THE OCTOECHOS AND THE BENEVENTAN CHANT

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Abstract

The Beneventan chant, preserved only in fragmentary form, did not employ the eight-mode octoechos system known to us from Franco-Roman chant. Within a single set of musical procedures — we might say a single mode — most pieces end on what we transcribe as A, while some end a step lower, on G. Study of the surviving psalmody suggest the use of three reciting notes, on C, D, or E.

Keywords: Beneventan chant, modality, octoechos, psalm tones
Ključne riječi: beneventansko pjevanje, modalnost, octoechos, psalamski tonus

The role of the octoechos in the Beneventan chant can be quickly stated: it has no role whatever. The Beneventan chant came into existence without a systematic modal organization, and it is to a large extent preserved in that form. At a later stage scribes attempted to adapt the Beneventan chant as received and understood to a more modern system; this is the direct result of the arrival of Gregorian chant in south Italy, probably in the late eighth century, in a form structured by the octoechos.

What follows is a brief amplification of this situation, with such examples as may help my colleagues to see the melodic arrangement of the Beneventan chant. It is my hope that they, in turn, will lend their modally-expert scrutiny to this repertoire, in an attempt to understand better its particular means of melodic procedure.

It is important to remember, by way of background, that the Beneventan chant is preserved incomplete, relatively late, and in manuscripts whose principal purpose is to record the modally-organized repertory known as Gregorian chant.

Thus, there is every reason to suspect that the repertory as we have it may have been filtered through the scribal need to fit the Beneventan chants into a systematic presentation designed for Gregorian, not Beneventan, chant. Modal and melodic qualities may have been affected as well, of course, but what remains to us is nevertheless so archaic, and so different from the Gregorian repertory in the same books, that we can feel sure, I think, that the music which has been passed on is relatively pure.

The Beneventan chant lacks the melodic categorization found in many Gregorian melodies. Generally the music is uniformly ornate, and full of the small melodic formulas that give the repertory its particular character. But there are no melodies, or melodic formulas, limited to a single liturgical category, or a single liturgical season.

Beneventan melodies are not generally more or less ornate according to their liturgical function, although all the longest pieces are Ingressae (entrance chants) and the simplest are Offertories and Communions. It is also true that Offertories and Communions include some of the most ornate pieces.

In the earliest and most complete sources, the Beneventan chant is transcribed without clefs, so that we cannot be certain of the pitches; but careful work with the melodic formulas themselves, and their relations one to another, make reliable transcription a possibility, and we can be certain that the musical system of the Beneventan chant consists of a single melodic framework, in which all pieces end on A or one note lower on G — a sort of protus and tetrardus, second mode and eighth mode, that corresponds with other generally agreed early repertories. It matches very closely, in almost all particulars, the hypothetical »échelle archaïque developpée« posited years ago by Dom Jean Claire.

But there are not really two modes: there is nothing to distinguish the two groups: those on A and those on G from each other except for their final pitches. There are no particular turns of phrase, no special formulas, no families of melodies, that belong exclusively to one group or the other. Indeed, the same melody may end on either of the two pitches. The melody that is used for almost all the Alleluias of the Beneventan repertory has three different forms, according to the length of the text: the longest form includes the other two, and the medium-length version likewise includes the shortest: that is, the melody stops at one of three places, according to the text.

Two of these endings are on A, but one is on G. We do not know whether the Alleluia was repeated after the verse; if so, the full performances would all end alike, even though the verses had a variety of endings; but even so, it remains true that the same melody ends on two pitches.

A similar case of a melody which may end on different pitches is the Ingressa *Michi autem absit*, for feasts of the Holy Cross: this concludes with a group of

Alleluias, ending on G in the version of Benevento 40, folio 124v; but in the palimpsest Rome, Vallicelliana C 9 the use of different Alleluias brings the piece to rest on A.

The cadential formulas which are most common in the repertory echo this plan of two finals. There are two such formulas, each used hundreds of times: one for cadences on A, and one a note lower, on G. Versions of them are marked on **Example 1**, which reproduces the beginning of the Ingressa for Maundy Thursday. Note that the cadence on G, found throughout the repertory, is never used for the final cadence of a piece, but only for intermediate cadences: final G-cadences are always made in some other fashion.

The psalmody of the Beneventan chant is preserved very incompletely, but we have some evidence of the earlier practice, and we also can see the gradual adaptation of that practice to the newer norms of the octoechos (or at least, to the psalmody received with the Gregorian repertory).

