

MELODIC VARIATION
IN NORTHERN LOW COUNTRIES CHANT MANUSCRIPTS

Melodic Variation in Northern Low Countries Chant Manuscripts (1150-1600)

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by

Rens Tienstra

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Rens Tienstra

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This is the dissertation *Melodic Variation in Northern Low Countries Chant Manuscripts: 1150-1600* as it was submitted, only typographical changes have been made.

The appendix (concordances, transcription tables and variation overviews) to this dissertation can be viewed and downloaded at renstienstra.nl

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ABSTRACT

A single piece of Gregorian chant can be found in as many guises as there are manuscripts, each with its own 'local' peculiarities. This especially goes for the chants recorded in the manuscripts of the Low Countries, in which many types of melodic variation are found. This study sets out to map the melodic variation occurring in northern Low Countries chant manuscripts from the oldest known notations to those of the sixteenth century, and to explore their relationships and attributions through this variation. It includes case studies on the melodic traditions of Utrecht's chapter church of St Mary and the Haarlem Commandary of the Knights Hospitaller.

‘Yet some curious force compels us to preserve and project into the future the essence of our individuality, and, in doing so, to project something of our age and civilization. The artist is like the coral insect, building his reef out of the transitory world around him and making a solid structure to last long after his own fragile and uncertain life. It is one of the many proud points of his occupation that, great or small, there is, ultimately, little else but his work through which his country and civilisation may be known and judged by posterity.’

(Gerald Finzi: *Absalom’s Place*, 1941)

‘The knowledge of music, then, is no small ground for praise, is of no slight use, and is no mean achievement, since it makes him who knows it a judge of music already created, an emender of faulty music, and an inventor of new... Whereas the musician always proceeds correctly and by calculation, the singer holds the right road intermittently, merely through habit.’

(John of Afflighem: *De Arte Musica*, ca. 1100-21)

‘It is as if God Almighty had thrown down pieces of a mosaic for heaven’s floor and asked me to find out what was the original pattern!’

(Jean Sibelius on the composition of his Fifth Symphony, April 1915)

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LIST OF ARCHIVES, LIBRARIES AND MUSEUMS CONSULTED

B-BR	Belgium: Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I
B-LVGBIB	Belgium: Leuven, Bibliotheek Godgeleerdheid
D-EM	Germany: Emden, Johannes a Lasco Bibliothek, Grosse Kirche
F-CA	France: Cambrai, Mediathèque Municipale
F-PA	France: Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal
NL-AU	Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek Amsterdam
NL-DHK	Den Haag, Koninklijke Bibliotheek
NL-DHMW	Den Haag, Museum Meermanno
NL-D	Deventer, Athenaeum-bibliotheek
NL-Hs	Haarlem, Stadsbibliotheek (merged into: Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief)
NL-LU and NL-UL	Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek
NL-UC	Utrecht, Catharijneconvent
NL-UU	Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek
NL-ZUM	Zutphen, Stedelijk Museum
US-NY PL	United States of America: New York, Public Library

GLOSSARY

- Flexus** The addition of a comparatively lower note to a note or note group.
- Liquescence** A phenomenon occurring on syllables of specific phonetic conditions: either two successive consonants (e.g. *angelus*) or two vowels forming a diphthong (e.g. *autem*); the neume involved draws attention to the particular pronunciation of a consonant or vowel. Interpretations vary on its exact function (see HILEY 1993: 357, CARDINE 1977: 215 ff.).
- Officium** The chants sung during the Liturgy of the Hours (*Liturgia Horarum*) or Divine Office (*Officium Divinum*); it consists primarily of psalmody and accompanying antiphons, hymns and responsories.
- Ordinarium** From *Ordinarium Missae*; the series of chants recurring in Mass: *Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei* and *Ite Missa Est*; their texts are always the same, regardless of the liturgical season or day.
- Proprium** From *Proprium Missae*; the series of chants belonging to a particular liturgical day, with the text varying for each day, in contrast to *ordinarium* chants. In general, the term is used to indicate the *introitus, graduale, alleluia* or *tractus* (in Lent), *offertorium* and *communio*.
- Quilisma** A neume most often notated as a wavy shape, ending in a longer ascending stroke. As far as known from chant manuscripts, it never occurs in isolation but always as part of a larger neume group, for example a quilisma pes () or as the middle element of a quilisma scandicus (). Interpretations vary on its function and manner in which it should be performed (see Chapter 9).
- Resupinus** The addition of a comparatively higher note to a note or note group.

