



***The Oral-Formulaic Theory For Medieval Chant And Beyond: A Case
Study on Medieval Offertory and the Chinese Shijing***

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Abstract:

Based on the previous study of oral poetry tradition, the oral-formulaic theory can be an analytical tool for the study of medieval Western chants; however, such an approach may also be useful when studying music-poetic traditions in other cultures and other eras. In this article, I will start with a brief background introduction, followed by a literature review on the scholarly study and methodological approach of both oral-formulaic theory and the medieval chant system. Then, I will transcribe five 11th-century Aquitanian offertories as a case study, and analyse them by the aforementioned formulaic theory, then compare with the tradition of *Shijing* chanting in early China, in order to further verify the effectiveness and limitations of this analytical method across various cultures.

Keywords: Oral-formulaic theory, Medieval chant, Book of Odes, Cross-cultural study

Oral-Formulaic Theory and its Applications

The Homeric epics were long considered to be composed by single author following a written tradition. This understanding completely changed after the ground-breaking research published by Milman Parry¹, who discovered that the Homeric masterpiece, along with other Hellenic epics, followed a paradigm of oral poetry tradition, which can be traced and verified by certain *formula*, in this sense, refers to ‘a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea’². This formulaic characteristic was then found to be intercultural – Parry and his assistant, Albert Lord, collected Yugoslavic oral epics during their fieldwork and determine what the *formulae* were by a comparative method³. This method, commonly called the *Parry-Lord theory* or *oral-formulaic theory*, has proven its effectiveness in various cultural contexts, such as *Beowulf* and *La Chanson de Roland* etc.⁴ Without being overly enumerative, it is still worth-noting that the *Parry-Lord theory* can also be applied at the other end of the Eurasian continent, for instance, the analysis of Chinese *Shijing* (詩經, lit. *Book of Odes*)⁵, as well as the Japanese *min’yō* (民謡) oral folklore tradition⁶, making it a effective tool for the study of comparative global literature⁷.

Delightfully for medievalists, this bridge also connects the *oral-formulaic theory* to the Gregorian chant tradition. With the previous scholarship on exploring the relation (and potential oral / written transmission) between Old-Roman and Gregorian chant⁸, in ‘*Homer and Gregory: The Transmission of Epic Poetry and Plainchant*’⁹, a thought-provoking article that reminds us the virtue of Plutarch’s *Vitae Parallelae*, Leo Treitler correlated the *oral-formulaic theory* with the structural analysis of medieval plainchant, and define *formulaic system* in this context as ‘the system of constraints of a melody or a phrase’, which ‘stand[s] for a kind of knowledge that the singer had when he knew a melodic type. He held it along with his knowledge of the overall strategy for melodies of that type’.¹⁰ Next, the pattern analysis of *Deus meus* validated such *formulae* occur within one chant and between various versions in Old Roman and Gregorian chant books.

Transcription

Inspired by Treitler’s research as mentioned above, I choose *Paris BnF MS. Lat. 1121* (henceforth *L.1121*), an 11th-century liturgical manuscript ascribed to Adémar de Chabannes¹¹, as the primary material of this case study. Five offertories are transcribed and analysed accordingly (see the attached notations), and the same pieces from *Montpellier Codex H.159* are cross-referenced for confirming modes, uncertain pitches, and alternative texts. The information of the five offertories is shown in below *Table 1*.

¹ See Parry (1930: 73-147) and Parry (1932: 1-50).

² Quoted from Parry (1930: 80).

³ See Parry (1933: 179-197) and Lord (1951: 71-80).

⁴ Explained by Lord (1971: 198-220).

⁵ See Wang (1974).

⁶ Tokita (2022: 35-65).

⁷ See Beecroft (2003).

⁸ See Cutter (1967: 167-181).

⁹ See Treitler (1974: 333-372).

¹⁰ See Treitler (1974: 352-353).

¹¹ See <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8432272p> for scanned copy. For a list of Adémar’s writing with explanatory remarks, see Grier (2013: 605-638).

