

yone active for more than one recipient<sup>175</sup>, we would do well to follow Huschner in emphasizing the local qualities of these hands. The classic examples are the many Chur and Magdeburg scribes of the era: these were not royal servants, but local figures who periodically assisted the court in charter production. By reconceptualizing their activities, Huschner also shines new light on the leading notaries of the period. Only a handful of figures were in regular imperial service and they need to be treated differently.

Yet it is with these more active hands that Huschner struggles most. The problem is less that he is determined to prove regional interests where there are none, than that he is convinced that most of these figures were leading prelates – „bishops in post and prospect“, as he repeatedly puts it<sup>176</sup>. As Merta notes, however, this turn of phrase obscures an important distinction: it is very different to undertake scribal work in hope of promotion than it is to do so as a leading member of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. No-one, save perhaps a bishop-elect, is a „future bishop“<sup>177</sup>. In this respect, Huschner is only able to adduce one convincing case from Otto I's reign of a bishop acting as a trans-regional notary (Hubert of Parma), and this comes from Italy, where our earlier evidence for episcopal notarial activity is strongest. Even so, Hubert's service pales in comparison with that of BA, BB, LF or WB; he is only a leading notary in a quite restricted sense of the term. By contrast, many bishops were active scribes before promotion, both north and south of the Alps; and doubtless many others entered royal service in hope of promotion, then found that this was not forthcoming. A number of bishops were also active in a recipient capacity, as we see with Abraham of Freising, Hartbert of Chur and Pilgrim of Passau. The problem is that Huschner's thesis risks becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. Because he assumes that charter scribes were in most cases leading bishops, he easily enough finds candidates for their identity. And once he has established palaeographical links between a few of these, he allows himself to start making connections where no such evidence is available.

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175) SICKEL, *Beiträge VI* (as n. 2) p. 361f. Cf. BRESSLAU, *Handbuch* (as n. 2) 1, p. 414.

176) HUSCHNER, *Transalpine Kommunikation* (as n. 10) p. 198–214, 617. See also IDEM, *Ottonische Kanzlei* (as n. 10) p. 362–365.

177) MERTA, *Rezension von Huschner* (as n. 13) p. 407. Cf. ROBERT L. BENSON, *The Bishop-Elect: A Study in Medieval Ecclesiastical Office* (1968).