A Gregorian processional antiphon

A Gregorian Processional Antiphon

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No chant of the medieval liturgy comes better supplied with evidence of its origin, function, and change than the processional antiphon *Deprecamur te Domine.* No chant, in fact, has a better claim to be called «Gregorian,» for Deprecamur reaches us with a unique parcel of history attached. In 596, Pope Gregory the Great dispatched Augustine, the Italian-born prior of the monastery of Saint Andrew on the Caelian hill at Rome, to refound the Church of England, and before Augustine died in 604–5 he was ordained the first archbishop of Canterbury. In the 8th-century *History* of Bede and again in the *Vita* of Augustine it is recorded that as the Saint approached Canterbury in 597 there was sweetly sung the «litanialem antiphonam» *Deprecamur te Domine in omni misericordia tua.*[1] The full text of that antiphon is given by the two English histories, and it appears again in the 9th-century text-antiphonaries of Compiègne and Senlis among the provisions for the Great Litanies.[2] During the following centuries it reappears in neumed sources from all over Europe. Thus there is every reason to suppose that the verbal text was established in the Roman usage by the end of the 6th century. For the music, no fewer than three distinct chants circulate during the Middle Ages, and the present purpose is to examine them and see what they reveal.

The most widely diffused chant is a truly international one that appears in France (as early as the 10th century), Germany, Italy, and England. It is apparently the only melody in surviving English sources. A generation ago, one might have labelled a melody with such a pedigree as «Gregorian,» and with that have settled the question of what melody it was that Augustine heard in England. Today, however, it is clear that the question is knottier, and that there are arguments for assigning such a melody to a «Frankish»-fostered recension of the Roman chant, carried out north of the Alps some two centuries or more after Gregory's reign.[3] In the discussion that follows, I shall prefer to call that recension «Carolingian» rather than «Frankish,» on the one hand as describing the time-frame during which it took decisive shape, and on the other as describing what was in some respects a broad-based endeavor which, like its cultural progenitor, the «Carolingian Renaissance,» joined contributions of Visigoths and Lombards, Celts and Saxons, with those of Franks and Italians in shaping the musical tradition that for centuries thereafter was known as «Gregorian.»

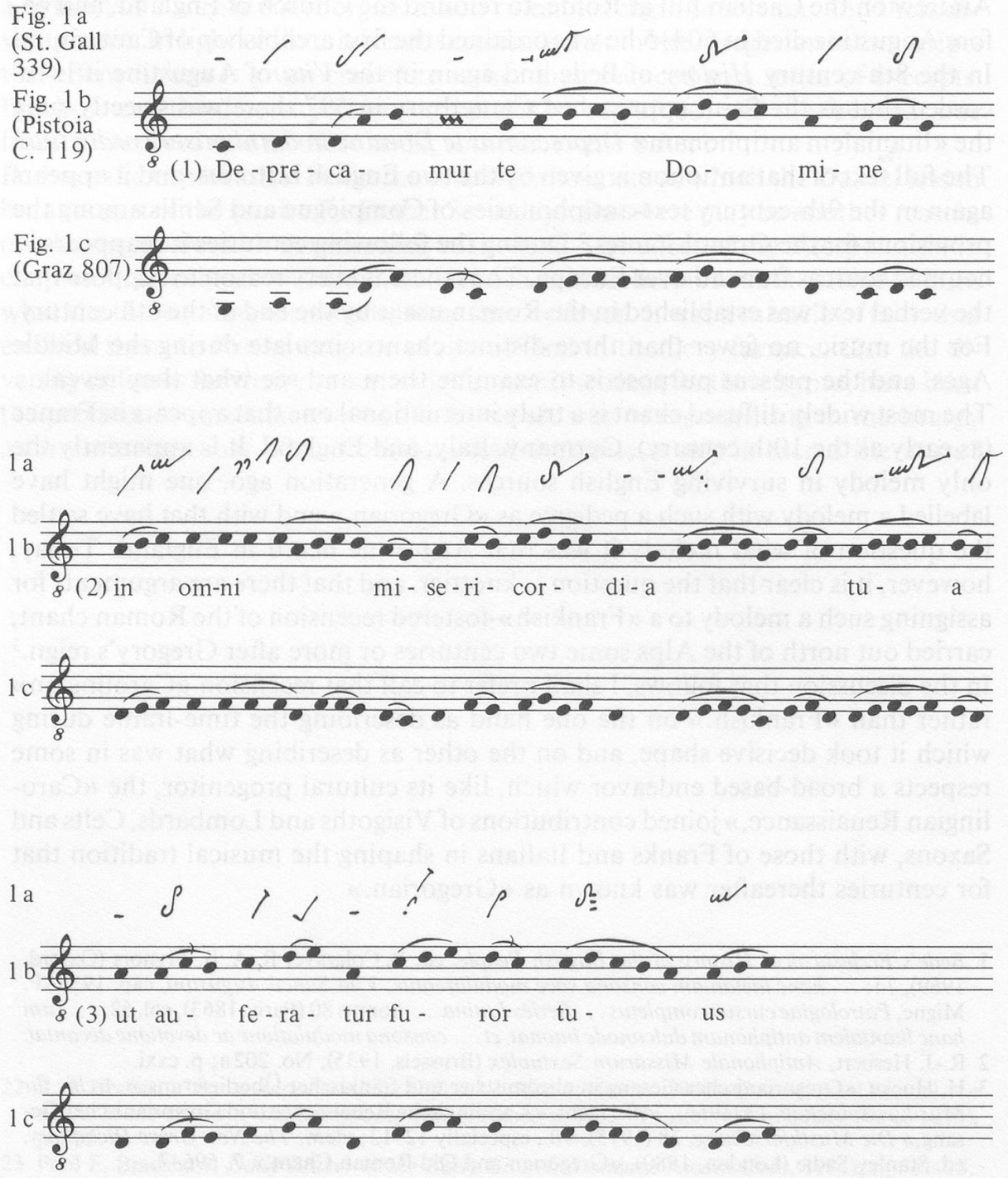
1 *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* ed. B. Colgrave, R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), 74: . . . *hanc laetaniam consona voce modularentur; Vita Sancti Augustini,* cap. 19; J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus . . . Series Latina. . . ,* tomus 80 (Paris, 1863), col. 62: . . . *tum hanc litanialem antiphonam dulcimode intonat, et . . . consona modulatione ac devotione decantat.*