Table 1. Information of Selected Offertories

Name	Mode ¹²	<i>L.1121</i> Fol.	<i>H.15</i> 9 Nr.	Pag e Nr. ¹³
1. <i>Confortamini et iam</i>	Deuterus M, P, P	91v- 92r	908	380- 382
2. <i>Anima nostra</i>	Protus P, M, M	96v- 97r	873	329- 331
3. <i>Veritas mea</i>	Protus M, M, M	97v- 98r	879	339- 340
4. <i>Offerentur regi</i>	Deuterus P, A, M	98r- 98v	890	353- 355
5. <i>Iubilate deo uniuersa terra</i>	Protus A, M, M	99v- 100v	861	311- 313

The five transcribed scores are attached in the *Appendix* at the end of this essay. For formatting purposes, each chant is labelled with three numbers respectively for offertory, page and line, e.g., (3.1.6) indicates *Veritas mea*, 1st page of transcription, 6th line. The offertory texts and related line numbers are listed below:

- Of. (1.1.1-2): Confortamini, et iam nolite timere,
 (1.1.2-4): ecce enim deus noster retribuet iudicium,
 (1.1.4-5): ipse ueniet, et saluos nos faciet.
 V (1.1.5-7): Tunc aperientur oculi caecorum et aures surdorum audient,
 (1.1.8-9): tunc ascendet claudus quasi ceruus et clara erit lingua mutorum.
 V (1.2.1): Audite itaque domus dauid,
 (1.2.2-3): non pusillum uobis certamen praestare hominibus,
 (1.2.3): quoniam dominus praestat certamen,
 (1.2.3-5): propterea dabit uobis dominus signum,
 (1.2.5-7): ecce uirgo in utero accipiet et pariet filium
 (1.2.7-8): et uocabitur nomen eius Emmanuel.
- Of. (2.1.1-3): Anima nostra, sicut passer, erepta est de laqueo uenantium,
 (2.1.3-5): laqueus contritus est, et nos liberati sumus.
 V. (2.1.5-8): Nisi quod Dominus erat in nobis¹⁴, dicat nunc israhel,
 (2.1.8-2.2.2): nisi quia dominus erat in nobis, [laqueus contritus est.]¹⁵
 V. (2.2.2-3): Torrentem pertransiuit anima nostra,
 (2.2.3-5): forsitan pertransisset anima nostra aquam intolerabilem,
 (2.2.6-9): benedictus Dominus, qui non dedit nos in captionem dentibus eorum.
- Of. (3.1.1-2): Veritas mea, et misericordia mea cum ipso,
 (3.1.2-3): et in nomine meo exaltabitur cornu eius.
 V. (3.1.4-5): Posui adiutorium meum super potentem
 (3.1.5-7): et exaltaui electum de plebe mea.
 V. (3.1.7-3.2.1): Misericordia meam non dispergam ab eo,

¹² As identified by Hansen (1979); for the response and two verses, M = *maneria*, A = *authenticus*, P = *plagalis*. Regarding mode determinations, cf. Hiley (1993: 121-122).

¹³ The page number of *Montpellier Codex H.159* as transcribed in Hansen (1979).

¹⁴ Underlines show text pattern repetition that will be discussed later.

¹⁵ Texts in [square brackets] encloses text that is not written in *L.1121*, but only appeared in *H.159*.

(3.2.1-4): et sedes eius in conspectu meo, et in nomine.

Of. (4.1.1-2): Offerentur regi uirgines, proximae eius

(4.1.2-3): offerentur tibi in laetitia et exultatione,

(4.1.3-5): adducentur in templo regi domino.

V. (4.1.5-6): Eructauit cor meum uerbum bonum,

(4.1.6-8): eructauit cor meum uerbum bonum,

(4.1.8-9): dico ego opera mea regi,

(4.1.9-4.2.2): lingua mea calamus scribae uelociter scribentis.

V. (4.2.3): Diffusa est gratia in labiis tuis,

(4.2.3-5): diffusa est gratia in labiis tuis,

(4.2.6-8): propterea benedixit te deus in aeternum. (Adducentur.)

Of. (5.1.1-2): Iubilate deo uniuersa terra,

(5.1.2-5): iubilate deo uniuersa terra,

(5.1.5-6): psalmum dicite nomini eius,

(5.1.6-7): uenite, [et] audite, et narrabo uobis,

(5.1.7-8): omnes qui timetis deum,

(5.1.8-5.2.1): quanta fecit dominus animae meae, AEUA [=Alleluia].

V. (5.2.1): Reddam tibi uota mea,

(5.2.2-4): reddam tibi uota mea,

(5.2.4-9): que distinxerunt labia mea.