Neumes

Names	punctum	virga	pes	clivis	torculus	porrectus	climacus	scandicus	quilisma
Modern equivalent	•	•							
French Square Notation									
St Gall	—								

PART I: INTRODUCTION

I. INTRODUCTION

I.1 Murder in the monastery

Somewhere in the fifteenth or sixteenth century, a scribe from the Low Countries opened a large book of Mass chants. In this book, thousands of notes had been neatly written in black *hufnagel* notation on red lines, combined with an unpretentious, elegant decoration of capital letters. A book of impressive labour, covering the entire liturgical year, written for daily use in an environment of prayer and devotion.

The unknown scribe – perhaps even the creator of the book as it now lay finished – set about altering almost all melodies included in the book, over no less than 200 pages. Notes that were once so carefully committed to the parchment were erased, overwritten, regrouped or bluntly crossed out. Having been altered to a new musical taste, the book then served in the chapel of St Agnes' monastery in Amsterdam until that house was dissolved during the Reformation, in 1585.

Like many others, St Agnes' manuscripts were scattered or destroyed in those turbulent times, but this particular book survived, and eventually found repose at Leiden's University Library. There, in an atmosphere not unlike that of the former monastery, one can simultaneously admire the dedicated work of its first author and be horrified at the crude alterations of the unknown scribe.

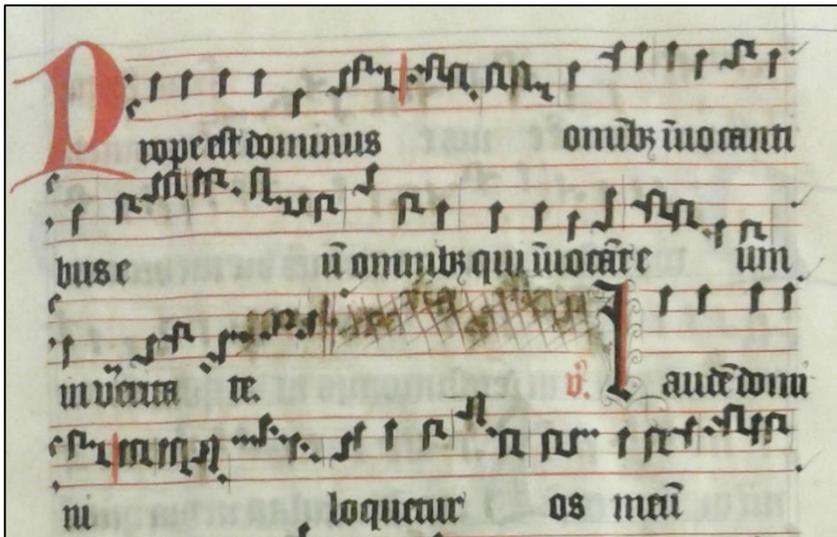


Figure 1. LEIDEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY BPL 3683, detail of fol. Xlr.

However, the apparent assault on the choirbook may be a blessing in disguise, because the rough style of redaction has in effect left us with two chant books, which enables a rare insight in two types of melodic variants in use in the Low Countries of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In a time when the debate on the uniformity of plainchant still goes on, BPL 3683, as the book is now known, has gained new importance: it offers a clear example of the diverse traditions in that apparently uniform repertoire.

Gregorian chant: uniformity and diversity

When one realises that thousands of chants were transmitted over more than three centuries in which there were no accurate means of melodic notation, the core repertoire – the so-called *vieux fonds* – of Gregorian plainchant has been transmitted with an astonishing degree of uniformity. On the other hand, these chants – or better still, the *notations* of chants – are reflections of a living liturgy, and thus reflections of their particular surroundings: a specific church, a group of churches, a congregation, or a monastic order. In these surroundings worked singers and writers, each of whom contributed to the development of ideas of what chant should be and of habits of composition and notation, before passing them on to their successors. Any monastic or collegial environment could develop its own conventions in relation to what only seems to be a uniform repertoire at first sight.

