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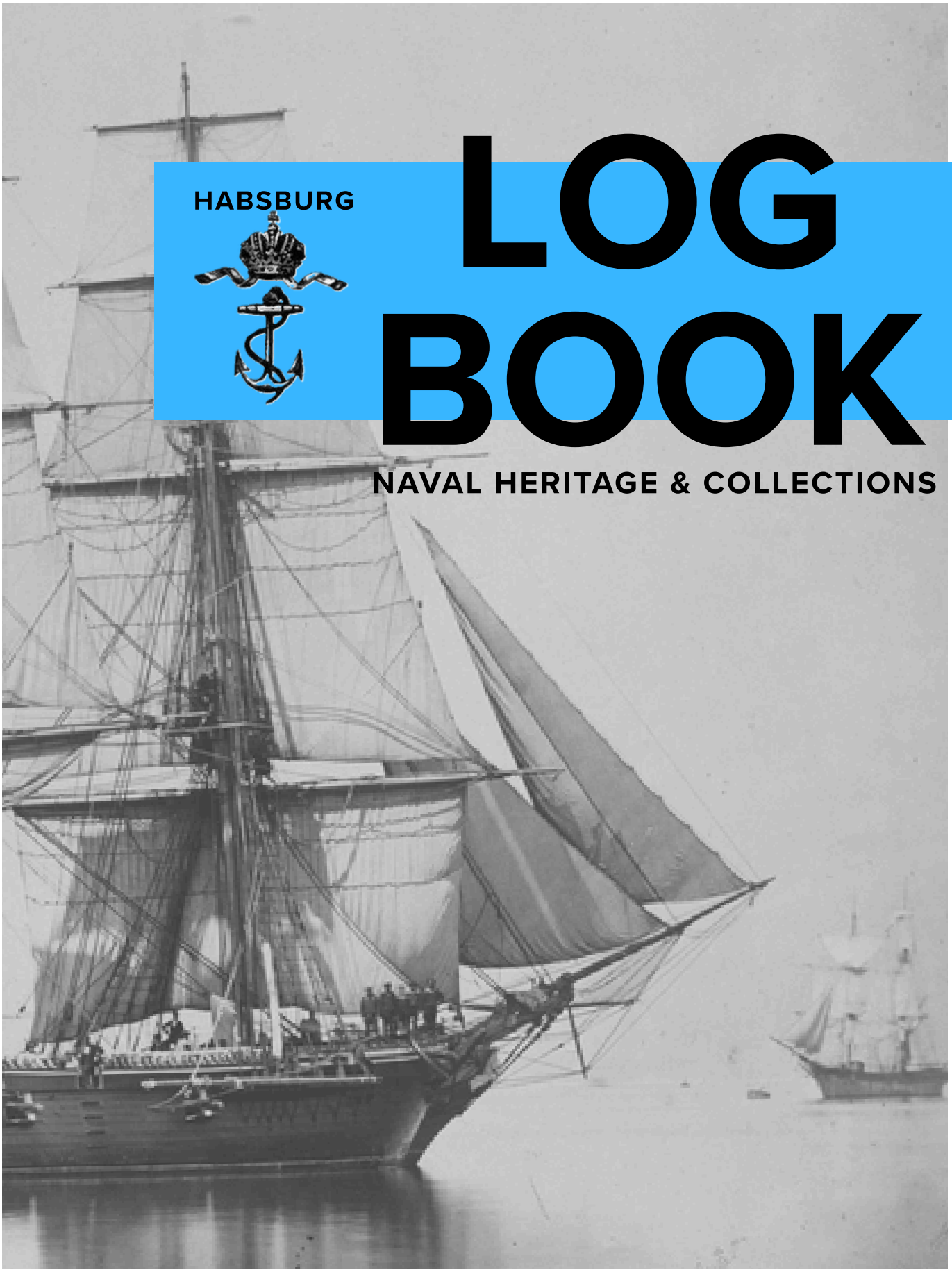

HABSBURG

LOG BOOK

NAVAL HERITAGE & COLLECTIONS

MARCH 2026

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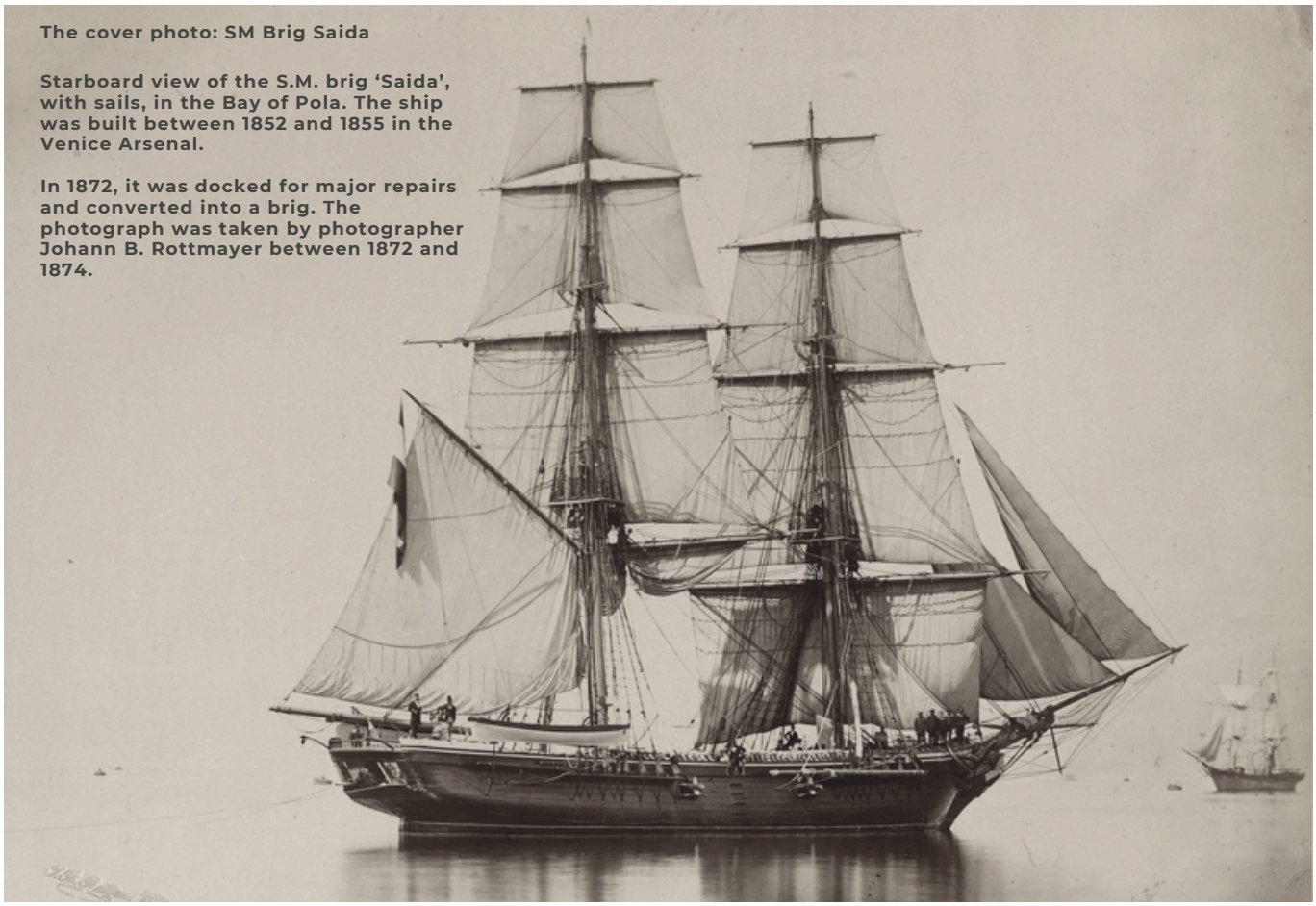

The cover photo: SM Brig Saida

Starboard view of the S.M. brig 'Saida', with sails, in the Bay of Pola. The ship was built between 1852 and 1855 in the Venice Arsenal.