We have little information on the regular practice of the office in Beneventan chant, so that psalmody from the earliest transmitted layer is rare and possibly not typical. Psalmody for the mass is almost nonexistent, since the Ingressa is sung without psalmody, like the entrance chant at Milan, and the communion gives almost no evidence of psalmody.

Nevertheless, there are a few examples of psalm-tones among the earliest written repertory, and these have a consistency within themselves that accords with the style of the Beneventan chant itself; in later manuscripts, and among the antiphons which have Beneventan melodies but which are not preserved among the earlier sources, the psalmody seems to be regularized, systematized, accommodated to the practices in the Gregorian chants with which these pieces are surrounded in later manuscripts.

The early layer of psalmody is small: Vespers for Good Friday, preserved among the amalgamated rites for Holy Week in a few early manuscripts; Vespers for St. John the Baptist, preserved in a privately owned eleventh-century fragment (known as the »Solesmes fragments« because they can be consulted only in photographs at Solesmes); and the newly-discovered Vespers, probably of Epiphany, in a private collection at Bisceglie.

In most of these cases, the antiphons are accompanied not only by a psalmodic ending, but by an entire *versus ad repetendum*, so that we can see the entire structure of the psalm-tone. These psalm-tones are displayed in **Example 2a-2b**, along with the few examples of psalmody found among the pieces for the mass.

The psalmody behaves in a familiar fashion: each verse has intonation, mediation, termination, and there is often an intonation for the second half; all tones recite on the same pitch in each half, and for each tenor there is a variety of endings, presumably related to the antiphon to follow. The final cadences evidently fit their notes to the syllables without regard for accentuation.

There are evidently three reciting pitches for psalmody, which I present as mi, re, and do, although in the early sources they are nowhere identified with specific pitches.
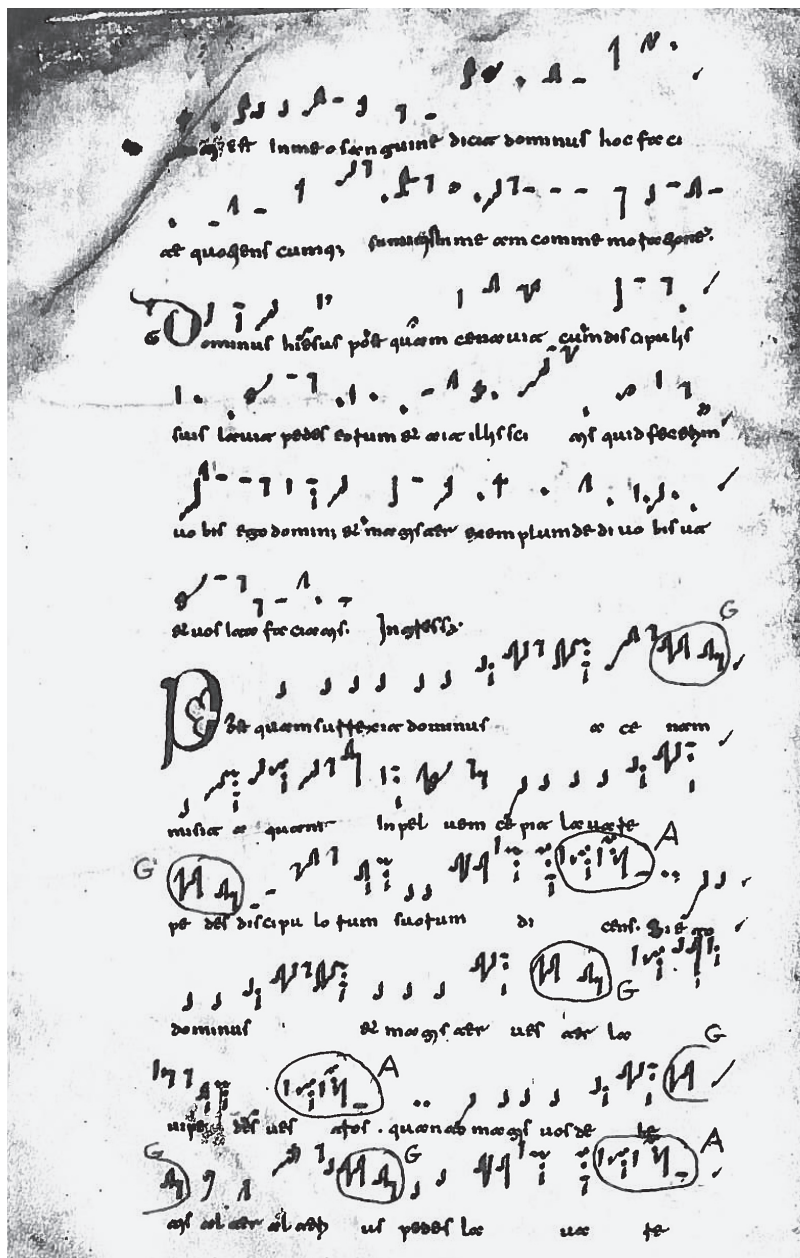
Example 1: Benevento, Biblioteca capitolare MS 38, f. 4v. The Introit *Postquam surrexit* for Maundy Thursday has been marked with two of the most common Beneventan cadences, on G and A.