There have been several studies of the uniformity and diversity of Gregorian chant. Two monumental works are the studies of the Benedictine monks of Solesmes on Mass chants in the *Graduel Critique* (1957-1962) and Dom R.J. Hesbert's studies on office chant texts in the *Corpus Antiphonale Officii* (1963-1979).

In preparation of the *Graduel Critique*, the monks of Solesmes compared chant melodies from hundreds of medieval manuscripts. Their method consisted of dividing a chant into small melodic fragments and comparing the different variants of each of these fragments. Based on their findings, a classification of manuscripts in nine 'families' was made, based on particular melodic similarities:

- I. East-Frankish:
 1. Germany

- II. West-Frankish and Italian
 2. Lorraine
 3. Brittany
 4. Aquitaine
 5. Benevento
 6. Dijon
 7. Cluny
 8. St. Denis

Intermediate group between East- and West-Frankish:

9. Echternach

Two conclusions were reached on the basis of these findings.

First, the high degree of uniformity in the tradition of Mass *proprium* chants in the region that once formed the Carolingian Empire points to an origin from the time when this empire was intact, or to an origin before that time. In short: the Gregorian Mass chants are a Carolingian or pre-Carolingian repertoire.

Secondly, the delimitation of small melodic deviations in these Mass chants appears to coincide with the language barriers and political borders of the time during and after the disintegration of the

Carolingian Empire. Thus, a theory has been proposed that these variants should be seen as the results of developments taking place after the Treaty of Verdun in 843. According to Dom Cornelius Pouderoijen, the uniformity of the Eastern group reflects the political stability of the late German Empire, while the eight families of the Western group reflect the disintegration of the Lotharingian Empire and the political volatility of the French and Italian provinces.¹

Although relationships between specific manuscripts and their associated variants of Gregorian plainchant certainly exist, how the different variants of chants developed has been, and continues to be, a highly debated topic. Moreover, how these different developments were valued has varied widely.²

A well-known example of discord at the beginning of the twentieth century was the conflict between the monks of Solesmes and Pustet Publishers regarding papal approval for their respective, 'authentic' version of the Gregorian Mass gradual: Pustet's gradual was chiefly based on the 1614 *Editio Medicaea*, while the monks of Solesmes based their *restitutions* on their comparative research of early medieval manuscripts. Papal approval was eventually given to Solesmes, whose *Graduale Romanum* of 1908 still serves as the officially sanctioned version of Mass chants.

However, the publications of Solesmes did not go uncontested. In 1930, Peter Wagner, the unofficial spokesman for research on chant in the German-speaking countries, published the first part of a facsimile of a fourteenth-century gradual from Leipzig's St Thomas church. In the preface to this facsimile, Wagner contested the idea of a single primeval version of all chants (as propagated by Solesmes) and introduced the term 'chant dialects' (*Choraldialekte*) to indicate different traditions of Gregorian chant. In particular, he praised the 'Germanic chant dialect', of which the Leipzig gradual offered, in his view, a clear example. Wagner's anti-French sentiments shimmer through in most of this work, an element which has unfortunately clouded research on the topic.

Up to this day, studies of Gregorian chant vary widely in their basic assumptions, ranging from studies in which a primeval version of chant is taken as a lead (often considering the later variants to be corruptions), to works emphasizing the great diversity of Gregorian chant. However, the topic of 'chant dialects' as proposed by Wagner has received comparatively little attention when compared to, for example, studies of the earliest neumatic notations.

The Low Countries

The subject of uniformity and diversity is especially relevant to the study of liturgical manuscripts of the Low Countries. Only since the latter half of the twentieth century have these manuscripts come to the attention of international scholarship, for example drawing attention to their unique notational developments.³ As the case in the introduction demonstrates, manuscripts from the medieval Low Countries offer an interesting example of the co-existence of melodic variants. Even a single scribe could create chant books containing different melodic traditions.⁴

¹ POUDEROIJEN, Cornelius. 'Intermezzo: twee historische gevolgtrekkingen', no. IV from the series 'Modaliteit. Nieuwe inzichten in de ontwikkeling der modi', in: *Gregoriusblad* 110, 1986, pp. 199-203, especially p. 200.

