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**Brief Biography:**

I am a master student (history) at the University of Vienna and have been working as contractor within the START project "Monastic Enlightenment and the Benedictine Republic of Letters" since 2010 with a focus on the correspondence between Johann Friedrich Schannat and Bernhard Pez. I am currently writing my master thesis on the *Nova Typis Transacta Navigatio in Orbis Indiae Occidentalis*, a book on Columbus' second voyage by Kaspar Plautz, abbot in Seitenstetten, published in 1621.

**Paper Title:**

Johann Georg Eckhart vs. Johann Friedrich Schannat: On the Construction of Historical Evidence as a Social and Political Process

**Paper Abstract:**

In the late 1720s, the two historians and longtime correspondents Johann Friedrich Schannat and Johann Georg von Eckhart began a controversy over the history of the Imperial Abbey of Fulda. Schannat, employed by the prince-abbot of Fulda, detected incongruities in feudal conditions primarily concerning Würzburg. Eckhart, working as historiographer for the prince-bishop in Würzburg, defended his employer and the territory by attacking his friend Schannat. What followed was not only a dispute but a search for truth as both historians tried to convince their readers of their respective arguments, and it is the affirmation of the audience that gave value to their allegations. The conflict between Schannat and Eckhart can thus be analyzed in an epistemological context. In this case „truth” is not simply a given factor but requires external acknowledgment; third parties have the power to judge who is right and who is wrong, and thus become crucial for the construction of evidence. As both Eckhart and Schannat considered themselves members of the *res publica literaria*, these third parties were usually other scholars, often ones who were in direct contact with Eckhart as well as Schannat. Consequently, their quest for truth also gained a strong social dimension.

It should also be noted that neither of the two protagonists can be regarded as independent writers as both were employed by Princes who had their own agendas. Historiography is an instrument of legitimization and the claiming of rights, and historians become agents of these political strategies. Accordingly, the construction of historical evidence is always deeply influenced by politics.