

# Archival Heritage of Religious Communities in Croatia and Possibilities for its e-Accessibility

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## Summary

*Archival heritage of religious communities in Croatia is kept in private archives of the religious communities, Croatian State Archives in Zagreb, other regional state archives', and special archives' of certain public institutions. The number and variety of the religious communities in Croatia, especially in its northern parts, is a reflection of the historic migrations of the population, which shaped a multicultural and multireligious social context. Within that context, during history, the religious communities engaged in a wide range of activities, so the archival materials, created as a result of their work, are a rich source of information in different fields. In accordance with specific functions of the religious institutions (the creators), archival materials containing specific types of information were created. The materials of secular provenance often do not contain such information. Therefore, the type and contents of those pieces of information shape special informational character of the religious archives that keep and provide access to the mentioned materials. However, these materials are only partially accessible, according to legislation and internal structure of the religious institutions. Thus, the use of the materials in Croatia differs between the institutions, and ranges from little access to conventional materials to the possibility of using digitized documents online. International experience and practice, as well as some examples of good practice in Croatia, indicate the need to change the overall approach to the processing and use of this heritage in Croatia.*

**Key words:** archival heritage, religious heritage, religious communities, processing of the materials, use of materials, digitization

## Introduction

During the history, the religious institutions played an important role, far more than today, having an impact on the culture, politics, economics, waging the wars, bringing peace and reconstruction. Therefore, European historiography is also based on the archive documents of religious communities, either in their written form or relics of people and events during certain history period.

Croatian regions or Croatians countries were strongly affected by different social, ethnical, political and religious factors and their influences. Speaking about religion, we could see that since the Christianity had spread in this part of Western Europe, that it has been strongly influenced by Catholic Church. However, it must be pointed out that Croatian Catholic identity had been exposed to other influences during the history, so that we can talk about multiethnic, multicultural and multireligious aspects of Croatian identity. It is a combination of different cultural identities, cohesion and assimilation, but at the same time it preserved its dominating and authentic features.<sup>1</sup>

### **The most important Religious Communities contributing to archival Heritage in Croatia**

The existence, presence and the importance of some religious communities was not the same through the history and today in certain historical regions of Croatia. So we can see that northern part of Croatia has had far more different religious communities than the southern part. Historically speaking, Croatia was a Catholic area in Middle Ages, and only in the Modern history we could see the foundation and the dispersion of other religious communities due to the political, economic, social and cultural influences.

Catholic Church<sup>2</sup> based on Roman tradition (Roman Catholic Church) has been present in Croatia since early Middle Ages till today and has been organized in different church hierarchy subdivisions, numerous religious, cultural educational and scientific institutions. Therefore its archival heritage, especially the archives of Catholic Church of Roman tradition is widely spread and present in Croatia. Nevertheless, in spite of the strong influence of Catholic Church, there were other religious communities which spread in Croatia.

In different parts of Croatia throughout the history, within the Catholic and Orthodox context, Eastern Christianity Byzantine tradition got developed as well. Today it is Križevačka eparchy, with its Catholic followers, its institutions, Eastern tradition and regulations, meaning that there is rather big Greek Catholic archival heritage. When we talk about Orthodox religious influence and the influence of its institutions, there is also archival heritage of Serbian Orthodox Church in Croatia.

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<sup>1</sup> Compare Mohorovičić, Andre. *Hrvatska: kulturno-povijesni identitet. // Hrvatska i europa: kultura, zanost i umjetnost. Svezak I. Zagreb : HAZU; AGM, 1997., str. 38.*

<sup>2</sup> In this paper there are two definitions used Catholic and Roman Catholic. Catholic Church describes all churches of Western and Eastern tradition, liturgy and regulations which are united under the Roman Bishop, Pope. Roman Catholic Church has Western (Latin) tradition, liturgy and regulation. Numerous European, African, Asian churches under the Roman Bishop practice different Eastern traditions, liturgy and regulation. They are also Catholic, but not Roman Catholic. However in Croatia, Catholic Church of Eastern (Byzantine) tradition is called Greek Catholic church.