In 1872, it was docked for major repairs and converted into a brig. The photograph was taken by photographer Johann B. Rottmayer between 1872 and 1874.

EDITORIAL

Dear colleagues,

In December 2024, the workshop “Provenance Research with a Focus on the Collections of the Imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian Navy”, held at the Weltmuseum Wien, brought together curators, provenance researchers, and maritime historians engaged with the collections, expeditions, and legacy of the Habsburg naval power.

During this workshop, Bettina Zorn, Chief Curator for Research and Science at the Weltmuseum Wien, proposed the establishment of an informal interdisciplinary research network for scholars and professionals interested in this field.

The newsletter Logbook – Habsburg Naval Heritage Collections is conceived as the e-paper bulletin of this interdisciplinary network. Published four times a year, it aims to foster scholarly exchange while also addressing a broader audience interested in the history and material legacy of the Habsburg Navy.

As a flexible network without a fixed institutional framework, I warmly invite experts, researchers, and institutions to subscribe to this newsletter and to actively contribute to this ongoing exchange. Contributions addressing research questions, individual objects, exhibitions, and recent publications are most welcome.

The next issue is planned for June 2026.

Thomas Zimmel

EDITOR

Thomas Zimmel

CONTRIBUTORS

Massimiliano Blocher, Lukáš Czopik, Gábor Pusztai. Ginevra Zelaschi

CONTRIBUTE!

We invite researchers, curators, and collectors to share their insights with our international community. Whether it is a spotlight on a specific object, a brief report on a research project, or a news item regarding naval heritage—your contribution enriches the Habsburg Log Book.

Submissions are welcome at any time. Please send your proposals or materials to:
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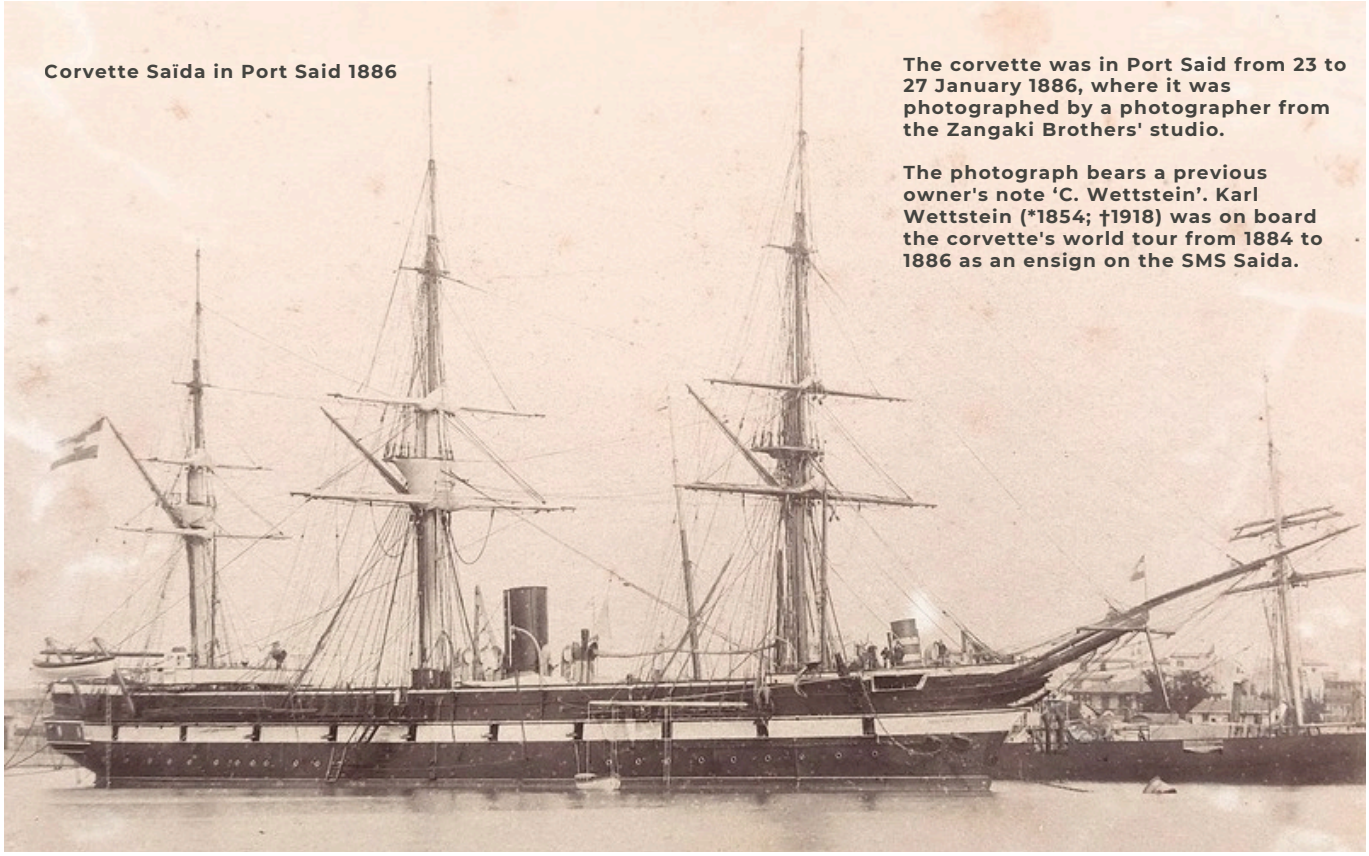


Corvette Saïda in Port Said 1886

The corvette was in Port Said from 23 to 27 January 1886, where it was photographed by a photographer from the Zangaki Brothers' studio.

The photograph bears a previous owner's note ‘C. Wettstein’. Karl Wettstein (*1854; †1918) was on board the corvette's world tour from 1884 to 1886 as an ensign on the SMS Saida.

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE FORMER COLLECTION OF THE NAVAL MUSEUM IN THE ARSENAL OF PULA

GINEVRA ZELASCHI

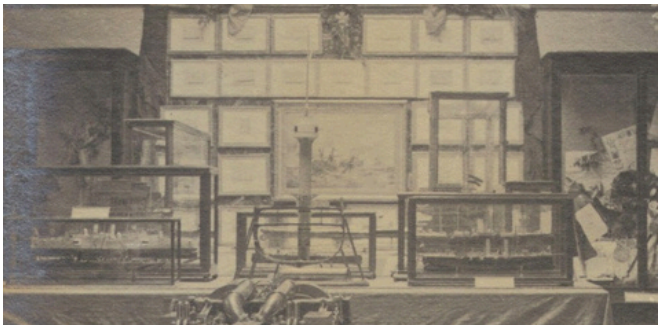
My name is Ginevra Zelaschi, and I am a researcher at the Historical Research Centre in Rovinj. My research focuses on the collections formed as a result of the voyages of the Austro-Hungarian Navy during the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. From 2023 to 2024, I studied the artefacts collected during the expedition of the frigate Novara, particularly those preserved in Trieste.

This work was carried out as part of a research grant from the Department of Humanities at the University of Trieste, under the supervision of Professor Guido Abbattista.