V. (5.2.9-5.3.1): Locutum est os meum in tribulatione mea,

(5.3.1-3): locutum est os meum in tribulatione mea,

(5.3.3-8): holocausta medullata offeram tibi.

Analysis & Discussion

Based on the transcription with texts and melodic feature, I have found a list of noticeable features of each chant as listed below.

1. Confortamini et iam

The beginning of the two verses, *tunc aperientur* (1.1.5) and *audite itaque* (1.2.1) share a similar formulaic structure of [c-c-H-c-d-e-d-e]¹⁶. Not many features are observed, but by cross comparison with other sources, such as *Einsiedeln Stiftsbibliothek, Codex 121*¹⁷, the two versions are similar, but the formulaic structure in *L.1121* is far weaker – it is only repeated once, and is not located in the start/end of any ‘phrase’. Comparatively, *Einsiedeln 121* does have a pattern like [D-F-F-F-E-F-E/G] which repetitively appears and variates. Hence, this may suggest it is a varied form that had later been recomposed through Adémar’s hand.

When keeping the idea of oral tradition in mind, we should remember that, in Adémar’s period, there were numerous hymn books with written neumatic notation, this suggests a **literacy tradition** rather than the oral one focused by Parry and Treitler. In this sense, *Confortamini et iam* serves as a **counter-example** of the formulaic tradition, since Adémar may, in fact, have forgone the existing melody in formulaic type. On the other hand, Adémar’s could also be an example of the ‘transitional period’ of the oral-written tradition¹⁸, therefore a certain degree of oral formula can still be detected, despite the overall written format. We will discuss

¹⁶ For better formatting, I use c = Middle C (C4), C = lower C (C3), then by learning from German that B = B Flat, H = B Natural. Flats and sharps are not used here but otherwise will be -es or -is.

¹⁷ A partial transcription can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIhL-Ci1EfM>

¹⁸ This ‘transitional period’ is believed to form a special variation of the oral formula, but still fits into the *Parry-Lord theory*. For the description and argument of this claim, see Wang (1974: 24-31).

this feature in later sections.

2. *Anima nostra*

In (2.1.3-4), the line *laqueus contritus est, et nos...* shares a comparable pattern [A-c-c-c-c-...c-d-c] with the first verse *Nisi quod dominus* at (2.1.5-6), but the latter one forms a long melisma assigns with one syllable ‘do(-minus)’, then the descending and ascending sequence followed starts to differ. A slightly altered pattern [A-c-c-c-d-e-c] appears at (2.1.9) *in nobis*, and (2.2.2.), the very last phrase of the first verse to close this part.

In addition, some repetitive patterns appear a few times in the melisma of *in nobis*, which may indicate that a method of small ‘building blocks’ have been used to construct a longer form of melodic pattern. For instance, in (2.1.9), a pattern of [c-c-d-e-d] occurs twice, it reappears twice in (2.2.1), and follows a slight variation of [c-d-e-f-d] in the latter part of (2.2.1); thereafter, it follows a variated form [c-d-d-e-c] constructed as the cadence. Those are typical instances of the ‘building blocks’ that I observed, which require the chanter to only remember basic patterns like [c-c-d-e-d] and its variations, so that the workload of memorising of long phrases will be largely reduced. This idea will be discussed mainly in the last example *Iubilare deo uniuersa terra*.

A highly interesting feature can be found by comparing the differences with other manuscripts¹⁹. For example, in (2.1.1) *sicut*, the pattern in melody is [A-c-A-B-G-A], but in the video, it is [A-c-B-c-G-A], i.e., a partial difference of a major 2nd. In (2.1.7) *dicat nunc israhel*, the transcription reads [D-F-F-A-G-G-A-G-G-c]; the video reads [E-G-G-B-A-A-B-G-A-c], i.e. there is a major 2nd shift in most tones. The mechanism of such difference could be complex, but one important feature that result in such difference is that, music pitches are not texts – **the texts usually carry some specific meaning that enables the accuracy of transmission, but music pitches do not**. In oral tradition, there is the possibility that an out-of-tune cantor and/or a hearing-impaired listener could transmit ‘wrong’ notes; performance in a large cathedral could lead to the *doppler effect*, and the microtonal feature on chants (if it really exists)²⁰ will be nearly impossible to transmit precisely. On the written side, the earlier heightened neumes without multiple staff lines allowed high risk of misjudging pitches, and therefore the reading with the difference of major 2nd can also happen in this case.

