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The Interdisciplinary Vienna Project about the Court Librarian Sebastian Tegnagel: First Questions and Further Steps

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Sebastian Tegnagel was the court librarian of the Imperial library in Vienna from 1608 to his death in 1636. At the same time he was an active member of the international community of scholars - the Republic of Letters. Large parts of Tegnagel's correspondence are dedicated to the enrichment of the collection of manuscripts, among them that of Oriental manuscripts.

Much of the material written by him that has survived until today documents his work with manuscripts in Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, and Hebrew. Tegnagel exchanged some 800 letters with scholars, scientists, linguists, clerics, lawyers, adventurers, and bibliophiles in Europe and the Middle East. His correspondence spans more than 30 years (1594-1635) and sees the participation of key personalities of the Republic of Letters alongside less well-known figures. Within this community, Tegnagel played an important role which saw him develop from a librarian into an Oriental scholar. With this contribution we firstly aim to present the objectives of the recently granted project "The Oriental Outpost of the Republic of Letters. Sebastian Tegnagel (d. 1636), the Imperial Library in Vienna, and Knowledge about the Orient." (FWF P-30511). Secondly we will concentrate on the following first questions of our study: What does Tegnagel's correspondence tell us about the manuscripts and prints from and about the Orient circulating in learned Europe during the early 17th century? What can be learned, through these same materials as well as through book catalogues and handwritten dictionaries, regarding the practices of language learning, annotation, and organization of knowledge about the Orient?