² See for example WAGNER 1930, in which the 'German' tradition of chant is sharply contrasted with that of the 'Roman countries' (i.e., France and Italy).

³ See for example BLOXAM 1987, and concerning notation: DE LOOS 1996.

⁴ TIENSTRA, Rens. 2017. 'Eén hand, twee tradities: de zangboeken van broeder Adriaan', in: *Tijdschrift voor Gregoriaans*, 2017-3. Stichting Amici Cantus Gregoriani.

A first foray into this field was made by Ike de Loos (1955–2010), who impressively worked to index the manuscripts of the Low Countries and their specific features on her web page *Chant behind the Dikes*. She pointed out that research on ‘Dutch’ manuscripts covering the entire subject was lacking.⁵ As stated by De Loos in 2009, her work on the web page ‘must be considered to be no more than a first attempt to bring more clarity in this matter, which might perhaps be more complicated than it seems at first sight.’ De Loos’ ‘attempt’ consisted of adding a remark to each manuscript indexed, noting if a manuscript displayed East- or West-Frankish variants; these observations, mainly based on melodic variants, provide a starting point for further research.

1.2 Motivations and goal of this work

As will become clear from the overview of existing literature, the manuscripts from the Low Countries have received comparatively little international attention regarding their melodic contents. The studies that do include these sources often refer to these contents as a ‘hybrid’ or ‘mixed’ repertoire⁶ – terms that are not illogically chosen, if one examines the liturgical and notational variations found in these manuscripts, and their possible origins. For example, the medieval Utrecht calendar of saints contained feasts that point to different continental and possibly insular influences,⁷ and this also applies to the different types of Easter Plays found in Low Countries manuscripts.⁸ In terms of notation, the characteristics of Low Countries manuscripts can be linked to traditions of various European regions.⁹

However, the term ‘mixed’ carries with it a connotation which – in the study of Low Countries manuscripts, or indeed any manuscript – must be spelled out: it implies the pre-existence of pure groups elsewhere, an assumption reinforced by the late arrival of chant notation in the Low Countries compared to other parts of Europe, such as France and Switzerland.

Two arguments against this preconception can be advanced. First, as will become clear from the overview of literature, the proposed groups of chant traditions (‘East-’, ‘West-’, or ‘Middle-Frankish’) are far from clearly demarcated, with a number of features shared between the proposed groups, even in the oldest manuscripts known (such as the famous codex Laon 239).¹⁰ The term ‘mixed repertoire’ can just as easily be applied to these sources.

Secondly, labelling a repertoire of manuscripts as ‘mixed’ inevitably renders impossible a judgement of that repertoire *as it is*: it may follow the traces of particular features’ origins, but at the expense of seeing the sum of the parts as a particular aesthetic.

Although the title of the current study may imply the examination of a clearly-demarcated group of sources, it is not built on the assumption of a single, autonomous ‘northern Low Countries’ form of chant; a quick glance through the manuscripts from a single city such as Utrecht or Amsterdam already invalidates such a notion. Neither is the notion of a ‘mixed’ repertoire a starting point.

⁵ http://hlab.dyndns.org/pub/webplek/ike/ike/special_topics/Eastern_Western_spec.htm. (Access date 9-9-2017.)

⁶ E.g. DE BOOR 1968; SMITS VAN WAESBERGHE 1976. Although De Loos occasionally refers to the Low Countries’ liturgical chant as a ‘contact form’ or ‘mixed repertoire’ (DE LOOS 1996: 371; DE LOOS 1999) she makes clear that the distinguishing property of Low Countries *notation* is a unique combination of notational traditions that has not occurred in other regions.

⁷ BOWER 2003.

⁸ DE BOOR 1968.

⁹ DE LOOS 1996.

¹⁰ BLACHLY 1990 and David G. Hughes’ contributions in BERMAN 1972.

Instead, it is hoped that this study will offer insight in the *different* aesthetics of chant composition and variants that, as a number of manuscripts already show, have (co-)existed for some time in the Low Countries. This does not exclude the possibility of mixed repertoires, but neither does it take it as read.

