

The Private Lives of Mariners' East Asian Objects: Memory and Identity Through the Generations

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Abstract

This article examines the domestic lives of East Asian objects brought by seafarers from Slovenian lands in the second half of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th, mostly men serving in the Austro-Hungarian War Navy. Drawing on a variety of material, documentary and oral sources it first explores how the sailors' social and educational backgrounds, their positions on their vessels as well as other circumstances of their voyages impacted their access to such objects. In accordance with the fashions of the time, decorative and souvenir items dominate in their legacies.

The main part of the analysis focuses on how objects' meanings and uses changed once they were brought to the new socio-cultural milieu and displayed in the homes of the seafarers and later their heirs. For the seafarers they presented an embodied memory and testimony of their voyages and experiences in what at the time were distant and exotic lands. Through their very presence as well as the storytelling they prompted these objects to some extent also shaped the imaginaries of East Asia. In the transmission of objects through lines of inheritance, however, most of the information about their provenance was quickly lost, and the significance of the objects became anchored in the relationship with the seafaring relative. While those heirs who are direct descendants of the seafarers tend to perceive objects as material witnesses of their families' histories, more distant relatives stress the objects' decorative and aesthetic qualities.

Keywords: East Asian objects in Slovenia, seafarers, objects of memory, Austro-Hungarian Navy, inherited objects

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Zasebna življenja vzhodnoazijskih predmetov pomorščakov: spomin in identiteta skozi generacije

Izvleček

Članek obravnava življenja vzhodnoazijskih predmetov, ki so jih s potovanj z ladjami avstrijske in avstro-ogrske vojne mornarice prinesli pomorščaki iz slovenskih dežel v drugi polovici 19. in prvih desetletjih 20. stoletja. Na podlagi različnih materialnih, dokumentarnih in ustnih virov najprej raziskuje, kako so družbeno in izobrazbeno ozadje pomorščakov, njihov položaj na ladjah ter druge okoliščine potovanj vplivali na njihov dostop do vzhodnoazijskih predmetov. V skladu s takratno modo v zapuščinah pomorščakov prevladujejo dekorativni in spominski predmeti.

Osrednji del članka analizira, kako so se pomen in uporaba predmetov spremenili, ko so jih prinesli v novo družbeno-kulturno okolje in razstavili v domovih pomorščakov in pozneje njihovih dedičev. Za pomorščake so predmeti predstavljali utelešen spomin in pričevanje o njihovih potovanjih in izkušnjah v takrat oddaljenih in eksotičnih deželah. Že samo s svojo prisotnostjo, še bolj pa skozi spodbujanje pripovedi o ljudeh in krajih, ki so jih pomorščaki obiskali, so do določene mere oblikovali tudi imaginarij Vzhodne Azije. Vendar se je v procesu dedovanja večina informacij o izvoru predmetov hitro izgubila, njihov pomen za nove lastnike pa se je vzpostavil glede na odnos do mornariškega prednika. Medtem ko dediči, ki so neposredni potomci pomorščakov, predmete običajno dojemajo kot opredmeteno družinsko zgodovino, bolj oddaljeni sorodniki poudarjajo njihovo dekorativno in estetsko vrednost.

Ključne besede: vzhodnoazijski predmeti v Sloveniji, pomorščaki, spominski predmeti, avstro-ogrska mornarica, podedovani predmeti

Introduction

In the second half of the 19th and the first decades of the 20th century, an increasing number of men from the area of what is now Slovenia had travelled to East Asia in the service of the Austrian and Austro-Hungarian Navy, bringing back various objects from China, Japan and, occasionally, Korea. An overview of objects from the collections of seafarers from this period recorded in Slovenia has shown that, regardless of where they stopped during their ocean voyages and how many places they visited on different continents, it is mostly, or even only objects from East Asia that have been preserved in their legacies. This is not only true of those objects that ended up in museums, but also of those that remain in private hands.¹ Although many such objects have reportedly been lost or destroyed—including entire collections—from relatives' accounts, we can infer that the seafarers were

1 Mariners' East Asian objects are kept in the Maritime Museum Piran (PMSMP), the Slovene Ethnographic Museum (SEM) and the Park of Military History Pivka (PVZP).

predominantly interested in East Asian objects and their descendants or relatives have kept these objects the longest.

Various seafarers' writings indicate that they were more attracted to the regions of East Asia than other places around the globe, as they considered these places the most remote and the culture of the local inhabitants the most different and unknown (PMSMP, letters, memoirs of seafarers of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, for more see Marinac 2017). These objects were more sought after, probably partly because richly decorated East Asian porcelain, silks, furniture and other decorative objects were very fashionable among the European upper classes of the time, though they were less accessible in Slovenian lands² (Vampelj Suhadolnik 2019). As a result of the voyages of the Habsburg monarchy's ships, however, they also found their way into the homes of seafarers – not only officers and their relatives, but also midshipmen and sailors, i.e. also into the homes of the middle and, more rarely, even the lower classes.

Little is known about precisely where, how and why seafarers obtained particular objects or what they meant to them throughout their lives, but they have kept them in their homes and eventually left them to their closest relatives. Some of the heirs have preserved the inherited objects through several lines of succession while others have donated or sold the objects to different museums. This paper examines the lives of East Asian objects in the domestic spaces of, initially, mariners, and later of their heirs and relatives, as well as the memories and values successive owners have attached to these objects. It focuses on how both spatial and temporal transmission affects the significance and understanding of the objects and whether the identity and use of the objects is transformed in this process, for example from a souvenir or antique into an object of memory and material testimony of a rich family history. Our analysis shows that the respective owners have tended to inscribe the objects with multiple meanings, although often one type of value is more dominant over others. We therefore pay attention to how personal interests and circumstances affect these interpretations and suggest that the proximity of kinship relations is one important factor in the way East Asian objects are cherished by those who inherited them.

2 This applies to the experiences of Austro-Hungarian mariners from Slovene ethnic lands and the social classes they came from. East Asian porcelain and ceramics were also popular collectors' items among Carniolan elites (Berdajs 2020; 2023). The Merchant Navy, both in terms of companies and the private commissions carried out by the maritime elite, of course, has been at the forefront of driving the demand and supply for Chinese objects already in the 18th century (von Brescius 2022, chapter 3).

Moreover, we are interested in how these objects have served as vehicles for the transmission of knowledge about East Asia and shaped images of East Asian peoples and their ways of life. While we cannot ascertain how knowledgeable the mariners were about, e.g., methods of production or the socio-cultural significance of particular objects in their original environment, our findings show that most of the information on objects and their provenance was lost after the death of the mariner and through the succession of property, even to the extent that some contemporary owners were not aware that an object was East Asian.

The surviving artefacts show that seafarers in East Asia bought objects to represent the country and culture in a new environment, or to remind them of their travels. According to Maroević's definition of the museality of an object as the immaterial characteristic of an object, i.e. the value of the meaning of a material object that documents one reality in another reality, including another place, these objects had a similar function in their homes as musealia and were purchased by the seafarers for this purpose (cf. Habinc 2002, 109). However, unlike musealia, many of these objects were in fact used by the seafarers, or by other owners of the objects, in their new environment.

Research Methods

The paper is based on an analysis of the surviving material sources—mainly East Asian artefacts that have survived to the present day, photographs, primary written sources such as diaries, memoirs, the correspondence of the seafarers and other personal documents, and on oral interviews with the current owners of the artefacts and with the descendants or close relatives of the seafarers.

Oral information and written and photographic materials have been collected not only in relation to the seafarers whose objects have survived to the present but also to those whose objects have been lost. It is an important limitation of this study that the seafarers that appear in the article are the ones for whom we have a combination of data—material, documentary and oral. While we did manage to obtain accounts of objects that no longer exist, these only relate to those seafarers whose relatives and heirs Marinac was able to trace in her previous research. There are other seafarers who appear in primary documents (and probably many more we are not even aware of yet), about whom we know very little besides their names. In fact, even in cases where we were able to document the surviving objects of a particular mariner, the list is likely not exhaustive, as heirs through other lines of succession may also possess such objects. It is therefore very difficult to assess the scope—in quantity and variety—of the objects brought back

from East Asia. The tables of seafarers and their East Asian objects, we have so far managed to identify, can be found in the appendices.

The interviews were conducted with the first, second or even third generation of descendants of the seafarers, some of which were quite distant relations. Due to the considerable time lag since the original transfer of the objects from East Asia, these oral sources can be used mainly to establish the informants' own attitudes towards the objects, while findings relating to older generations are based on less reliable second-hand accounts and are combined with written sources, photographic material and the objects themselves.

The interviews our analysis relies on took place over several years and were carried out in different research projects. The quality of the data thus gathered varies not only because some interlocutors were more temporally distant from the seafarer's voyage and life, or some were more knowledgeable about family histories or more eloquent than others, but also because the interviews had not paid equal attention to the topic of the mariner's objects in their homes. Over the past three years, we have been conducting interviews with the aim of exploring the life stories of the mariners' objects and their role and significance in both their original environment and in Slovenia. In the oral interviews, we focused on those heirs who still keep the seafarers' objects at home.

The older interviews, which were conducted between 2014 and 2017, were only collected by Bogdana Marinac, mainly in preparation for her exhibition and book *Across the Seas to the Unknown Far East* (*Čez morje na nepoznani Daljni vzhod* 2017), and in connection with the acquisition of museum objects. Marinac interviewed the descendants of seafarers but with an emphasis on seafarers and their voyages, as well as contact with foreign cultures, which included obtaining objects in foreign places. To a lesser extent, information was gathered on the attitudes of the current owners and other informants towards the seafarers' journeys, East Asian objects, and the transmission of objects from one generation to the next. However, much of the data used in this paper had also been collected by Marinac many years earlier during her research into the seafarers' lifestyles and life stories. Due to the much broader scope of that research, the data collected at that time on the seafarers' purchases abroad and the use of these objects in their homes is scarcer. However, those interviews with descendants who still personally knew the seafarers and who have by now all passed away, still provide invaluable insights into the ways the mariners and their first heirs related to the East Asian objects from the voyages.

Both older and recent interviews were semi-structured, with pre-prepared interview guides that helped steer the conversations, while still allowing the inter-

viewees to speak freely and at length. Free narration was important, among other things, to reveal what was and was not of significance to the interlocutors, which is very informative for an exploration of their attitudes towards objects, people and foreign places. Some interviewees were interviewed more than once, at shorter or longer intervals, to widen or focus the topic of the previous interview or to compare their responses with information from other sources. Marinac often followed up with phone calls and emails to clarify certain details. The interviews were usually carried out in the informants' homes, which also gave us the opportunity to see the objects and observe how current owners live with them. The physical presence of objects was highly useful in prompting questions, jogging memories and eliciting reflections. If the informants agreed, the interviews were recorded and then transcribed, otherwise the answers were taken down on the fly and later written up in a more edited form.

