

For the vast majority of bishops north of the Alps (and many in Italy, too) we do not possess any securely identified autographs; and even for those we do, they typically take the form of one or two subscriptions to private charters, judicial notices or synodal *acta*. On the basis of just a handful of words, written in haste in limited space, it is extremely hard to establish scribal identity with any certainty. To make matters worse, we are sometimes dealing with different scripts: subscriptions to private charters north of the Alps are rarely autograph and episcopal hands, where identified, are typically Caroline. Even in Italy, where autograph subscriptions by bishops are quite common and generally undertaken in charter script (either diplomatic minuscule or elongated letters), these might still sometimes take Caroline forms. The best we can hope for under these circumstances is to establish scribal identity with a degree of plausibility<sup>45</sup>.

There are, therefore, grounds for considerable caution regarding the Huschner thesis. Though Huschner's model of diploma production is a notable improvement on previous ones, the bolder conclusions he draws on this basis are not always supported by the wider evidence for charter production and episcopal office. The only way to go beyond such general caveats, however, is to return *ad fontes*. For it is in the diplomas themselves that we can see most clearly the strengths and weaknesses of the *nova doctrina Huschneri*.

### 3. The draftsmen-scribes of Otto I revisited

Having established the value and potential pitfalls of Huschner's approach, it is high time to test it. In order to facilitate this, I have revisited all the diplomas of Otto I, to see how well Huschner's division of scribes into trans-regional/imperial, regional, local, recipient and occasional – and the attendant identifications of such figures – works in practice. The aim has been to leave old assumptions about the „chancery“ to one side, and to let the evidence speak for itself, so far as possible. I start with those hands which display a marked regional focus, for which Huschner's model is especially effective. Pride of place here belongs to a set of Swabian hands, which Huschner identifies partly on the basis of Sickel's earlier editorial work. Thereafter,

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45) Cf. Peter A. STOKES, Scribal Attribution across Multiple Scripts: A Digitally Aided Approach, in: *Speculum* 92, Number S1 (2017) p. S65–S85.