2 R.-J. Hesbert, *Antiphonale Missarum Sextuplex* (Brussels, 1935), No. 202a; p. cxxi.

3 H. Hucke, «Gregorianischer Gesang in altrömischer und fränkischer Überlieferung,» *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft,* 13 (1956), 74ff.; idem, «Karolingische Renaissance und Gregorianischer Gesang,» *Die Musikforschung,* 28 (1975), 4ff., especially 12–13; idem, *The New Grove Dictionary,* ed. Stanley Sadie (London, 1980), «Gregorian and Old Roman Chant,» 7, 696–7.

Fig. 1 offers three early witnesses of Deprecamur te in the Carolingian tradition: one is from German Switzerland; another from central Italy; and a third from eastern Austria.

Fig. 1 *Deprecamur te* in Carolingian traditions: 1a. Saint Gall 339, 136 (plus Bamberg lit. 6, 90); 1b. Pistoia C. 119, 127; 1c. Graz 807, 116.



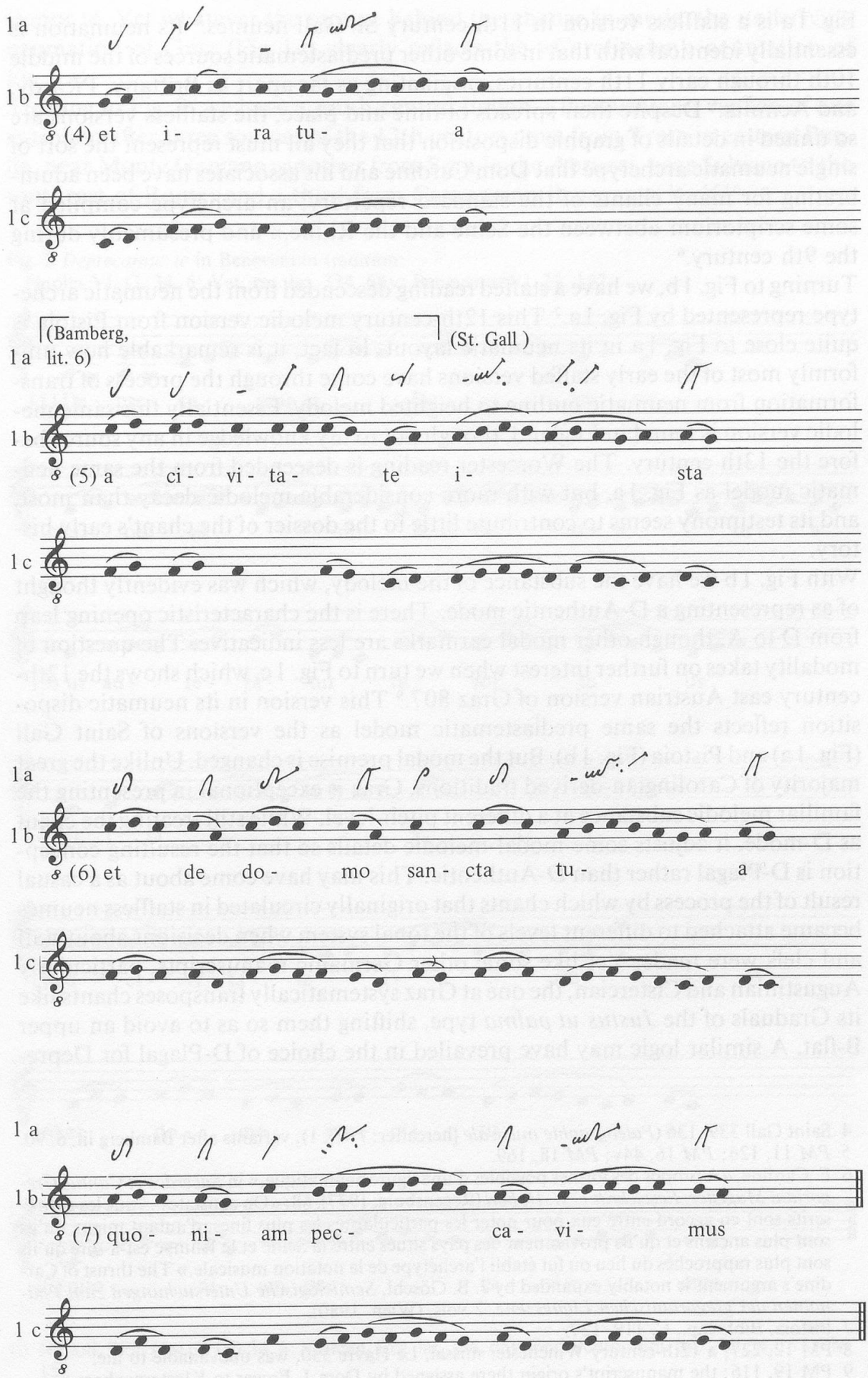

1 a
1 b
(4) et i- ra tu- a
1 c
(Bamberg,
1 a lit. 6)
(St. Gall)
1 b
(5) a ci- vi- ta- te i- sta
1 c
1 a
1 b
(6) et de do- mo san- cta tu- a
1 c
1 a
1 b
(7) quo- ni- am pec- ca- vi- mus
1 c