Another motivation for this study is an omission in the existing literature, that is, the *direction* of comparative research. Often – and especially in studies where ‘chant dialects’ are discussed – specific features of contemporaneous manuscripts from different locations are compared. With such synchronic comparison, the diachronic change of variants is frequently left undiscussed. As stated by Peter Wagner in one of the works which instigated research on the subject, the issue with some studies on chant is the treatment of a musical text as the text of an ancient author, instead of treating it as a ‘witness to a lively tradition’.¹¹ The liturgical manuscripts from the Low Countries, especially those of Utrecht’s St Mary’s church or the manuscript of St Agnes mentioned in the introduction, are such witnesses.

Finally, this study aims to cover a broader area than previous studies on melodic variants, almost all of which have focussed on Mass *proprium* chants. It is hoped that with the inclusion of different types of chant, the findings of this study will be more robust because they are based on a fairer representation of the entire corpus.

In short, this study is about melodic variants in liturgical manuscripts from the northern Low Countries (in particular the region of the medieval diocese of Utrecht), ranging from the oldest known notations (twelfth century) to those from the sixteenth century (roughly coinciding with the outbreak of the Eighty Years’ War in the Low Countries).

The study should be seen as an attempt to create an overview of the number and nature of alternative melodic units, and to gain a deeper understanding of the aesthetics which produced this variation in chants of the northern Low Countries. Special focus will be on locations where manuscripts from different centuries can be compared, to see if the development of specific variants can be discerned.

A number of manuscripts from the northern Low Countries (those from Utrecht’s St Mary Church, Amsterdam’s St Agnes monastery, Zutphen’s St Walburga church and Rijnsburg’s St Mary Abbey) suggest that – at least in this region – the transmission and *alteration* of chant was still an active process during the late Middle Ages. It is hoped that this study may contribute to a better understanding of these processes.

Much of the scholarship of medieval plainchant has concentrated on attempts to rediscover the earliest, and presumably most authentic, form of chant. By examining the chant of late medieval times, this dissertation seeks instead to examine the way in which chant developed in response to a continually changing musical aesthetic.

1.3 Structure

This study consists of three parts: an introduction, analyses/discussions of the different melodic variants encountered in northern Low Countries manuscripts, and two case studies of groups of manuscripts.

¹¹ WAGNER 1932, pp. LX-LXIV.

The introduction consists of an outline of the subject. This is followed by Chapter 2: an overview, summary and assessment of the literature on the subject to date. In the next chapter the research questions are given, followed by a description of the demarcations of the current study, and an introduction to the sources.

Based on the methodology explained in Chapter 3, the transcription tables of chant melodies are introduced. These can be found in the appendix. The transcription tables are divided into three categories: Mass proper chants, Mass ordinary chants and office chants. The purpose of the appendix is to present in a clear manner the different renditions of chants as notated in the sources, enabling a quick comparison of the melodies, and saving the reader the effort of searching in a multitude of sources.

General observations follow (Chapter 4) and discussions of different types of variation are given in Chapters 5-10. The selection of variants discussed is based on three indicators: alterations in the sources, noteworthy situations encountered in the transcription tables, and variants pointed out in previous discussions. Distinctions and combinations of variants are summarised in Chapter 11.

Chapters 12 and 13 are case studies of manuscripts from Utrecht's chapter church of St Mary and the manuscripts connected to the Knights Hospitaller of Haarlem respectively, expanding on the findings of preceding chapters.

1.4 Expectations

In this selection of manuscripts it was expected that the East-Frankish propensities would be the ones most frequently encountered, although the degree of internal variation within these was uncertain. Since the diocese of Utrecht was for many centuries a suffragan diocese of Cologne, it was expected that this had its effect on the liturgical-musical practice of the region. The northern province of Groningen fell under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Münster, but the Münster diocese also was a suffragan of Cologne. In addition, a large number of churches and lands were held in the possession of (or claimed by) monasteries East or Southeast of the region, such as Fulda, Werden and Echternach.

