

THE HABSBURG'S NAVY ON GRAND TOUR: THE OLDEST MARITIME TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHS FROM 1855

by MATHIAS BÖHM and UWE SCHÖGL
(Vienna)

Abstract: In the year 1855, Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian, the oldest brother of reigning Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria, undertook a sea voyage of almost five months through the Mediterranean Sea.¹ Fourteen years later, he achieved posthumous fame when he was shot as Emperor of Mexico on 19th of June 1867 and this tragic event became immortalised in its artistic interpretation in the work *The Execution of Emperor Maximilian* (1868/69) by Édouard Manet.

On the 1855 voyage, the Archduke, who was only 23 years old at the time, headed a squadron of up to 16 ships in his role as Supreme Commander of the Navy. The route covered almost the entire Mediterranean beginning in Trieste on 19th of May and continuing via Athens, Beirut, and Alexandria, to Naples, before going as far as France, and returning to Trieste by the end of September.

It was the Archduke's personal wish that the most innovative photographic company of the time, the Imperial and Government Printing Establishment, delegate Franz Mai, who was also 23 years of age, to provide photographic support on the cruise. The result is a unique pictorial narrative that has been preserved in the form of a collection of loose sheets with up to 49 photographs. The Imperial and Government Printing Establishment provided the Archduke with a total of six editions of this work,² with four of them being available at the time of investigation.³ This portfolio from 1855 is not only the first photographic documentation of ships of the Imperial Navy,⁴ but also the first photographs taken on board a ship during a sea voyage.

Keywords: sea voyage, Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian, Mediterranean route, Imperial and Government Printing Establishment.

Introduction

This photographic journey has been subjected to thorough research activity and a detailed analysis of this naval historical and photographic aspects and, as a result, provides an insight into both a biographic episode in the Archduke's life and the photographer's methods in connection with the selection of the motifs of the images and their composition. On the one hand, the ship voyage was conceived as an extensive training run visiting some of the Archduke's favourite places and recording them photographically. On the other hand, the route also took diplomatic visits to the rulers of various Mediterranean countries into consideration and gives an impression of the political dimension of the voyage. The numerous images of ships that provide a conscious demonstration of the strength of the imperial fleet must also be seen in this context. The analysis of the photographs and their contextualisation within the written sources – chiefly, the files of the Imperial Navy, and the Archduke's correspondence, as well as with the assistance of contemporary reporting in the media – make it possible for an exact reconstruction of this voyage to be made.⁵

¹ The squadron sailed from Trieste on 19th of May and returned to Muggia Bay near Trieste on 27th of September where manoeuvres were held until 22nd of October.

² Monika Faber, Maren Gröning, *Urban panoramas: the photography of the Imperial and Government Printing Establishment, 1850–1860*, exhibition catalogue “Stadt.Leben.Wien” at the Albertina (20th of October 2005 – 22nd of January 2006), Vienna: Brandstätter, 2005, 22.

³ Individual copies of the album are in the holdings of the following institutions: Artstetten Castle Archives; Austrian National Library, Vienna; Museo Storico e il Parco del Castello di Miramare; Photoinsitut Bonartes, Vienna.

⁴ Wladimir Aichelburg, *Register der k.(u.)k. Kriegsschiffe*, Vienna, 2002, 13.

⁵ This article is a revised version of the article *The Habsburg Dynasty Photographs the Mediterranean. Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian's Sea Voyage in 1855*, by Mathias Böhm and Uwe Schögl, published *Photoresearcher* no. 40/2023, pp. 46–77, online version: www.eshph.org/journal/ (proven active 4th of March 2025).

The political arena in 1855

May 1855 – the attention of the European public was dominated by two affairs. First of all, they focused with trepidation to the east to the battle zones of the Crimean War where the Russian Empire had been attempting to expand its territory at the expense of the “ailing” Ottoman Empire since the middle of 1853. Thanks to modern telegraph system, and the introduction of photography as well as innovative printing processes, the readers of the major newspapers had been able to keep themselves informed of the events on an almost daily basis.⁶ At a time when the Franco-British alliance was relocating contingents of troops and warships, the imperial government in Vienna still seemed to be undecided about whether it had been wise to enter into an alliance treaty with these naval powers. Although the future of the multinational Habsburg state was seen “in the East” – as Emperor Franz Joseph I, who had been crowned in 1848, stated in the autumn of 1854⁷ – the Empire’s active entry into the war against Russia was to be avoided at all costs. However, with the signing of the so-called “December Treaty” against Russia, Austria finally broke with the Holy Alliance from the Napoleonic era.