Currently, I am working at the Centre on reconstructing the history and collections of the Naval Museum of the Pula Arsenal. This small museum was opened in 1870 by the Habsburg Navy and permanently closed in 1918, when the city came under Italian rule.

After being looted for several weeks, the museum was placed under Italian Navy's protection, and the remaining artefacts were transferred to Italy and distributed among various local museums.

My study aims to understand how this collection was relocated and how it came to be housed in its current museums: Museo della Natura e dell'Uomo



in Padua, Museo Storico e Navale in Venice, Museo Tecnico e Navale in La Spezia, and Museo Nazionale Scienza e Tecnologia Leonardo da Vinci in Milan.

Some artefacts are also held by the Heeresgeschichtliches Museum in Vienna, as they were returned to Austria in 1937 following bilateral agreements between Italy and Austria. It is also possible that additional objects remain in collections that have not yet been identified.

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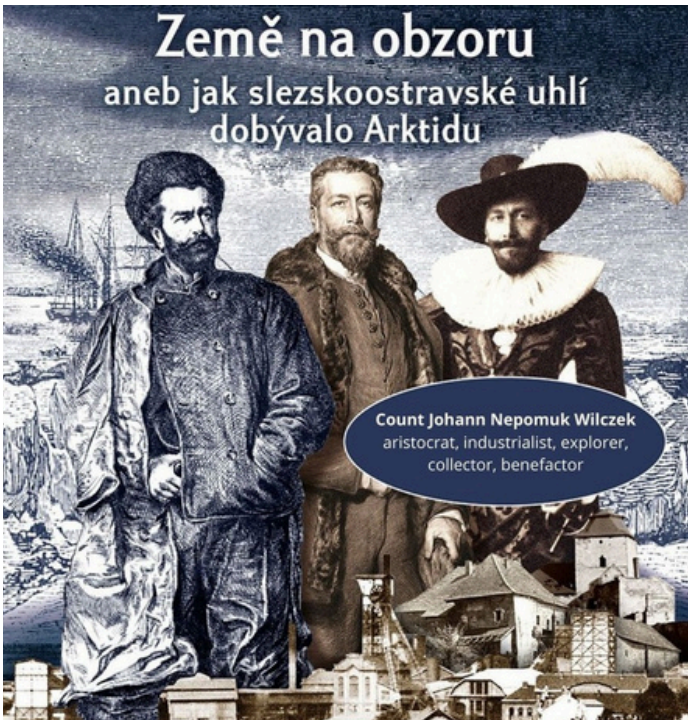
EXHIBITION IN OSTRAVA: LAND ON THE HORIZON!

THE EXHIBITION EXPLORES THE LIFE AND WORK OF JOHANN NEPOMUK COUNT WILCZEK.

LUKÁŠ CZOPIK



Johann Nepomuk Count Wilczek (1837–1922) was a preeminent Austrian aristocrat, philanthropist, and explorer whose immense wealth and passion for heritage profoundly shaped the cultural landscape of the Habsburg Monarchy.

As the primary financier of the Payer-Weyprecht North Pole Expedition (1872–1874), he played a pivotal role in the discovery of Franz Josef Land and significantly advanced the era's naval and polar research.

At the Silesian Castle in Ostrava, the former ancestral seat of the Wilczek family, the exhibition "Země na obzoru!!! aneb Jak slezskoostravské uhlí dobývalo Arktidu" ("Land on the Horizon!!! or How Silesian-Ostrava Coal Conquered the Arctic") is on display in the vaulted cellar.

The exhibition explores the life and work of the Austro-Hungarian aristocrat Johann Nepomuk Count Wilczek.

Through historical documents and interactive elements, it tells the story of how Wilczek financed key polar expeditions and thus contributed to the discovery of the Franz Josef Land islands.

Located in the castle's historic cellar vaults, the exhibition illustrates how Wilczek's commitment to science, culture, and industry extended far beyond the region.

The presentation links Wilczek's story with the local development of coal mining in Silesian Ostrava, which significantly shaped both the castle and the surrounding area. The exhibition is open until the end of 2026 during the castle's regular opening hours and offers visitors a fascinating insight into a chapter of European exploration history.

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GOOD COLLECTING – BAD COLLECTING

SPECIAL EXHIBITION FROM 28 APRIL 2026 TO 27 JUNE 2027 ON THE OCCASION OF THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM VIENNA.

THOMAS ZIMMEL

On 29 April 1876, Emperor Franz Joseph I formally founded the Natural History Museum Vienna with his signature; on 30 April 1876 he appointed the geologist Ferdinand von Hochstetter as its first director. At that time, the museum building on Vienna's Ringstraße was already well under construction, and the ceremonial opening finally took place in August 1889.

Today, with more than 30 million objects, the museum houses one of the world's most important natural science collections. The NHM Vienna is a unique archive documenting the origin and development of the Earth and of life.

Its 150th anniversary provides the NHM Vienna with an opportunity for a critical reflection on its own history.

The passion for collecting and the joy of discovery and research that continue to drive scientists today are set against the darker sides of collecting and of collections. Some objects appear Janus-faced: scientifically unique, yet burdened by problematic contexts of acquisition.

Were the famous expeditions of the 19th century an honorable attempt to expand knowledge and acquire exotic objects for the imperial collections — or was a colonial agenda the true motivation? How were objects handled that entered the museum unlawfully during the Nazi era, and how should items be assessed that found their way into the collections through ethically questionable means?

Depending on one's perspective, an object may function either as a sober carrier of scientific information or as a manifestation of dubious collecting practices.

This ambivalence, manifested in the NHM Vienna and its collections, forms the guiding theme of the exhibition and shapes its architecture and design.

The design team of breadedEscalope and Benedikt Haid deliberately adopted unexpected viewpoints to shed new light on the collections and selected objects, presenting them from unusual perspectives and recontextualizing them.

The result is an exhibition that breaks with customary ways of seeing and expectations and, despite the complexity of its themes, conveys the intense and often affectionate bond between the curators and "their" collections.

INFORMATION

Good Collecting – Bad Collecting
150 Years of the Natural History Museum Vienna

Special Exhibition - 28 April 2026 – 27 June 2027
Cabinets and Special Exhibition Galleries, 1st Floor
www.nhm.at

Room concept of the exhibition(© breadedEscalope / Benedikt Haid)

TREASURES FROM MUSEUMS AND COLLECTIONS

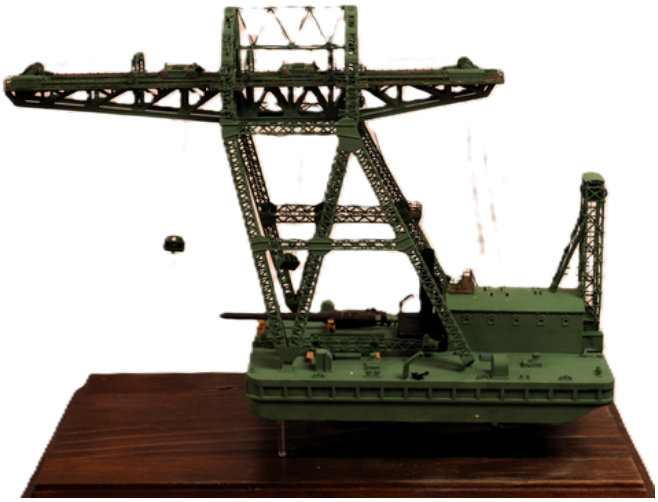
Angelo Ghega ran his studio in Pola from about 1890 to 1900. He was the successor to Cesare Gallinaro at Via Sergia 71. According to a newspaper advertisement dated 1 November 1900, his studio was replaced by the Mikado studio. Here is a remarkable photograph: a naval officer with his family in a decorative boat.
Private collection in Vienna.