A wide range of influences should be mentioned in addition to the presumed East-Frankish influence in the churches affiliated with the diocese. The northern Low Countries were Christianised in the eighth and ninth centuries by a large number of missionaries, most of them from overseas: Bonifatius of Dokkum, Lebuinus of Deventer, Jeroen of Noordwijk, Wiro of Odiliëberg, and Willibrordus, to name a few. Unfortunately, lack of sources from this period makes it impossible to assess the influence of these missionaries on the first Christian liturgical practices in the region.

The sources from the following centuries are clearer, with a wide array of possible influences. For example, manuscripts are known from several religious communities, such as the Benedictine abbey of Egmond (the foremost abbey of the County of Holland in the Middle Ages), re-founded ca. 950 through the relocation of monks from Ghent in Flanders, a city with strong Southern and insular connections.¹² The Benedictine abbey of Rijnsburg, founded in 1133 by the countess of

¹² See for more on the Holland/Flanders connection: VERKERK, C.L. 1997. 'Vlaams-Hollandse connecties in de tiende eeuw. Relieken van Sint Bavo, Egmond en de Hof van de Hollandse Graaf in Haarlem', in: *Historisch Tijdschrift Holland* 29 (1997), pp. 1-17 (in Dutch).

Holland, consisted of a rather conservative community of sisters who held to the liturgical-musical practice from their place of origin, Stötterlingenburg in Saxony.¹³ In general, Benedictine monasteries seem to have been fairly independent in their liturgical-musical practice, although the Benedictine monasteries in the vicinity of Utrecht may have been influenced by the customs of the city's cathedral and chapter churches.

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw the spread of the new rural orders of canons regular in the region, with Cistercians and Premonstratensians each introducing their own liturgical-musical practices. In the Low Countries the northern provinces (especially Groningen) and the Southwest (Zeeland) were at the forefront of this development. Characteristic at least for the canons regular and the Premonstratensians was their willingness to adopt tasks in the pastoral care in rural parishes, which would explain the presence of melodic variants typical of these orders in manuscripts from such locations.¹⁴

The earliest settlements of the knightly orders in the Netherlands took place in the same period, a process in which the Teutonic Order was ahead of the Knights of St John. The fourteenth century saw the foundation of communities of Knights Hospitaller (or Knights of St John) in Haarlem and Utrecht, whose manuscripts – at first glance – contain predominantly West-Frankish propensities (e.g. the mode-1 intonation and mode-8 cadence). These communities also served several local parish churches.

From the thirteenth century onwards, religious communities also began to settle in the cities of the Low Countries. The mendicant orders – the Friars Minor and the Dominicans in particular – established many houses in urban surroundings, as did the Augustin Friars and the Carmelites on a smaller scale.¹⁵

Starting with the last decades of the fourteenth century the northern Low Countries went through nothing less than a monastic revolution, on a par with surrounding regions like Brabant, Liège, the Lower Rhine and Westphalia. Responsible for this was the *Devotio Moderna* movement, a predominantly urban phenomenon. Although the IJssel Valley with its Hanseatic cities is generally supposed to have been the movement's cradle, in fact the western parts of the Utrecht diocese, which were becoming increasingly urbanised at this time, have as much right to the claim.

Complicating the assessment of musical practice in the houses associated with the *Devotio Moderna* is the fact that most of these went through a process of claustration: lay communities ('Brethren and Sisters of the Common Life') first adopted the Third Rule of St Francis, then had themselves enclosed, and in many cases eventually adopted a fully monastic rule. Impulses for this development came from the sisters and brothers themselves, as well as from the hierarchy: in many communities the tour by papal legate and monastic reformer Nicholas of Cusa in 1451 triggered the

For more on the insular connection: HAGGH, B. 'Sources for plainchant and ritual from Ghent and London: a survey and comparison', in: *Handelingen der Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent*. New series, part I (1996), pp. 23-72.

¹³ For more on Rijnsburg Abbey, see HÜFFER 1923. See DE LOOS 2002 for a discussion and reattribution of its manuscripts.

¹⁴ *Medieval monasteries in the Netherlands: a census*. Assembled by: Koen Goudriaan; website and database: Ben Stuyvenberg (Bureau Informatisering, Faculty of Humanities); published by Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Web address: <http://www2.fgw.vu.nl/oz/monasteries/index.php>. (Access date 13-11-2017.)