Fig. 1a is a staffless version in 11th-century St. Gall neumes.[4] Its neumation is essentially identical with that in some other prediastematic sources of the middle 10th through early 11th centuries, originating as far apart as Brittany, Picardy, and Aemilia.[5] Despite their spreads of time and place, the staffless versions are so united in details of graphic disposition that they all must represent the sort of single neumatic archetype that Dom Cardine and his associates have been adumbrating for many chants of the standard repertory, an archetype compiled at some scriptorium «between the Seine and the Rhine,» and presumably during the 9th century.[6]

Turning to Fig. 1b, we have a staffed reading descended from the neumatic archetype represented by Fig. 1a.[7] This 12th-century melodic version from Pistoia is quite close to Fig. 1a in its neumatic layout. In fact, it is remarkable how uniformly most of the early staffed versions have come through the process of transformation from neumatic outline to heighted melody. Essentially this same melodic version is found in England, though not to my knowledge in any source before the 13th century. The Worcester reading is descended from the same neumatic model as Fig. 1a, but with more considerable melodic decay than most, and its testimony seems to contribute little to the dossier of the chant's early history.

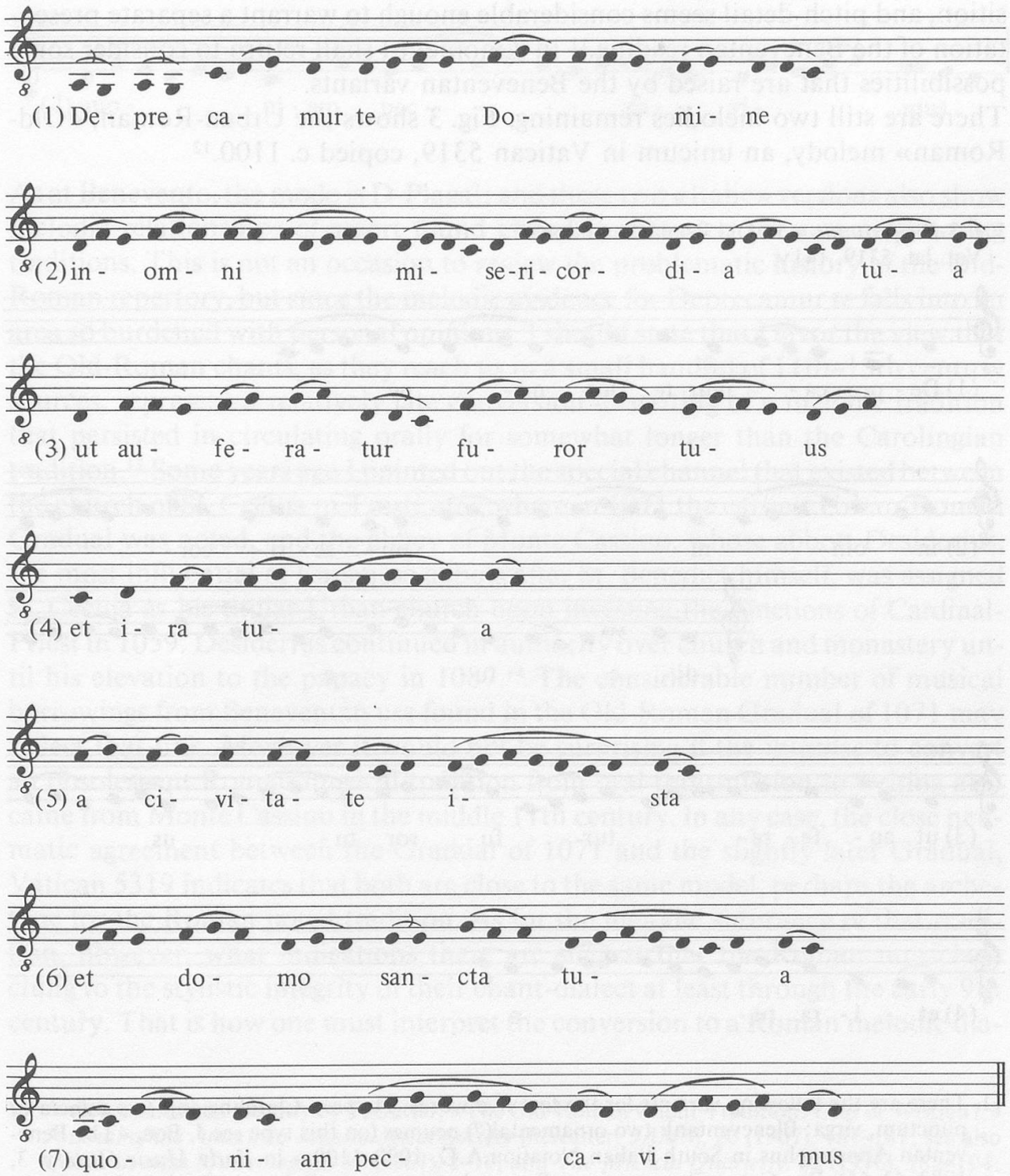
With Fig. 1b we have the substance of the melody, which was evidently thought of as representing a D-Authentic mode. There is the characteristic opening leap from D to A, though other modal earmarks are less indicative. The question of modality takes on further interest when we turn to Fig. 1c, which shows the 12th-century east Austrian version of Graz 807.[9] This version in its neumatic disposition reflects the same prediastematic model as the versions of Saint Gall (Fig. 1a) and Pistoia (Fig. 1b). But the modal premise is changed. Unlike the great majority of Carolingian-derived traditions, Graz is exceptional in presenting the familiar melodic substance at a different pitch-level. While still treating the chant as D-mode, it adjusts some modal-melodic details so that the resulting conception is D-Plagal rather than D-Authentic. This may have come about as a casual result of the process by which chants that originally circulated in staffless neumes became attached to different levels of the tonal system when decisions about staff and clefs were made. Yet like some other Germanic manuscripts, particularly Augustinian and Cistercian, the one at Graz systematically transposes chants like its Graduals of the *Justus ut palma* type, shifting them so as to avoid an upper B-flat. A similar logic may have prevailed in the choice of D-Plagal for Depre-