The analysis of the different types of materials had to consider their credibility, objectivity and authenticity. This was particularly evident in the case of the seafarers' biographical records (diaries, memoirs and letters), where the primary consideration was who the records were intended for.

Mariners' Travel Circumstances in East Asia and Access to Local Objects

Surviving East Asian artefacts brought by seafarers, the seafarers' biographical records and the interviewees' memories of those objects that had been lost or destroyed in the century or more since the voyages to East Asia, demonstrate great diversity in quantity and value, as well as in terms of the utility of the objects brought home. Nevertheless, certain groups of objects appear more frequently in the collections, which helps to identify what seafarers were more likely to purchase or receive as gifts, what the objects were for, and what guided their choices. Some seafarers only brought back a postcard or photograph, or perhaps several, while others brought back whole albums of photographs and postcards and/or ten, twenty or more different objects, tea sets and even pieces of furniture and artworks.

The selection and quantity of objects obtained by the seafarers on their voyages not only depended on their preferences, which were linked to their aesthetic norms, values, interests and expectations, or their background and education, but also on the possibilities the circumstances of their travel afforded them. This included the period, place and duration of the ships' stopovers in foreign countries, the purpose of the voyage (e.g. exploration, regular patrolling or participation in

armed conflicts), and the variety on offer in the places they visited. The seafarer's position on board and the social class and environment from which they came were also of great significance in their selection of East Asian objects.

Although the first Austrian warship visited China in 1820, followed by the expedition of the frigate *Novara* in 1857, travel to East Asia intensified after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 when the Austro-Hungarian Empire began to send so-called station ships to East Asia. These ships would travel to East Asia and then cruise for a year or more between the many ports in China, Japan and Korea before returning home (Donko 2013). These longer journeys, often with multiple stops in the same ports, allowed mariners to become more familiar with East Asian countries and increased their opportunities to buy or otherwise obtain things. In many places, ships only docked for a day or so and sometimes not all the seafarers had the opportunity to leave the ship or travel beyond the port itself. In the larger ports especially (Hong Kong, Shanghai, Kobe and Yokohama), however, the ships would remain for a week or two, sometimes even longer, in order to make repairs or replenish stocks (*ibid.*; Marinac 2017).

Seafarers were usually allowed to leave the ship for half a day. Full-day departures were rare, and multi-day departures were more of an exception than the rule (Vidović 2004, 208, 212; PMSMP, Kristan, *Diary of the S.M.S. Leopard*; Vilfan family private archive, Letter to Brother Alfonzo, 3 March 1901; Pahor and Petek 1980; PMSMP, Lipovž, *Memoirs*; Dolenc 1892; Domjan 1912). Sailors were most likely to remain close to the ship and the port areas of the cities. The officers, who mainly came from the upper and middle classes and had higher earnings and better financial means, would stay on land more frequently and for longer. They could partake in overland journeys, even to places a little further afield. All this allowed them to visit more shops, not only in the ports but also in the capitals of Beijing, Tokyo and Seoul. Their position on the ship, moreover, meant that they were often invited to official receptions by the ambassadors or consuls of Austria-Hungary and other friendly countries. They were also hosted by local governors and other persons of importance. Important guests, who could advise them where and what to buy, also visited them on the ships (figs. 1 and 2) (PMSMP, Kristan, *Diary of the S.M.S. Leopard*; PMSMP, Rupnik, *Memoirs*; PMSMP, Lipovž, *Memoirs*; Dolenc 1892; Pahor and Petek, 1980). Some were even at the courts: Anton Haus visited the imperial palace in Seoul (Halpern 1998, 36) and Viktor Kristan took a photo at the palace of the viceroy of Liangnan (PMSMP, Kristan).



Figure 1. Lieutenant commander Anton Dolenc (in the middle), the ship commander Theodor Skerl, Austro-Hungarian Consul in Shanghai Ugo Schumpeter and Mrs. Asesor onboard torpedo boat Panther in 1910. (Source: PMSMP)

The diaries and travelogues of the mariners further report that the embassies, representatives of the naval detachments that were stationed locally, or influential locals also organised excursions to local sights for them. These guided tours included visits to the production of porcelain, silk, cloisonné, tea etc., where they could buy such products (PMSMP, Kristan; Dolenc 1892; *Viaggio intorno al globo* 1862). Cadets, too, were invited to join numerous excursions and receptions, thus learning how to behave in a manner befitting officers, while at the same time getting to know foreign places and the customs of the local inhabitants (Bach-Ritter 1989, 165–66; Donko 2013; PMSMP, Kristan, *Diary of the S.M.S. Leopard*; PMSMP, Rupnik, *Memoirs*; Dolenc 1892; Vidmar 1880).

Junior officers, midshipmen and ordinary seamen were more likely to spend their leisure time near ports. Anton Lipovž, sailor of the first class, and other mariners of lower ranks note in their diaries that they, too, were occasionally invited by the locals to their homes or pubs, though they were rarely able to join the organised excursions (PMSMP, Lipovž, *Memoirs*). Nevertheless, there were many shopping opportunities in the port towns and even on the ships. In many ports, traders

came to the ships by boat and sold their wares on board. A photograph in the collection of Naval Petty Officer Anton Ukmar (PVZP), for example, portrays Japanese vendors on board the *Kaiserin Elisabeth* (fig. 3). The memoirs of Cadet Ivan Rupnik mention that in Hong Kong, vendors came onto the ship with fruit and other produce and handicrafts (PMSMP, Rupnik, *Memoirs*). It should be emphasised that many lower ranks preferred to spend their rather meagre earnings on drinks and women, or to send or bring home their savings, but most of them, at least occasionally, bought a postcard to send home or had their photograph taken (PMSMP, Rupnik, *Memoirs*; PMSMP, collections of photographs and postcards; PMSMP, seamen's photo library).

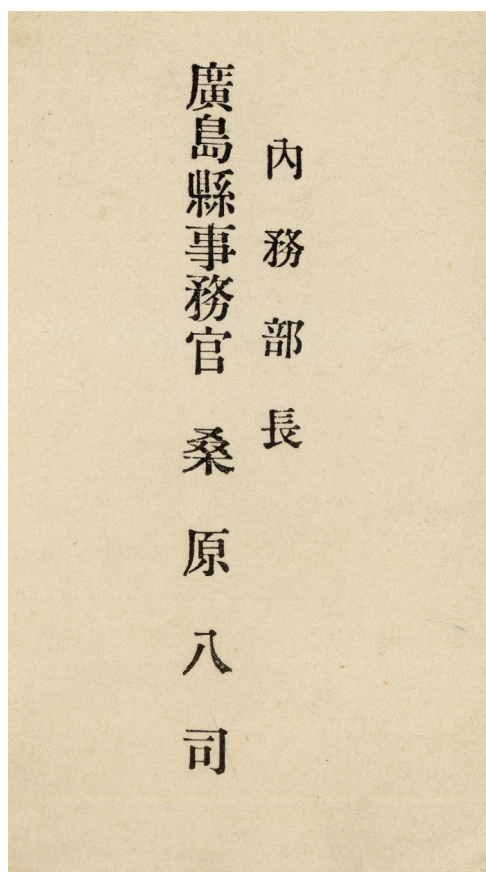


Figure 2. The calling card of the governor of Hiroshima in the collection of Anton Dolenc. (Source: PMSMP)

For many lower-ranking seafarers, their shipboard living quarters and transport options also presented a barrier to buying larger and more expensive items. Officers had their own small but quite comfortable cabins that also doubled as their offices, and they could easily store some items there. As can be seen from the photographs, they sometimes even decorated the cabin with such objects, arranging them on the desk and shelves or hanging them on the walls (fig. 4). They could further store items in the ship's hold. Senior midshipmen, who shared their cabins with only a few people, also had some space for the items they bought. This, however, was not the case for the lowest-ranking seamen and cadets, who slept in a large common room, often on hammocks. They kept their uniforms and other equipment in seamen's sacks (Dolenc 1892; PMSMP Rupnik, *Memoirs*). The lack of space and the fear of theft³ probably encouraged them to buy postcards, which were

3 Most theft reports are in connection with parts of their uniforms.

small, light and cheap. Those who had a little more money, however, had commemorative embroideries made, which could be conveniently folded and bagged.⁴



Figure 3. Japanese traders onboard torpedo cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth on its voyage in 1908–1910 in the photo collections of Petty Officer Anton Ukmar. (Source: PVZP)

The collection of the battleship captain Anton Dolenc, for example, demonstrates the importance of how objects were transported. Since Dolenc disembarked in Qingdao and returned home by train via Siberia to visit places in the interior and north of China, his collection of objects from East Asia consists exclusively of small objects—handles of small samurai *kozuka* knives, Mandarin hat buttons, hairpins, snuff bottles, embroidered silk ribbons for Chinese women's clothing, a lock and a box, even though his position otherwise afforded him more space (fig. 5).

4 On the popularity of souvenir embroideries among sailors see Dubois (2022) and Manley (2023).



Figure 4. Decorations, including fans, in an officer cabin on corvette Donau. (Source: PMS-MP, Metod Koch, Photo album “S.M.S. Donau 1894–1895”)



Figure 5. Objects brought from East Asia by Anton Dolenc, now kept in the Slovene Ethnographic Museum and the Piran Maritime Museum. (Source: PMSMP. Photo by Sara Grdina)

Although there is no information in the sources about where the seafarers bought specific items, there are some records of shops in their diaries, travelogues and letters. The seafarers were well-informed about where to buy what, for example about good bargains on silk and porcelain in China and Japan. According to Matija Kliner, the Ship's Butler at the frigate Novara, which sailed around the world in 1857–1859, the mariners “admired the shops in Hong Kong, where silk, ivory and silverware were sold” (*Novice gospodarske, obrtnijske in narodske* 1858, 349), and part of the crew visited a porcelain factory, silk workshops and a tea factory in Shanghai (La Fatal Novara 1999, 27–30). The Seaman Matija Domjan, who was in East Asia in 1900–1901, wrote in his memoirs that Yokohama had many factories with fine porcelain that could be bought at a low price (Domjan 1912, 158). Intendant Viktor Kristan, whose voyage lasted from 1907 to 1909, reports in his diary that Kobe was one of the largest commercial cities in the world, but with high prices, and Yokohama was the main Japanese commercial port. He also mentions that in Canton (Guangzhou), the streets were full of ivory, black wood and other merchants, that they sold fine silk in Chefoo (Yantai), and beautiful porcelain vases and silverware in Jiujiang. In Nara, he notes the sale of steel swords. Among the details of his own purchases, he only mentions that in Hankow (Hankou, now part of Wuhan), he and other officers bought a beautiful leopard skin and tea (PMSMP, Kristan, Diary). Shopping streets in Yokohama, Kobe and Nagasaki, as well as in Hong Kong and Shanghai, also frequently feature on postcards and photographs from the collections of Austro-Hungarian sailors (PMSMP, Austro-Hungarian sailors' postcard collections).