In 16 and 17 century under the influence of European Reformation, we could see its spreading in Croatia, leaving its archival heritage. The impact of Reformation through the history shows many changes resulting in rather polyvalent churches and religious communities that can be classified under the Reformation heritage. The multipurpose of Reformation churches has strongly influenced their archival heritage.

Judaism and its national group living in Croatia have experienced the same tragic destiny like in other parts of Christian Europe. Their archival heritage shows the permanent exile and an endless fight to preserve their national and religious identity. The documents archived in Croatia, especially since mid 18 century till the onset of II. World War, show their active role in the society and economics within the communities they lived in.

Islam had a negative connotation in Croatia due to the Turkish conquest in 15 century and their rule in 16 and 17 century. It must be mentioned that the Turks occupied some other Balkan regions till the second half of 19 century. Once when the Austrian Hungarian Empire conquered Bosnia and Herzegovina, Islamic community got recognized and from that moment on with the help of the existing documents, we can follow *in situ* the influence of Islam in north Croatia regions and its archival heritage.

The contemporary functioning of the religious communities in Croatia is prescribed by the *Law on legal status of religious communities*<sup>3</sup>. The registered religious communities in Croatia, not only the ones long and traditionally established, but also the new ones, are registered or are in the process of being registered in the *Religious community register of Croatia*<sup>4</sup>, which is kept by the Ministry of Administration according to the passed law. For the institutions of Catholic Church there is special *Register of institutions of Catholic Church in Croatia*<sup>5</sup>. Both registers are available *online* on the web pages of Croatian Ministry of Administration.<sup>6</sup>

The religious communities officially listed in the Register were described in book with a systematic overlook on existing data about the religious communities in Croatia through the history and today.<sup>7</sup> In this book the religious communities are discussed from the perspective of the religious sociology, but in order to study, understand, preserve and use archival heritage,

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<sup>3</sup> Com. Zakon o pravnom položaju vjerskih zajednica. *Narodne novine* 83/02.

<sup>4</sup> Evidencija vjerskih zajednica u Republici Hrvatskoj. URL: <http://www.applpravna.hr/RegistarVjerskihZajednica/> (2011-9-9).

<sup>5</sup> Evidencija pravnih osoba Katoličke Crkve u Republici Hrvatskoj. URL: <http://www.applpravna.hr/PravneOsobeKatolickeCrkve/> (2011-9-9).

<sup>6</sup> Ministarstvo uprave RH. URL: <http://www.uprava.hr/> (2011-9-9).

<sup>7</sup> Com. Marinović Bobinac, Ankica; Marinović Jerolimov, Dinka. *Vjerske zajednice u Hrvatskoj*. Zagreb : Prometej; Udruga za vjersku slobodu u RH, 2008.

some other methods should be introduced. It is necessary to know how the religious communities operated within some system, network, relations among offices, governments, municipalities in certain region. It can be done only with the use of high quality literature data, together with the regulations of certain religious community and nowadays with the help of online/web data, what can be of an enormous benefit for the extensive research.

The thorough data investigation of the religious community founders in Croatia for the purpose of archival public was conducted by archivist and historian Josip Buturac in 1970 and it can be seen as a basis of the history archives of religious communities. In this book we could find history data about the governing of religious communities in Croatia from the very beginning till 20 century, the history of religious institutions, their hierarchy and the history overlook of the dominant religious communities in Croatia, for e.g.: Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic church, with the emphasis on catholic monks; Serbian Orthodox church; Evangelical church, Reformed church and Jewish religious community.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, there were other publications published by some religious communities, which could help with the research of their institutions and their history. Recently, they are available on web/online documents, enabling a fast access to summarized information about the history and the functioning of the religious institutions, either in the past or today.

The author of this paper has studied the different regulations of religious communities in his thesis<sup>9</sup> and talked about them on the seminar "The preservation of religious community documentation" in Croatian national archive in 2010.<sup>10</sup> The thesis presents the typology and hierarchical archive levels of Croatian religious communities<sup>11</sup>, typology and the importance of the preserved archives content<sup>12</sup>, including the most important data resources and their application<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Com. Buturac, Josip. *Povijest uprave vjerskih organizacija u Hrvatskoj od X-XX stoljeća*, Zagreb : Arhiv Hrvatske, 1970., str. 7-65.