3. *Veritas mea*

The end of the respond *eius* (3.1.3) forms a typical cadence of [A-B-c-B-c-B-A]; the very end of the hymn (3.2.3-4) forms a descending sequence – I have not found other comparable features, but some of the seem to be built from a set of *motives*, like [B-A-G]-[A-G-F]-[G-F-E] at (3.2.3). Those look very similar to the sequential progression that later composers were keen to use (with the constraint of harmonic progression). In this case, the cantor should be able to apply those as memorable features to use in other chants, as they provide an easy and flexible way to build up melismatic variation without much effort.

4. *Offerentur regi*

This seems to be another variation of *offerentur regi* that I can find from other sources. This hymn starts from D, but it ends with two similar cadences of [A-G-E-G-F-E], at (4.1.5) ‘(do-)mino’, and (4.2.8) ‘(aeter-)num’. This cadence may be easily linked to another D, such as in (4.2.2) ‘(scriben-)tis’, the pattern is [A-G-E-F-E-D], which could be comparable with a different ending note.

In addition, this offertory is a clear example that melodic pattern does not follow the ‘text pattern’: the two *eructauit cor meum uerbum bonum* (4.1.5-6), (4.1.6-8) and *diffusa est gratia in labiis tuis* (4.2.3), (4.2.3-5) shares no similarity in melody, but the second time usually comes

¹⁹ I am comparing with this one: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2UrXb2QUSsI>

²⁰ See the summary by Ferreira (1997: 161-166).

with more melisma with more stress in one or two syllable(s).

5. *Iubilate deo uniuersa terra*

This offertory, in my opinion, is more analysable by the Treitleric (?) method: it starts with a typical opening [C-D-D-A-B-A] at (5.1.1) *Iubilate*, then it repeats at *Reddam tibi* (5.2.1-2) and ‘*re(-ddam)*’ (5.2.2) with a shorter form [D-A-B-A] and [C-D-A-B] respectively; again, despite the fact that the two *reddam tibi uota mea* share some similarities in melodic patterns, they develop differently in the latter half, and the comparable part stresses different syllables. Then, the same opening reappears with its ‘longer’ form at two *Locutum est* (5.2.9) and (5.3.1).

It is noteworthy that, this chant contains some long melismata before each cadence, these are probably built by smaller ‘blocks’ such as repetitive C notes with a few descending notes at (5.2.7), (5.3.6) and (5.3.7), or some small three/four-note *motives* e.g., [c-c-A] (5.2.7), (5.3.4), extendable to [c-c-c-A] (also 5.2.7) and a shifted one of [e-e-c] (5.3.6), as well as some descending features like [A-G-F] (5.2.8), moveable to [c-B-A] (5.2.9), extendable to [c-A-G-F] (5.3.6 and 5.3.7) or [B-A-G-F] (again 5.3.7). I believe that those *leitmotifs* constituted some basic mnemonic units, which allow for flexibility of extension and variation; a combination of them in different order can help form a long melisma. More importantly, this leads to a certain degree of improvisability.

In addition, the response ends with *alleluia* (5.2.1), this is a common phrase used in many chants. Despite the fact that *alleluia* is used only once among the five offertories studied here, these common phrases can likely share a similar melodic pattern as they are frequently used at the end of a chant (and hence, could be in a cadential form).

This chant also provides a good example when continuing the transmission issue discussed in *Anima nostra* – [C-D-D-A-B-A] – the symbolic formula that repeats from the beginning to latter half, contains a large jump of a perfect 5th between D and A, but if *L.1121* becomes the only extant manuscript, just by measuring the distance on notation, how can we precisely determine if it is a jump of perfect 5th, but not a perfect 4th or major 6th? As a comparison, the transmission of text does not have any such.

For an analysis of the five offertories altogether, firstly, only a part of them, such as *Iubilate deo uniuersa terra*, showed a clear formula (according to Treitler’s definition) as they start and repeat with the pattern [C-D-D-A-B-A]. As well, only a part of them shows its variations, which more or less exhibit a periodic feature alike to what Treitler demonstrated. Other chants are comparatively less similar in this regard; for example, *Veritas mea* only contains a formulaic cadence, but no features that can be seen repetitively in the whole chant. Hence, the example of *Deus meus* is carefully (and perhaps savvily) chosen as a representative and appropriate model, whilst other chants may not always show a structure in such state of perfection.

