



# **“Provenance research with a focus on collections of the Imperial Navy of Austria-Hungary”**

## **Workshop**

**December 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> 2024**

**Weltmuseum Wien, Forum**

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**Harald Fiedler:**

## **The holdings of the k.(u.)k. Imperial Navy in the War Archives Vienna**

The holdings of the former k.(u.) k. Imperial Navy within the Austrian State Archives/War Archive Department is undoubtedly one of the richest holdings of maritime historical sources in Europe. It must be mentioned at the outset that this collection almost exclusively comprises the records of the former highest naval authority - the Naval Section (Naval Ministry). Even though the Habsburg Monarchy can only look back on a good century of naval warfare history, treasures of files have been accumulated and preserved here, which need to be unearthed using the right methods. The right method is of crucial importance, because more than 100 years have brought a variety of filing and storage changes that must be taken into account before starting to search. This part of the workshop will provide a brief overview of what materials are available and how they can be accessed. The focus is almost exclusively on the 19th century, with the numerous expeditions of the Austrian navy providing a welcome starting point for getting a good understanding of most parts of the entire collection. How can you find materials on certain topics, such as sea voyages or expeditions? What materials are available and what content can be expected? What documents can be researched about the warships or their crews and what is the procedure to do so? What are the possibilities for using or digitising them? What preparations are necessary for a research trip to the Austrian State Archives? These questions form the core of the lecture and there will be enough time to deal with individual questions and concerns.

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## **Manfred Kerry:**

**Study focusing on the expeditions of the Imperial Marine in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, based on the printed voyage reports of the ships Nautilus, Saida, Fundsberg, and Aurora.**

A brief presentation of the maritime collection of the Museum of Military History and its scope. The following section will focus on the presentation of the Baumgartner Collection, which was acquired in 2018 and a significant part of which has been subjected to detailed analysis.

An examination of the world voyages undertaken by the Imperial Marine in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, with a focus on the principal objectives of the expeditions. To what extent did questions of ethnography, zoology and botany actually play a role in the expeditions? This question will be explored in greater depth on the basis of the instructions given to the ships Nautilus, Frundsberg, Saida, and Aurora.

A more detailed account of the world voyages of the SMS Saida from 1884 to 1886 is provided. The way in which the documentation from that time is structured is a typical example of voyage documentation, which is de facto all structured in the same way. The events that are dealt with in the report and the interests that are predominantly covered by the narrative are identified.

It is notable that, although a few instructions do contain assignments that also cover non-military or commercial aspects, these are extremely rare. It would be beneficial to examine these unmentioned aspects with a selection of quotations and references. Following the lecture, it would be advantageous to present a few images from our collection, which could provide insight into events not mentioned in the travelogues and aspects of the voyages not documented.

Subsequent to the lecture, it is my intention to present a selection of images from our collection, which will provide additional information regarding events not referenced in the travelogues and illustrate aspects of the voyages not documented.

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**KMA Kriegsmarinearchiv Wien**

The 'KMA Kriegsmarinearchiv Wien' is a private institute organised as an association and located on the premises of the Marineverband, the successor to the "Österreichischer Flottenverein" founded in 1904.

The roots of the Naval Archive can be traced back to the Austrian Naval History Working Group founded in the early 1970s. This group was centred around the naval historians Franz Bilzer and Helmut Pemsel. As an entrepreneur, Pemsel was able to finance the group, in particular the printing of the specialised journal 'Marine - gestern, heute', which was published from 1974 to 1989. Many members of the working group were passionate collectors, some of whom had been building up their collections since the 1950s, ranging from literature, uniforms, ship models and figurines to paintings, photographs and everyday items.

When one of these collectors died towards the end of the 1990s, the other members of the working group had to watch as his collection was quickly broken up by his heirs. In order to spare their own collections this fate, they looked for an institution to which they could hand over their collections as a legacy or estate. The association was founded in 2010 and after adapting the premises, the archive was opened in 2011.

The 'KMA Kriegsmarinearchiv Wien' not only hold the collections of some of the most important local naval historians, but also the research notes and photo collections of several researchers. The archive runs a unique library with around 2,000 volumes on Habsburg naval history. It also contains a collection of travelogues and diaries of members of the navy. Ongoing projects include the edition of several diaries, a project on naval surgeons and projects on Jews and Protestants in the navy.