Finally, some mariners were forced to spend longer periods on land due to their participation in armed conflicts, namely during the Boxer Rebellion in China and in WWI. Several mariners from Slovenian lands were engaged in the suppression of the Chinese popular anti-foreign Boxer Rebellion in 1900–1901 by the Eight-Nation Alliance.⁵ The looting of palaces, shrines, homes and even imperial palaces by foreigners and domestic robbers was widespread during and in the aftermath of the clashes. Open-air sales and auctions organised by foreigners (Howard 2019; Klein 2008) gave Austro-Hungarian sailors ample opportunities to buy stolen items cheaply. Some of them also took part in the looting. Although some of the detachment leaders, including the lieutenant commander Alojz Šusteršič, who was sent to fight near Tianjin, and Theodor Winterhalder, who commanded the light cruiser Zenta's battle detachment in Beijing, which included Matija Domjan, reported that their detachment members did not loot (Jung 2000, 106). Anton Haus, who took command of the armoured cruiser Kaiserin und Königin Maria There-

5 Among those who are most relevant for this article are Matija Domjan, Anton Haus, Alojz Šusteršič and Fran Vilfan.

sia immediately after the suppression of the Boxers, and shortly thereafter of the entire Austro-Hungarian East Asia Squadron, was indignant to find that all the Austro-Hungarian ships in East Asia were crammed with pillaged objects and that the officers were shamelessly discussing plunder. The sailors were not looting items just for themselves, however. Larger and more valuable objects were destined for the Imperial Court and the Navy (Halpern 1998, 36). Some of the looted objects, which were still in circulation in China many years later, were probably bought by the officer Ivan Skušek during WWI (Vampelj Suhadolnik 2019), 131.

WWI in East Asia began as a Japanese-German military engagement over the German colony in China. The Austro-Hungarian torpedo cruiser *Kaiserin Elisabeth* was sent to the aid of its European ally in the siege of Qingdao in autumn 1914 but was defeated by the combined Japanese and British forces. Most of the crew were captured by the Japanese and were sent to POW camps in Japan (Marinac 2017, 152–57; PMSMP, Lipovž, *Memoirs*). Those who were stationed in Austro-Hungarian marine detachments in Beijing and Tianjin were forbidden from returning home, but were only imprisoned after China joined the Allied forces in August 1917 (Kaminski 2014).

Among the latter was Ivan Skušek, an intendant of the torpedo cruiser *Kaiserin Elisabeth*, who returned home in 1920, bringing with him the largest collection of East Asian, predominantly Chinese, objects in what is now Slovenia. It is unclear how he had obtained this collection, or even where exactly he spent the first years of his stay in China. The packing list composed just before his interment shows that he already owned 40 crates of objects (more in Berdajs 2021). He purchased and perhaps otherwise obtained a further 35 crates in the following two and a half years. Skušek, who served as a liaison between the POW camp's self-management and Chinese and Dutch authorities,⁶ was able to move freely around the city. The memoirs of his younger brother Franci Skušek suggest that he may have bought these objects in Beijing's antique shops and art markets (SEM, Skušek, *Memoirs*), and from his correspondence with a German missionary responsible for the spiritual care of the POWs, it is clear that he engaged a knowledgeable assistant, at least for his numismatic collection (Grčar 2021, 62ff).⁷

6 As a neutral country, the Netherlands represented Austro-Hungarian and German interests in China during WWI.

7 The Skušek collection, now housed in the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, as well as Ivan Skušek and his Japanese wife Tsuneko Kondō Kawase, whom he met in China, are the focus of an ongoing international research project "Life of the Skušek Collection: From the Living Room to a Virtual Museum" (2023–2026). The story of the Skušek couple and the collection is portrayed in the current related exhibition "Asia in the Heart of Ljubljana: The Life of the Skušek Collection" in the Slovene Ethnographic Museum (until August 2025).

Other POWs in China and Japan were confined to the camps but were nevertheless taken on occasional sight-seeing trips. Some of them brought home rich collections of photographs and postcards (Viljem Pečar from China, and Ivan Lešnik and Anton Lipovž from Japan), some of which were obtained before their capture, and some taken during their imprisonment. Material and oral sources prove that they also brought some pieces of porcelain from Japan (Ivan Lešnik and Anton Lipovž), and from the estate of Leopold Voje, a commemorative silk embroidery has survived, which was made in Japan during his captivity and reminds us of his stay in East Asia (now in PMSMP) (fig. 6).

Mariners' Tastes in East Asian Objects as a Reflection of Popular Fashions

According to the accounts of relatives, many objects brought by the sailors were displaced, damaged or otherwise lost. The sailors of the Merchant Navy who visited China and Japan between the two world wars explained that they also bought objects that were primarily intended for either daily use or for further processing, which is the main reason why they have not endured to the present day. These include items used on board and during the voyage,⁸ silk and cloth to be made into clothing or home textiles upon returning home, and some other consumables. There are some indications that this could have been the case for earlier periods as well. A wooden tea container from the estate of Petty Officer Anton Ukmar and some written sources, for example, suggest that seafarers regularly brought tea. However, the objects that have survived to the present day are mainly those that were so distinctive that they represent foreign cultures in the eyes of the seafarers and their heirs.

Oral and written sources, as well as photographic material, postcards and the provenance of the surviving objects, show that the seafarers bought the objects for themselves and for their relatives, friends and acquaintances – often as a gift, but also on request.⁹ Some of them were later sold and, if we can judge from the practices of a few decades later, some may have been bought explicitly with that

8 Interviewees who served in both the Italian and Yugoslav Merchant Navy in the interwar period report that sailors had to provide their own uniforms and other items of clothing, so they bought textiles and finished products where they were cheaper. Japan, for example, was known for its well-priced quality underwear. They would also buy technical equipment such as gramophones and radios.

9 In the letters that Anton Dolenc sent to his nephew from his trip to East Asia in 1909–1910, he promised he would bring him back stamps from the trip, and Fran Vilfan apologises in one of his letters home that he is running out of money, implying that he won't be able to buy everything that was intended.

intention.¹⁰ For mariners, the selection of objects points to an emphasis on their commemorative value through their connection with the place or, more broadly, the country they visited on their voyage – its uniqueness and exoticism. Furthermore, many ascribed to them aesthetic, decorative and (some officers in particular) artistic value. For most, the practical use value was also important. Many objects, intentionally or unintentionally, also conveyed ideas about foreign lands to those who encountered them. The emphasis on one or the other value depended on the object, the individual seafarer and their social environment.

According to the surviving artefacts, the most common purchases among seafarers of different ranks in East Asia were postcards and photographs. Postcards, which were small, inexpensive, light and readily available everywhere, were bought by virtually all seafarers, regardless of rank and social status. They were sent to acquaintances and relatives to communicate that everything was going well with them, but in the fashion of the early 20th century, they also served as popular souvenirs and collectors' items, brought home for themselves or for others. This resulted, for example, in the postcard album of the naval superior Ivan Koršič and in the presence of numerous East Asian postcards in the albums of other sailors who had never been to East Asia (August Blaznik, Matevž Štibil, etc.). The sailors who bought postcards for their own collections followed the trend of putting stamps on them and having them postmarked on the front (image) side—to make both visible when inserted in the album (fig. 10).¹¹ The albums were also used to store photographs that mariners purchased from photo studios in East Asia or that were taken by one of their fellow crew members (e.g. Viktor Kristan, Ivan Skušek, Viljem Pečar, Anton Lipovž and Ivan Lešnik).

Another very popular type of East Asian object among mariners was porcelain-ware, as well as tea sets and vases made of other materials, most often ceramics, but also brass or cloisonné. Most of these types of objects were richly decorated, and those from Japan, especially, tended to be adapted to the use and tastes of Europeans. The objects varied in quality, size and price, with the cheaper versions accessible to the less well-off sailors.

Word also spread among seafarers about the sale of cheap but high-quality silk in China and Japan (Marinac 2002, 62). Officers (Fran Vilfan and Anton Dolenc)

10 This was the case for the Merchant Navy, where seafarers would supplement their rather meagre incomes with sales of popular East Asian items. The situation for the two groups was quite different. Those on the Merchant Navy ships would typically make continual trips to East Asia, while those enlisted in the Navy would only make one such voyage.

11 Early 20th century East Asian postcard collections in Slovenian public institutions, including those of mariners, are examined in an edited volume by Shigemori Bučar and Veselič (2021).

bought paintings and embroideries on silk with Chinese and Japanese motifs, including embroideries for the borders of Chinese garments or patches for them. The most widespread among non-commissioned officers and sailors, however, were commemorative silk embroideries, made in Japan on their orders, commemorating their journey to East Asia¹² (fig. 6) (Ivašič 2019). They can be considered as objects that primarily have a memorial function, as there is a direct, recorded association with the remembered event (Gačnik 1992, 44).



Figure 6. The custom-made commemorative embroidery brought from Japan by Leopold Voje, now in the Piran Maritime Museum. (Source: PMSMP. Photo by Igor Presl)

12 Maritime Museum Piran keeps embroideries brought by Karol Krizman and Leopoldo Voje as well photographs of the embroidery commissioned by Karel Mráz, which is privately owned.

In the collections of officers and midshipmen of the Austro-Hungarian Navy (Jožef Berthold, Fran Vilfan, Alojz Tepina and Anton Ukmar), lacquered wooden objects (trays, boxes, dishes, paintings and albums for photographs or postcards) with inlays or appliqués made of mother-of-pearl and ivory have also been preserved from East Asia. Their collections also include several statuettes, usually of deities, made of black wood or brass (bequests of the officers Fran Vilfan and Alojz Tepina), paintings in various techniques and styles (Fran Vilfan and Anton Ukmar), parts of samurai weapons (Anton Dolenc), items of clothing, among which, in addition to silk embroidery, buttons for mandarin hats were popular (Anton Dolenc and Fran Vilfan), and fans (Rupert Pivec and Anton Haus). The officers Fran Vilfan and Anton Dolenc also brought various other small utilitarian items, such as small boxes, calligraphy utensils, hairpins, *netsuke* (small figurines used in Japan as weights for carrying tobacco or other bags) and others. Some officers (Anton Haus, Viktor Kristan and Fran Vilfan) also brought pieces of furniture. The most common were Japanese and Chinese folded screens, some of which were made for foreign markets.

The purchasing preferences reflect the collecting fashions of the European elites and trends such as Chinoiserie and Japonisme of this and earlier periods, which trickled down to the educated urban classes and even to the lower classes. The producers in East Asia had been adapting to the tastes of Western customers and most of the surviving objects of the mariners—especially the porcelain, furniture, postcards and photographs—had already been produced with the intention of selling them to foreign consumers (Jähn 2004; Madsen and White 2009; Wakita 2013; Kaufman 2019; Suchomel 2023). Not only the famous export wares, but even the authentic artisanal objects that were originally made for locals, such as handles of short samurai *kozuka* knives and *netsuke*, soon became mass-produced as souvenirs when the demand grew with the inflow of foreign visitors and so-journers (Shigemori Bučar 2020, 90–92; Milhaupt 2009).

