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Museo Etnologico Missionario Don Bosco

Frazione Morialdo 30, 14022 Castelnuovo Don Bosco (AT)

Form compiled by Letizia Pecetto (curator), in collaboration with Anna Bottesi

Introduction

The Museo Etnologico Missionario (MEM) of Colle Don Bosco (Asti) is located within the Salesian complex in the locality of the same name. It preserves the large collections (around 10,000 pieces in total) that the Salesians gathered at their missions over roughly a century. The Salesians were founded as a religious society in 1858 in Turin, under the guidance of Don Giovanni Bosco. From the very outset, towards the end of the nineteenth century, their missionary activity was accompanied by the collection of ethnographic objects illustrating the variety of geographical, environmental and cultural contexts with which they interacted on a daily basis. The organisation of an exhibition of sacred art in Turin in 1898 served as the first stimulus for the formation of an initial core collection.

A significant expansion took place in 1925, following the invitation by Pope Pius XI to take part in the great Vatican Missionary Exhibition. The following year the objects collected for this occasion were transported to the Valdocco oratory in Turin and exhibited in a show organised to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of missionary activity. They remained there for several years, kept in storage and used occasionally for temporary exhibitions.

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In 1941, with the outbreak of the Second World War and the need to protect them from bombing, the collections were transferred to Colle Don Bosco. At the same time Don Pietro Ricaldone, the fourth Successor of Don Bosco from 1932 to 1951, conceived the idea of creating a permanent museum display in Don Bosco's birthplace. Thus the Museo Etnologico Missionario was founded and dedicated to Cardinal Giovanni Cagliero from Castelnuovo, the first Cardinal of the Congregation and head of the first Salesian missionary expedition, with the aim of demonstrating the universality of Giovanni Bosco's dream and of his educational and missionary project.

The initial structure consisted of three sheds in which the artefacts were displayed according to criteria designed to highlight their curious nature and arouse wonder and amazement in the public. In 1984 work began on the restoration and rethinking of the entire architectural complex, which was finally inaugurated in 1988 on the centenary of Don Bosco's death. The new structure was organised around two main areas: the exhibition space on the first floor, open to the public with regular opening hours; and the storage area, accessible only to staff or to those who submit a specific request for authorisation (for research and study purposes) to the Museum Director, and who are in all cases accompanied by the staff in charge.

The Latin American collections are among the oldest, since these were the very first regions to be involved in Salesian missionary activity. The first artefacts to be brought to Italy came from Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego – the arrival of the Salesians in Argentina dates back to 1875. In the years that followed, numerous other collections were added as new missions were founded in the regions of the Gran Chaco, Mesoamerica, Amazonia and the central highlands. In particular, the collections represent the Bororo, Xavante, Tukano and Karajá peoples (Brazil), the Yanomami (Venezuela), the Shuar (Ecuador), the Mapuche, Tehuelche, Peuelche and Araucanian

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peoples (Patagonia), the Ona, Alakaluf and Yamana peoples (Tierra del Fuego) and some unidentified groups from the Gran Chaco region.

Cultural Areas (tags)

Mesoamerica; Amazon; Gran Chaco; Central-Eastern and Coastal Brazil; Austral America

Collections

#01

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Bororo collection
<i>Collector</i>	Don Ermenegildo Carrà; Monsignor Giovanni Battista Couturon
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Eastern Highlands (Brazil, Mato Grosso)
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Bororo
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	The Bororo collection preserved at the MEM consists of around 600 objects, both for everyday use and for ceremonial occasions. Among them are body ornaments for arms, torso and head made of feathers, animal skins and teeth, seeds, beaten bark and plant fibres, such as earrings, labrets, belts, arm and leg bands, necklaces and penis sheaths. There are also various objects made

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	of plaited palm leaves – baskets, sieves, bags, mats and fans – as well as pariko feather headdresses, hammocks, fishing nets and traps for catching animals, oars, musical instruments (end-blown flutes, maracas and other rattles), children’s toys, gourds used for eating and drinking, fire sticks, implements for spinning cotton (in particular spindles), terracottas, simple and feather-decorated bows, arrows, spears and other darts.
<i>History of the collection</i>	The collection was assembled at the Salesian mission between 1924 and 1928.
<i>Online Database</i>	Memora; Guarini Patrimonio Culturale
<i>Web page</i>	https://www.memora.piemonte.it/ricerca/beni-museali/risultati?comune=Castelnuovo%20Don%20Bosco
<i>Bibliography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Colbachini, A. 1925. “I Bororós orientali ‘Orarimugudoge’ del Matto Grosso (Brasile).” <i>Contributi scientifici missioni salesiane del venerabile don Bosco</i>. Turin, Società editrice internazionale XII: 252.● De Palma, M.C., ed. 2004. <i>Io sono Bororo. Un popolo indigeno del Brasile tra riti e futebol</i>. Milano: Silvana Editoriale.● Don Balzola, 1932. “Fra gli Indi del Brasile, Matto Grosso. Note autobiografiche e testimonianze raccolte da D. A. Cojazzi.” <i>Missionari salesiani</i>.