The homeward pennant was a long, narrow pennant indicating that the ship was on an overseas voyage. The length of the pennant was determined by the nautical miles covered during the journey: one meter of the homeward pennant corresponded to 1,000 nautical miles traveled.
Navy Archive Association Vienna

On 10 March 2026, the Heeresgeschichtliche Museum in Vienna invites visitors to a lecture by conservator Victoria Michlmayer about a historic rudder that most likely came from the aircraft "S 39," which could not be completed due to the end of the war and missing components.
Heeresgeschichtliches Museum Vienna

Model of the 18-pounder defensive cannon, Model 1776, from the workshop of Peter Schupita. These defensive cannons remained in use well into the 19th century; however, the barrels were newly cast according to the old model.

The 1:200 scale model of the 2×120-ton floating crane of the Austro-Hungarian Navy comes from the workshop of Friedrich Kermauner.



Such identification capsules had to be carried by members of the Imperial and Royal Army and Navy. The identification card was kept in this flat metal box..
Navy Archive Association Vienna

XAVÉR FERENC WITTI (1850–1882) IN BORNEO

DISMISSED NAVAL OFFICER OR AGENT OF AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN COLONIALISM?

GÁBOR PUSZTAI

From an early stage, the Austro-Hungarian Empire pursued colonial ambitions, one of which involved an attempt to establish control over North Borneo. In 1875, the Austro-Hungarian warship Erzherzog Friedrich reached the northern coast of the island, where a skirmish erupted between marines and Dayak pirates, resulting in the deaths of two sailors and serious injuries to two others.

Despite this incident, the Austro-Hungarian Empire never succeeded in securing possession of the territory. In 1876, the German businessman and diplomat Gustav Overbeck (1830–1894) acquired concessionary rights to North Borneo and, together with Alfred and Edward Dent, founded the Dent & Overbeck Company. In 1881, the region was declared a British protectorate.

Against this backdrop, a former officer of the Austro-Hungarian Navy arrived in Borneo and entered the service of the British North Borneo Company. Xavér Ferenc Witti (1850–1882), born in Pest, Hungary, had previously pursued a distinguished naval career.

As a naval cadet, he participated in the Battle of Lissa in 1866 and was awarded the Silver Medal for Bravery (Second Class). In 1868, he took part as a midshipman aboard Erzherzog Friedrich in the Austro-Hungarian Southeast Asia Expedition. Promoted to ensign of the line, he received the Montenegrin Order of St. Danilo (Fourth Class) in 1877. This promising career came to an abrupt end in 1878, when Witti was stripped of his rank following a decision by the Council of Honor.

After leaving the navy, Witti traveled to London and subsequently to Borneo, where he joined the British North Borneo Company in 1880. He led several expeditions into the island's interior in search of raw materials deemed valuable to the company. During his fourth and final expedition, Witti was attacked and killed by local inhabitants on the Sibuco River. His death attracted considerable international media attention, prompting the Austro-Hungarian ambassador in London, Count Alajos Károlyi (1825–1889), to demand a thorough investigation into the circumstances and perpetrators.

Contemporary sources suggest that Witti may have received financial support from the government in Vienna.

This raises the central question of this study: was Witti acting as an informant for the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Ministry, or even as an agent advancing imperial colonial interests in Southeast Asia? Alternatively, should he be understood as a disgraced naval officer seeking personal rehabilitation through colonial service? In our research, we examine Witti's activities in Borneo within the broader context of Austro-Hungarian colonial aspirations and informal imperial networks.

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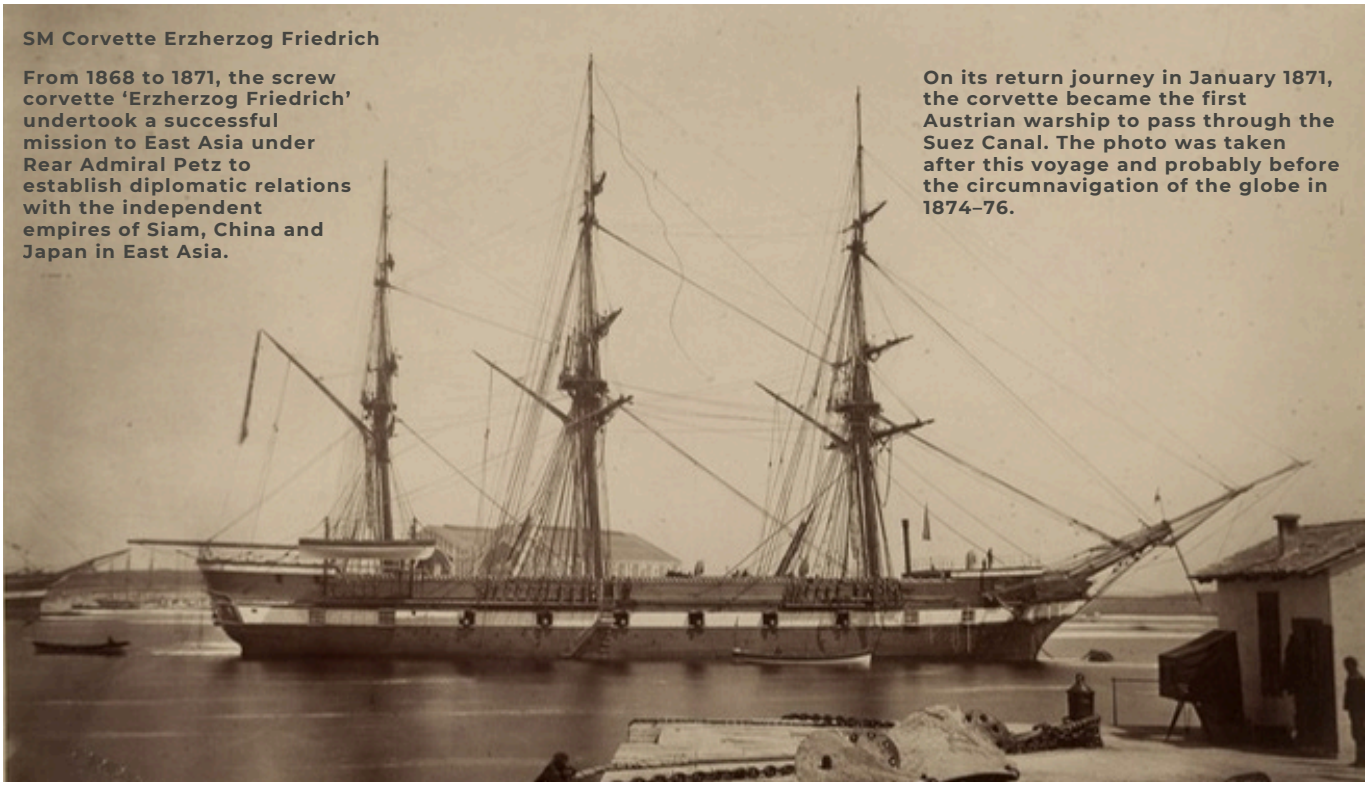

SM Corvette Erzherzog Friedrich

From 1868 to 1871, the screw corvette 'Erzherzog Friedrich' undertook a successful mission to East Asia under Rear Admiral Petz to establish diplomatic relations with the independent empires of Siam, China and Japan in East Asia.

On its return journey in January 1871, the corvette became the first Austrian warship to pass through the Suez Canal. The photo was taken after this voyage and probably before the circumnavigation of the globe in 1874–76.

AUSTRIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES COLONIALISM RESEARCH PLATFORM

ÖAW kolonial is an interdisciplinary initiative of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW) dedicated to critically examining the institutional and scientific involvement of the ÖAW in colonialism. The starting point is the recognition that Austrian scientists systematically used colonial networks for their research and, in doing so, contributed significantly to the expansion of museum and archive collections.

Numerous so-called expeditions were initiated and financed by the Imperial Academy of Sciences. At the same time, a colonial worldview influenced the development of scientific theories and methods, thereby having a lasting impact on the research results obtained. The initiative critically examines these historical connections and contextualises them from today's scientific perspective.

The aim of ÖAW kolonial is to network existing research and reappraisal projects within the Austrian Academy of Sciences and to develop common questions, definitions and thematic priorities for future research projects. The aim is to create a structured, cross-institutional framework for research critical of colonialism.

On 15 and 16 September 2025, the Austrian Academy of Sciences Colonialism Research Platform hosted an international interdisciplinary symposium on the topic of colonial knowledge production.

The Institute for Cultural Studies (Director: Johannes Feichtinger), the Austrian Archaeological Institute (Co-Director: Andreas Pülz) and the Phonogram Archive (Co-Director and Spokesperson: Kerstin Klenke) are participating in the initiative.

For further networking and exchange in the context of the Forum Wissenschaft kolonial initiative, the Research platform operates a mailing list, which you can sign up for via the link in the QR code.

CONTACT

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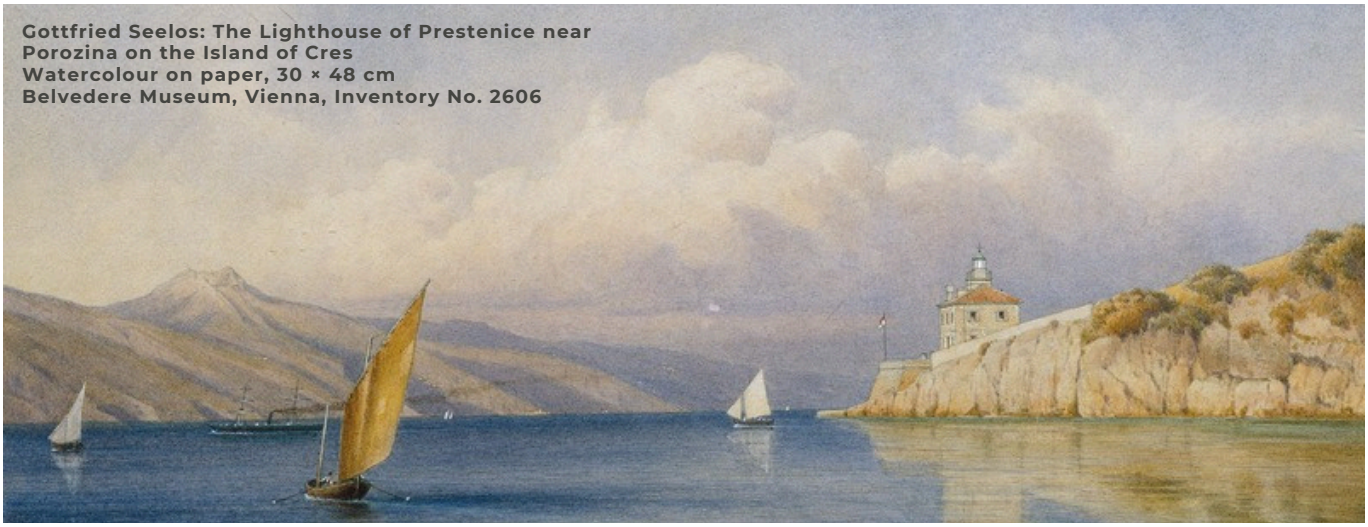
EXHIBITION: GOTTFRIED SEELOS – LIGHTHOUSES OF THE HABSBURG LITTORAL

In 1885, the landscape and architectural painter Gottfried Seelos was commissioned by Emperor Franz Joseph I to document “the most outstanding lighthouses of the Austrian Littoral, remarkable for their location or historical significance.” For this purpose, Seelos travelled aboard the steamship Pelagosa, operated by the Austrian Maritime Authority, visiting numerous lighthouse sites and producing a series of 35 watercolours. The history and artistic context of these works—today preserved in the collections of the Heeresgeschichtliches Museum, Vienna, and the Belvedere Museum, Vienna—have been researched by Massimiliano Blocher, who has curated an exhibition dedicated to this corpus. The exhibition will open on 16 April 2026 at the premises of the Lega Navale, located by the old Trieste lighthouse (Laterna). An accompanying publication will be released in conjunction with the exhibition.



Gottfried Seelos: The Lighthouse of Prestenice near Porozina on the Island of Cres
Watercolour on paper, 30 × 48 cm
Belvedere Museum, Vienna, Inventory No. 2606

THE NAVAL MEDICAL CORPS IN 1867

AUGUST JILEK AND THE REFORM OF THE NAVAL MEDICAL SERVICE IN THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN NAVY

THOMAS ZIMMEL

August Jilek was born on 28 August 1819 in Leitomischl in Bohemia. He studied medicine in Vienna and entered the Imperial and Royal Navy (k.k. Kriegsmarine) on 23 October 1845. As early as October 1852, Jilek was appointed senior physician at the Naval Academy, where he was additionally tasked with teaching oceanography.

In connection with this teaching assignment, he authored the Lehrbuch der Oceanographie zum Gebrauche der k.k. Marine-Akademie ("Textbook of Oceanography for Use at the Imperial and Royal Naval Academy"), which was published in 1857 by the Court and State Printing Office.

As Jilek himself had no formal training in oceanography, he drew extensively on comparable English-language specialist literature for the text of his textbook.

Already in the first half of the 1850s, Archduke Maximilian became aware of the naval physician when observing him treating patients. The Archduke eventually appointed Jilek as his personal physician, and in this capacity Jilek accompanied Maximilian on his voyage to Brazil in 1859–60. Maximilian is said to have remarked of August Jilek.

"When I look into Jilek's kindly eyes, when I hear his warm, full voice, I recover without his prescriptions. The man has a way of treating the sick that is unquestionably beneficial."

Although Archduke Maximilian wished to take Jilek with him to Mexico for his enthronement in 1864, Jilek succeeded in obtaining permission to remain in service in Vienna.

After Maximilian's death, August Jilek was summoned to Miramare in 1867, where he and other physicians attempted to treat Maximilian's widow Charlotte, who had descended into mental illness. For this service, he was awarded the Order of the Iron Crown, 3rd Class, in October 1869 and was elevated to the rank of knight.

On 4 October 1863, August Jilek was promoted to the rank of Chief Naval Medical Officer (Oberster Marine-Arzt), a position in which he would lead the naval medical service for more than thirty years. He succeeded Dr Stephan von Patay, who had retired at his own request. This period was marked by a persistent shortage of naval physicians, which Jilek sought to address through reforms and a significant professional upgrading of the Naval Medical Corps.

One of the principal problems faced by the navy was that, as a relatively small branch of the armed forces, it lacked its own training institution for military physicians, unlike the army. Naval doctors were recruited primarily from among the cadets of the Medical-Surgical Joseph's Academy in Vienna, as well as from army field surgeons transferring to naval service and from civilian physicians.

For several reasons, recruitment numbers remained low. The working environment of the navy was unfamiliar to men from inland regions; military medical training within the army had already established strong

AUGUST JILEK

ties to the land forces; and any later return from naval service to the army entailed the loss of seniority accrued during naval service.