<sup>9</sup> Com. Kušen, Dražen. *Arhivi vjerskih zajednica u sjevernoj Hrvatskoj. Razvoj, tipologija, sadržajni značaj*. Doktorski rad na Filozofskom fakultetu Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, Zagreb, 2011., str. 62-194.

<sup>10</sup> Com. Kušen, Dražen. *Arhivi u propisima vjerskih zajednica – od pismohrane do ustanove. // Zaštita dokumentacije vjerskih zajednica. Seminar. Hrvatski državni arhiv, Zagreb, 19. i 20. travnja 2010. (sažeci izlaganja)*. Zagreb : Hrvatski državni arhiv, 2010., str. 23-34.

<sup>11</sup> Com. Kušen, Dražen. *Arhivi vjerskih zajednica u sjevernoj Hrvatskoj*, str. 62-194.

<sup>12</sup> *Idem*, str. 195-233.

<sup>13</sup> *Idem*, str. 234-240.

### **Archival heritage of the Religious Communities in Croatia – Register and Access**

According to the *Law on archive material and archives*, the archive material of the religious communities is seen as the private archive material in Croatia, so it is regulated with the certain protocols within the Law.<sup>14</sup> Their own regulations regarding the archive material, its saving, preserving and use has only Catholic Church in Croatia. The other religious communities would have these regulations only regarding the church administration, keeping the registers of births, marriages and deaths, and their finances, but it must be pointed out that some of them have started issuing their own archive regulations.

The history context confirms that the religious archives are together with their development, typology and the content an, essential part of the archival heritage, dating from early Croatian history till nowadays.<sup>15</sup> The heritage records are mostly kept by the religious communities, but the approach to these data differs depending on the institution. Speaking about the public, the most important archival heritage of the religious communities is recorded in *Register of archive funds and collections of Republic of Croatia*, which was published in 2006.<sup>16</sup> The same data published in the register are also available via ARHiNET internet system.<sup>17</sup> The online access of these documents and its importance and potential was presented by Vlatka Lemić and Tomislav Čepulić on the seminar "The preservation of the religious communities documents".<sup>18</sup>

This archival heritage is pretty dispersed in two different contexts. On one side they are the holdings and collections of archival heritage of religious communities, which are preserved in public archive institutions (Croatian State Archives, its branch offices/archives and some other archives or institutions) as their own archive materials. On the other side they are holdings and collections which are preserved within the religious institutions and archives as their own materials.

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<sup>14</sup> Com. Zakon o arhivskom gradivu i arhivima. *Narodne novine* 105/97.

<sup>15</sup> Com. Kolanović, Josip. Arhivi u Socijalističkoj Republici Hrvatskoj. // *Arhivski fondovi i zbirke u SFRJ; SR Hrvatska*. Beograd : Savez Arhivskih radnika Jugoslavije, 1984., str. 11-37.

<sup>16</sup> Pregled arhivskih fondova i zbirki Republike Hrvatske. Zagreb : Hrvatski državni arhiv, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> ARHiNET. // URL: <http://arhinet.arhiv.hr/>. See also: Lemić, Vlatka; Čabrajić, Hrvoje. Managing and Presenting Digital Content in the ARHiNET System. // *The future of information sciences: INFUTURE 2009 - Digital resources and knowledge sharing : [2nd international conference, Zagreb, 4-6 November 2009]*; edited by Hrvoje Stančić ... [et al.]. Zagreb : Department of Information Sciences, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, 2009., str. 95-104.

<sup>18</sup> Com. Lemić, Vlatka; Čepulić, Tomislav. Arhivska služba u RH i vjerske zajednice – korištenje dokumentacije vjerskih zajednica. // *Zaštita dokumentacije vjerskih zajednica*, str. 41-42.

In *Register of archive fonds and collections of Republic of Croatia*<sup>19</sup>, it was possible to present all registered archive material of religious communities in both contexts, meaning not only the material saved in the archives, but also in some religious institutions. Besides the data which got published as the result of the cooperation between Croatian state archive and the religious communities, most religious communities do not have any published registers of their own archives.

