

The Whereabouts of Salvadori's Bird Collections

Carlo G. VIOLANI & Fausto BARBAGLI

Dipartimento di Biologia Animale dell'Università di Pavia
and Centro Interdipartimentale di Servizi „Musei Universitari“, Pavia, Italy

SUMMARY

Among the Italian naturalists of the 19th century who studied local and exotic avifaunas, Count Tommaso SALVADORI (1835-1923) stands out as one of the most celebrated ornithologists in Italy and abroad. Owing to his vast knowledge of ornithology and to his untiring activity in the study of museum material, the production of SALVADORI as a scientific author is indeed remarkable: approximately 350 publications, including the famous „Ornitologia della Papuasias e delle Molucche“ in three volumes and three supplements.

Many Museums of Natural History and private collectors entrusted him with series of birds, obtained from the exploration of little known countries, to be described. Therefore he soon became an expert on the birds of New Guinea, Moluccas, Indonesia, East Asia, Korea, Central and East Africa, Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, the North Pole, as well as Italy. A considerable achievement was also the compilation of three volumes of the „Catalogue of Birds in the collection of the British Museum“ (dealing with Parrots, Pigeons, Ducks, Flamingos, Tinamous and Ratites), with accurate descriptions of the rich collections then preserved in London, and now at Tring. The finest specimens in the series studied in Italy by SALVADORI are still preserved in the Museums of Genoa, Turin and, at a lesser extent, Milan and Florence, including the majority of the types of his new taxa.

The richness in exotic birds preserved in Genoa Museum is due to the activity of its founder and director Marquis Giacomo DORIA who financed several naturalistic expeditions in which ornithological series were particularly sought after. SALVADORI as deputy director of the Zoological Museum of Turin University was the only one entrusted with the study of all the birds brought back to Genoa Museum and his work was rewarded with duplicates of the skins, also including some syntypes, for the Turin Museum. After the relevant papers were published, part of the studied collections was often broken up by the owners and part of them was sold or exchanged with other institutions. Some important material was unfortunately destroyed (e.g. most of the Turati collection in Milan Museum, some specimens in Lisbon and Dresden Museums), while several series were actually dispersed and scattered as single specimens in other Museums (Palermo, Parma, Pavia, Pisa, Rome, Verona, Leiden, Rothschild collection, now in New York).

C.G. VIOLANI, Dipartimento di Biologia Animale dell'Università di Pavia, Piazza Botta 9 - I-27100 Pavia, Italy.

F. BARBAGLI, Centro Interdipartimentale di Servizi „Musei Universitari“, Piazza Botta 9 - I-27100 Pavia, Italy.