Consequently, interest among Joseph's Academy cadets in serving with the navy was extremely limited.

As early as 1867, the naval medical service was reorganized according to plans devised by August Jilek. On 18 September 1867, Emperor Franz Joseph I issued a new Organizational Statute for the Naval Medical Branch, which provided for improved pay and an increase in personnel. Compared to the 1856 statute, which had envisaged 54 authorized positions, the new regulation provided for 62 posts in peacetime and 83 in wartime, thereby distributing the workload among a larger number of personnel.

Work processes were also improved, and the professional category of ship's surgeons (Schiffswundärzte) was abolished. Under the 1856 staffing plan, this group had occupied 30 of the 54 authorized posts. Ship's surgeons possessed a craft-based medical training and would today be described as paramedics.

The remaining members of this service category were reclassified as assistant physicians, also referred to as junior doctors. The newly available positions were subsequently filled by academically trained physicians who had completed medical studies at a university faculty of medicine.

This professionalization of the naval medical service also resulted in naval medicine soon assuming a leading position compared to the field medical services of the Danube Monarchy. As early as the 1870s, the navy was a pioneer in the introduction of antiseptic dressing materials. Furthermore, naval physicians were sent abroad for advanced training.

What the reform could not change, however, was the lack of esteem in which naval physicians were held within the officer corps. Although naval doctors formally belonged to the officer corps, they were not equal to "combatant officers" in several respects.

In particular, the refusal of line officers to recognize physicians as their equals caused considerable resentment. The familiar form of address customary among officers was denied to doctors.

The uniforms of naval physicians lacked the splendor of those worn by sea officers, and, most notably, physicians were prohibited from wearing epaulettes.

At the same time, naval physicians were nevertheless subject to the same financial obligations as the rest of the officer corps, such as mandatory contributions to the Naval Music Fund, which amounted to a deduction of two percent of their pay.

The reform of the naval medical service was not concluded with the 1867 statute. In subsequent decades, naval authorities continued to increase the attractiveness of the service through incremental measures.

The maximum entry age for lateral entrants was gradually raised, and in 1907 the rank of Corvette Surgeon (Korvettenarzt), previously the lowest medical rank, was abolished, resulting in higher entry-level salaries for physicians. Finally, epaulettes were introduced as part of physicians' dress uniforms: initially, under the 1891 service regulation, these featured a silver plate with a golden Rod of Asclepius, and from 1910 onward a gold plate with a likewise golden Rod of Asclepius.

Although the reform of 1867 only marginally improved the external attractiveness of naval medical service and recruitment difficulties persisted, it brought tangible improvements for physicians already in service. Among them, August Jilek enjoyed enormous popularity. In July 1868, the naval physicians Robert Kolacek and Josef Ulbing traveled to Vienna to present him with a magnificent photo album containing portraits of all naval physicians. At the same time, they also presented him with a lithograph portrait produced by the workshop of Josef Kriehuber.

During the 1860s and 1870s, August Jilek devoted considerable attention to combating malaria in Pola, publishing two studies on the subject.

August Jilek held the position of Chief Naval Medical Officer for more than thirty years. From 1 September 1871, he served as head of the Chief Naval Medical Directorate, which was renamed the Naval Medical Office (Marine-Sanitäts-Amt) in 1892. In November 1888, August Jilek was promoted to the newly created rank of Admiral Staff Surgeon.

On 1 March 1894, he was awarded the Order of Franz Joseph with Star and, after 49 years of service in the Austro-Hungarian Navy, retired from active duty. He spent his retirement in seclusion in Trieste, where he died on 8 November 1898.

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DIGITAL EXHIBITION: [RE]FRAMING COLONIAL INFRASTRUCTURES

With the digital exhibition format [re]framing Colonial Infrastructures, the Vienna Technical Museum is setting a new framework for open and contemporary practices in the cataloguing, exhibition and communication of museum collections from colonial contexts. [re]framing Colonial Infrastructures is designed as a research exhibition and combines digital communication with a research portal.

All digital resources – not only the web exhibition texts and images, but also a glossary critical of racism and colonialism, high-resolution scans, metadata and transcriptions of all scientifically processed documents – are accessible online.

In this way, the digital research exhibition offers users a broad basis for in-depth discussion and multi-perspective research into infrastructure projects from the colonial era.

The archive holdings comprise four transport infrastructure projects in which Austrian involvement in planning or construction, or direct or indirect exploitation interests of the Habsburg Monarchy, can be verified: the Suez Canal in Egypt and selected railway projects in Brazil (Dom Pedro II Railway), India (North Western Railway) and Namibia (Otavi Railway).

The Lloyd steamship Thalia has arrived in the port of Trieste from Alexandria. Oil on canvas, framed. Painted from life by the postal official Ludwig Fuchs in April 1891 - Technisches Museum Wien

ANTIQUITY AND MODERN TIMES

ORIENTAL STUDIES AND CULTURAL CONTACTS IN THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN MONARCHY

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT: EGYPT AND AUSTRIA XV

The Egypt and Austria conference will take place from Thursday, 8 October to Saturday, 10 October 2026, at the University of Graz (Styria) and at the Archaeology Museum at Eggenberg Palace (Universalmuseum Joanneum).

The conference is organized by the Egypt and Austria Research Society in cooperation with the Institute of Classics of the University of Graz and the Department of Archaeology & Coin Cabinet of the Universalmuseum Joanneum.

Egypt and Austria XV will focus on the study of the Orient (Near and Middle East) within the context of the Habsburg Monarchy and on the complex relationship between antiquity and modern times.

The conference aims to examine how scholarly research and cultural interest in antiquity developed during the Austro-Hungarian period and how these interests manifested themselves in art and science, particularly in Egyptology and Oriental studies. Special emphasis will be placed on the cultural, scientific, artistic, and social contexts, as well as on the networks that shaped these developments.

The conference will address both the perspectives of European researchers and the voices and contributions of scholars, travellers, and historical actors from the regions of the Orient.

In doing so, it seeks to highlight a dialogue that goes beyond a purely disciplinary history of scholarship and instead encompasses broader questions of perception, reception, and the transfer of knowledge.
.
Egypt and Austria XV aims to provide an interdisciplinary forum for discussing the dynamic interactions between antiquity and modernity and for reassessing the role of Oriental studies within the intellectual and cultural landscape of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

VENUE

Graz, Institute of Classics (University of Graz) and Archaeology Museum, (Universalmuseum Joanneum)

Thursday, October 8th to Saturday, October 10th 2026

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The then Austrian Ambassador to Bangkok, Wilhelm M. Donko, at the opening of the exhibition.