The archives in the religious institutions are not only the records about the history of the very institutions, but also other holdings and collections, gathered, donated or deposited during the history.<sup>20</sup> Most of the documents have never been stored or preserved in the public archives. The most important documents kept in religious archives are: notarial documents, register of births, marriages and deaths, records of Canon visitations (inspections) and *Status animarum*.<sup>21</sup>

The public has a limited access to religious archives due to their own regulations and the organization within the religious communities. We could say that possibility to access some of these archives varies in different institutions. There are some archives which are easy to access, including via internet, and the other ones with limited or no access to rather at all conventional documents. The basic information about the preserved documents of the religious communities can be used online via ARHiNET internet system, and some religious communities, or Croatian State Archives, have their documents digitised, including their most important materials, like the registers of births, marriage and deaths.

The registers of births, marriage and death have been carefully preserved for centuries either in the public archives or in the religious archives. The access to these registers is legally prescribed by the state law or international conventions<sup>22</sup>, consequently the access to these registers is limited. A lot of religious registers (older than 100 years) are preserved in the public archives, since they were taken from the religious archives after the II. World War. Therefore the public archives preserve them, protect their screening and usage, like they do with all other funds in Croatian State Archives and other public archives in Croatia.<sup>23</sup> The religious registers are extremely important for the

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<sup>19</sup> Com. Pregled arhivskih fondova i zbirki Republike Hrvatske.

<sup>20</sup> Com. Pavliček, Vida. Pregled arhivskih fondova i zbirki Republike Hrvatske. Rad na prikupljanju i obradi podataka. // Arhivski vjesnik, 50 (2007), str. 13-14.

<sup>21</sup> Com. Kušen, Dražen. Arhivi vjerskih zajednica u sjevernoj Hrvatskoj, str. 234-240.

<sup>22</sup> Com. Zaštita osobnih podataka i dostupnost informacija : Preporuke Vijeća Europe. URL: <http://www.arhiv.hr/hr/pdf/Zastita%20osobnih%20podataka.pdf> (2011-6-28).

<sup>23</sup> Com. Baričević, Zvonko. Zaštita kulturnih dobara – onemogućavanje nezakonitog prometa kulturnim dobrima. Crkveni arhivi u središnjoj Europi – tradicija, funkcije, suradnja, izazovi. // *Zaštita dokumentacije vjerskih zajednica*, str. 15-21.

genealogical and demographic researches, so they can provide us with the essential information about the population living in one region in a specific period. There are also scientific papers based on the materials coming from registers and the papers explaining the register history value and the importance of the documents contained in the registers. When we talk about the demographic research, registers are of a great importance for the religious community or other social demographic studies, philological research, medical heritage studies, as well as the closest source of the information for the research or determination of the genealogy.

In most other countries the old registers of births, marriage and death are dispersed and kept by the various institutions (church/religious offices or public/national register offices) and therefore are difficult to have an easy access for a systematic research. There are examples in the world where the registers in the bishop's archive are deliberately collected, preserved and used. The very illustrative example of how the registers can be used in the research, is in Catholic diocese in Passau, Germany, which launched the project of creating database of Passau population before 1900.<sup>24</sup> Working on the project, they used all the registers of Passau parishes, which were kept in bishop's archives (what is typical for Bavaria, but not in other parts of Germany). The first project phase consisted of data entry of all registers and creation of the network and the second phase would be digital filing of all sources and connecting records with central database. The purpose of the project is not only to enable an easy access to data, but also to prevent further use of the original source and its damage.<sup>25</sup> The project was rather demanding, because it meant to information and IT process and connect data of 6000 registers with more than 4 million data to be stored, so that the necessary information and all other linked pages could be easily identified and browsed. After 10 years of intensive work of the Passau Bishop archive and IT experts the result was outstanding. The database content was immediately used in Alzheimer disease research and it was of a great help when the family relations or genealogy were studied, using a special application which automatically browsed the data.<sup>26</sup> This successful project is an example of how the register records can be systematically collected with the protective scanning, how the data can be prepared for IT processing and how the use of the

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<sup>24</sup> Com. Wurster, Herbert W. The Historical Population Data Base of the Catholic Diocese of Passau, Germany, and its Use for Genetic Research. // URL: [http://www.wien2004.ica.org/imagesUpload/pres\\_283\\_WURSTER\\_SKR03.pdf?PHPSESSID=7230ed24fb7c9533364e768725582fb4](http://www.wien2004.ica.org/imagesUpload/pres_283_WURSTER_SKR03.pdf?PHPSESSID=7230ed24fb7c9533364e768725582fb4) (2009-09-18).