4 Saint Gall 339, 136 (*Paléographie musicale* [hereafter: *PM*], 1); variants after Bamberg lit. 6, 90.
5 *PM* 11, 126; *PM* 16, 44v; *PM* 18, 169.
6 E. Cardine, «A propos des formes possibles d'une figure neumatique,» in *Sacerdos et Cantus Gregoriani Magister: Festschrift F. X. Haberl* (Regensburg, 1977), 68: «On constate . . . que les manuscrits sont en accord entre eux pour noter les particularités les plus fines, d'autant mieux qu'ils sont plus anciens et qu'ils proviennent des pays situés entre la Seine et le Rhin, c'est-à-dire qu'ils sont plus rapprochés du lieu où fut établi l'archétype de la notation musicale.» The thrust of Cardine's argument is notably expanded by J. B. Göschl, *Semiologische Untersuchungen zum Phänomen der gregorianischen Liqueszenz*, 2 vols, (Wien, 1980).
7 Pistoia, Bibl. cap., C. 119, 127.
8 PM 12, 227; a 12th-century Winchester missal, Le Havre 330, was unavailable to me.
9 PM 19, 116; the manuscript's origin there assigned by Dom J. Froger to Klosterneuberg.

camur te. Yet whatever the motive behind the change in mode, the underlying neumation of Graz (Fig. 1c) clearly reflects the «Carolingian» neumation of Fig. 1a.

Turning to Fig. 2, we have a south-central Italian, «Beneventan» version of our antiphon after three sources of the 12th century: one from Troia in eastern Puglia, near Monte Gargano; another from Sora in the Abruzzi, near Subiaco to the southeast of Rome; and a third from Campanian Benevento itself.[10]

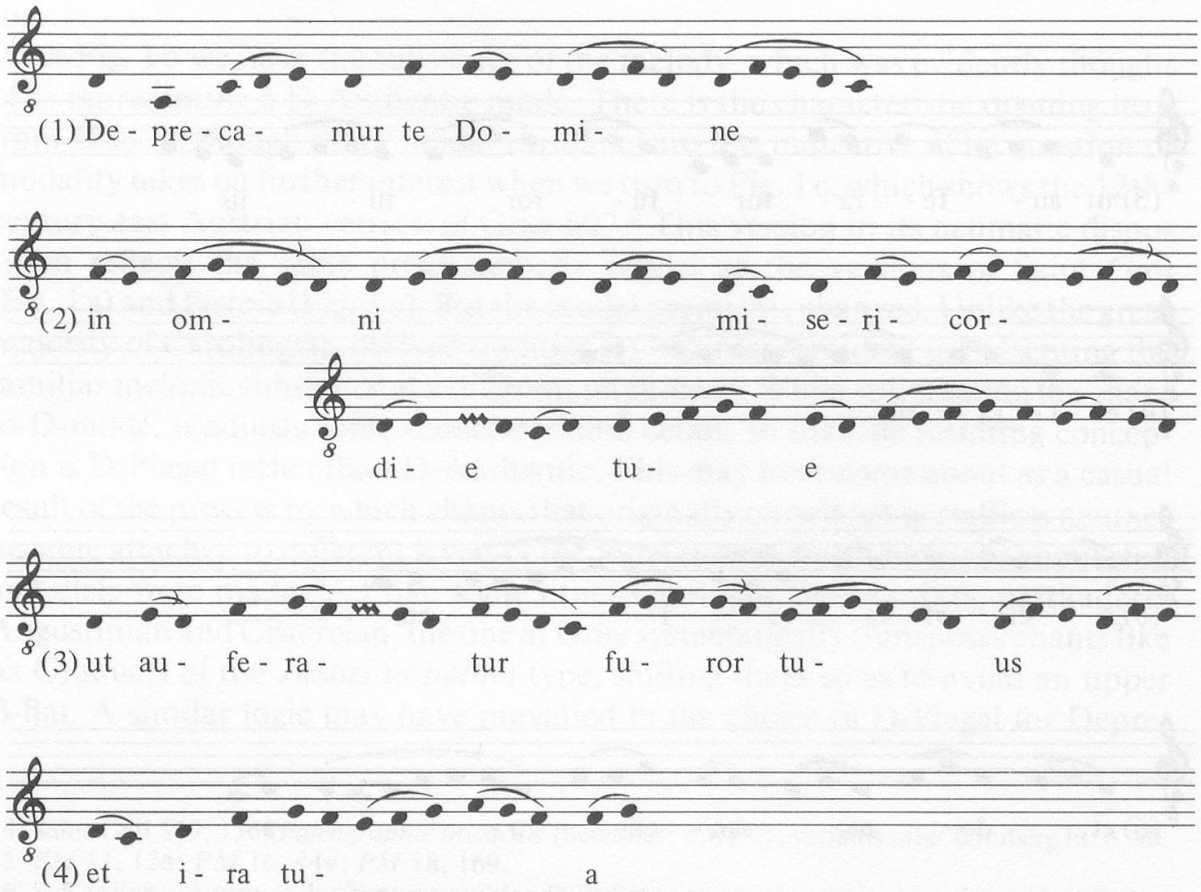
Fig. 2 *Deprecamur te* in Beneventan tradition:
Naples VI. G. 34, 6; Vat. reg. lat. 334, 68v; Benevento VI. 34, 157.