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**Andrea Zarembo:**

**Navigating communication flows. Records of the NHM Vienna's directorate on missions of the S.M.S "Saida" (1884–1899)**

The administrative records of the museum's directorate (Intendanzakten) are one of the key archival holdings of the museum's Archive for the History of Science. Dating back to the institutional founding of the Imperial Natural History Museum Vienna (k. k. Naturhistorisches Hofmuseum) in 1876, they cover a variety of processes that involved the office of the director (Intendant) and the agenda of the museum: Instructions, collection requests, reports, exchanges with international agents or issues of transport offer an insight into the close cooperation between the NHM and the Austro-Hungarian Navy and are therefore significant for analysing acquisition contexts at the NHM.

The talk discusses communication flows between the navy, authorities and the NHM from the perspective of the museum's administration based on the example of missions ("Missionsreisen") of the corvette S.M.S. "Saida" (1884–1899).

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## **János Gyarmati:**

### **The Austro-Hungarian East Asian Expedition through Hungarian eyes**

The Austro-Hungarian East Asian expedition set out in 1868 primarily for diplomatic and commercial purposes. However, the Hungarian government and the Academy of Sciences were skeptical about the economic benefits of the expedition, and an experienced natural history collector was delegated to the expedition. After the revolution of 1848, János Xántus spent more than a decade in exile, where he became one of the best collectors of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. This made it possible for him to collect a huge natural science, ethnographic, applied arts and numismatic collection in East Asia for the Hungarian National Museum. The approximately 155,000 objects sent home by Xántus was an increase of an importance that can hardly be overestimated for Hungarian public collections. His collection laid the foundation for the Museums of Ethnography and Applied Arts. In addition, he made a huge contribution to the various collections of the Natural History Museum and the materials within the National Museum's numismatic collection.

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**Dominik Spörker:**

**In the name of science – A collaboration between the Austro-Hungarian Navy and the Hofmuseum**

Museums in Europe benefited from colonial endeavors and the expansion of colonial structures, which made it much easier to collect objects and human remains in the colonies. Although the Habsburg Monarchy was no successful colonial power, the Hofmuseum (Imperial Royal Court Museum) was no exception in this respect. In the second half of the 19th century, the ambitious Austro-Hungarian Navy proved to be a reliable partner for the newly founded museum when it came to collecting ethnographica, scientific objects and human remains from regions of the Global South. At least 4.316 ethnographic objects and uncounted natural history objects found their way into the storage rooms of the Hofmuseum via the Austro-Hungarian Navy.

Doing provenance research on collections from colonial contexts, the focus of my research is on the identification of sensitive objects in the collections of the Weltmuseum Wien, which took over the ethnographic collections of the Hofmuseum. Using object histories, the lecture will outline the different forms of cooperation between the museum and the navy as well as methods of collecting. Furthermore, the aim is to hint at possible cross-connections to naval collections outside of Austria.

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**Constanze Schattke:**

**For Country and Science: Human Remains on Austro-Hungarian Imperial Ships in the Late 19th Century**

Human remains carry inherent sensitivity due to their former human nature and the significant cultural meanings attributed to them, which varies based on cultural background and time period. This study examines the acquisition of human remains by the Austro-Hungarian Imperial Navy in the late 19th century, focusing on the motivations and objectives behind these practices. By conducting archival provenance research on the voyages of the SMS Saida, Frundsberg, and Aurora, and performing bioarchaeological analyses on the collected remains from New Zealand, Africa, and South America, it is aimed to illustrate the processes and implications of these acquisitions. Today, the human remains are curated at the Natural History Museum Vienna, Austria. This transdisciplinary work is carried out while addressing the necessary ethical considerations including contact with the communities of origin and the ongoing debate about post-colonial provenance research.

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## **Filip Suchomel & Marcela Suchomelová:**

### **Czech noblemen and scholars in the service of the Austro-Hungarian Navy**

The interest in exploring foreign lands has been one of the dreams of European peoples throughout the entire chapter of human civilization. However, it was not until the modern technologies discovered in the 19th century, such as the invention of the steam engine or the ship propeller, that massive travel spread around the world. Also important for Austria was the construction of the Suez Canal, which shortened the journey to Asia. Initially, it was diplomatic missions that played an important role in getting to know foreign countries. Later, there were also individual private journeys of wealthy people who could afford to travel to discover distant countries and their cultures. These activities were gradually documented through authentic travel records, accompanied by sketches and drawings and later photographs. This trend spread in the second half of the 19th century not only in Western Europe but also in the countries of Central Europe, especially in Germany or the Austrian Empire, i.e. in countries without colonies.

