

The reception of the german dialect of the gregorian chant between 1900 and approx. 1950

(Abstract)

In today's musicology, the germanic chant dialect («germanischer Choraldialekt») is nearly unimportant. Especially in the first half of the 20th century, it was very different. In particular, the invention of the term by Peter Wagner of Fribourg in 1925 promoted the perception of a melodic phenomenon, which can be found equally in many sources of plain chant in central Europe. The oldest witnesses of the phenomenon are adiastematic sources, the youngest ones were restored, restituted or newly composed in the first half of the 20th century. So this tradition is existing for more than 1000 years. The present work examines how this tradition has been scientifically, historically and practically elaborated in the last century.

The chapter on the history of research shows that the phenomenon of the germanic chant dialect was still considered a local tradition of individual dioceses or monasteries in the 19th century. Michael Hermesdorff from Trier was the first to recognize striking similarities between these fragmented traditions; his pupil Peter Wagner founded the basics of the scientific research. Not all musicologists agreed with Wagner's findings and explanations, but his term and his theory prevailed. In the 1950s, research into the germanic chant dialect largely disappeared, also because the word «germanic» was discredited under German National Socialism.

In musical practice, the germanic chant dialect revived thanks to a new awareness of the «german» phenomenon: in Kiedrich, for example, 14th-century melodic versions were restored, and Ephrem Omlin and Pirmin Vetter compiled an *Antiphonarium Monasticum* for the Swiss Benedictine Congregation. This study examines the various methods of these processes and combines them with Gregorian research.

This work also shows the function in a cultural historical and ecclesiastical historical perspective that were ascribed to the term, and it shows too some danger associated with the term: Proponents of the «Deutsche Gregorianik» saw in this phenomenon a potential for creating an identity for the German church. Racial research, on the other hand, tried to derive also a (musical) German superiority from the characteristics of the germanic chant dialect.