The difference in the numbers and types of objects brought home by mariners of different classes and ranks indicates that the Japanese port cities had a much better-developed and more diverse souvenir supply, able to satisfy both wealthy and modest customers. Objects from Japan are not only more numerous in the mariners' legacies in general but are vastly overrepresented in the legacies of lower-ranking seamen and the seamen who only brought a few items. On the other hand, objects brought from China tended to be made for local consumption. This is probably due to the increased availability of popular items with different levels of quality and price ranges as a result of the aforementioned looting after the Boxer Rebellion and the growing impoverishment of all the Chinese social classes. Among the Chinese objects, smaller and more affordable items predominate (e.g.

chopsticks and mahjong), while furniture and works of art are rarer due to their cost and difficulty of transportation, and were only brought back by officers.

The Skušek collection is an exception as it was gathered explicitly with the purpose of opening a museum of Chinese culture and therefore consists of many different types of objects, many of which are high quality.¹³ When the plans fell through, a large part of the collection was used to furnish and decorate the Skušek residence and moved with the family around Ljubljana, attracting the attention of the city's intellectual and art circles (Motoh 2021).

New Home—New Meaning

Regardless of the number or types of objects that seafarers brought home and their original purpose, mariners of all classes displayed the acquired East Asian objects for decoration and as a testimony of their journeys and experiences. Some of the objects served their intended functions. Flowers were placed in vases, at least occasionally; boxes held various items; albums held photographs and postcards; and tea sets were taken out of their glass cabinets to serve guests, at least on very special occasions.

The officers who were able to bring home furniture used it in their living spaces, as was fashionable among the upper classes. The photographs of Grand Admiral Anton Haus' Vienna apartment show an East Asian cabinet of curiosities, adorned with smaller porcelain vases, a Buddha statuette and several ornamental boxes, all East Asian in style. Other photographs show a smaller chest with mother-of-pearl inlay – almost certainly from Korea (cf. *Korean Lacquerware* 2011, 124–33), and, sitting on a wall shelf, a larger vase holding a fan with a portrait of a Japanese woman. On the walls, paintings from East Asia were hung next to European ones (fig. 7) (Trenz family archive).

Folded screens were used in the apartments of some officers and their relatives to divide the space and decorate rooms. Anton Haus, his sister Kitty and some relatives owned Japanese folded screens. The photographs of the Trenz family, Haus's in-laws, show that they liked to use it as a background for photographs of family members and visitors—a practice commonly observed in old Chinese portrait painting and photography (fig. 8). Various tables, cupboards and other pieces of furniture brought by some of the officers also served to store and display objects, also testifying to the family's familiarity with the fashions of the time (private collection of the Trenz family; PMSMP, Metod Koch, Photograph Album).

13 See Vampelj Suhadolnik (2020; 2023) on Skušek's furniture, and Grčar (2021) on the numismatic collection.



Figure 7. A room in Anton Haus' apartment in Vienna. (Source: Trenz family archive)



Figure 8. Anton Haus with his wife Ana, née Trenz, and her siblings in front of a Japanese folded screen at the Trenz family's Draškovec mansion sometime after 1902. (Source: Trenz family archive)

In addition to the furniture, porcelain and statuettes that adorned cupboards and shelves, paintings were hung on walls, as well as framed embroideries on silk. Some mariners also hung ornately decorated trays, as demonstrated by the hanging devices on the backs of the trays from the estates of Jožef Berthold and Fran Vilfan. Joseph Berthold's tray, which was made for foreign buyers, was probably intended for decoration in the first place, as its high relief ornamentation makes it unsuitable for carrying things. The aforementioned photos of Haus's apartment in Vienna and of the officers' cabins and officers' lounge on the troopship Donau, dated to the end of the 19th century, further show how fans were used to decorate the rooms, either by hanging them on the walls or by placing them on shelves (fig. 4).

The very popular fans were occasionally used for fanning, and were perhaps combined with East Asian robes for play and entertainment. According to the Trenz family, some of the girls played with fans, and Ivan Konte, one of the Slovenian naval aviation officers of the Royal Yugoslav Navy, fondly remembers the so-called *Japanese evenings* in the Navy air bases in Divulje and Kumbor in the 1930s, when Ivan Skušek's adopted daughter Erika from his wife's first marriage lived there with her naval officer husband.¹⁴

However, many objects could no longer serve their specific purpose when they were transferred to a new environment, such as calligraphy stones, mandarin hat buttons, women's hairpins and more, as well as the already mentioned handles of *kozuka* knives and *netsuke*, which had in fact been produced as collectables and souvenirs rather than for local consumption. The two mariners may have found the objects curious, aesthetically pleasing or suitable as gifts for family members and friends, but the absence of these objects in other mariners' legacies suggests that either the mariners generally didn't find them particularly appealing or that, coveted by European and American collectors, they might have been too expensive for mariners of lower ranks.

In middle- and upper-class houses, smaller items, predominantly tea sets or parts thereof, were displayed in cupboards or other cabinets with glass doors, and only smaller and less decorative items were kept out of view, as were the photographs and postcards. However, it was precisely the inscribed and annotated postcards and personal photographs that, alongside the commemorative embroideries on silk, had the strongest biographical memorial value. The latter were commissioned in Japan, especially by some lower-ranking seamen. The embroideries commem-

14 While for Erika, whose mother was Japanese, donning a Japanese kimono was part of her heritage, for other participants it was an exotic fancy dress. An East Asian-style robe was also used for similar purposes by the heirs of Fran Vilfan, who wore it several times for carnivals. The garment, however, may not have been Fran's but a later acquisition.

Viljem Pečar and Ivan Skušek). They usually wrote down the place and time when the photograph was taken and the names of the people in it. Portrait photographs have also been preserved, which show that the sailors gifted them to each other as mementoes, with dedications written on the back or front. Photographs of seamen of other nationalities and of Japanese guards from the Aonogahara camp in the collections of Anton Lipovž, Ivan Lešnik and others are a case in point.

Postcards, which usually have a caption in the front (image) side, also played a very strong role as objects of memory. This is especially true of those collections that were kept by seafarers in special albums dedicated to a particular voyage. The postcards were usually arranged by seafarers chronologically, following the ship's itinerary, or by place (e.g. albums by Viktor Kristan, Karel Zevnik and Ivan Lešnik).¹⁶ Even when postcards from a voyage to East Asia were placed in an album with postcards from elsewhere, they were grouped together (album by Anton Lipovž). Albums of photographs and postcards therefore form a whole and constitute a kind of travelogue in pictures. In the cases of Viktor Kristan and Anton Lipovž, they also complement their written travelogues.

In addition to their commemorative value, the objects played an important role in spreading knowledge about voyages and foreign lands. Although the seafarers could be reminded every day of their voyages to East Asia by the objects on display in their apartments—objects that were different from all the others and therefore attracted the attention of visitors—the seafarers most often used postcards and photographs to recount their experiences and knowledge of foreign places. Oral sources testify that visitors would ask the seafarers and later owners about the origin and use of the objects. Many seafarers, regardless of rank, were keen to explain where and when they had obtained the objects. They were eager to talk about their experiences on their voyages and about everything they had seen in foreign lands. This is also reflected in interviews and conversations with living seafarers.¹⁷

Milivoj Lešnik, the son of Petty Officer Ivan Lešnik, remembered from his childhood the visits of acquaintances and his father telling them in the evenings about his voyage to East Asia aboard the *Kaiserin Elisabeth* and about his captivity in

16 On the same voyage, a ship might have visited certain ports more than once.

17 Seafarers from all periods found it difficult to get used to their lives ashore, especially in the initial years after returning home, and were keen to talk about their time on board, especially with other seafarers who had shared the lifestyle. They recounted the stories to relatives and friends, some of whom listened keenly, while others less so. For example, when Marinac visited Anton Turk, the experienced sea captain of the General Navigation Company of Piran, in 2002, his wife stressed how happy she was to see her, so that her husband would be able to talk to someone else about life on board. She herself had heard his stories repeatedly and was tired of them. Bogdanac's seafaring interlocutor, too, was delighted by her interest.

Japan during WWI. Ivan showed the visitors postcards and photographs from his album, which were mostly from his captivity in Japan (fig. 9). Since young Milivoj was not allowed to sit with the visitors, he would sneak up to the door and eavesdrop with great interest (Lešnik, interview 2016). As his son Rudi recalled, Karel Mraz was also encouraged to tell stories by his friends, who liked to pay for his drinks (Mraz, interview 2016), and Peter Keršič still remembers his grandfather Alojz Tepina's storytelling (Keršič, interview 2023). Ivan Skušek and his wife Tsuneko, who planned a museum of Chinese culture in Slovenia, were certainly at the forefront of spreading knowledge about East Asia, as they hosted many interested guests in their apartment, and Tsuneko also promoted East Asian culture through public appearances (Motoh 2021; Hrvatin 2021). The seafarers further spread knowledge about foreign places and cultures through postcards sent by post to acquaintances and relatives. The postcards were very informative in themselves through the pictures, stamps and postmarks, and even more so with the notes from seafarers about what they had seen and experienced.



Figure 10. A page from Viktor Kristan's album of postcards from his voyage to East Asia aboard SMS Leopard, 1907–1909. (Source: PMSMP)

govih zarodnikov ni možak, kakoršen je oče bil. Le Ibrahim Paša bi ga bil dostojno namestoval, pa nemila smert ga je prežgodaj vzela.

(Dalje sledi.)

Pismo našega rojaka K. iz Kitajskega na barki „Novara.“

Matija K. . . . iz Radolice, ki je v pretečenem letu na barki „Novari“, ktera je bila tudi v „Novicah“ že večkrat imenovana, na morje šel se okrog zemlje peljat in jo ogledavat, je svojemu bratu iz Kitajskega (Kineškega) pisal. Iz tega pisma povzamemo sledeče verstice:

Ljubi brat!

V nobenem čudnišem kraji bi ne bil mogel Tvojega dragega pisma prejeti, kakor tukaj v kitajskem mestu Hong-kongu. — Tretji dan malega serpana smo se lesem prišli; prvo vprašanje je berž bilo: ali nas kaj pism čaka. Silna žalost pa nas je obsla, ko smo zvedili, da še ni nobenega pisma. Sedmi dan zjutraj zgodaj pa se kar hipoma med goricami, ktere v kitajskem morji sem ter tje iz vode gledajo kakor obrbite kitajske glave, poštna barka prikaže. Kako sem veselja poskakoval, ko sem slišal, da nam ta barka pism prinese. In tako je res bilo. Koj po enajstih pride komisar s precej debelim zlozkom pod pazdijo, pa nam tudi včas nevoljen in žalosten naznani, da se je več pism po poti zgubilo. Moje veselje pa je bilo vendar neizrečeno, ko mi je komisar pisanje iz moje ljube domovine, od Tebe, dragi brate, in od ljube matere naše zročil. Nisem vedel, kaj bi veselja počel; včas norčav letim na zgornji del barke drage verstice brat.