Still, I have traced some *formulae*, either a lot or a few, within each offertory. However, no shared formula is found between any two of them. This could be a case of luck, since there is no universal rule for the offertory composition, but some others can share a similar opening, such as *Tollite portas*, *Luebo oculos* and *In te speraui* also in *L.1121*, they begin with the formula of [E-G-A-B-A] but in three different modes. Some commonly seen phrases such as *alleluia* can be more likely to share a formulaic pattern, but this, again, is not observed in these five cases. However, some others e.g., *Seculorum Amen* [abbrev. *EUOUAE*]²¹ can be observable in other chants with shared features, which could suggest some transmission by a closer investigation of them.

Compared to the formulaic system that **folds** a melody into repetitive patterns and

²¹ For more description, see Hiley (1993: 333).

structures, it would also be effective to observe the chant in a microscopic manner, i.e., the focus of the *leitmotif*: a precursor to what Beethoven developed in later times. Back to the 11th century, the frequent, packed use of three or four-note *leitmotifs*, along with the parallel shift, extension, alteration, and sequencing of them, help the memorisation of chants in a rather linear and monophonic manner.

A comparison of the texts and melodic patterns does not show much overlap: in these five examples, I observed eight cases where the text features repetition on two lines (see underlined text above) – two of them (*torrentem / forsitan pertransiuit anima nostra* and *offerentur regi / tibi*) are not identical but prosodic in poetic mean, one (*nisi quod Dominus erat in nobis*) has other text between the repetition, and the other five all exhibit simple repetition in two continuous lines. However, only two *reddam tibi uota mea* seem to fit into two similar patterns but stress differently; other instances show limited comparability regarding melodic lines, except for some general features e.g., the second line is usually accompanied by a longer and more complex melisma. Little can be concluded except for claiming it as a general ‘habit’ of chanting.

The above serves as an important feature that distinguishes the plainchant from other oral poetry traditions. Hence, in my opinion, the ‘fundamentalist’ sense of *oral-formulaic theory* is not an ideal way to analyse plainchant. I will explain my claim in the next section.

Confucius and Gregory: A Possible Cross-Cultural Study

The *oral-formulaic theory* is proved applicable by Parry and Lord in Homeric and Yugoslavic epics; their inheritors further found it effective across various oral traditions, regardless of their regions or cultures. However, having oral features does not result in a fit of the *Parry-Lord theory*, even in a pair that are highly comparable.

Echoing with *Homer and Gregory*, another counterpart, Confucius, at the other end of Eurasia, was famous for his editing of *Shījīng*. Parallely, both Confucius and Gregory modified and edited an important chanting tradition within their culture²², both stood at the point of a ‘transitional period’ between oral and written tradition, and both standardised a form of art that was highly influential in later development. We can pay a closer look at typical poems in the *Shījīng* (in here, *guānjū* 關雎 and *jiānjiā* 蒹葭) with their clear repetitive pattern marked in red:

Table 2. Text, transliteration and translation of *guānjū*²³

Kròn kròn tsa kou, 關關雎鳩, dzùc Gày tu tou. 在河之洲。 Ìwc-liwc diwk nrac, 窈窕淑女, Kwun tzuc hòuc gou. 君子好逑。	‘Kròn-kròn’ quack the ospreys, On the islet in the river. The modest, retiring, virtuous young lady: – For our prince a good mate she.
Chum chay grànk tsùs, 參差荇菜, tzàyc wuc riw tu. 左右流之。	Here long, there short, is the duckweed, To the left, to the right, borne about by the current. The modest, retiring, virtuous young lady: –

²² For the Confucian school and the editing of *Shījīng*, see Needham & Wang (1956: 4-5).

²³ The Chinese text is from Mao (2000: 25-32). Since phonetic feature is required in this case, I use the reconstruction of old Chinese pronunciation from Sampson (2020: 47-48). The translation is based on Legge (1960: 1-5), with my minor modification.