<sup>25</sup> Com. Workshop Herbert W. Wurster. Usp. URL: <http://www.ddb.umu.se/aktuellt/workshopdec2003/herbertwwurster.html> (2009-9-24).

<sup>26</sup> Com. Project description for GenDB. Usp. URL: <http://www.forwiss.uni-passau.de/en/projectsingle/19/main.html> (2009-9-24).

registers can stimulate the cooperation of religious communities and the public archives.

The audio visual materials, not only the new ones, but also the very first ones of this kind can be also found in the various religious archives.<sup>27</sup> However the new electronic data is of great concern, because its existence is not recorded in the national archives, but has been stored in the religious archive for decades.<sup>28</sup> This material should be processed, applying the international and national methods. The Department of archive and documentation within the Department of Information Science at Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb in its education of archivists and other experts has been emphasizing strongly the conservation of electronic data. This conference has had it as its goal since 2007.<sup>29</sup> The gained and shared experiences, study results in information science and plied in heritage institutions in public offices, should help us shape the right policy toward electronic data, other sources and private religious institutions. The outcome of this modern policy should be wide usage of modern technology to protect and enable easier access to archives, including the ones in religious institutions. The modern technology should be particularly used in the case of very important materials and if there are more inquiries. The good examples are ICARUS<sup>30</sup> and Metis programs<sup>31</sup>.

### **Some examples of good practice in Croatia**

The outstanding example of a good cooperation between the religious institution and the national archive is one hundred year old cooperation between Archbishop diocese in Zagreb and Croatian State Archives. The Archbishop archive is the most important archive of Catholic church in Croatia, because it not only preserves the records of its own activities and of its offices, but also is in the possession of the materials of many other church institutions within Archbishop diocese. The whole archive holdings dating from very early ages till 1945, respecting the agreement of both parties' obligations and rights is deposited in Croatian State Archives. All the holdings (mostly manuscripts from Middle ages and contemporary) together with records of Bishop library of Zagreb Archbishop diocese (from Middle Ages, mostly 14 century) are

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<sup>27</sup> Com. Lhotka, Carmen. Hrvatska kinoteka – filmsko gradivo kao povijesni izvor. // *Zaštita dokumentacije vjerskih zajednica*, str. 41-42.

<sup>28</sup> The author of this work has their own insight into the more parochial and monastic archives of the Catholic Church in Croatia, and into the archives of the Jewish community of Osijek.

<sup>29</sup> Com. INFuture 2011. // URL: <http://infoz.ffzg.hr/infuture/> (2011-6-27).

<sup>30</sup> ICARUS. // URL: <http://www.icar-us.eu> (2010-06-20).

<sup>31</sup> Com. Colombo, Massimo. Metis: Italian Technology for the worldwide Cultural Heritage. *Atlanti*, Vol. 17, N. 1-2, Trieste 2007, pp. 299-300. // URL: <http://www.iias-trieste-maribor.eu/fileadmin/atti/2007/Colombo.pdf> (2007-10-12).



preserved in Croatian State Archives at the Department of Zagreb Archbishop diocese.<sup>32</sup> We can say that of all religious institutions of Catholic church in Croatia, Zagreb Archbishop diocese has solved best the problem of archive preservation, the filing of the documents and their use. The preserved materials are precious source for the research of North Croatia history. The History Association of Archbishop diocese of Zagreb "Tkalčić" is very active in systematic research, publishing and preservation of the heritage, as well as in the holding presentation to the public (also via internet).<sup>33</sup>

Talking about Jewish communities in Croatia, we must mention an extremely successful project, conducted by the Research and documenting center "Cendo". The center got organized on the international level in 2000 in Jewish community of Zagreb and collects materials, documents and testimonies of the Jews living in Croatia. It also keeps the archive, publishes the catalogues, organizes data base for its users, studies all history segments of Jews in Croatia and publishes the research results and gathers data.<sup>34</sup>