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	<p>Torino: Società editrice internazionale 8.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Forni, S. 2001. "Il museo etnologico missionario del Colle Don Bosco (Asti)." <i>Ricerche Storiche Salesiane</i> 20 (38): 119-132.• Silva, A.L. 2011. <i>Mapa de viagem de uma coleção etnográfica – A aldeia bororo nos museus salesianos e o museu salesiano na aldeia bororo</i>. Tese de Doutorado em Antropologia Social, São Paulo: Universidade de São Paulo (https://www.academia.edu/60748870/Mapa_de_viagem_de_uma_cole%C3%A7%C3%A3o_etnogr%C3%A1fica_a_aldeia_bororo_nos_museus_salesianos_e_o_museu_salesiano_na_aldeia_bororo)• Bollettino Salesiano 1877-1988.
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#02

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Rio Negro collection
<i>Collector</i>	Monsignor Pietro Massa; Don Marchese; Don Tiron; Don Antonio Giaccone
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Amazon (Rio Negro, Brazil)
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Groups belonging to the Tukano and Arawak language families

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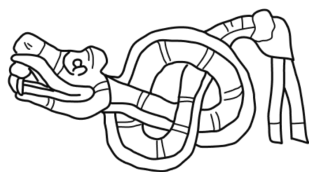
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<i>Description of the Collection</i>	<p>The collection of artefacts from the Rio Negro basin in Brazil comprises roughly 450 objects from different ethnic groups, most of them for ceremonial use. It is one of the most important collections in Italy from this region. It includes bows, arrows, wooden staffs, two oars, baskets of plaited palm leaves, hammocks, a manioc grater, terracottas, gourds of various kinds, beaded skirts, necklaces made of seeds and plant fibre, musical instruments (panpipes, nose flutes, maracas, ceremonial bone flutes), several wooden stools reserved exclusively for the pajé (shamans), two shields, barkcloths and mats woven from plant fibres. Particularly noteworthy are a number of ritual masks and several “sets of ceremonial ornaments” associated with the Jurupari ritual. Each of these sets belonged to a different clan who originally kept it in plaited leaf boxes (also part of the collection); each set consists of feather and plant-fibre headdresses made up of several assemblable pieces, arm and leg bands, belts and necklaces in seeds and quartz.</p>
<i>History of the collection</i>	<p>The collection was acquired between 1924, 1931, 1932 and 1933 at the Salesian missions founded in the middle and upper Rio Negro region in Brazil.</p>
<i>Online Database</i>	<p>Memora; Guarini Patrimonio Culturale</p>

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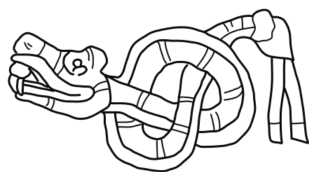
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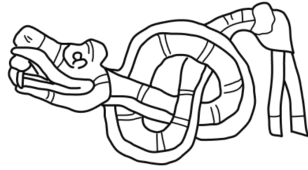
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	<p>Herzog-Schröder, 51-63. München: Museum Fünf Kontinente.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bollettino Salesiano 1877-1988.
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#03

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Karajá collection
<i>Collector</i>	Monsignor Giovanni Battista Couturon
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Eastern Highlands (Brazil – states of Pará, Mato Grosso, Goiás, Tocantins)
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Karajá
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	The Karajá collection consists of around 200 objects, including feather diadems and other headdresses, various clubs decorated with plaited plant fibres, bows and arrows, mats, fans and baskets in palm leaves, maracas, gourds, terracottas, ceramic dolls and other head and body ornaments, particularly skirts, necklaces and labial ornaments.
<i>History of the collection</i>	The collection was assembled in 1927.
<i>Online Database</i>	Memora; Guarini Patrimonio Culturale