Ìwc lìwc diwk nrac, 窈窕淑女, ngàs mits gou tu. 寤寐求之。	Waking and sleeping, he sought her.
Gou tu pu tük, 求之不得, ngàs mits sus buk. 寤寐思服。 You tzù you tzù, 悠哉悠哉, Trent tront pant juk. 輾轉反側。	He sought her and found her not, And waking and sleeping he thought about her. Long he thought; oh! Long and anxiously; On his side, on his back, he turned, and back again.
Chum chay grànk tsùs, 參差荇菜, tzàyc wuc tsùc tu. 左右采之。 Ìwc lìwc diwk nrac, 窈窕淑女, gum sprit wuc tu. 琴瑟友之。	Here long, there short, is the duckweed, On the left, on the right, we gather it. The modest, retiring, virtuous young lady: – With <i>qín</i> and <i>sè</i> [zithers], let us give her friendly welcome.
Chum chay grànk tsùs, 參差荇菜, tzàyc wuc màws tu. 左右芼之。 Ìwc lìwc diwk nrac,、 窈窕淑女, tong kàc ngràwks tu. 鍾鼓樂之。	Here long, there short, is the duckweed, On the left, on the right, we cook and present it. The modest, retiring, virtuous young lady: – With bells and drums, let us show our delight in her.

Table 3. Text, transliteration and translation of *jiānjiā*²⁴

Kèm krà tsàng tsàng, 蒹葭蒼蒼, bràk ràks way shang. 白露爲霜。 Shac wuts i nin, 所謂伊人, dzùc lhouyc it pang. 在水一方。	The reeds and rushes are deeply green, And the white dew is turned into hoarfrost. The man of whom I think, Is somewhere about the water.
Sngàks wùy dzong tu, 邇洄從之,	I go up the stream in quest of him,

²⁴ The Chinese text is from Mao (2000: 494-497). Reconstructed old Chinese pronunciation from Sampson (2020: 151). Translated after Legge (1960: 195-197).

lòuc jac tsac drang. 道阻且長。 Sngàks you dzong tu, 遡游從之, ont dzùc lhouyc troung ang. 宛在水中央。	But the way is difficult and long. I go down the stream in quest of him, And lo! He is right in the midst of the water.
Kèm krà tsì tsì, 蒹葭萋萋, bràk ràks muts huy. 白露未晞。 Shac wuts i nin, 所謂伊人, dzùc lhouyc tu mouy. 在水之湄。	The reeds and rushes are luxuriant, And the white dew is not yet dry. The man of whom I think, Is on the margin of the water.
Sngàks wùy dzong tu, 遡洄從之, lòuc jac tsac tzi. 道阻且躋。 Sngàks you dzong tu, 遡游從之, ont dzùc lhouyc troung dri. 宛在水中坻。	I go up the stream in quest of him, But the way is difficult and steep. I go down the stream in quest of him, And lo! He is on the islet in the midst of the water.
Kèm krà tsùc tsùc, 蒹葭采采, bràk ràks muts luc. 白露未已。 Shac wuts i nin, 所謂伊人, dzùc lhouyc tu shuc. 在水之涘。	The reeds and rushes are abundant, And the white dew has not yet ceased. The man of whom I think, Is on the bank of the water [river].
Sngàks wùy dzong tu, 遡洄從之, lòuc jac tsac gwu. 道阻且右。 Sngàks you dzong tu, 遡游從之, ont dzùc lhouyc troung tuc. 宛在水中沚。	I go up the stream in quest of him, But the way is difficult and turns to the right. I go down the stream in quest of him, And lo! He is on the island in the midst of the water.

In the above two examples, it can clearly be found that the textual formulae in *Shījīng* are obvious; the sentence is mainly based on four-character pattern, in which a phrase consists of four or eight sentences. The words used are highly formulaic; as seen above, that *red* part occupies the majority of the two poems: some exhibit a full repetition that features an object or a scenery, like ‘lwc liwc diwk nrac’ (The modest, retiring, virtuous young lady) in *Table 2.*, then

there are instances that, with a fixed component followed by a changeable arrangement, while the latter parts share similarities, e.g., *jiān jiā cāng cāng / qī qī / cǎi cǎi* in **Table 3.**, so the fixed component features an object (reeds and rushes), then the changeable components mention about three situations of the object, they usually share the same form (in this case, they all consist of two identical Chinese characters), and sometimes they rhyme. When looking at it through the *Parry-Lord theory*, *Shijing* can be a more typical example for showing a clear and repetitive formula – even comparing with Homer.

