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Autore	Bausi Alessandro
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Nota di contenuto	Frontmatter -- Contents -- Preface -- Prologue: Contemporary Practices of Archiving -- How to Distinguish between Manuscripts and Archival Records: A Study in Archival Theory / Schenk, Dietmar -- Archives from Tibet and the Himalayan Borderlands: Notes on Form and Content / Ramble, Charles -- The Ancient World up to Late Antiquity -- Constitution, Contents, Filing and Use of Private Archives: The Case of Old Assyrian Archives (nineteenth century BCE) / Michel, Cécile -- Archives in Ancient Egypt, 2500-1000 BCE / Hagen, Fredrik / Soliman, Daniel -- Archives and Libraries in Greco-Roman Egypt / Fournet, Jean-Luc -- Libraries and Archives in the Former Han Dynasty (206 BCE-9 CE): Arguing for a Distinction / Fölster, Max Jakob -- Setting a Bishopric / Arranging an Archive: Traces of Archival Activity in the Bishopric of Alexandria and Antioch / Camplani, Alberto -- Documents, Acts and Archival Habits in Early Christian Church Councils: A Case Study / Graumann, Thomas -- The Middle Ages -- Weighing in on Evidence: Documents and Literary Manuscripts in Early Medieval Japan / Adolphson, Mikael S. -- Securing and Preserving Written Documents in

Byzantium / Grünbart, Michael -- Archival Practices in the Muslim World prior to 1500 / Paul, Jürgen -- The Power of the Pen: Cadis and their Archives / Müller, Christian -- Indian Copper-Plate Grants: Inscriptions or Documents? / Francis, Emmanuel -- Epilogue: Why and how to compare -- Epilogue: Archives and Archiving across Cultures- Towards a Matrix of Analysis / Friedrich, Markus -- List of Contributors -- List of Documents

Sommario/riassunto

Archives are considered to be collections of administrative, legal, commercial and other records or the actual place where they are located. They have become ubiquitous in the modern world, but emerged not much later than the invention of writing. Following Foucault, who first used the word archive in a metaphorical sense as "the general system of the formation and transformation of statements" in his "Archaeology of Knowledge" (1969), postmodern theorists have tried to exploit the potential of this concept and initiated the "archival turn". In recent years, however, archives have attracted the attention of anthropologists and historians of different denominations regarding them as historical objects and "grounding" them again in real institutions. The papers in this volume explore the complex topic of the archive in a historical, systematic and comparative context and view it in the broader context of manuscript cultures by addressing questions like how, by whom and for which purpose were archival records produced, and if they differ from literary manuscripts regarding materials, formats, and producers (scribes).

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