

scholarship or fêted as the most important institution of medieval government, its spectre continues to haunt all work on medieval documentary traditions. And if the chancery in the abstract has been a matter of lively debate, the Ottonian chancery holds a special place in these discussions. It was Theodor Sickel, the founder of modern diplomatic and the editor of the Ottonian diplomas for the newly founded *Diplomata-Abteilung* of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, who first identified conformity to chancery norms („Kanzleimäßigkeit“) as the best guarantor of authenticity for such documents. And his influence, direct and indirect, can be traced through all subsequent work, be it French, German, English or Italian. Sickel famously deemed *bona fide* members of the royal chancery all notaries who could be shown to have acted on behalf of two or more recipients. And because such figures are not named in the documents they produced, he took to giving them alphabetic designations based on the chancellor under whom they first served (Poppe A, Poppe B etc.). In Sickel's eyes, the chancery was thus a well-oiled machine, charged with the production and authentication of official *acta*; any document produced outside its hallowed (metaphorical) walls was potentially suspect².

Sickel's ideas were very much of their time and speak of his own experiences with the budding Prussian and Habsburg bureaucracies of the later nineteenth century. As traditional constitutional history in the vein of Georg Waitz – under whose presidency Sickel's first editions emerged with the *Monumenta* – started to come under concerted criticism in the first half of the twentieth century, the great Prusso-Austrian diplomatist was therefore not spared. In a justly famous article of 1937, Hans-Walter Klewitz noted that the Latin term *cancellaria* („chancery“) is not attested before the later twelfth century. By employing the term and concept before this point, he argued that Sickel and his adherents had been guilty of historical anachronism, of transposing institutional frameworks of the central and later Middle Ages onto the earlier Middle Ages³. Klewitz was not alone in his

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2) Theodor SICKEL, Programm und Instructionen der *Diplomata-Abtheilung*, in: NA 1 (1876) p. 427–482; IDEM, Beiträge zur Diplomatik, 8 pts in 1 vol. (1975). Cf. Harry BRESSLAU, Handbuch der Urkundenlehre für Deutschland und Italien, 2 vols. (1912–31), 1 (1912) p. 41–55.

3) Hans-Walter KLEWITZ, Cancellaria. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des geistlichen Hofdienstes, in: DA 1 (1937) p. 44–79.