Thus, we have the important hints that poetry, music and dance are highly homologous among various cultures – at least the *Shijing* provides a rather uncontroversial instance²⁵. Sadly, but not surprisingly, the melodies of the *Shijing* are all lost, as no original notation has survived²⁶. However, we can still ‘reconstruct’ some performing features from historical descriptions. Overall, ten categories can be found: (1). the simple repetition of a form; (2). one form with a following chorus; (3). a form followed by a chorus; (4). repetition of a form with minor variations; (5). a ‘mini-overture’ before the repetition of a form; (6). the repetition of a form with small coda at the end; (7). two different forms repeat with themselves, i.e. ABB; (8). two different forms repeat alternately, i.e. ABAB; (9). two different forms repeat in irregular way (such as one poem forms a complex structure of ABBBBABAA); (10). overture – repetition of a form – coda²⁷. Due to the fact that the emphasis of ‘forms’ lead to certain ‘formulaic patterns’ in music which are **dependent** on poetic patterns, we then can have some sense of how the formulae of melodic pattern may be. This is still distanced from a real ‘reconstruction’, but it certainly excludes a lot of obviously wrong answers.

Starting from that point of view, we can see that, although Confucius and Gregory did share many similarities regarding their transmission, those two are less comparable with scrutinising with the *oral-formulaic system*, mainly because of these characteristic differences:

1. Most poems and epics have more focus on texts but not melodic line, but plainchant does not.
2. The oral-formulaic scheme usually applies effectively to texts with clear prosody, which allows the formation of a relatively stable melodic pattern, while plainchant has a weak sense of such prosody.
3. A tight relationship between texts and its associated melody (like the *Shijing*) will naturally form a structural formula for the musical text, but plainchants has a rather loose text-music relation.
4. The oral tradition requires the memorisation of formulae in both text and melody, but plainchant has fixed (pre-composed) text with melodic lines associate little with it.
5. The transmission of musical pitch is different from the transmission of text: it does not involve unambiguous meaning, and the mechanisms of listening to pitch and texts are also fundamentally different; therefore, a melodic transmission can be highly unstable in nature.

Finally, it is pitiful that five offertories and two poems provides only a tiny sample, so the

²⁵ There are loads of ancient records about how the *Shijing* was sung and accompanied with dance, while listing all of them will add a full page of reference list. For a modern comparative summary, see Zhu (1987: 13-16).

²⁶ The *Shijing* is considered composed from 10-6th cent. B.C., and the poems are standardised no later than Confucius’ time (551-479 B.C.). However, the earliest surviving melodic notation (we exclude the drum notation dated 2nd-1st cent. B.C.) for a piece of zither solo is dated ca. 6th cent. A.D. The earliest surviving notation precisely for the *Shijing* is dated 1165-1173 A.D. (transmitted from ca. 713-741 A.D. according to the preface writer), see Mittag (1993: 204). Because of the long chronological gap, the 12th cent. A.D. notation is considered of little value for preserving the original melody in pre-Confucian times.

²⁷ For the categorisation, see Yang (1981: 57-61); for a statistical summary, see Ou (2004: 10-11).

conclusion can be easily distorted with selection bias, statistical outliers, and/or even my own mistakes during transcription. Also, we are far from excluding the possibility that Adémar's composition had already been far from oral tradition, which renders the *oral-formulaic theory* defunct. However, a more possible scenario would be that the oral chant transmission is indeed a much more complex process than the transmission of any poetic text – a lot of exceptions and special rules have to be specified. In the future, it is challenging yet promising that further studies can be conducted, to determine an improved theory which could fit in the study of plainchant more inclusively.

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Appendices

I. Confortamini et iam (fols. 91v-92r)

Confortamini et iam (fols. 91v-92r)

Con- for ta mi ni et iam noli

te ti me re ecce enim deus nos

ter re tri bu et iu dici

um ipse ue ni et sal uos nos

fati et Tunc aperi en

tur oculi cae co

rum et au- res sur do rum au dient

tunc ascen d et clau dus qua si

cer uus et cla ra erit lingua mu to rum

-1-

Au di te ita que do mus da uid
non pu sil lum uobis certamen presta re ho mi ni
bus quo ni am do mi nus praestat certa men prop
te re a da bit uo bis
do mi nus sig num ec ce uir
ego in u te ro ac ci pi et et pa ri et
fi li um et uo ca bi tur no men eius em
ma nu el ip se

-2-

II. Anima nostra (96v-97)

Anima nostra (fol. 96v-97r)

