entered the south of Italy. The study of neo-Gregorian chant demonstrates, in fact, that the process of liturgical unification pursued by Carolingians provoked the diffusion in southern Italy of a few non-standard items.

Finally, another level of influences is with the liturgical repertory of Rome, the so-called Old-Roman chant. Beneventan sources show the presence of two communions and one offertory, which were directly transmitted from Rome to Benevento. The three pieces, which failed to be transmitted to the north in the eighth century so that they never entered the Gregorian repertory, were never reworked by the Franks. Their presence in Beneventan sources is particularly striking, because they offer an unpaired opportunity to detect the acquisition of Old-Roman melodies into a region other than France.¹⁶

The analysis of melodic manipulations occurred to the Roman melodies in Benevento demonstrates that these chants were acquired orally and were musically transformed according to the musical style of the region. This process of transformation is evident also in the pieces of Byzantine and Gallican origins: they became in fact perfectly compatible with the main

¹⁶ Luisa Nardini, *Il repertorio neo-Gregoriano*, pp. 209 and 228-233. I have analyzed these pieces in my paper presented at the conference “Cantus Intertextus: Chant and Liturgy in Medieval Italy”, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, March 2004. This topic is the subject of my forthcoming article “Old Roman Intruders in Beneventan Sources”.

characteristics of the entire neo-Gregorian repertory, which main characteristics may be recognized in the fluidity of melodic pattern that proceeds through fragmentary scalar segments, in the insistence on the sub-semitonal note (namely the B or E) that is the sign of an archaic modal perception not completely influenced by the theory of the Eight Modes, and in ornamentation of the modal chord. But there are also other aspects that are worth to mention. Most melodies studied belong to a tune family. The concept of ‘tune family’ was developed in the 20th-century by British-American folksong scholars as a tool to explain the strong relationships among melodies widespread in the oral tradition. Peter Jeffery and David Hughes have applied the tune family concept to plainchant melodies based on the circumstance that certain pieces share common musical material, such as the same tune with minor adjustments, or similar or identical opening phrases.¹⁷ In the case of many neo-Gregorian melodies, we can recognize similar melodic gestures but never the repetition of identical musical designs. This compositional method owes much to the practice of improvisation and oral delivery.

Another element of these melodies is the compositional technique that consists in the varied re-proposition of the same melodic phrase throughout the entire piece. This technique, usually termed *Gestaltvariation*, was described for the first time by the German musicologist Marius Schneider and consists in the variation of the same melodic pattern within a piece. In monophonic music modifications usually consist in the insertion of secondary pitches that enlarge a hitherto more synthetic theme. Schneider recognized this technique as a distinctive

¹⁷ David G. Hughes, “Evidence for the Traditional View of the Transmission of Gregorian Chant,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 40 (1987), 377-404; Peter Jeffery, *Re-Envisioning past musical cultures: ethnomusicology in the study of Gregorian chant*. Chicago Studies in Ethnomusicology (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992)

feature of the musical cultures of the Mediterranean area and the Near East.¹⁸ It owes its origins, once again, to the need to improvise and memorize so typical of oral musical traditions.

These characteristics just described are typical of Beneventan and old-Roman chant, but more in general of all repertories in which orality played a determinant role in the preservation and diffusion of melodies. Gregorian chant, the ‘official musical language’ of the Latin Church after the eighth century, was transcribed in the sources at a very early stage, so that melodies remained crystallized for centuries. Roman, Beneventan, Byzantine, and, at this point, also neo-Gregorian chant, on the other hand, underwent a continuous process of alteration until the eleventh century when they were first transcribed in the sources. The interest that this music has for us is not merely the discovery of an incredible amount of ‘new’ melodies, but also the opportunity to deal with compositional techniques related to oral musical culture, techniques that have been supplanted at an early date in western liturgical music by the standardization of written transmission.

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¹⁸ See his “Consideraciones acerca del canto gregoriano y la voz humana,” *Arbor*, xiv (1949), 367–87; *Geschichte der Mehrstimmigkeit; historische und phänomenologische Studien* (Tutzing: H. Schneider, 1969).

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