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#04

Name of the collection	Xavante collection
Collector	Don Cesare Albisetti; Don Bartolomeo Giaccaria
Cultural areas	Eastern Highlands (Brazil, Mato Grosso)

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<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Xavante
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	The Xavante collection, smaller than the others, includes around fifty objects for both everyday and ceremonial use. Among them are baskets, gourds and implements for lighting fires, as well as necklaces of various kinds, several flutes and feather-decorated diadems worn on the head.
<i>History of the collection</i>	The collection was assembled at the Salesian missions founded in Mato Grosso at various times between 1924 and 1975.
<i>Online Database</i>	Memora; Guarini Patrimonio Culturale
<i>Web page</i>	https://www.memora.piemonte.it/ricerca/beni-museali/risultati?comune=Castelnuovo%20Don%20Bosco
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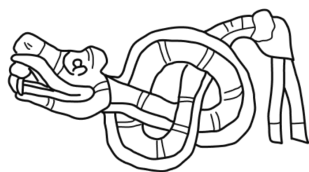
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#05

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Shuar collection
<i>Collector</i>	Vicariate of Méndez and Gualaquiza
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Amazon (Ecuador)
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Shuar
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	The Shuar collection is one of the richest in the Colle Don Bosco museum. It comprises around 700 objects, including body ornaments in plant fibres, feathers, animal skins, seeds, teeth, beads and other materials such as headdresses, arm and leg bands, belts, bracelets, rattling ornaments, nape ornaments, necklaces, earrings and straw hats. There are also hammocks, fans, mats and baskets of various kinds, bags, tools for spinning cotton, garments, musical instruments (panpipes, rattles and nose flutes), quivers and blowpipe darts, gourds and some ceramics. Finally, the collection includes 13 tsantsas, 11 made from monkey heads and two from sloth heads.
<i>History of the collection</i>	The collection was assembled in 1926.
<i>Online Database</i>	Memora; Guarini Patrimonio Culturale

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#06

Name of the collection	Yanomami collection
Collector	Don Luigi Cocco; Don Enrico De Ferrari; Don Antonio Candela
Cultural areas	Orinoco basin, Amazon (Venezuela)
Ethnic group / community / cultural context	Yanomami

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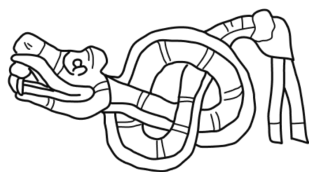
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<i>Description of the Collection</i>	The Yanomami collection comprises approximately 600 artefacts from communities living near the Salesian missions in the Orinoco river basin (Venezuela). It consists of various types of objects for domestic and ceremonial use. The former include hammocks, bows and arrows, axe heads, fire-lighting tools, baskets, gourds, a manioc grater and a tipití for squeezing grated manioc. The latter are mainly body ornaments (bracelets, necklaces, rings and pendants) in macaw and toucan feathers, as well as flutes and instruments used for inhaling yakoana, a psychotropic substance employed during shamanic rituals.
<i>History of the collection</i>	The collection was assembled at different times between 1929, 1935 and 1965.
<i>Online Database</i>	Memora; Guarini Patrimonio Culturale
<i>Web page</i>	https://www.memora.piemonte.it/ricerca/beni-museali/risultati?comune=Castelnuovo%20Don%20Bosco
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<i>Name of the collection</i>	Chaco collection
<i>Collector</i>	Monsignor Riccardo Pittini; Don Livio Farina
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Gran Chaco (Bolivia, Paraguay)
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Unidentified groups
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	Among the MEM collections there are around 260 objects from the Gran Chaco region. These include bows and arrows, ceramics of various kinds, numerous gourds and other types of wooden containers, several carved cow horns, spinning tools (spindles and crochet needles), various bands of cotton and other plant fibres, hammocks made of different fibres, toys, a wooden pipe, footwear, spoons, musical instruments (whistles, drums and rattles made of seeds and animal claws) and body ornaments in feathers, animal teeth, beads and seeds (headdresses, necklaces, earrings and bracelets).
<i>History of the collection</i>	The collection was assembled between 1924 and 1931.
<i>Online Database</i>	Memora; Guarini Patrimonio Culturale
<i>Web page</i>	https://www.memora.piemonte.it/ricerca/beni-museali/risultati?comune=Castelnuovo%20Don%20Bosco

