

# KNOT

KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS:  
REASSESSING THE INDIGENOUS  
AMERICAN HERITAGE IN ITALY

## **Museo Civico di Scienze Naturali “Enrico Caffi”**

Piazza Cittadella 10, 24129 Bergamo

*Form compiled by* Paolo Pantini (curator)

### **Introduction**

The ethnographic collections of the “Enrico Caffi” Museum consist of two main nuclei, one American and one African. Already the original core of the Museum held a collection of about 500 artefacts from the two continents, assembled and later donated to the city of Bergamo by people from different cultural and social backgrounds. Over time the ethnographic collections have grown thanks to significant additions and now include about 1,200 artefacts; above all, they have been the subject of specialised studies by Italian and foreign scholars, which have highlighted their particular historical and documentary value.

The American collection consists of two nuclei. The most important nucleus is the celebrated North American collection gathered by Giacomo Costantino Beltrami in the early nineteenth century, whose display has recently been renewed. The collection also contains some remarkable materials from Mexico and Haiti. The second nucleus corresponds to a smaller collection of materials from Paraguay assembled by Gaspare Zineroni and Faustino Borra.

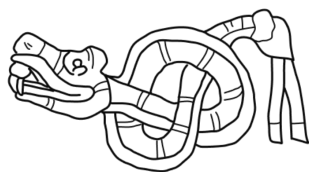
### **Cultural Areas (tags)**

Great Plains; Mesoamerica; Caribbean; Gran Chaco; Pampas

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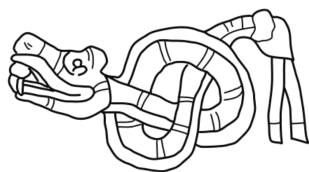
## Collections

### #01

|                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Name of the collection</i>                              | <b>General Ethnographic Collection; Zineroni and Borra collections</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <i>Collector</i>                                           | Zineroni, Gaspare<br>Borra, Faustino                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <i>Cultural areas</i>                                      | Gran Chaco; Pampas                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <i>Ethnic group /<br/>community / cultural<br/>context</i> | Gran Chaco (Paraguay)<br>Pampas (Paraguay)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <i>Description of the<br/>Collection</i>                   | <p>There are 22 objects in the General Ethnographic Collection that come from South America: 20 were donated by Gaspare Zineroni in 1880 and 2 by Faustino Borra in 1938.</p> <p>They consist of bows and arrows, a boleadora, a bota de potrò (leather gaiters/boots), a wool belt, a decorated women's leather belt, a war club, a glass-bead headdress, two necklaces of puma claws, two wool ties (for leggings), two carved wooden stirrups, a helmet of the Paraguayan army, a skirt of rhea feathers, a horsehair saddlecloth, a wool saddlecloth, an equestrian war spear,</p> |

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|                                  | a lasso, a decorated women's leather ornament and a wool girth strap.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <i>History of the collection</i> | The Zineroni nucleus was donated to the museum in 1880, while the Borra nucleus was donated in 1938.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <i>Online Database</i>           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <i>Web page</i>                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <i>Bibliography</i>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cassiano Quirci, L., L. Carmen. 2007. <i>Museo di Scienze Naturali E. Caffi. Guida alle collezioni etnografiche</i>. Bergamo: Museo Civico di Scienze Naturali.</li> </ul> <p><a href="https://www.museoscienzebergamo.it/educazione/pubblicazioni/monografie/">https://www.museoscienzebergamo.it/educazione/pubblicazioni/monografie/</a></p> |

## #02

|                                                    |                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Name of the collection</i>                      | <b>Giacomo Costantino Beltrami ethnographic collection</b>   |
| <i>Collector</i>                                   | Beltrami, Giacomo Costantino (1779–1855)                     |
| <i>Cultural areas</i>                              | Great Plains; Mesoamerica; Caribbean                         |
| <i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i> | Sioux (USA)<br>Ojibwe (USA)<br>P'urhépecha (Mexico)<br>Haiti |

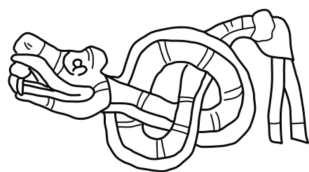
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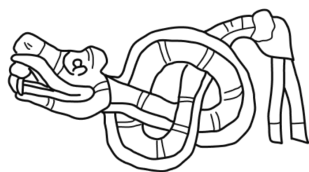
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| <i>Description of the Collection</i> | <p>The Beltrami collection, owned by the Municipality of Bergamo, includes 79 objects primarily linked to his 1823 journey along the upper course of the Mississippi River.</p> <p>In 2021 Marzia and Linda Luchetti, continuing the work of their father Glaucio, deposited in the Museum the remaining portion of the Beltrami collection that had until then been kept in Filottrano. This consists of 122 items which, in addition to Beltrami's personal objects and material collected along the Mississippi, also include Mexican artefacts and artefacts from Haiti, the island that Beltrami visited in order to learn about the first republic born from a slave rebellion.</p> |
| <i>History of the collection</i>     | <p>Beltrami collected the materials between 1823 and 1826. The collection was acquired by the city of Bergamo in 1855. In 2021 the part of the collection that had previously been kept in Filottrano was added.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <i>Online Database</i>               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <i>Web page</i>                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <i>Bibliography</i>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● AA.VV. 2005. <i>Un bergamasco tra i Sioux: G.C. Beltrami – 150° Anniversario 1855–2005. Alla scoperta delle sorgenti del Mississippi</i>. Bergamo: Museo Civico di Scienze Naturali E. Caffi.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

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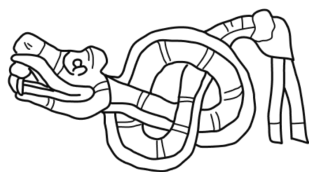
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