¹⁵ For completeness' sake an enumeration follows of the orders which settled more incidentally in the Netherlands during the thirteenth century: the Pied Friars; the Friars of the Sack; the Magdalenes, an order destined for 'fallen' women, whose monasteries soon joined other orders; the Hermits of St William, called after their founder William of Malaville; the Antonines, who originally constituted a confraternity dedicated to the nursing of victims of St Anthony's Fire (ergotism) and which was organised along the lines of the knightly orders; the canonesses regular of St Victor (the reforming monastery near Paris); and the Caulites, who were akin to the Carthusians and owed their name to the original founding in the Val-des-Choux in Burgundy. (Source: see note 14.)

more or less enforced adoption of the Rule of St Augustine. St Agnes' monastery in Amsterdam offers a good example of such an evolution – and this is reflected in its choirbook.

An important complicating factor for the current study is the period of the Revolt against Spain, when many of the monasteries which were not destroyed were merged. This typically entailed the movement of the inhabitants of one monastery to another, taking liturgical manuscripts with them.

The developments outlined above illustrate the wide range of liturgical-musical practices in the region over the centuries and suggest we should expect to find an equally wide range of associated melodic variants.

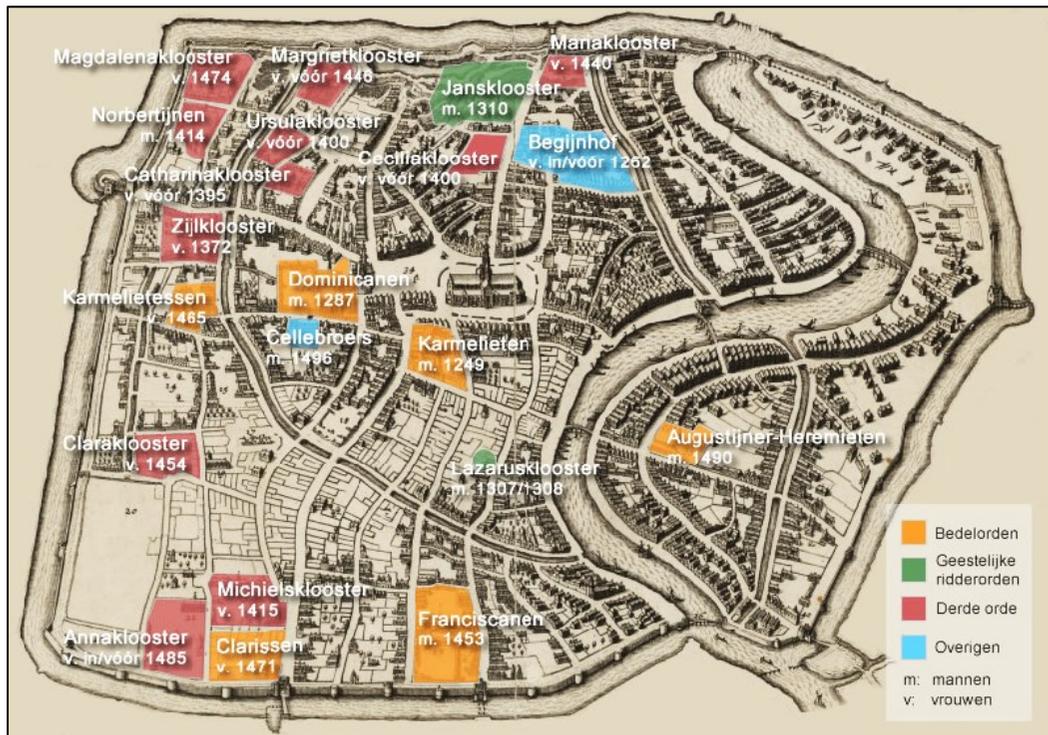


Figure 2. Map of Haarlem by Thomas Thomasz from 1578 with the different religious communities and their years of foundation, with St Bavo's parish church (for a short period also a cathedral) in the centre of town; an illustration of religious life in the average city in the region. (m = male communities; v = female communities).¹⁶

1.5 Terminology

'Melody'