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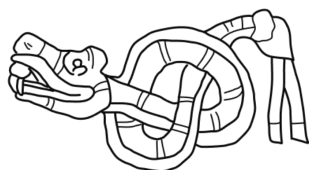
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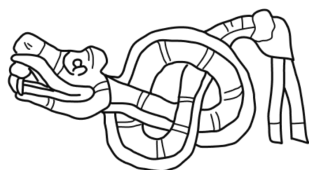
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#08

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego collection
<i>Collector</i>	Don Alberto Maria De Agostini; Don Domenico Cerrato; Monsignor Aguilera Abramo; Don Maggiorino Borgatello
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Pampas; Austral America (Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego)
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Patagonia: Tehuelche, Peuelche, Araucanian peoples Tierra del Fuego: Ona, Alakaluf, Yamana
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	The Colle Don Bosco museum preserves around 350 objects from the regions of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. Some of them are among the earliest to have arrived in Italy, following the foundation of the first mission in Argentina in 1875. A large part of the collection consists of garments in various materials:

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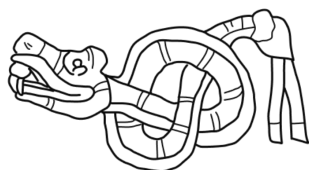
	guanaco wool, cotton and animal furs. There are also oars, staffs, bows, arrows, harpoon points and quivers; woven bands of various lengths; baskets in plaited fibres and bark; ladders; wooden scale models of boats; ornaments in bone, shell and feathers; gourds for preparing and drinking maté; and finally a series of objects linked to horse riding – the so-called gaucho culture – such as saddlecloths, bridles, spurs, bolas, leather straps, hats, a saddle and knives.
<i>History of the collection</i>	The collection was assembled in 1907, 1912, 1924 and 1932.
<i>Online Database</i>	Memora; Guarini Patrimonio Culturale
<i>Web page</i>	https://www.memora.piemonte.it/ricerca/beni-museali/risultati?comune=Castelnuovo%20Don%20Bosco
<i>Bibliography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Forni, S. 2001. “Il museo etnologico missionario del Colle Don Bosco (Asti).” <i>Ricerche Storiche Salesiane</i> 20(38): 119-132.● Bollettino Salesiano 1877-1988.● Fasulo, A. 1925. <i>Le missioni salesiane della Patagonia</i>. Società editrice internazionale.

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#09

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Andean collection
<i>Collector</i>	
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Central and Southern Andes (Peru, Chile, Bolivia)
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	The Andean collection is not particularly large; it comprises just over 100 objects, most of which are related to the weaving of wool and cotton. There are numerous bags, hats, cloths, hammocks, spindles for spinning and two round woollen cloths. Among the other items it is worth mentioning several decorated gourds, leather garments, small statues and wooden trays.
<i>History of the collection</i>	
<i>Online Database</i>	Memora; Guarini Patrimonio Culturale
<i>Web page</i>	https://www.memora.piemonte.it/ricerca/beni-museali/risultati?comune=Castelnuovo%20Don%20Bosco
<i>Bibliography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Forni, S. 2001. "Il museo etnologico missionario del Colle Don Bosco (Asti)." <i>Ricerche Storiche Salesiane</i> 20(38): 119-132.

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- Bollettino Salesiano 1877-1988.

#10

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Mesoamerica and Caribbean collection
<i>Collector</i>	Don Giuseppe Reyneri; Don Giovannelli; Don Adolfo Tornquist
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Mesoamerica and Caribbean (Guatemala, Mexico, El Salvador, Colombia)
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	Only a few objects come from the Mesoamerican and Caribbean regions, mostly linked to popular culture and the tourist market. They include some bags in plant fibre, gourds, baskets, small statues, a feather headdress and several small framed pictures from Colombia; ceramics, brass necklaces, some textiles and a statue from Guatemala; a number of predominantly religious objects from El Salvador; and finally, from Mexico, two masks, textiles, ponchos, sombreros, small stones and two small religious pictures.
<i>History of the collection</i>	The objects were collected between 1926, 1931 and 1975.

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Online Database	Memora; Guarini Patrimonio Culturale
Web page	https://www.memora.piemonte.it/ricerca/beni-museali/risultati?comune=Castelnuovo%20Don%20Bosco
Bibliography	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Forni, S. 2001. "Il museo etnologico missionario del Colle Don Bosco (Asti)." <i>Ricerche Storiche Salesiane</i> 20 (38): 119-132.• Bollettino Salesiano 1877-1988.

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