SIAM THROUGH THE LENS OF WILHELM BURGER

LOOKING BACK: WILHELM BURGER EXHIBITION IN BANGKOK 2024 – AND A NEW PUBLICATION

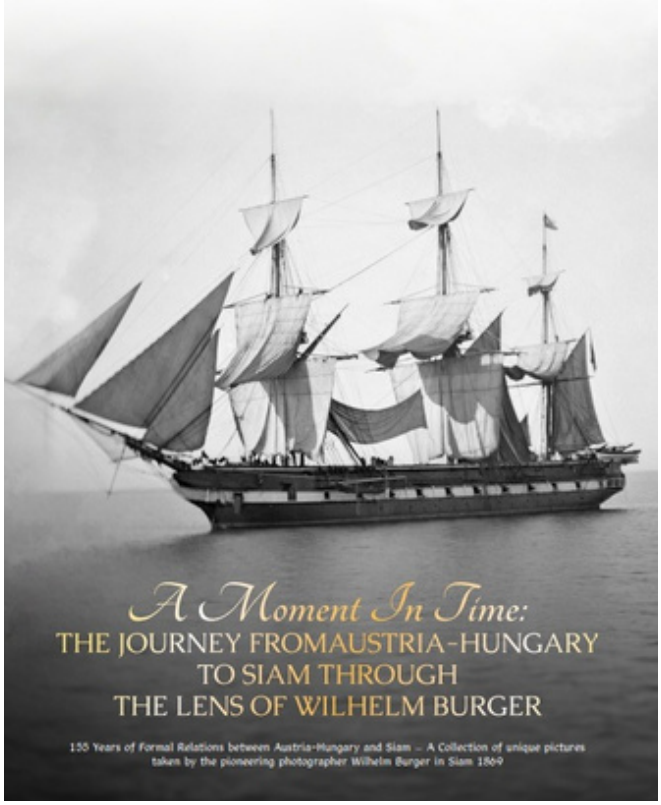
The exhibition “The Austro-Hungarian East Asia Expedition 1869 – Photographs by Wilhelm Burger” was on display from 25 November to 4 December 2024 at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre in Bangkok and was a collaboration between the Hungarian and Austrian embassies in Bangkok.

The photographs, taken during the Austro-Hungarian East Asia Expedition of 1869, illustrated the historic journey that led to the establishment of formal relations between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Kingdom of Siam.

The exhibition also highlighted the scientific and diplomatic goals of the expedition, which brought together naval officers, scholars, and artists. Through Burger’s camera, viewers could observe landscapes, architecture, and cultural encounters documented during this remarkable voyage.

Displayed in Thailand for the first time, Wilhelm Burger’s images offered a rare glimpse into historic sites captured 155 years ago. The photographs revealed how many of these places have transformed over time while still preserving elements of their original character. For many visitors, the exhibition provided a unique visual bridge between nineteenth-century exploration and present-day Thailand.

In connection with this exhibition, the book "A Moment in Time: The Journey from Austria-Hungary to Siam Through the Lens of Wilhelm Burger" will be published in 2026.



UTVRDE – SUDBINA JEDNOGA GRADA (FORTRESSES – THE FATE OF A CITY)

AUTHORS AND EDITORS OF THE BOOK: KATARINA POCEDIĆ AND KATARINA MARIĆ

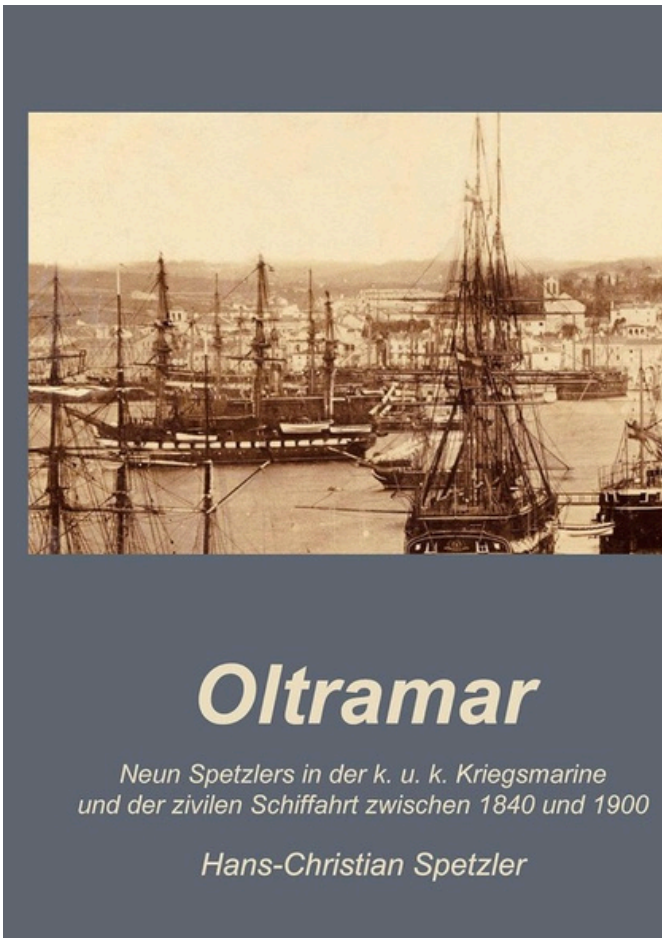
The book by the Historical and Maritime Museum of Istria, 'Fortresses – the fate of a city', with graphic design by Studio Tumpic/ Prenc, was selected as one of Croatia's most beautifully designed books of 2025 in the 'Croatian Beautiful Book' competition, securing a place among only 12 selected works out of a total of 188 entries.

The book follows on from the exhibition of the same name at the Historical and Maritime Museum of Istria in 2022, which aimed to draw attention once again to the neglected fortification system of Pula and to present the rich museum and archive material that documents it.

In the book and in the exhibition, authors and editors Katarina Pocedic and Katarina Maric systematically presented defensive structures, from complex fortifications to smaller military buildings, which bear witness to the development of military technology, defence strategies and the extraordinary engineering achievements of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

OLTRAMAR – THE SPETZLER FAMILY IN THE IMPERIAL AND ROYAL (K.U.K.) NAVY

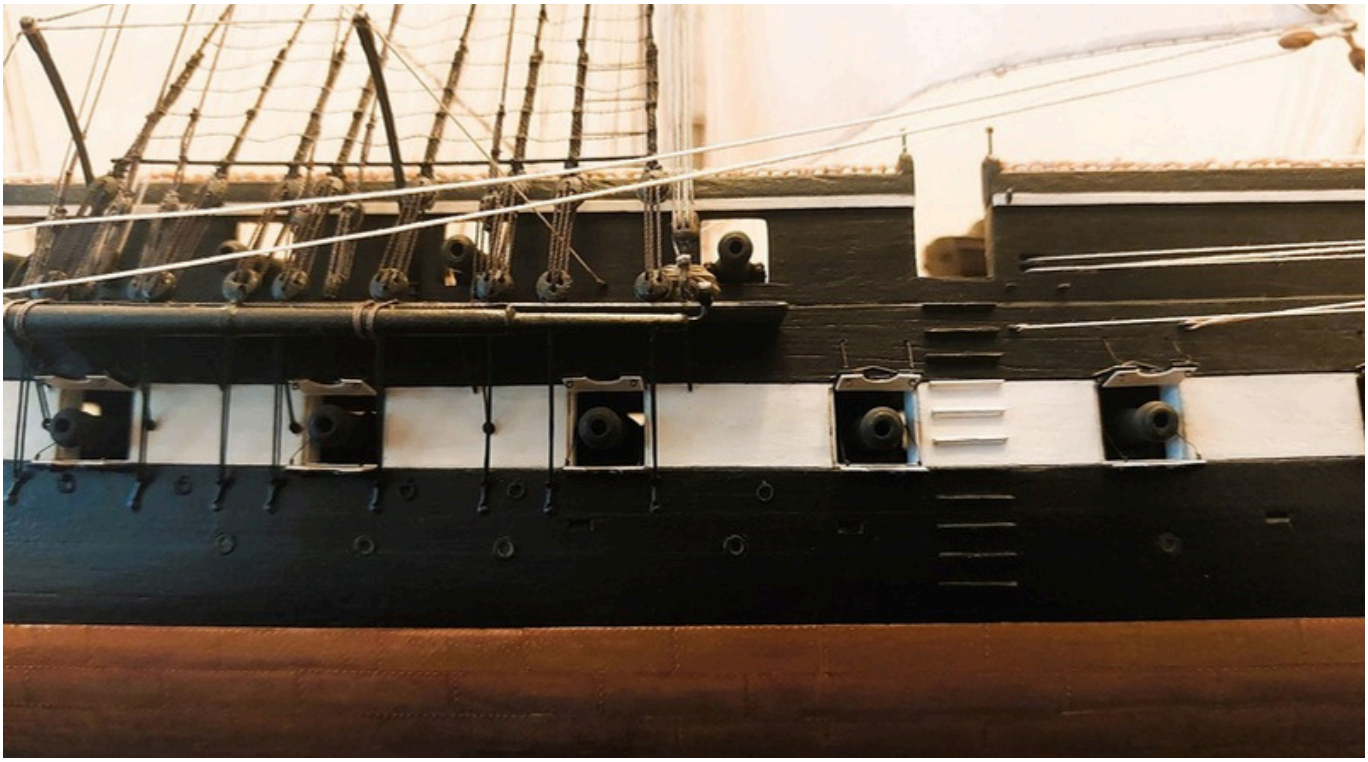
NINE MEMBERS OF THE SPETZLER FAMILY IN THE IMPERIAL AND ROYAL (K.U.K.) NAVY AND IN CIVILIAN SHIPPING FROM 1840 TO 1900 – BY HANS-CHRISTIAN SPETZLER