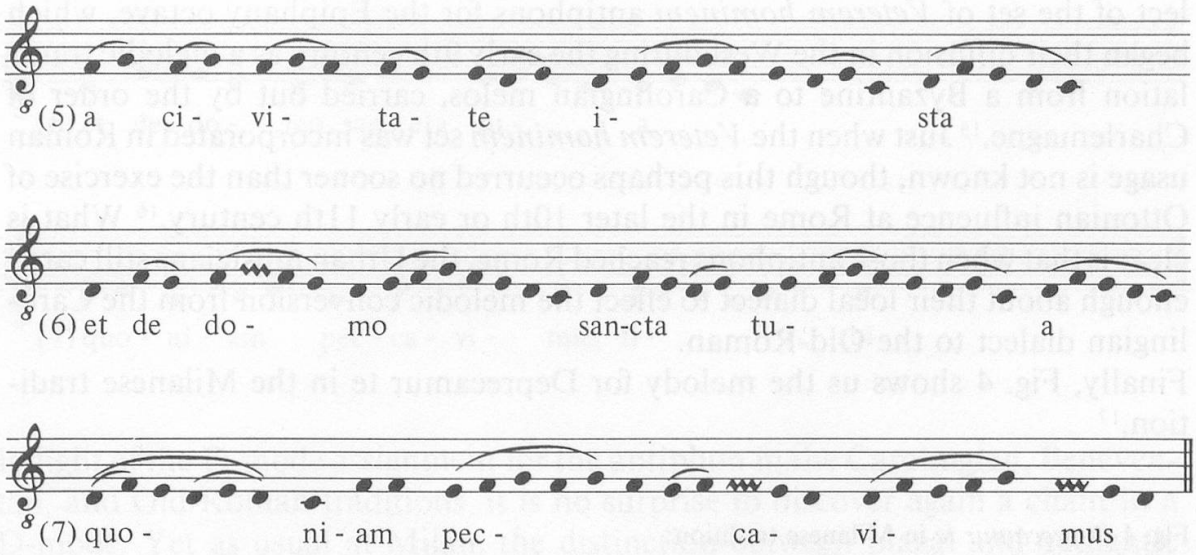
10 Napoli, Bibl. Naz., VI.G.34, 6; Vatican, Reg. lat. 334, 68v; Benevento, Bibl. cap., VI.34, 157 (PM 15).

No Beneventan version in staffless neumes has survived, but our three staffed readings are so close in details of neumation that there is likely to have been a single pre-diastematic model behind all of them, as there is for most of the rest of the Beneventan tradition. Like the east Austrian melody in Fig. 1c, our Beneventan melody is in D-Plagal, and it is in many respects so much like Fig. 1c that a first estimate might be that it represents the same kind of transmission: another derivative of the Carolingian neumatic archetype, again shifted from authentic to plagal. Still, the Beneventan reading departs somewhat more considerably from the Carolingian neumation than occurs elsewhere in the 11th–12th century readings, and the aggregate of the Beneventan variants of mode, neumatic disposition, and pitch-detail seems considerable enough to warrant a separate presentation of the Beneventan reading.[11] In a moment I shall return to consider some possibilities that are raised by the Beneventan variants.
There are still two melodies remaining. Fig. 3 shows the Urban-Roman, «Old-Roman» melody, an unicum in Vatican 5319, copied c. 1100.[12]

Fig. 3 *Deprecamur te* in Old Roman tradition:
Vat. lat. 5319, 141v.



11 There are the following variants for the first five words: *De-pre-*, C[arolingian]: two puncta or punctum, virga; B[eneventan]: two ornamental(?) neumes (on this type see J. Boe, «The Beneventan Apostrophus in South Italian Notation,A.D. 1000–1100,» in *Early Music History*, 3, 1983, 43–66). *Do-*, C: torculus resupinus; B: torculus, punctum, clivis. *mi-*, C: virga; B: podatus. *ne-*. C: torculus; B: «pressus.» *in.* C: quilisma; B: torculus. *om-*. C: virga; B: torculus. Etc.
12 Vatican, Latin 5319, 141v; B. Stäblein, ed., *Monumenta monodica medii aevi*, II (Kassel, 1970), 565.



As at Benevento, the mode is D-Plagal; and these two «Italic» versions also show melodic relationships of a sort found elsewhere between the two neighboring traditions. This is not an occasion to review the problematic history of the Old-Roman repertory, but since the melodic evidence for Deprecamur te falls into an area so burdened with personal opinions, I should state that I favor the view that the Old-Roman chants, as they reach us in a small handful of 11th–13th century sources, represent a relatively late conversion to writing of a melodic tradition that persisted in circulating orally for somewhat longer than the Carolingian tradition.[13] Some years ago I pointed out the special channel that existed between the church of St. Cecilia in Trastevere, where in 1071 the earliest Urban-Roman Gradual was noted, and the abbey of Monte Cassino, whose abbott Desiderius, the most influential of Cassinese abbots after St. Benedict himself, was assigned St. Cecilia as his titular Urban church upon investing the functions of Cardinal-Priest in 1059. Desiderius continued in authority over church and monastery until his elevation to the papacy in 1087.[14] The considerable number of musical borrowings from Beneventan use found in the Old-Roman Gradual of 1071 may reflect that link. Moreover it would not be surprising if the impulse to convert an obsolescent Roman musical tradition from oral transmission to writing also came from Monte Cassino in the middle 11th century. In any case, the close neumatic agreement between the Gradual of 1071 and the slightly later Gradual, Vatican 5319 indicates that both are close to the same model, perhaps the archetype for the Roman noted tradition. As for the melodic substance of that tradition, however, what indications there are suggest that the Roman musicians clung to the stylistic integrity of their chant-dialect at least through the early 9th century. That is how one must interpret the conversion to a Roman melodic dia-