### **Preservation of Religious Communities' Archives and their Accessibility on the international Level**

International Council on Archives (ICA)<sup>35</sup> has a special department "Section of Archives of Churches and Religious Denominations" (SKR), which got founded in 1995 in Prag and according to its regulations, works on accessibility and the protection of cultural resources which should promote the understanding of the world religions. ICA/SKR has its own publication "Newsletter of ICA Section of Archives of Churches and Religious Denominations".<sup>36</sup>

UNESCO on line material could provide also the links of the religious communities archives all over the world, as well as web pages of worldly, regional or national religious associations, organizations or specialized associations which take care of religious heritage archive.<sup>37</sup> We could mention

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<sup>32</sup> Com. Razum, Stjepan. Biskupijski, kaptolski i samostanski arhivi. Nadbiskupijski arhiv Zagreb i Metropolitanska knjižnica Zagreb. // *Zaštita dokumentacije vjerskih zajednica*, str. 35-36. See also: Državni arhiv u Zagrebu [http://www.daz.hr/arhol/prilozi\\_arhivi.htm](http://www.daz.hr/arhol/prilozi_arhivi.htm) (2010-5-3)

<sup>33</sup> Com. Tkalčić : Društvo za povjesnicu Zagrebačke nadbiskupije. // URL: <http://www.tkalcic.hr> (2010-5-28).

<sup>34</sup> CENDO. // URL: <http://www.zoz.hr/home.php?content=content&term=39&key=26&key1=39> (2010-6-14).

<sup>35</sup> ICA : International Council on Archives. // URL: <http://www.ica.org> (2010-5-26).

<sup>36</sup> ICA/SKR : Section of Archives of Churches and Religious Denominations. // URL: <http://www.ica.org/en/node/30820#ica-infobox-2> (2010-5-26).

<sup>37</sup> Com. UNESCO Archives Portal. // URL: <http://www.unesco-ci.org/cgi-bin/portals/archives/page.cgi?d=1> (2010-2-8).

only few archive associations of religious communities like the ones in Italy<sup>38</sup>, Germany (evangelical<sup>39</sup> and catholic<sup>40</sup>), Austria (diocese<sup>41</sup> and monastery<sup>42</sup>) and Hungary (interreligious)<sup>43</sup>. All these associations via their on line documents and web pages can supply a lot of information about their work, about the work of the religious communities, the community they function in, their own archives and their holdings.

### **Conclusion**

The condition, the objective limitation, but at the same time the great potentials of the archives of the religious communities in Croatia raise the questions of an necessary preservation of these archives and their accessibility for the research purposes. If we take international experience, Croatia should also try to have more and more on line access to the archives. Nevertheless, the access to electronic (digitised) data of religious archives is not easy to achieve in Croatia, due to human and financial limitations. In the future the cooperation of the religious institutions with the archive experts from the public archives would improve the education and training of the people working in the religious archives, resulting in better e-access to their materials. However, in order to achieve the goal of an easy access to archive material, it is necessary to improve the cooperation between private religious institutions and public archives, what would have as a result better preservation, valorization, conservation and the use of archive materials which are kept in the archives of the religious communities.

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- <sup>38</sup> Com. Archiva ecclesiae. // URL: [http://www.archivaecclesiae.org/index.php?option=com\\_frontpage&Itemid=1](http://www.archivaecclesiae.org/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1) (2010-2-8).
- <sup>39</sup> Com. Verband kirchlicher Archive. // URL: <http://www.ekd.de/archive/index.htm> (2010-2-7).
- <sup>40</sup> Com. Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Ordensarchive (AGOA). // URL: [http://www.orden.de/index\\_oa.php](http://www.orden.de/index_oa.php) (2010-2-8).
- <sup>41</sup> Com. Das Portal zum Archivwesen der römisch-katholischen Kirche in Österreich. // URL: <http://www.kirchenarchive.at> (2010-2-6).
- <sup>42</sup> Com. Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Ordensarchive Österreichs. // <http://www.ordensarchive.at/index.php> (2010-2-7).
- <sup>43</sup> Com. MELTA. // URL: <http://archivum.piar.hu/melte/> (2011-6-25).

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