Authentic accounts from the 'East', especially diaries, travelogues and excerpts from voyages, were influenced by the complex vision of the world of the time. These materials - published and unpublished - are still very important sources of contemporary information about foreign countries in general and the Far East in particular. The authentic records, often accompanied by exceptional photo albums of the voyages of the Imperial Austro-Hungarian Navy, are particularly important to us even now.

Important wealthy men of the Bohemian lands, such as the scholars **Heinrich Wawra von Fernsee**, 1831-1887 a **Václav Stejskal**, 1851-1934) or the noblemen **Erwin Dubský** (1836-1909) or **Jeroným Colloredo-Mansfeld** (1870-1942), took part in these events.

Their journals and other texts are still extremely interesting today for their authenticity and description of the time. These members of the Austrian navy often played an important role in promoting the culture, ideas and art of most of the countries they visited. After their return to Central Europe, they often organised educational events - exhibitions, lectures or collaborated with newly established museums. A very important chapter is therefore their collections of artistic and ethnographic artefacts, which these members of the Austro-Hungarian Navy collected during their travels. Of these, let us mention at least the collection of Erwin Dubský (now in Lysice castle, Moravia) or the collection of Václav Stejskal (now preserved in the Náprstek museum in Prague), which have survived to the present day in a relatively complete form. The collections of Wawra and Colloredo-Mansfeld have survived only in fragments, but they are nevertheless an important part of the cultural heritage of our territory, too.

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**Jan Šejbl:**

**Photographs from the voyage of S.M.S. Saida in the collection of the Náprstek museum**

In the collection of historical photographs of the Náprstek Museum, which is part of the National Museum in Prague, two remarkable sets of large-format photographs from the expedition of the Austro-Hungarian corvette Saida have been preserved. Photographs were acquired in 1935 from the local museum in Litoměřice (Leitmeritz) together with the ethnographical objects. The originator was Eduard Kittel (1864–1935), who joined two Saida expeditions (1884–1886 and 1892–1894). The first set contains souvenir photographs produced by local photographic studios of the ports visited during the voyage between 1892–1894. There were indeed several well known photographers (i.e. H. King, Zangakai brothers, Eduard Taurine, Hippolite Arnoux, Charles Rudd, Samuel Bourne, John William Lindt, Charles Scowen, Pascal Sebah, Felix Bonfils...). The most of photographs came from Asia, especially from today India and Indonesia. There are also photographs from Australia and Oceania, Egypt and European ports. The second set contains photographs taken during the journey 1884–1886 by a crew member, Lieutenant Felix Falzari. The comparison of the two sets is interesting especially in terms of subject matter. While the souvenir photographs are mainly landscapes and studio portraits of locals, Felix Falzari's photographs capture snapshots of the voyage, life aboard the ship and the places the sailors actually visited and the people they met there. Photographs from the second set were taken mostly in Asia (today Indonesia) and Oceania (Fiji, New Zealand, Solomon Islands). There are also photographs from Australia, Brasil, South Africa, European ports and photographs taken aboard the ship. While the first set is an example of a collection of souvenir photographs from the second half of the 19th century, the second is a unique document of the photographic activity of Felix Falzari, who was himself a member of the ship's crew.

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**Gabriela Jungová Vrtalová:**

**Saida and the Pacific Collection of the Náprstek Museum, Prague**

Although being born in the landlocked then Czech lands (Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia) of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, many adventurers set on sail on board of transoceanic ships to explore the world. Some of them brought or sent back to their homeland ethnographic objects they found interesting or potentially profitable; the Pacific collection of the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures in Prague currently cares for several hundreds of objects that were originally acquired by sailors. Our knowledge about these collectors and their contribution to the museum's funds is unfortunately unbalanced. Some are well documented, studied or even published. On the other hand, for the S. M. Saida, there are often mere clues in the form of an inconspicuous sticker on the back of an object or a pencil mark in the accession books. Only by carefully following and exploring these leads was it possible to establish a connection between the names, object numbers and the stories behind them. The effort brought to light the stories of six men: František Kott, Eduard Kittel, Václav Poledne, Josef Kopecký, Karl von Adamovič and Václav Stejskal. They participated in four of Saida's voyages, holding different positions in the crew. The museum currently keeps over 550 objects collected by them, mostly from the Solomon Islands, New Guinea and Bismarck Archipelago. The objects typologically range from weapons, through decorations and objects of everyday use, to decorated human skulls.

