

A central plank of Huschner's argument throughout is that it would be anachronistic to imagine bishops employing amanuenses north of the Alps if they did not do so in Italy. Whether the Italian notariat was as episcopal as Huschner claims is open to question<sup>178</sup>; but even if so, it does not follow that its German counterpart must have been equally (or more) so. If anything, we might expect greater reliance on scribal specialists in a region where literacy was more limited; an amanuensis here would not be an anachronism, but a pragmatic response to the scarcity of such skills. Huschner is right that we should be more willing than Sickel was to identify bishops with charter scribes: even if most were not notaries, some clearly were. At the same time, we must not ignore the fact that many bishops had trained notaries in their service, sometimes even before their promotion to the episcopate. The clearest case is that of Hartbert of Chur, who had at least three (and perhaps more) scribes in his service, despite being capable of notarial work himself. The earliest manuscript of Thietmar's *Chronicon* tells a similar tale. While Thietmar was evidently a competent scribe, he left the copying work to others and largely restricted himself to correcting this. The most serious problem is that many of Huschner's identifications are not supported by palaeographical evidence; and those that are, with the notable exceptions of Hubert of Parma and Ambrosius of Bergamo, do not convince. Without such secure proof, his identifications become little more than a *petitio principii*; they are not necessarily wrong, or even implausible, they are simply incapable of falsification.

Nor should we be too swift to dismiss Sickel's point that draftsman was not always scribe, and that episcopal involvement, where present, need not have been scribal. To take an example identified by Sickel himself (but not discussed by Huschner), it is very likely that Rather of Verona composed the diploma Otto I issued for his see in 967, the text of which reveals strong similarities with Rather's other writings. Yet it is most unlikely that Rather was the scribe of this act. For Sickel identified an otherwise unknown Italian hand at work, while Rather's autograph – known from many other manuscripts of the period – bears the hallmarks of his Lotharingian training. Sadly, the original single sheet of the diploma has since been damaged by floodwaters, rendering it all but illegible. But Dario Cervato was able to consult it in its undamaged

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178) By Huschner's own admission, there were plenty of Italian ecclesiastics below episcopal rank who had mastered diplomatic minuscule: Transalpine Kommunikation (as n. 10) p. 145–156. Cf. GHIGNOLI, Istituzioni ecclesiastiche (as n. 18), strongly endorsing Huschner's findings.