Naj Ti zdaj mesto Hong-kong in njegove prebivavce enmalo popišem. Mesto je ob hribu zidano, kteri se do morja razprostira, na katerem pa ne zapaziš ne najmanjšega drevesa; samo nizka mahu podobna trava ga pokriva. Hiše Evropejcev, ki tukaj živé, so jako visoke in lepe, močno zidane in po najnovejši evropejski šegi izdelane. Kitajske hiše pa so nizke in oborne, in imajo prav majhne okence, našim linam ali pa luknjam na ogradih podobne. Zidovje je sivo pomalano in strehe so precej plošnjate. Kakor so pa te maloprida in revne, tako zale in imenitne so hiše bogatih Kitajcev, kterih Ti še popisati ne morem. Najlože si pa misliš, kakošne so, če doma pogledaš podobe, na

liki uhavniki kincijo, in steer tako veliki, da bi lahko obtepe sončnih žarkov varovali. Obleko ima široko, preč mahajočo suknjo, ktera mu sega do mēč, in pod njo se vidi jo še dosti bela jopica in bele široke hlače, ktere do kolēn segajo, potem se pa v višnjeve nogovice zgubé, ki na koncu v močno zakrivljenih čevljih z zlo debelimi podplatit tičé. Pokrivala ni imel nobenega. Možicelj ta uči keršansko vero.

Zdaj pa nekaj od tukajšnih žensk. Ločijo se le malo od možkih; obličje se vé da je enmalo gladkeje, kakor se to povsod pri ženskem spolu najde. Sploh so pa vendar možkim tako podobne, da bi se večkrat lahko zmotil in da bi možkega k ženskemu spolu štel, ko bi ne zagledal dosti zgodaj obritega nadglavja; ženske imajo namreč sprelepe črne lasé, ktere si prav umetno splesti znajo. Njih obleka je možki enaka, le suknje so dalje, kakor sem že pred povedal, in imajo veliko širokejše rokave, ktere si prav mično nazaj visejo. Noge so tako drobne, da se človek mora začuditi; persti so ravno zategavoljo spod zaviti, da se noge manje vidijo; koj otrokom jih zavijajo.

Najrevniši ljudje tega mesta nimajo na suhem nič hiš, imajo le precej velike ladije, v kterih se po koturu vozijo z vso družino. Na tej ladii ribe lové in si jih kuhajo; vse opraviila opravljajo, spé in umrejo tudi na ladii. Ta ladija je vse njih premoženje.

Mesto je prav čudež, kakoršnega do zdaj na svojem potovanji še nismo nikjer vidili. Indijske mesta so pač tudi čudapolne; memo kitajskih so pa le komaj njih senca. Prodajavnice (štacune) so napolnjene z najlepšimi in najčudnišimi rečmi. Tam se nič družega ne dobi kakor drago svilnato blago, najlepši slonokosteni izrezki, najumetnije izdelana srebernina itd. Mi Evropejci skor oblišimo o ogledovanji takih lepotij, da ne vemo, kje bi začeli knpovati.

Kónj se tukaj nič ne vidi, in bi se tudi ne mogli rabiti, ker so le dveje ulice ravne; na vsakem voglu pa je deset ali petnajst sedežev pripravljenih, kterih je nekaj pokritih, nekaj pa, kteri so za lepo vreme, nepokritih. Na levi in desni strani sta dva po tri sežnje dolga kola in pri teh dva Kitajca, ktera nabaseta tak sedež s človekom, ki se va-nj vsede, na rame, ter se pobereta, kamor se jima ukaže.

Življenje je tukaj kaj drago. Kozarec vina veljá en tolar ali pa še več, en kozarec ola (piva) pol tolarja, to je po našem dnarji en goldinar. Res težko se za en polič ola en goldinar plača, pa kaj se če? Včas se ga vendar tako napijemo, da ga zlo v glavi čutimo; zraven Ti pa

Figure 11. Matija Kliner's letter from China to his brothers was published in the weekly *Novice rokodelske, kmetijske in narodske*. (Source: *Novice gospodarske, obrtnijske in narodske*, 1858)

At the time when the mariners were still alive, their role in spreading knowledge about foreign places was therefore considerable, despite their relatively small circles of acquaintances and relatives. In fact, seafarers remained the most frequent travellers to East Asia from the regions of Slovenia throughout the first half of the 20th century, learning about foreign places through direct contact.¹⁸ Some seafarers started to write memoirs for this very reason or wrote personal diaries and longer letters during their travels. Voyages were an important part of their lives and they considered them something extraordinary and therefore worthy of attention by the general public. In the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th

18 Another important group—smaller in number, but with more in-depth experience in East Asia, were Catholic missionaries.

century, the editors of Slovenian magazines were happy to publish their writings, including letters sent by mariners to their family members and friends (fig. 11).¹⁹ Viktor Kristan (PMSMP, Kristan) states at the beginning of his unfinished memoir that his ambition is to introduce Slovenians to countries about which little was known at that time. Many other seafarers, whose texts were published in magazines, had a similar aim. As well as their own experiences, most of them reported on the local geography, history and ways of life of the places they visited (Vidmar 1880; Pahor and Petek 1980; Pohar 1951; *Novice gospodarske, obrtnijske in narodske* 1858; 1872; PMSMP, Dolenc; PMSMP, Kristan).²⁰ Although some of the seafarers may have bought postcards and photographs with the intention of publishing them, the articles printed during the Austro-Hungarian period were not accompanied by such visual material (more in Marinac 2017).

Preservation of Objects by Seafarers and Heirs

Many of the objects brought back from East Asia by sailors have not survived. Some were sold or destroyed while the seafarers were still alive—to the regret of some heirs—while others were lost or damaged and thrown away by the seafarers' successive heirs. Objects have been lost or destroyed in accidents, wars and relocations, or misplaced during inheritance divisions or property sales. In many cases, old objects had to give way to new ones due to lack of space.²¹ Some postcards sent by sailors from East Asia have found their way to private collectors or antiquarians. All kinds of objects were sold or bequeathed to museums by heirs. It is likely that the heirs discarded some of the objects because they did not associate them with East Asia or with their seafarer relatives. This can be inferred from visits to some heirs, who were not certain or were completely unaware of the provenance of certain objects in their homes.

For example, relatives of Anton Haus who had in their possession a Japanese folding screen only realised that it had been brought by him from East Asia when they found a photograph he had had taken with his relatives in front of their screen in the Draškovec mansion where the family used to live (fig. 8). Due to the former upper middle-class status of the family, they thought it possible the screen

19 See for example Matija Kliner's letter published in *Kmetijske in rokodelske novice* (1858) or the compilation of 16 letters by Vinko Vidmar (1880) in *Letopis matice slovenske*.

20 Some of the memoirs focus more on various emergencies they encountered and the way of life of the seafarers (Domjan 1912; PMSMP, Rupnik).

21 As cups and saucers were the objects used more frequently, they suffered the most damage and destruction. They were also more sensitive when mariners were moving house due to marriage, new jobs or retirement.

was bought by their predecessors. Similarly, Viktor Kristan's great-nephew, who inherited a part of his estate, did not know that the piece of furniture they use as a plant stand is in fact a Chinese high stand for similar purposes. It was only when we alerted them that it was Chinese that they linked it to Viktor Kristan. They are certain it must be his, as they could not imagine the family obtaining such a piece in any other way (Kristan, interview 2023).

Interviews suggest that not all seafarers and their heirs valued East Asian artefacts in the same way. While some families retained the objects through generations despite frequent moves, wars, deportations and evictions, others were sold or discarded by the mariners themselves. According to his son Rudi Mraz, the sailor Karel Mraz brought back numerous objects from his voyage during 1904–1905—candlesticks, a walking stick made of ivory with a hidden blade,²² as well as all kinds of porcelain. He apparently sold several items for drink, while other items were destroyed. After leaving the Navy, Karel Mraz took a job with the railway as a shunter and lived with his family in two carriages on a dead-end track in Novo mesto. The last of the porcelain was smashed when their carriages were hit by a train due to a drunk shunter. Only the commemorative silk embroidery survived, which his son Rudi proudly kept (Mraz, interview 2016). Bojan Domjan, the great-nephew of Matija Domjan, recalled the destruction of a rather rich collection of East Asian objects from his great-uncle's collection. Reportedly, the heirs did not value the objects and did not take care of them, so they were destroyed when the roof collapsed during renovation (Domjan, interview February 2024). The heirs of Anton Lipovž, Alojz Tepina and some others also remember either witnessing or hearing second-hand accounts about the loss or damage of objects. In both cases, however, several objects did survive until the present day.

The Ship's Butler Matija Kliner from Radovljica, on the other hand, sold the objects he had brought from his voyage around the world on the frigate *Novara* in 1857–1859 to the Regional Museum of Carniola, the predecessor of the National Museum of Slovenia. Perhaps he felt they were of no use to him. The objects include Chinese dominoes, two banana leaf fans, Chinese coins and men's shoes from Shanghai, as well as a Buddhist deity statue from the Nicobar Islands (Štrukelj 1980–1982, 139).

Completely different reasons led owners to “damage” postcards by removing their stamps, as seen in Ivan Koršič's album of postcards sent to him by fellow navy men from East Asia and elsewhere. The postcard owners, who carefully preserved the postcards even after the stamps had been taken off, did not want to destroy them,

22 According to oral sources, such an item was also brought home by Petty Officer Shime Radin, who was on a trip to East Asia on the torpedo boat *Panther* (Radin, interview 2023).

but to acquire new collectables of even greater value. Some owners removed the postcards or photographs from the albums and continued to keep them in a loose state. This was probably due to a lack of space or to the poor condition of the albums making less valuable to them. The postcard collections of Matevž Štibil, Karel Rant, and Karel Zevnik have survived in this form.

On the other hand, the heirs of officer Fran Vilfan have preserved many items to the present day, despite his frequent moves with his family before and after WWI, as well as his arrest and the deportation of his family during WWI when they were living in Sulina, in present-day Romania. Despite frequent movements, many objects were also preserved by the heirs of Anton Ukmar, who was in East Asia from 1908 to 1910 with the torpedo boat *Kaiserin Elisabeth*. Both he and his daughter, who inherited his estate, had to move several times. Her son, who inherited the East Asian objects from her, recalls some fans from his childhood that are no longer in the collection. He assumes they were destroyed like some items from the tea sets, which are still in his possession (Polak, interview 2023).