In this study, the definition of 'melody' is one of several given in *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*: 'pitched sounds arranged in musical time in accordance with given cultural conventions and constraints'. (...) 'The character of a given melody is determined by its range or relative position within the total pitch continuum, its ambitus or pitch spread, its contour or linear design, and its

¹⁶ From the website *Voor God en de Mensen. Haarlemse kloosters nader bekeken*: janskerk-haarlem700.nl/katernen/Haarlemse-kloosters.pdf. (In Dutch.) (Access date 27-11-2018.)

syntactic structure with respect to elements of contrast and repetition, variation and development.¹⁷

'Melodic variation'

Although the term 'variant' usually implies there is a main version to vary from, that is not the sense in which the word is used here. The several versions of a melody are all 'variants', without precedence being given to those considered older or more accurate. The term 'variation' indicates all melodic differences both within and between sources.

The focus is on *melodic* variation; textual and notational differences, variations of liturgical order, decoration, etc. may be included in the exploration of a particular source where relevant, but they are not the subject of this study. Examples of melodic variation are differences of modality and pitch, the quantity of notes (repercussion), the use of ornamental neumes (oriscus, quilisma, etc.) and liquescence. These differences are discussed separately from Chapter 4 onwards.

Although the possibility that primary versions of chants once existed is acknowledged, it is not the aim of this study to find a putative *Urtext*. Since the oldest known sources of chant already differ considerably, it is suggested that even where finding an 'original' version possible, examining the existing variation will prove to be a more productive exercise.

'Dialect'

The term 'dialect' was first applied to chant by Peter Wagner (*Choraldialekt*, WAGNER 1930; see Chapter 2). Although the word is a troublesome one in linguistics, Wagner used it as it commonly is, as denoting a coherent set of characteristics which distinguishes the speech (here, the musical language) of one region from that of another where the same language is used in a different form. Leaving aside the – often politically charged – debate on what is and is not a dialect, what concerns us here is that the 'chant dialects' are neither as coherent nor as distinct as Wagner's use of the term implied.

Wagner was writing about something which was in HILEY 1993 more descriptively called 'propensities': in recurring or similar melodic situations (e.g. cadences), sources tend towards distinct variants of those situations. The sum of these in a single source indicates the scribe's adherence to a given melodic tradition. The clearest examples of such propensities can be found in situations with a semitone in the upper range of a melody (MI-FA, TI-DO, LA-TI *b*), in which most sources reveal a recurring propensity towards the one or the other pitch.

Nowadays, the terms 'East-' and 'West-Frankish dialect' are still used to give a *general* indication of a source's melodic inclinations. Throughout this study, the term 'dialect' is used sparsely, as a general indication. The reason for this is that Wagner proposed the term to classify sources from all over Europe based on shared melodic variants. In this, he almost exclusively focussed on single pitches, leaving elements such as repercussion or ornamental neumes undiscussed. Later research (see Chapter 2) has demonstrated the difficulty of making such distinctions, since the variants

¹⁷ 2001. 'Melody.' *Grove Music Online*.

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000018357>.

Published in print: 20 January 2001; published online: 2001. Web address:

<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.18357> (Access date: 13-4-2019.)

pointed out by Wagner are not exclusive even in the oldest known sources. Moreover, by Wagner's standards, almost all manuscripts from the northern Low Countries would fall in the category of the 'East-Frankish chant dialect' without further qualification. Since it is the distinctions within this set, however small or seemingly unimportant, which are the focus of this study, Wagner's terms are too general to be useful here.

Note names

In this study the relative system of note names is used (DO-RE-MI-FA-SOL-LA-TI-DO), since these were, with the exception of DO (which Guido of Arezzo calls 'UT'), the names in use for notes and their intrinsic intervals in the times from which the majority of sources originate. It is assumed that anyone studying chant will be familiar with this notational system, and rather than forming an obstacle, the choice will result in a more uniform presentation of musical examples. This in contrast to most present-day studies of chant which opt for the absolute system (C, D, E, etc.), implying a (false) equation between the two systems. In addition, modern transcriptions of chant often show a tenor clef, with the (equally false) suggestion of an all-male performance practice.

The system of pitch names used in the analyses is explained in paragraph 3.11.