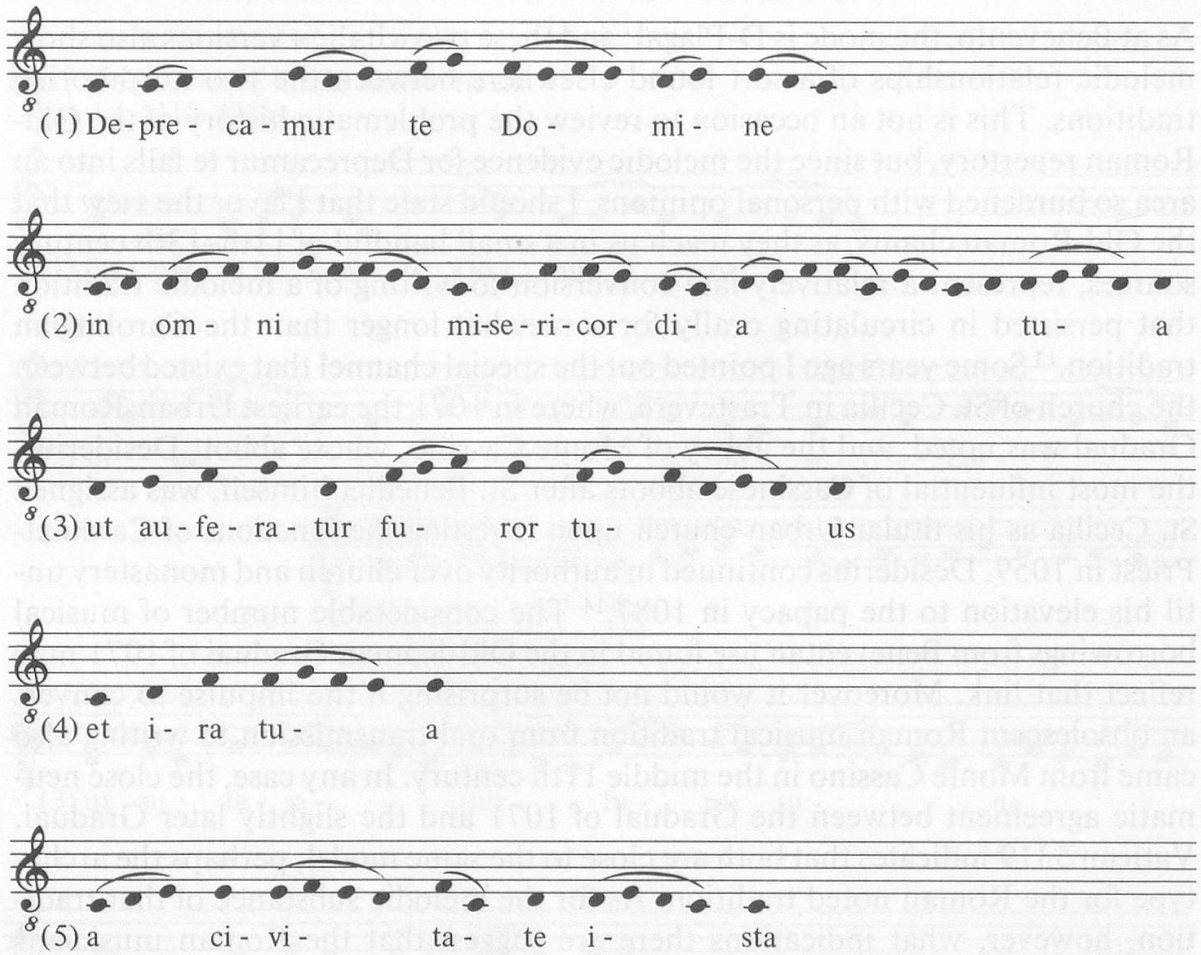
13 A view considered recently by P. Cutter, «The Old-Roman Chant Tradition: Oral or Written?,» *Journal of the American Musicological Society* [hereafter: *JAMS*], 20 (1967), 167–181; see also Cutter in *Acta Musicologica,* 39 (1967), 2–19, and *The Musical Quarterly,* 62 (1976), 182–194; compare T.H. Connolly, «The Gradual of S. Cecilia in Trastevere and the Old Roman Tradition,» *JAMS,* 28 (1975), 413–458.

14 K. Levy, «*Lux de luce:* The Origin of an Italian Sequence,» *The Musical Quarterly,* 57 (1971), 44 n. 11.

lect of the set of *Veterem hominem* antiphons for the Epiphany octave, which began their diffusion in the West during the early 9th century as a melodic translation from a Byzantine to a Carolingian melos, carried out by the order of Charlemagne.[15] Just when the *Veterem hominem* set was incorporated in Roman usage is not known, though this perhaps occurred no sooner than the exercise of Ottonian influence at Rome in the later 10th or early 11th century.[16] What is clear is that when those antiphons reached Rome, the Urban musicians still cared enough about their local dialect to effect the melodic conversion from the Carolingian dialect to the Old-Roman.

Finally, Fig. 4 shows us the melody for Deprecamur te in the Milanese tradition.[17]

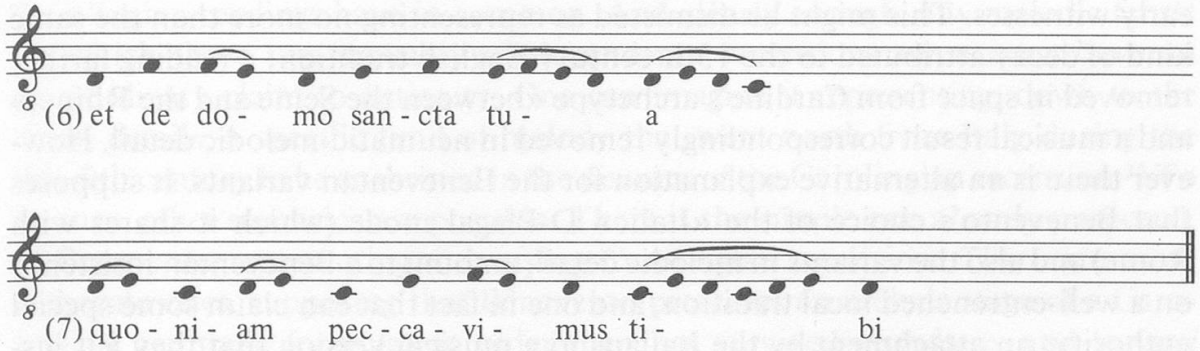
Fig. 4 *Deprecamur te* in Milanese tradition:
Oxford, Bodl. lat. lit. a. 4, 87.