For generations, the Trenz family also carefully preserved the Japanese folded screen and the fan brought from East Asia for his wife's brothers by Anton Haus. The last owner of the family's Draškovec mansion, Marijana Trenz, had her residence reduced to only two rooms after the mansion was confiscated in 1948, which she later shared with the family of her nephew Alfred Anton Trenz. The screen was among the selected pieces of furniture that she brought from the rest of the mansion into her rooms. Alfred's two children still remember that it decorated the corner of Marijana's living room. As the mansion was rapidly falling into disrepair, the Trenz family set up a new home in Šentjernej around 1960, and the mansion was demolished in 1966 (*Dolenjski list* 1966, 12; Kambič 2021). The Japanese screen was once again among the pieces of furniture that were transferred to the new home as an important part of their family heritage. In the apartment in Šentjernej, it continued to decorate the living room for some time. Quite damaged due to age and long use, it was later placed against the corner of the wall in the corridor, and finally carefully wrapped in cardboard and stored in the attic. According to the last owner, it was removed because she feared it wouldn't be properly taken care of by the next generation, now that the highly visible damage meant that it could no longer be used decoratively. However, she wanted to preserve it because of its commemorative and historical value, so she sold it to the Piran Maritime Museum.

In the case of the present owners of East Asian objects, field research has shown that in several cases, they were inherited by heirs who took great interest in them, which has contributed to their longer-term preservation. Today's owners mainly

avoid using them, concerned about their age and fragility, fearing damage and destruction. They display the objects for their aesthetic qualities and personal and family history. The great importance of the objects to their owners is evidenced by the fact that many of them were kept even after they had been damaged. They were put away in less visible places in cupboards or cellars, or even repaired by the owners. The great-niece of Jožef Spetić, a ship's engineer at Lloyd of Austria in Trieste, kept a Japanese tea set with a teapot whose handle had broken off in a glass case for a long time. Anton Ukmar's grandson glued two broken vases himself and they still adorn the wooden chest in his bedroom (fig. 12). The panels with mother-of-pearl and ivory inlays hang on the living room wall, despite the missing pieces. The heirs of Fran Vilfan also keep the damaged objects carefully stored in boxes. They have replaced torn embroidery on the Chinese screen by another, smaller embroidery that Fran brought from East Asia. It is now protected behind glass.



Figure 12. Detail of a vase brought back by Anton Ukmar, showing reparations made by his grandson Miran Polak. (Source: PMSMP. Photo by Sara Grdina)

Lines of Inheritance and Meanings of Objects for Later Generations

Seafarers left their estates to their nearest relatives, but this would often mean siblings or nephews and nieces, because it was common for mariners in long-term service to remain childless. While Marinac was still able to interview some children or nephews of the mariners in the 2010s, by now objects are in the hands of the next generation of descendants and their children. Many of the current owners have only vague childhood recollections of the mariners or only know about them through second-hand accounts. When families decided to keep the objects, the division of inheritance followed the principles of fairness, but personal interests were also considered. In one family, the two daughters (granddaughters of the mariner) both appreciated East Asian objects aesthetically and tried to ensure that they would both receive a similar number of similar objects, while their brother who showed less interest in them only received a few, but was compensated with other items from the estate. On the other hand, the inheritance could be somewhat of a burden, as in the case of a Japanese tea set, which the current owners didn't particularly like and therefore did not use, but still kept it in a glass cabinet as important family heritage (Keršič, interview 2023; Kristan, interview 2023; Polak, interview 2023; Vilfan's heirs, interview 2024).

Although the objects continue to decorate and draw attention to themselves in the homes of today's owners, the role, meaning and knowledge of the objects have changed from generation to generation. While seafarers knew where they bought certain items, where those items were made and what they were for, this knowledge quickly disappeared as the objects were passed down. While the seafarers may have known that some of the objects had been adapted to foreign tastes, the subsequent owners have been unaware of this; for example, that tea cups would only have handles if they were intended for Western buyers. While interest in and knowledge of East Asia varied among our interlocutors, none of them engaged in a more in-depth study of East Asia or the types of objects they owned. The heir of Anton Tepina, for example, purchased from online antique shops some vases in the same style as those brought by his grandfather to expand his collection, but his focus seems to be more on strengthening his connection with his grandfather and his legacy, than developing any expertise on Chinese ceramics (Keršič, interview 2023).

The association of objects with seafarers has meant that the preservation of objects has largely been linked to knowledge of and attachment to the seafarer and, for younger generations of heirs, to an awareness of and pride in the importance of ancestors. Field research has shown that, as a result, objects are preserved longer or for more generations in the direct line of descent (children, grandchildren

and great-grandchildren) than in the indirect line of succession (nephews and great-nephews). While the mariners' children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren are attached to the objects because of their connection with their ancestors, heirs who did not know the seafarer (the heirs of Jožef Spetič, Anton Lipovž and Viktor Kristan) kept the objects mainly because of their uniqueness and aesthetic value. As they were not emotionally attached to them, they were still used, at least occasionally. Viktor Kristan's great-grandnephews remember looking at his albums of photographs and postcards as children, seeing it as a book of fairy tales or an adventure picture book. They also remember that on special occasions, their mother still served tea in the cups Viktor Kristan brought from Japan. Even today, they still occasionally offer guests tea in the cups, which are kept in a kitchen cupboard behind a glass door. The cups were also used for a long time by Jožef Spetič's niece and later by her daughter.

For the close relatives of the seafarers, on the other hand, the commemorative value of the objects has been linked to a strong emotional bond with the seafarer. After the death of the seafarer, the objects became tangible memories of the missing loved one. In the eyes of their relatives, they personified the seafarer. The objects represented the memories of the moments spent with the seafarers around the objects, including the seafarers' accounts of their voyages. Subsequent generations also associated the objects with their family and, when kept at home, with their home. The objects were therefore also part of their family and personal identity.

It is for this reason that Lance-Corporal Ivan Lešnik's youngest son, Milivoj Lešnik, who recalls his father's stories about his journey and life in the Japanese camp, was strongly attached to his father's East Asian objects. As he recounts, he loved and respected his mother but he adored his father, who always answered his questions, gave him advice and helped him. Ivan was wise but quiet, honest and a good worker. As a man who had experienced Asia, he was a charismatic figure for the children. It was for this reason that Milivoj also wanted to join the Navy. Milivoj carefully kept in a box in his cabinet, together with his father's personal documents, a miniature vase, two sake cups and saucers from Japan and an ivory necklace that Ivan Lešnik brought back from East Asia and his captivity in Japan. The postcard album from his father's trip to East Asia also meant a great deal to Milivoj, but he most valued the album of photographs that were mainly from Ivan's Japanese captivity. Many of the photographs, taken by the sailors themselves, feature Ivan. Looking through this captioned photo album, Milivoj recounted everything he knew about his father's life in East Asia. Because of his pride in his father, Milivoj lent the album and the objects to the Piran Maritime Museum for an exhibition, despite his considerable fear that they would never be returned (Lešnik, interview 2016).

Karl Mraz's son, Rudi Mraz, also proudly talked about his father's voyage to East Asia. He also had a strong attachment to the aforementioned commemorative silk embroidery from Japan, the only surviving object, for its memory value. He proudly showed the embroidery to journalists who, according to Rudi Mraz, had written a piece about his father, but he refused to lend it to anyone for fear of it never being returned to him (Mraz, interview 2016).

While the sons of Karel Mraz and Ivan Lešnik had an attachment to objects that was linked entirely to memories of their father, for the second and third generation of descendants, the objects represent family heritage in an aesthetic and decorative form. The grandchildren of Anton Ukmar and Alojz Tepina keep objects from East Asia in prominent places. In the modern apartment of the architect Milan Polak, Japanese lacquered decorations hang on the wall (fig. 14), larger vases stand on a chest, and porcelain objects dominate a glass cabinet. Both he and his wife appreciate the objects as much for their beauty as for their family significance. This is perhaps best illustrated by the Polak's watercolour painting of a tea set brought by his grandfather Anton Ukmar (figs. 15a and 15b), which links family history with the heir's love of art. Peter Keršič keeps his objects in an old glass cabinet in an inherited heritage-protected former tavern, where he occasionally organises cultural events. He and his family appreciate antiques, but for him, the pride in his East Asian vases is more about his grandfather. When Bogdana Marinac curated an exhibition in the Piran Maritime Museum entitled *Across the Seas to the Unknown Far East* (Marinac 2017), which portrayed the East Asian voyages of Austro-Hungarian Navy men from Slovenian lands, he borrowed part of the exhibition to display in his guesthouse, sharing with locals and other visitors the story of his grandfather (fig. 13). Peter Keršič and Milan Polak knew their grandfathers and remember their stories from their early youth. But while Peter Keršič remembers at least parts of his grandfather's stories about the Navy and the voyage, Milan Polak only remembers his grandfather's stories about other things.

The increased prevalence and availability of East Asian artefacts in the Slovenian regions after WWII, or after 1980, as well as more frequent tourist travel to non-European destinations, have made the artefacts of East Asian seafarers less exotic and therefore perhaps less interesting to many heirs. Although their historical, antiquarian and heritage value is increasing, as even objects that were new when they were brought from East Asia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries have become antiques over time, the heirs mostly do not consider them particularly prestigious. They appreciate their aesthetic value, but their connection with their ancestors is still the most important value they attach to them. Some even conduct research on their life stories and family trees.



Figure 13. Marinac's 2017 exhibition partly displayed at the Keršič family's guesthouse. (Photo by Bogdana Marinac)



Figure 14. Japanese decorative lacquer panels, produced for foreign consumers, adorn the apartment of Anton Ukmar's grandson. (Photo by Maja Veselič)

Fran Vilfan's heirs, intellectuals and scholars, who also keep a family archive at home, have undertaken detailed research on their ancestors and have even published their findings academically (Maček, Pflaum and Vilfan Vospernik 2019). For them, objects are not just antiques and sources for research, they are also objects of historical value. Fran Vilfan's son, the legal historian Dr Sergij Vilfan, who was very close to his father, displayed many objects that Fran Vilfan had brought from East Asia on the walls and shelves of his apartment. Because they reminded him of his father, he was very emotionally attached to them. He knew a lot about them and would give explanations to interested visitors. Today's owners, who did not know Fran Vilfan, know much less about the objects. As they say, their visitors are rarely interested in the objects. They too have an emotional attachment to them, but not because of their love for Fran Vilfan. Their memories and emotions are linked to the apartment they grew up in, to the objects that surrounded them when they were young, and to their parents (Vilfan's heirs, interviews 2023 and 2024).