Between 1840 and 1910, nine members of the Spetzler family, originally based in Dinkelsbühl in Franconia, served in the Austro-Hungarian Imperial and Royal Navy (k.u.k. Kriegsmarine), in civilian maritime service, and in the shipbuilding industry.

Based on contemporary documents, the book recounts notable events and experiences from their lives and careers.

About the author: Dipl.-Ing. Hans-Christian Spetzler (born in 1947) served in the German Navy and studied mechanical engineering at the Technical University of Braunschweig before working in naval shipbuilding.



THE FRIGATE NOVARA AROUND THE WORLD

A TALE OF THE SEA, SCIENCE AND EMPIRES (1857–1859)

BY GUIDO ABBATTISTA AND ERICA GROSSI, PUBLISHED BY SALERNO EDITRICE (ROME, 2026), 260 PAGES.

In April 1857, the Austrian frigate Novara departed from Trieste on an ambitious circumnavigation of the globe that would last more than two and a half years. Conceived to assert the Habsburg Empire's place among the leading maritime powers of the West, the voyage was equally driven by scientific curiosity and cultural ambition.

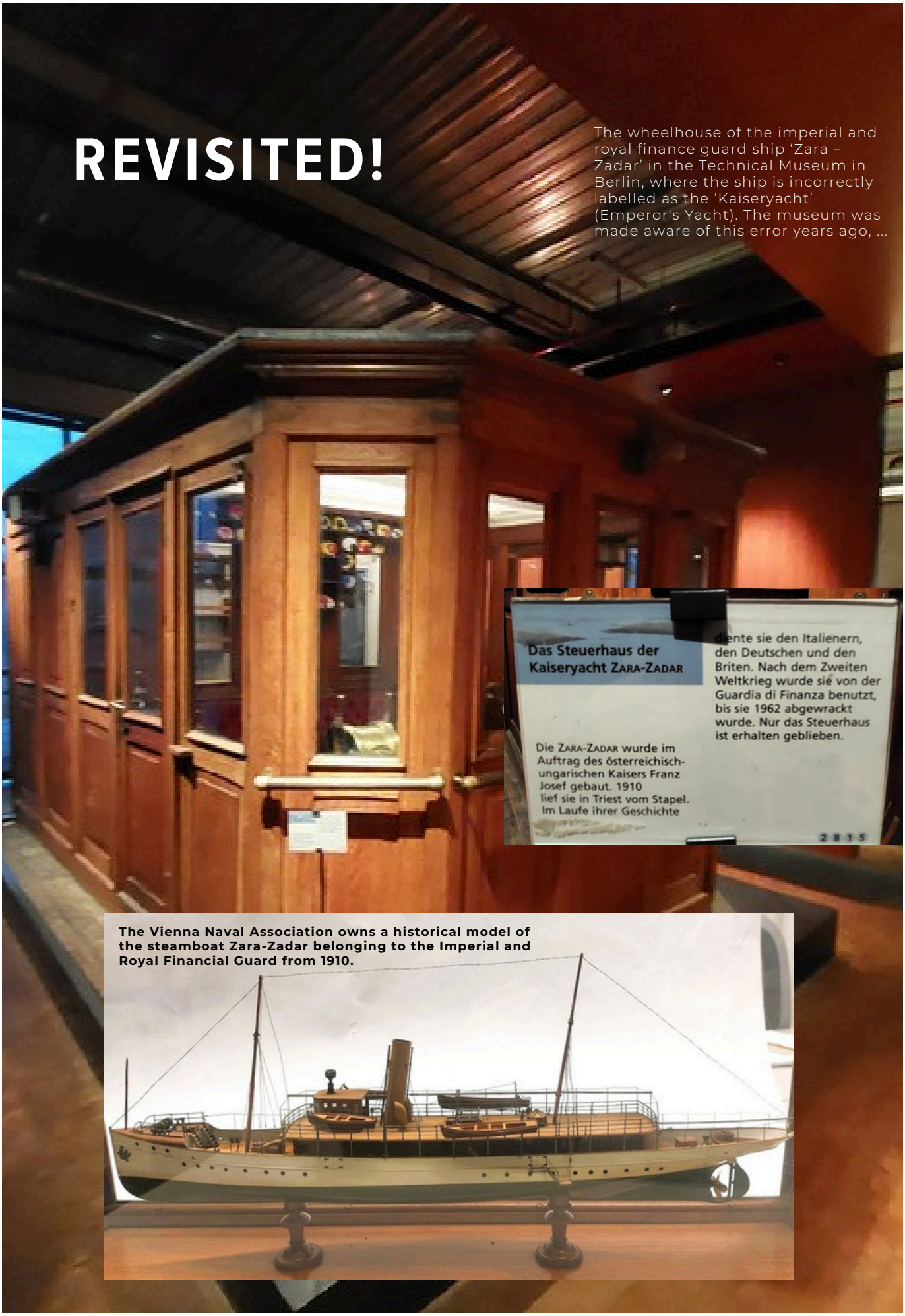
Drawing on a wide range of published and unpublished sources, Guido Abbattista and Erica Grossi offer a detailed reconstruction of the expedition's itinerary and results. The journey becomes a privileged lens through which to observe the political, social, and cultural conditions of the regions encountered at a moment of accelerating European imperial expansion.

Seen through both scientific and aesthetic perspectives—and filtered by the assumptions and prejudices of the Austrian travellers—the narrative reveals a rich yet deeply problematic portrayal of colonial societies and cultures. This compelling book sheds light on the Eurocentric mindset of the nineteenth century, exposing the encyclopaedic drive to collect, classify, and dominate that characterized the expansionist and positivist ambitions of imperial Europe.

The research on the frigate Novara was part of the 'Global Sea Routes Project – A Historical Geodatabase of European Global Navigation (1500–1900)'. A link to the project website can be found in the QR code.

REVISITED!

The wheelhouse of the imperial and royal finance guard ship 'Zara – Zadar' in the Technical Museum in Berlin, where the ship is incorrectly labelled as the 'Kaiseryacht' (Emperor's Yacht). The museum was made aware of this error years ago, ...



The Vienna Naval Association owns a historical model of the steamboat Zara-Zadar belonging to the Imperial and Royal Financial Guard from 1910.