15 O. Strunk, «The Latin Antiphons for the Octave of the Epiphany,» *Recueil de travaux de l'institut d'Études byzantines, No. 8: Mélanges Georges Ostrogorsky,* 2 (Belgrade, 1964), 417–426; repr. in O. Strunk, *Essays on Music in the Byzantine World* (New York, 1977), 208–219.

16 Berno of Reichenau (d. 1048) (*De Quibusdam rebus ad missae officium spectantibus,* c. 2: Migne, *Patrologiae . . . lat.,* 142, col. 1060f.) recounts *(me coram assistente)* the astonishment of Henry II in 1014 on finding the Credo omitted from the Mass at Rome, which lead to its inclusion at public Masses by Benedict VIII (1012–24).

17 Oxford, Bodl., lat. liturg. a. 4 (30062), 87 (A. D. 1399).



In light of the D-mode assignment for the antiphon in the Carolingian, Beneventan, and Old-Roman traditions, it is no surprise to discover again a chant in a D-mode. Yet as usual at Milan, the distinction between plagal and authentic forms is not clearly made, if made at all, and this chant is not indicative enough in melodic idioms or focussed enough within its range to justify a characterization as either plagal or authentic. The text first appears at Milan in a series of litanic services in an 11th century Ambrosian Manuale.[18] The musical version in Fig. 4 is three centuries younger, though the melodic stability exhibited by other Milanese chants as they progress through manuscripts of the early 12th through late 14th centuries allows some possibility that the version of Deprecamur te sung at Milan in the 11th–12th century was not too different from the one given here.

If we go on now to compare our three basic melodies – Carolingian-Beneventan (Figs. 1–2), Old-Roman (Fig. 3), and Milanese (Fig. 4) – there is some ground for supposing that they are fundamentally related. Thus there are parallels in the rhetorical rise and fall of lines 1 and 2; in the melodic climaxes on *furor* (line 3) and *ita* (line 4); in the recitations that open line 5. One of these three melodic formulations may have served as the point of departure for another. But it is more likely that behind all three there lies some ancestral modal-melodic formulation whose stylistic details we can no longer ascertain.

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Barring some unexpected circumstance, there will be no way of knowing what melodic formulations lie behind our earliest noted sources. I am not about to propose that such an unexpected circumstance exists, yet there is something provocative about the melodic transmissions for Deprecamur te, and I do not want to leave the question of this antiphon without sketching a scenario that may lift something of the veil that shrouds the earlier, pre-notational centuries. It depends on the small differences that have already been observed between the Carolingian (Fig. 1) and Beneventan (Fig. 2) versions. What separates those two comes to very little: the choice of authentic mode as opposed to plagal; and a handful of neumatic-melodic details whose divergences reach a bit beyond those in other

18 M. Magistretti, *Monumenta veteris liturgiae ambrosianae: Manuale ambrosianum (saec XI), pars altera* (Milano, 1904–5), 265; *die tertio de litaniis,* Antiphona xvi.

early witnesses. This might be dismissed as representing no more than the same kind of decay attributed to the 13th-century English tradition: a reading farther removed in space from Cardine's archetype «between the Seine and the Rhine,» and a musical result correspondingly removed in neumatic-melodic detail. However there is an alternative explanation for the Beneventan variants. It supposes that Benevento's choice of the «Italic» D-Plagal mode (which it shares with Rome) and also the variants in melodic detail, amount to a Beneventan insistence on a well-entrenched local tradition, and one in fact that can claim some special authority: an attachment by the Italians to a musical version that they felt justified in maintaining in the face of the Carolingian rescension. There is some background for the idea of a Beneventan liturgical-musical practice having special authority. For one thing, the Benedictine mother abbey of Monte Cassino, established in 529, spread its usage from the Beneventan zone to the whole of Europe. In the later 6th century, Gregory the Great governed his monks by the Benedictine Rule, and when Augustine of Canterbury and his company reached England in 596–7 it was that Rule and presumably its accompanying music that they brought with them.[19] There is also the Lindisfarne Gospel, compiled in northeast Britain at the end of the 7th century. Its text model was not an Evangeliary of Roman provenance but one going back to a Campanian or Neapolitan exemplar – from the Beneventan zone.[20] As for music, Dom Hesbert has shown the extraordinary tenacity of the Beneventan scribes in preserving archaic details of the Carolingian neumatic recension more faithfully than elsewhere.[21] The other side of that Beneventan archaizing is the tenacity about the local musical liturgy: the scribes continued to copy the old-Beneventan proper chants for major feasts well into the 12th century, long after other regions had bowed to the liturgical unifications dictated by Charlemagne and abandoned the bulk of their local music for the Carolingian recension.[22]

Now if it can be supposed that the Beneventan variants for Deprecamur te represent a similar independence of mind, an archaic persuasion about how certain features of the antiphon must go, that may tell us something useful. At face value, the variants say only that the Italians were fussing over some very small details. Yet the insistence on apparent trifles betokens something more: in effect, an «endorsement» of the large amounts of melodic fabric that the Beneventan and

19 F. L. Cross, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London, 1958), 155 («Benedictine Order»).

20 F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, eds., *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, 12[1], 766 («Naples»); E. A. Lowe, *Codices latini antiquiores*, 2 (Oxford, 1935), No. 187.