Mojca Štajner, great-granddaughter of Jožef Berthold, is also passionate about researching her ancestors. She keeps the Japanese vase and tray that Jožef Berthold brought back from his voyage around the world on the frigate *Novara* in 1857–1859 in a prominent place, together with some other precious pieces of family inheritance. As she tells us, despite her frequent moves, her ancestral objects had a special place in all her dwellings. The objects are remnants of the ancestors' material heritage, evidence of their high social status and professions (Štajner, interview 2023).

The objects that seafarers brought back from their voyages have undoubtedly helped to preserve the knowledge of seafarers and their voyages to this day. On the other hand, for many of the seafarers' heirs, the memories of the seafarer have been preserved despite the absence of East Asian objects, while in several cases the objects have been preserved by the heirs, but not the memory of the seafarer who brought them. In a few cases, however, these objects have helped revive or clarify the memory. In several cases, the heirs knew that their ancestor or relative had made the voyage to East Asia, but their knowledge was partly inaccurate. The heirs of Karel Zevnik and Karel Mraz were convinced that they had been in China during the Boxer Rebellion, but the objects revealed that they had been there several years later. A souvenir embroidery that Karel Mraz brought back from Japan records that he was in East Asia during the Russo-Japanese War in 1904–1905. Similarly, a postcard album that Karel Zevnik brought back from his trip shows that he sailed to East Asia on the torpedo boat *Leopard* in 1907–1909, based on the stamps and the sparse and scanty text on the postcards. The postcard and the photograph also brought back memories of a voyage made by Mihael



Figures 15a and 15b. A part of Anton Ukmar's porcelain collection. (Source: PMSMP. Photo by Sara Grdina); and the painting of the objects by his grandson Miran Polak. (Photo by Maja Veselič)

Guzič from Sveti Peter in the municipality of Piran, who was a member of the Austro-Hungarian naval detachment in Beijing in 1914. The Guzič family has preserved a photograph of him in his Austro-Hungarian uniform, and the Ferran family from Dragonja has some postcards from East Asia that he sent from Beijing in 1914 to his wife Maria, née Feran, in Sv. Peter. The knowledge that Mihael Guzič was recruited into the Austro-Hungarian Navy has survived with his heirs for several generations, but no one knew that he was in East Asia (Ferran, interview 2022; Guzič, interview 2022). With the help of postcards, a photograph and a family tree drawn by the heirs, it was possible to revive the memory.

Conclusion

In the second half of the 19th and the early decades of the 20th centuries, seafarers, most of them enlisted in the Austro-Hungarian Navy, were the most numerous group of people from Slovene lands that travelled to East Asia, bringing home not only stories of their experiences in what at the time were faraway, exotic lands, but also numerous objects. The selection of objects depended on their Navy rank and their social background, but also on what was available in the places they visited. Officers, who usually came from educated middle and upper-middle classes and had more space onboard to store personal belongings, brought larger and more expensive items, including furniture, while lower ranks brought smaller, cheaper objects—sometimes just everyday items, which had their status elevated to decorative objects once they were taken from their original socio-cultural milieu to Europe. Postcards and photographs, which became mass-produced in this period due to technological advances and the rise of mass tourism, were the most popular souvenirs and collectables for seafarers of all ranks and present the largest share of seafarers' legacies in public and private collections in Slovenia. Another very popular type of object were export porcelain and ceramics that were made for foreign consumers, and oral interviews highlight that many items, even entire sets, have been lost to damage over the decades. The Japanese market, especially, accommodated the growing demand from foreign visitors and collectors by producing various types of Japanese objects decorated to the preference of Western customers, such as fans, *netsuke*, metalworks and lacquered objects. In China, on the other hand, various conflicts and wars, as well as increasing poverty, led to the cheaper availability of authentic and higher-quality objects. As written accounts from some officers testify, the Austro-Hungarian Navy was also not immune to plundering in the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion.

Objects brought home by seafarers or given to relatives had multiple parallel and successive functions in their new environment and multiple meanings for their owners. Some could be used for their original purpose, especially the objects that had been adapted for foreigners, while others could no longer serve their purpose in their new environment and became mere ornaments or collectors' items. What they all had in common, however, was that for one or more generations, they represented foreign lands and their culture and recalled the voyages of the seafarer who brought them. The objects had important commemorative value for the seafarers, their relatives, and later descendants. They were tangible memories, preservers and representatives of memories. They reminded the seafarers of their voyages and the places they had visited, and their relatives of the seafarers and their stories. The objects thus had a strong autobiographical or biographical note. They were used by the seafarers, intentionally or unintentionally, to spread knowledge about foreign places and cultures. For most, the objects also held important aesthetic, artistic and decorative value. Objects from East Asia, which were popular and fashionable in the Austro-Hungarian period, especially among the aristocracy and the upper bourgeoisie, also represented prestige and exoticism at the time. They came from distant lands with a highly developed civilisation, with highly developed handicrafts and crafts. They suited the sophisticated tastes of the European upper classes and those of the less well-off.

In many cases, objects from non-European places brought home by seafarers have, through the very act of purchase, lost a wealth of information about their origin, use, symbolism and meaning in their original environment, depending on the interests of the buyer. Some seafarers had made detailed enquiries about them, while others were not even aware that the objects they had bought were adapted for Western buyers in style and form, and were only a shadow of the objects used by the locals. In either case, however, East Asian objects in seafarers' homes represented foreign lands and cultures. At the same time, they embodied their own memories of the specific places they had visited. As memories and knowledge began to fade with time, the objects that the seafarers would see displayed in their homes were important in prompting their recollections and preserving their memories of experiences in East Asia. The transmission of ownership through generational lines of inheritance resulted in the rapid loss of information about the objects. In almost all cases, information on where the objects were purchased has been lost. Often, all that is known is the country of origin and in several cases, the current heirs may not even be aware of that. This is particularly common among the heirs of seafarers who have visited several countries and many ports on their voyages.

However, when objects are transferred to new owners and new homes, they take on new values, new meanings and new narratives. Their life stories are therefore even more diverse, their narratives even more multilayered. To the heirs, they no longer recount stories of life in East Asia, but are now imbued with the narratives of the seafarers who brought them, as well as their aesthetic qualities. But even these impoverished bits of information have only been preserved by few relatives or in museums. Furthermore, all trace of provenance, transfer to Europe and owners has been lost in the case of objects that have ended up in the hands of strangers, in antique shops, at antique fairs or in the collections of various collectors, who were not interested in the objects' life stories, only in their assumed financial and utilitarian value as antiques or works of art, as objects from exotic places, or objects with a purely aesthetic value.

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Appendix 1: Seafarers from Slovenian Lands to East Asia, and the Objects in their Legacies and Collections (1857–1920)

The table is based on Marinac's (2017) monograph and ongoing research. It includes all the seafarers from the Slovene ethnic territory identified to date who sailed to East Asia in the service of the Austrian (A) and Austro-Hungarian (AH) War Navies, and in the Austro-Hungarian Merchant Navy (AHM). The records of objects brought by these seafarers are based on the surviving material, documentary and oral data. The absence of recorded objects is marked by either (/), indicating that at least some relatives were identified and contacted, or (?) when no relatives have yet been found. The public heritage institutions that keep the objects are the Piran Maritime Museum (PMSMP), the Slovene Ethnographic Museum (SEM), the Park of Military History Pivka (PVZP) and the National and University Library (NUK). Private ownership is marked by the names of the related heirs or collectors. In the case of the former, it follows their desired designation.

Seafarer	Navy/ship (period)	Rank at the time of voyage	Objects—survived and recorded (current ownership) <i>Publication or manuscript (Publisher)</i>	Objects—reportedly destroyed/ lost
Jožef Berthold	A/Frigate Novara (1857–1859)	Cadet	A pair of Japanese vases, decorative tray (Mojca Štajner and other heirs)	/
Matija Kliner	A/Frigate Novara (1857–1859)	Ship's Butler	Two banana-leaf fans, old coins, men's shoes from Shanghai, mahjong set (SEM?). Published letter (<i>Kmetijske in rokodelske novice</i>)	?
Viljem Potočnik	AH/Corvette Fasana (1871–1873)	Lieutenant Commander Second Class	? Published article in two parts (<i>Kmetijske in rokodelske novice</i>)	?
Jožef Potočnik	AH/Corvette Fasana (1871–1873)	Frigate Doctor	?	?

Seafarer	Navy/ship (period)	Rank at the time of voyage	Objects—survived and recorded (cur- rent ownership) <i>Publication or man- uscript (Publisher)</i>	Ob- jects— report- edly destroyed/ lost
Vinko Vidmar	AH/Corvette Er- zherzog Friedrich (1874–1876)	Cadet First Class	? Published letters (<i>Laibacher Zeitung</i> , <i>Leibacher Tag</i>), pub- lished collection of letters (<i>Letopis Mati- ce Slovenske</i>)	?
Janez Kuralt	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth (1892–1893)	Naval Curate	<i>Wakizashi</i> short sword, Japanese medal (which he was awarded) (Janez J. Švajncar)	?
Anton Perkol	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth (1892–1893)	Engineer	?	?
Rupert Pivec	AH/Corvette Saida (1895–1897)	Adjutant Second Class of the Navy Commisariat	Photographs from China and Japan (heirs); ²³ Japanese fan (PMSMP)	?
Ivan Rupnik	AH/Corvette Saida (1898–1899)	Student of the Mechani- cal-Engineer- ing School for NCO's	? Unpublished memoir, sketches, hand-drawn maps (PMSMP)	?
Jožef Obereign- er – Pepon ²⁴	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth (1899–1900)	?	Seven postcards from China and Japan (NUK), a postcard from Japan (heir – Angelika Hribar)	/
Matija Domjan	AH/Light Cruiser Zenta (1899–1901)	Able Seaman; member of the Beijing Marine Detachment	Own portrait from Yokohama (heirs). Published memoir (<i>Slovenske večernice</i>)	A larger collection

23 Information is provided in Matjašič Friš (2010).

24 Jožef Obereigner was identified by Shigemori Bučar (2019).

Seafarer	Navy/ship (period)	Rank at the time of voyage	Objects—survived and recorded (cur- rent ownership) <i>Publication or man- uscript (Publisher)</i>	Ob- jects— report- edly destroyed/ lost
Andrej Pegan	AH/Light Cruiser Zenta (1899–1901)	Sergeant En- gineer	Oil painting in Western style by a Japanese painter, Zenta's itinerary (PMSMP)	?
Anton Haus	AH/Corvette Donau, Armoured Cruiser Kaiserin und Königin Ma- ria Theresia (1901–1902) ²⁵	Second Class Commodore, Captain of Warship, Commander of East-Asian Esquarde	Japanese and Chi- nese folded screens, cabinet of curiosi- ties, Korean chest, Japanese fan, Bud- dha statue, several vases and decorative boxes (unknown) Japanese fan, Japa- nese folded screen (PMSMP)	Several fans
Alojz Šusteršič ²⁶	AH/Light Cruiser Zenta, Armoured Cruiser Kaiserin und Königin Ma- ria Theresia (1900–1902)	Lieutenant Commander, Watch Com- mander at the Austro-Hun- garian Em- bassy	Postcards sent to other mariners (PMSMP), ?	?
Janez Potočnik	AH/Corvette Donau, Light Cruiser Zenta, Light Cruiser Aspern (1900–1902)	Cadet, member of the Beijing Marine Detachment	?	?