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**Sources on the voyages of the Corvette Saida in the Maritime Museum “Sergej Mašera”  
Piran**

The Maritime Museum “Sergej Mašera” Piran holds written and material sources about the transoceanic voyages by the Austro-Hungarian Navy mariners on board the corvette Saida. The museum obtained them from members of the crews on these voyages, or from their heirs. Among these artefacts is a Japanese fan, brought from Japan by Quartermaster Rupert Pivec from a voyage to South America and East Asia during 1895–1897. Ivan Rupnik, who, as a student of the engineering non-commissioned officer's school, took part in the voyage with the corvette Saida to South Africa, Australia and East Asia in 1898–1899, donated his travelogue to the museum. In it, he wrote about his purchasing of postcards abroad, but the museum does not hold them. The richest collection in the museum is the one donated by Anton Dolenec, who brought 225 photos and an unrealistic model of a military three-masted ship back from his voyage to Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand and South America during the 1890–1892 period, when he was still a cadet. His extensive memoirs of the trip were published in 1892 in the magazine Ljubljanski zvon. No information as to where he obtained the photos as well as the sailboat model can be found in them. By comparisons with other photographs and sources, it was established that some of the photos were taken with the ship's photo equipment, while others were brought abroad. The photos almost exclusively contain scenes of foreign places and their local inhabitants, which confirms Dolenec's great interest in foreign places. Most of the photos were taken by foreigners or made for them and do not necessarily reflect what Dolenec actually saw. In spite of it, they are highly documentary.

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**Tereza Melicharová:**

**Collections of Central and South America in the Náprstek Museum and Austro-Hungarian Navy**

In the collections of the Náprstek Museum there are artefacts from several travellers, natives of the Czech lands, who were part of official expeditions to the New World, organised by the representatives of the Habsburg Monarchy or who served in the Austro-Hungarian Navy for a long time. Most of the artefacts brought back by these sailors are preserved in the collections of Australia and Oceania and Asia. However, the Central and South America collection also contains a small collection from the doctor Vaclav Poledne (1865-1929). V. Poledne studied medicine in Prague, then joined the Austro-Hungarian Navy and in 1895-97 he travelled around the world with the warship Saida. He visited various ports throughout South America. In 1897 Josef Poledne donated approximately 15 objects from the region of Peru and Magalhães straight to the Museum of the Kingdom of Bohemia. From there, the objects later found their way to the Náprstek Museum.

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**Eva Hofmann:**

**The ethnographic collection of the Austro-Hungarian Navy Doctor Adolf Nobl in the Weltmuseum Wien**

During the 19th century, European institutions and private collectors expanded their collections by taking advantage of colonial structures. This fueled a newly emerging market for ethnographic and archaeological objects as well as *human remains*. The Imperial Natural History Museum Vienna (*k.k. Naturhistorisches Hofmuseum*) – predecessor of the Weltmuseum Wien and the Natural History Museum Vienna – profited from the activities of private collectors, colonial state officials and residents and other scientific institutions.

The expedition of the Austro-Hungarian Navy with the ship *H.M. "Saida"* from 1895 to 1897 exemplifies the different strategies of acquisition: On behalf of the Imperial Court Museum and equipped with specific instructions by the museum, the ship's doctor Adolf Nobl collected 25 ethnographic and archaeological objects that are now in the possession of the Weltmuseum Wien. As a private individual he furthermore obtained a Peruvian mummy, gifting it to the museum immediately after returning to Vienna. This talk investigates the Nobl-collection as a result of practical considerations, colonial structures and scientific interests respectively the interests of the Imperial Museum. It also elaborates on the discrepancies between the museum's collection request and the actual collection.

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