21 *PM* 14 (1931ff.), 143–196: «L'Archaïsme mélodique,» Hesbert's summary (p. 464): «Archaïque par son écriture, archaïque par maints traits de sa liturgie, archaïque par sa notation musicale, la tradition bénéventaine l'est encore au double point de vue mélodique et modal. Et, ici encore, nous entendons bien parler, non de la cantilène locale qui accompagnait les fonctions de l'ancien rite bénéventain, mais bien du chant romain [i.e. the recension here described as «Carolingian»] en tant qu'il est attesté par des témoins bénéventains.»

22 On the old-Beneventan chant repertory, see Dom B. Baroffio, «Liturgie im beneventanischen Raum,» *Geschichte der katholischen Kirchenmusik*, ed. K.-G. Fellerer, 1 (Kassel, 1972), 204; K. Schlager, «Beneventan rite, music of the,» in *The New Grove Dictionary*, 2, 482–4; K. Levy, «Latin Chant Outside the Roman Tradition,» in *New Oxford History of Music*, 2, rev. ed. (forthcoming), ed. R.L. Crocker. Editions are in preparation of the old-Beneventan proper chants by T.F. Kelly, and the sequences and tropes by A. Planchart and J. Boe.

Carolingian readings have in common. And clearly enough, any melodic fabric on which those two arguably «independent» recensions agree must have an extraordinary claim to antiquity. One can imagine it representing, down to the small details, a specific fund of melody that went north from Italy during the 8th–9th century to be enshrined in the neumes of the Carolingian recension.[23] To be sure, other scenarios are possible. There is the simple one already proposed, of Benevento representing a decaying Carolingian recension. There are more elaborate ones, supposing that Benevento preserves an archaic stage of a Carolingian neumatic formulation older than has survived elsewhere, and leaving open the question of whether the common melodic fabric in Figs. 1–2 was originally Italian or may represent a Gallican or Frankish formulation.

To pursue only the scenario of an Italian original transmitted independently by Benevento, before any claims can be made, there must be further testing of Carolingian-derived versions of Deprecamur te, and also tests of comparable processional antiphons. I have undertaken one such comparison with the antiphon *Peccavimus Domine et tu iratus es,* which offers a particularly close parallel to Deprecamur te. This is again an antiphon of the Great Litanies, transmitted in the same group as Deprecamur te by the Carolingian, Beneventan, and Old-Roman traditions. At Rome, Deprecamur and Peccavimus are in a sense musical twins: both are in D-Plagal, and they share more specific melodic substance with one another than either shares with any other Roman processional antiphon.[24] The point of the comparison, however, is in the Beneventan and Carolingian recensions. Unlike the case of Deprecamur, where the two recensions disagree about the mode, both now have Peccavimus in D-Plagal. Moreover the differences in melodic detail are much less considerable for Peccavimus than for Deprecamur.[25] Since the recensions agree about Peccavimus while disagreeing about Deprecamur, the likelihood seems increased that the Beneventans were adhering to an entrenched historical tradition in their variant reading of Deprecamur.

If such arguments can stand up to further testing, they may give us a unique grip, not only on the melodic pre-history of Deprecamur te, but perhaps on something more. By saying that Benevento clung to certain archaic melodic variants while still agreeing in substance with the Carolingian melody, we are implying that the Carolingian music did not acquire its basic stylization in the north as part of a «Frankish» melodic revision, but rather that it originated in Italy and came north already fully stylized. And this may lend support to the view espoused by Stäblein and others that there were «two Roman chants»: that the melodic fabric of the Carolingian recension was not in large measure the outcome of a thoroughgoing «Frankish» stylistic overlay but represented a melodic fund that in most

23 An early stage of the Carolingian recension may have reached the Beneventan zone before about 838; on the date see K. Levy, «The Italian Neophytes' Chants,» *JAMS,* 23 (1970), 221, n. 100.

24 B. Stäblein, *Monumenta monodica medii aevi,* 2 (Kassel, 1970), 565–6.

25 The Beneventan neumation (Reg. 334, 65v; Napoli VI.G.34, 4; Benevento VI.34 [*PM* 15], 157) is practically identical with the 10th to 12th century neumations of Saint Gall (*PM* 1, 136; *PM* 4, 401), Picardy (*PM* 16, 45), Aquitaine (Paris lat. 903, 135), Nonantola (Rome, Casanatense 1743, 166v), and Aemilia (*PM* 18, 169v). The 13th century Worcester reading (*PM* 12, 224) is again farthest from the archetype.

respects came already stylized from Italy.[26] Yet it is a long way from a single antiphon of peripheral, processional usage to the central repertory of proper chants for the Mass and Office, and the fact remains that each class of liturgical chant, each modal category within a class, and indeed each particular chant, has to be weighed individually in this regard. There is one final point. We have been dealing with an Italian chant-reading that comes down through south-central Italian, Beneventan sources. At the same time we have noted the casual attitude of the Romans about preserving their own «Urban-Roman» musical repertory. Thus it may be that what the Beneventan transmission represents is the provincial survival of a neighboring Roman tradition that the Urban scribes themselves did not bother to commit to writing.

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The main points of the foregoing are: 1. Beneventan sources preserve a slightly variant melodic reading for Deprecamur te (Fig. 2), perhaps representing an archaic Italian tradition that did not filter through the Carolingian tradition (Fig. 1); 2. in that case, the Carolingian melody is likely to have been received already stylized from Italy, with little added in the way of «northern» or «Frankish» retouching; 3. while the preserved Italian tradition is Beneventan, the ultimate Italian source may have been Rome. In closing, I would reemphasize the tentative nature of these proposals. Yet I would also emphasize that we are unlikely ever to have direct access to melodic readings that are older than our oldest (9th century) neumed documents. That being so, it may only be an argument of the sort traced here that can ever tell us what the fabric of the 6th to 8th century «Gregorian»-Roman chants was actually like.

26 The positions are summarized by Hucke in *The New Grove Dictionary*, 7, 696–7 (art.: «Gregorian and Old Roman chant»).