Example 2a-2b: Psalmody in the Beneventan Repertory. Reproduced from Thomas Forrest Kelly, *The Beneventan Chant*, Cambridge 1989, pp. 145-146.

Ex. 4.25c   Psalmody on c

Legend:

K   Ben40/14v-15 (compare plates 15–16)   N   Ben40/6v (original psalmody written over)   Q   Ben40/11 (plate 21)   T   Rome, Vall. c 9/168v
L   Ben40/15v (plate 4)   O   Ben40/16v (plate 20)   R   Ben38/95   U   Rome, Vall. c 9/168v
M   Ben40/18v   P   Ben40/10v–11 (plates 20–21)   S   Ben40/133v (Communion, All Saints)

The modal system here is clearly not the octoechos. All the antiphons end on A, except for two on G and A final, unusual example on E. And yet the antiphons on A use all three reciting pitches, and a variety of endings. Evidently the final note alone is not enough to prescribe a category of psalmody.

Sometimes the beginning of the antiphon seems to affect the choice of psalmody. Four of the five antiphons using the highest psalmody begin in a high register; antiphons with low beginnings tend to use psalmody on C. But there are exceptions; and the reasons for choosing psalmody on D are not at all clear.

Among the psalm-tones on C there is a division into two categories; numbers 10-18 and 19-21. The first group behaves very much like the Gregorian mode 8, and it has a more elaborate (Numbers 10-16) and a simpler (17, 18) version; and the second group, numbers 19 to 21, resembles Gregorian mode 2.

Together they reflect the Beneventan system (if we can call it that) as a whole: protus and tetrardus: and numbers 17 and 18 are emblematic of the unity of this early repertoire, in their similarity despite the fact that their antiphons end on different pitches.

I have included one psalm-tone, accompanying an antiphon ending in E, both very unusual for the repertory; this is no. 22; it appears in the fragmentary office in the Bisceglie fragment, which otherwise looks almost purely Beneventan; its context is like that of the »Solesmes fragment,« a Beneventan office surrounded by Gregorian music. I present it for the sake of completeness, even though it is highly unusual, and may indeed reflect musical elements foreign to the Beneventan style.

It might be argued that the psalmody we have is filtered by scribes writing Gregorian chants, and that it already reflects a 'Romanized' view of Beneventan practice. This is certainly a possibility; but we must remember too that the palimpsest psalmody in Vallicelliana C 9 comes from the remains of a pure Beneventan book, and that its psalmody matches the other examples closely. In view of the many other archaic feature carefully preserved in the transmission of this repertory, I think we can feel confident that the psalmody of Beneventan chant was much like what we have presented in Example 2a-2b.

When we enlarge our view, and consider the psalmody that accompanies Beneventan melodies in later sources, the picture becomes clearer and more systematic, and it is here that we can detect the influence of the modal codification of the Gregorian chant. The psalmodic endings from sources of the twelfth century and later (we unfortunately have no more fully written-out verses) is presented in **Example 3a-3d**.

The same two ending pitches account for virtually all the antiphons, and the same three reciting pitches account for all the psalmody. But now psalmody on E is always accompanied by antiphons ending on A (they are now, however, written as ending on D and reciting on A: first mode). Psalmody on D is used for antiphons on G: mode 7. And recitation on C is used for antiphons whose ranges lie low: but here the A-antiphons are transposed so as to end on D, dividing the psalmody

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Ex. 4.26   Psalmody on ε in later manuscripts[1]

Legend:

A Ben21/87 (plate 7)	F Ben21/211
B Ben21/90v	G Ben21/211v
C Ben19/86v	H Ben21/213 (plate 10)
D Ben21/93v	I Ben20/236 (plate 6)
E Ben21/192	J Ben21/235v (plates 11–12)
	K Vat. Reg. lat. 334/72

† Psalmody in other manuscripts containing these antiphons (Montecassino 542, Montecassino Compactiones V, Ben22) matches that given here, except for Benevento 19–20, which in those cases marked with an asterisk (*) gives the psalmody in line 3 above.