25 Anton Haus arrived in Nagasaki from South America onboard the SMS Donau, which he commanded. The SMS Donau and SMS Kaiserin und Königin Maria Theresia exchanged part of the crew, including captains. The practice of circulating crew between different ships can also be seen in some other cases and was clearly common at the time of the Boxer Rebellion in China.

26 Šusteršič was identified by Rahten (2010).

Seafarer	Navy/ship (period)	Rank at the time of voyage	Objects—survived and recorded (current ownership) <i>Publication or manuscript (Publisher)</i>	Objects—reportedly destroyed/ lost
Fran Vilfan	AH/Light Cruiser Aspern (1900–1902)	Lieutenant Commander Second Class	Several Japanese porcelain tea sets or individual pieces, <i>netsuke</i> , brush stand, miniature teapot, several paintings, a pair of Chinese vases, decorated tray, calligraphy stone and ink box, ivory letter opener, two statuettes, a mandarin hat button, embroideries on silk, a Chinese screen, small display stand, two decorated silver plates, walking stick, four postcards sent by him, and more? (heirs)	Original embroidery on silk in the Chinese screen
Andrej Korenčan	AH/Light Cruiser Aspern (1900–1902)	Corvette Doctor	Three postcards likely sent by him (NUK), ?	?
Karl Noč	AH/Light Cruiser Aspern, Corvette Donau (1900–1901)	Cadet	?	?
Bernard Jeločnik	AH/Armoured Cruiser Kaiserin und Königin Maria Theresia (1900–1902)	Cadet	?	?
Mihael Kastner	AH/ Armoured Cruiser Kaiserin und Königin Maria Theresia (1900–1902)	Lieutenant Commander	?	?

Seafarer	Navy/ship (period)	Rank at the time of voyage	Objects—survived and recorded (cur- rent ownership) <i>Publication or man- uscript (Publisher)</i>	Ob- jects— report- edly destroyed/ lost
Wenzel Kubelka	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth, Ar- moured Cruiser Kaiserin und Königin Maria Theresia (1900–1902)	Lieutenant Commander Second Class	?	?
Viktor Petrič	AH/Light Cruiser Aspern (1900–1902)	Assistant Chief Engineer	A postcard sent by him (PMSMP), ?	?
Heinrich Zajc (Sajiz /Seitz) von Treffen	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaise- rin Elisabeth (1900–1901)	Lieutenant Commander	?	?
? Junowicz	AH/Light Cruiser Aspern (1900–1902)	Lieutenant Commander	?	?
Alojz Zarli	AH/Torpedo Boat Leopard (1900–1901)	Third Class Chief Engineer	Copies of letters (PMSMP), ?	?
Herman Zei	AH/Torpedo Boat Leopard (1900–1901)	NCO in me- chanical engi- neering	?	?
Karl Mraz	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaise- rin Elisabeth (1904–1905)	Able Seaman	Photo portrait from Shanghai, commem- orative embroidery on silk (heirs)	Porcelain, ivory walking stick
Karol Križman	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiser Franz Joseph I. (1905–1908)	Able Seaman	Two commemora- tive embroideries on silk (PMSMP), ?	?

Seafarer	Navy/ship (period)	Rank at the time of voyage	Objects—survived and recorded (cur- rent ownership) <i>Publication or man- uscript (Publisher)</i>	Ob- jects— report- edly destroyed/ lost
Viktor Kristan	AH/Torpedo Boat Leopard (1907–1909)	Intendant Navy Commis- sar Third Class	Album of postcards, album of photo- graphs (incl. calling cards, invitations, etc.) (PMSMP) Japanese tea set, Chinese display stand, a set of sou- venir spoons from Japan (heirs). Diary; Incomplete unpublished memoir (PMSMP)	/
Karel Zevnik	AH/Torpedo Boat Leopard (1907–1909)	Able Seaman	Japanese lacquer al- bum with postcards, loose postcards (PMSMP)	Porcelain
Martin Toplak	AH/Torpedo Boat Leopard (1907–1909)	Second Mate	? Published memoir (<i>Teleks, Informator: Glasilo Splošne plovbe Piran</i>)	?
Alojz Tepina	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth (1908–1910)	Third Class Chief Engineer	Japanese tea set, Chinese vase, a pair of statuettes, two boxes, several post- cards and photo- graphs (heir—Peter Keršič), a group portrait in Yokoha- ma, several postcards sent by him to Ivan Koršič (PMSMP)	Memoirs

Seafarer	Navy/ship (period)	Rank at the time of voyage	Objects—survived and recorded (current ownership) <i>Publication or manuscript (Publisher)</i>	Objects—reportedly destroyed/ lost
Anton Ukmar	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth (1908–1910)	Petty Officer	Over 350 photographs (PVZP), postcards sent by him to Avgust Blaznik (PMSMP), several tea sets and other porcelain pieces, tea box, a pair of Japanese vases, Japanese decorative wooden plaques, oil painting with Japanese motifs (heir—Miran Polak)	Folded Japanese fan
Ludvik Gorjan	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth (1908–1910)	Able Seaman	Photo (heirs) ²⁷	/
Anton Dolenc	AH/Torpedo Boat Panther (1909–1910)	Lieutenant Commander	Two <i>kozuka</i> knives, two calling cards of Japanese dignitaries, Chinese train ticket, group portrait from Shanghai; 11 postcards sent by him to family members (PMSPM); ornamental box, fan, two embroidered silk ribbons, four snuff bottles, lock, mandarin hat buttons, three hairpins (SEM)	Cigarette boxes, plates

²⁷ Information is provided in Cimprič (2015).

Seafarer	Navy/ship (period)	Rank at the time of voyage	Objects—survived and recorded (cur- rent ownership) <i>Publication or man- uscript (Publisher)</i>	Ob- jects— report- edly destroyed/ lost
Franc Cvelf	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Franz Joseph I. (1910–1913)	Marine Corps Sergeant, member of the marine detachment in Tianjin	Postcards sent by him to Avgust Blaznik and Matevž Štibil (PMSMP), ?	Com- mem- orative embroi- dery for Blaznik?
Alojz Rant	AH/Torpe- do Cruiser Franz Joseph I. (1910–1913)	Navy Commis- sar First Class, Dr Iur.	Three postcards (PMSMP), ?	?
Ivan Skušek	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth (1913–1914)	Navy Commis- sar First Class, POW in China (until 1920)	More than 500 mostly Chinese objects including furniture, Buddhist statues, porcelain and ceramics, tex- tiles, paintings, coins, musical instruments, photo- graphs (SEM, sev- eral objects owned privately)	/
Anton Lipovž	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth (1913–1914)	Seaman First Class, POW in Japan (until 1919)	Photographs and postcards, later inserted in two sep- arate albums (PMS- MP). Unpublished travel- ogue and memoirs from internment (PMSMP)	Vase (heirs)?

Seafarer	Navy/ship (period)	Rank at the time of voyage	Objects—survived and recorded (current ownership) <i>Publication or manuscript (Publisher)</i>	Objects—reportedly destroyed/lost
Ivan Lešnik	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth (1913–1914)	Junior Engineer and Electro Mechanic, POW in Japan (until 1919)	Album of photographs from East Asia and internment, album of postcards from East Asia, miniature vases, two small plates and two small sake cups, ivory necklace (heirs), grenade fragments from the German-Japanese war (PMSMP)	/
Leopold Voje	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth (1913–1914)	Torpedo Junior Sergeant, POW in Japan (until 1919)	Commemorative embroidery on silk, a postcard sent to Anton Lipovž (PMSMP)	/
Viljem Pečar	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth (1913–1914)	Seaman Second Class, POW in China (until 1920)	Album of photographs (heirs), ?	?
Franc Malalan	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth (1913–1914)	Seaman Second Class, POW in Japan (until 1919)	/	/
Anton Rijoza	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth (1913–1914)	Seaman, POW in Japan (until 1919)	?	?
Gašper Mesesnel	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth (1913–1914)	Seaman Second Class, POW in Japan (until 1919)	?	?
Josip Prinčič	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth (1913–1914)	Seamen Second Class, POW in Japan	?	?

Seafarer	Navy/ship (period)	Rank at the time of voyage	Objects—survived and recorded (cur- rent ownership) <i>Publication or man- uscript (Publisher)</i>	Ob- jects— report- edly destroyed/ lost
Alojz Brišnik	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth (1913–1914)	Seaman Third Class, POW in Japan (until 1919)	?	?
Alojz Barič	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth (1913–1914)	Seaman Sec- ond Class, POW in Japan (until 1919)	Four photos (heirs)	/
Josip Kralj	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth (1913–1914)	Seaman Sec- ond Class, POW in Japan (until 1919)	?	?
? Kramar	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth (1913–1914)	?, POW in China	?	?
Ignacij Pirc	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaiserin Elisabeth (1913–1914?)	?	A postcard sent by him (PMSMP), ?	?
August Sre- bočan ²⁸	AH/Torpedo Cruiser Kaise- rin Elisabeth (1913–1914)	Junior NCO at the Aus- tro-Hungarian Embassy in Beijing, POW in China (until 1920)	Photos (heirs)	/
Mihael Guzič	AH/?	Corporal, member of the marine detach- ment in Beijing in 1914	A postcard sent by him (heirs)	/
Jožef Spetič ²⁹	AHM/? (?)	Ship Engineer	Japanese tea set (PMSMP)	/

28 Srebočan was identified in Aonogahara (2019).

29 After the dissolution of Austria-Hungary, Spetič served in the Italian merchant navy.

Appendix 2: East Asian Objects in the Collections of Seafarers Who did not Visit East Asia

Seafarer	Navy/ship (period)	Rank at the time of voyage	Objects—survived and recorded (cur- rent ownership) <i>Publication or man- uscript (Publisher)</i>	Ob- jects— report- edly destroyed/ lost
Ivan Koršič	AH	Naval Curate	A Japanese lacquer album with more than 90 postcards and few photographs from East Asia, majority sent/brought by Žvonimir Ožegović v. Barlabaševac (voyages in 1904–1905 & 1907–1909), Alojz Tepina and many more, including sailors from non-Slovenian lands (PMSMP)	
Avgust Blaznik	AH	Sergeant	Postcards from East Asia sent by Franc Cvelf (40), Anton Ukmar, Pietro Jurich and unknown (PMSMP)	
Matevž Štibilj	AH	Artillery Instructor	Several postcards sent by Franc Cvelf, Ignacij Pirc and unknown (PMSMP)	