A ni ma nos tra sicut

pas ser erepta est de laque o

ue nan ti um la que us con

tri tus est et nos li be ra

ti sumus Ni si quod

do mi nus erat

in no bis di cat nunc isra

hel ni si quia do mi nus

erat in no bis

8

Torrentem per transivit a ni ma

8

nos tra for si tan per transi

8

set a ni ma nos

8

tra a quam intolera bilem

8

be ne dic tus do mi

8

nus qui non de dit nos in capti

8

onem dentibus e o

8

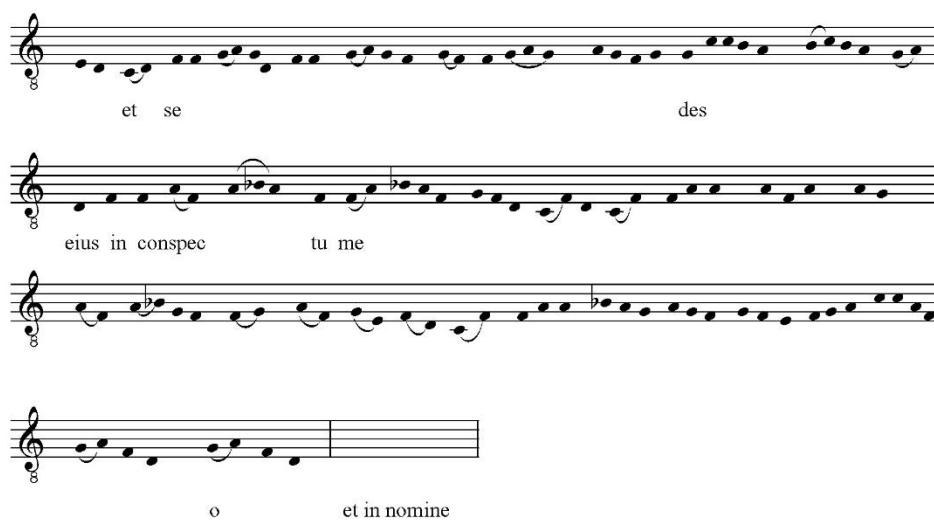
rum

-2-

III. Veritas mea (fols. 97v-98r)

Veritas mea (fols. 97v-98r)

Veri tas me a et mi se ri cor
dia me a cum ipso et in no mi
ne me o ex al ta bi tur cor nu ei us
Po sui ad iu to ri um me um su
per po ten tem et exal ta
ui e lectum de ple be mea
Mi se ri cor dia me non dis
per gam ab eo



-2-

IV. Offerentur regi (fol. 98r-v)

Offerentur regi 2 (fol. 98r-v)

Of fe ren tur re gi uir gi nes pro ximae

eius offeren tur ti bi in

lae ti ci a et ex ul ta tio ne addu

cen tur in tem plo regi do

mi no E ruc tu a uit cor meum

uer bum bo num eructavit cor

meum uer bum bo

num dico e

go o pe ra mea re gi lingua

-1-

mea ca la mus scribae ue lo

ci ter scri ben tis

Dif fu sa est gra ci a in la bi is tu is dif

fu sa est gra tia

in la bi is tu is

propterea be ne di xit te de us

inae ter

num Adducentur

The image shows a musical score for a medieval chant, consisting of eight staves of music. Each staff is written on a five-line staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes. The lyrics are: mea ca la mus scribae ue lo, ci ter scri ben tis, Dif fu sa est gra ci a in la bi is tu is dif, fu sa est gra tia, in la bi is tu is, propterea be ne di xit te de us, inae ter, num Adducentur. The music is a single melodic line, likely for a single voice part. The notes are mostly eighth and sixteenth notes, with some longer notes. The lyrics are in Latin and appear to be from a medieval offertory or similar liturgical text.

-2-

V. Iubilate deo uniuersa terra (99v-100v)

Iubilate deo uniuersa terra (99v-100v)

Iu bi la te deo o u ni uer sa ter

ra; iu bi la

te de

o u ni uer sa ter

ra psalmum di ci te no

mi ni e ius ue ni te Au di

te et nar ra bo uo bis om

nes qui ti me tis de um quan ta fe cit do

mi nus a ni meae

A E U A Reddam

ti bi Uo ta me a red

dam ti bi uo ta me

a a que dis

tin xe runt la

bi a me

a Lo cu tum est os meum in tri bu la

ti o ne me a Lo cu tum est os me

um in tri bu la ti o ne me

a ho lo caus ta

me dul la ta

of

fe

ram ti bi