Example 3a-3d: Psalmody with Melodies in Beneventan Style in Later Manuscripts. Reproduced from Kelly, The Beneventan Chant, pp. 149-152.

Ex. 4.27   Psalmody on D in later manuscripts

Ex. 4.27 (cont.)

Legend:

A Ben21/90
B Ben21/36
C Ben21/87 (plates 7–8)
D Ben21/87v (plate 8)
E Ben21/87v (plate 8)
F Ben21/87v (plate 8)
G Ben21/211
H Ben21/216
I Ben20/236 (plate 6)

J Ben20/236 (plate 6)
K Ben21/236 (plate 12)
L Ben21/211v
M Ben21/66v
N Ben38/21
O Vat. Reg. lat. 334/71v
P Vat. Reg. lat. 334/74
Q Vat. Reg. lat. 334/76v

Ex. 4.28 Psalmody on c in later manuscripts

Legend:

A   Ben21/67
B   Ben21/192v
C   Ben21/236 (plate 12)
D   Ben21/236 (plate 12)

E   Ben21/236 (plate 12)
F   Ben21/236 (plate 12)
G   Ben21/235v (plate 11)
H   Ben21/235v (plate 11)
I   Vat. Reg. lat. 334/57

into the two plagal modes 2 and 8. The fact of writing pieces so that they end on D, rather than A, is a choice made by later scribes who generally are accommodating antiphons with Beneventan melodies into the context of the Gregorian office. It is no surprise that they choose the transposition that fits within the system of the octoechos.

Occasionally, however, a scribe miscalculates, or perhaps chooses to leave a piece on A. An interesting example is the early twelfth-century scribe of the gradual Benevento 35, who transcribes the Beneventan music for Good Friday. In the case of two antiphons with the same range, the same final cadence, and the same psalmody, he pitches *Adoramus* on D, but *Laudamus te* on A. Perhaps when he began *Laudamus te* he thought it would actually come out on G, and unwittingly discovered the unity of the two proto-modes.

From the antiphons and their psalmody we can dimly see the shape of a two-tiered modal structure, with the concept of high and low modes, based on facts of range and melodic behavior at critical moments; this becomes much clearer as the psalmody is recorded, reorganized, and reinterpreted in later sources.

The Beneventan chant provides us an opportunity to look back in time; to see a repertory in a stage of development that precedes the imposition of systematic modality: we can clearly perceive the effect when this modality is imposed on the repertory, and we are thus very fortunate to be able to examine a very rare case of a Latin repertory that precedes the octoechos.

Sažetak

OCTOECHOS I BENEVENTANSKO PJEVANJE

Beneventansko pjevanje je repertoar liturgijske glazbe južne Italije, koji se pjevao prije uvođenja franačko-rimskog pjevanja. Ono danas postoji tek u fragmentarnom obliku, te rukopisima iz 11. i 12. stoljeća. Ovaj rad istražuje modalnost beneventanskog pjevanja.

Beneventansko pjevanje ne koristi sustav osam modusa — octoechosa što ga poznajemo iz franačko-rimskog pjevanja. Unutar niza glazbenih fraza pjevanih zapravo u jednom modusu, većina napjeva završava na tonu A, dok neki završavaju i sekundu niže, dakle na G. To, međutim, ne predstavlja dva različita modusa u beneventanskim napjevima, nego tek mogućnost završetka napjeva na dvama različitim finalisima.

Psalmodija beneventanskog pjevanja je također sačuvana tek fragmentarno. Iz tih zapisa saznajemo da je psalmodija beneventanskog korala imala tri recitativna tona — C, D i E. Ova je praksa, međutim, postupno iščezla pod utjecajem franačko-rimskoga pjevanja i ustupila mjesto sustavu koji nalikuje onomu od osam gregorijanskih psalamskih tonusa. Slična se prilagodba dešava i kasnije, kada pisar prepisuje napjeve iz adijastematskog zapisa u sistem s crtovljem, ostavljajući napjeve in G nepromijenjenima. Pri tom napjeve in A transponira sekundu niže — in G (koristeći pri tom B u zapisu ili pak tek implicitno), ili pak kvintu niže, in D.