At the same time as the chaos of war, the French Emperor Napoleon III invited the world to the second World’s fair, the Parisian Exposition Universelle, which was conceived as a gigantic exhibition of art, culture, and industry, that opened on 15th of May 1855 and attracted more than 5 million visitors by the time it closed on 31st October.

The Austrian squadron went almost unnoticed against this backdrop of countless reports, which were alternately characterized by the suffering of war and leisure time pleasures, when it set out to sea. Nevertheless, the undertaking would have deserved much greater attention. The Habsburg Empire, which, at the time, had been reduced to an almost landlocked country with only a few harbours of any importance, and was usually perceived of lacking any significance as a maritime power, was about to set out on a cruise through the Mediterranean lasting several months during which it would stopover numerous harbours and make several diplomatic visits. Ships of the Imperial Navy did make regular voyages in sections of the Mediterranean to train its crews and officers, but they were usually individual ships and rarely only groups of two or more. This was mainly because Emperor Franz Joseph I himself had very little interest in the navy and felt that it was of little importance as a means of war. Compared with the major maritime forces of England and France that continuously developed and expanded their gigantic fleets, the Imperial Navy had only little military relevance.⁸ Even when compared to its immediate neighbours, the Italian Kingdoms of Sicily and Sardinia, the announced expansion of the Imperial Navy remained behind the expectations of its Supreme Command.⁹

The best opportunity to improve aspects of the Imperial Navy did not come until the year 1854 when Emperor Franz Joseph I named his then-only-22-year-old brother Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian Rear Admiral and Supreme Commander of the entire Imperial Austrian Navy.¹⁰ He immediately began with the reorganisation and development of the fleet.¹¹ His primary target was – from that time on – to be present from the Adriatic Sea to the Levante in order to also expand trade and increase political influence from the sea to the south and east. The young archduke had not only been fascinated by a sailor’s life from the early days

⁶ It is justified in describing the Crimean War (1853–56) as being the birthplace of modern war journalism and, with it, Roger Fenton, with his around 360 photographs from the battle fields, as the first war photographer. His photos acted as the basis for the woodcuts used for reproduction in the media. See Oliver Wood, *Roger Fenton and “The Illustrated London News*, Photoresearcher no. 39/2023, 10–21.

⁷ Franz Schnürer, *Briefe Kaiser Franz Josephs I. an seine Mutter: 1838–1872*, Munich, 1930, 232.

⁸ At this time, the Imperial Navy had no ships that were larger than frigates (three-masted warships with one continuous gundeck: usually armed with 30 or more canons). Other types of ships, ranked in descending order of size, included corvettes (three masts, up to 24 canons), as well as brigs, and goellettes or schooners (two masts, 6–20 canons). In this period, steam-driven ships (paddlewheel or screw-driven) were still rare exceptions in the Imperial Navy.

⁹ Heinz Christ, *Geschichte der k. k. Kriegsmarine während der Jahre 1850–1866*, Vienna, 2017, 65 and 179f.

¹⁰ Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian of Austria; from 1864, Emperor Maximilian I of Mexico (6.7.1832–19.6.1867). Antonio Schmidt-Brentano, *Die österreichischen Admirale*, vol. 1, 1808–1895, Osnabrück, 1997, 94.

¹¹ Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian’s predecessors, the Supreme Commanders Dahlerup and Wimpfen, had already made efforts to reorganise the Imperial Navy, however their possibilities were limited. Both occupied the position of Supreme Commander for only a few years each: the Dane Vice Admiral Baron of Dahlerup from 1849–1851 (he unexpectedly left the service), his successor Lieutenant Field Marshal Count of Wimpffen oversaw the navy provisionally from 1851–1854 until Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian was considered to be old enough to take over the position. See: Christ 2017 (reference 9), 41ff.

of his youth,¹² but was also generally considered to have more charm and be better versed in the ways of the world than his imperial brother. In addition, he had an affinity for the arts, was interested in technology, and liked travelling as it removed from the burdens and obligations of Austrian domestic politics.¹³ The fact that he had difficulties managing his finances was somewhat irrelevant seeing that his family usually covered any extra expenses he occurred.¹⁴ Although being named Supreme Commander of the Navy represented an honour and Ferdinand Maximilian grasped the possibility for developing the navy with great enthusiasm, he wrote the following lines to his brother Carl Ludwig shortly after his assignment:

*The desire of my nautical passion would have been to spend at least 5 or 6 more years in the expanse of the oceans, being able to navigate through the stormy tides, and – at the same time – to go out into the world with the interesting command of a ship and observe and become acquainted with life from its exciting side. However, each Archduke must have the objectives of the state as his main purpose, he should be guided by the Emperor’s wish and will. The Emperor wished and I have to sacrifice myself and spend such a long time sitting behind a desk.*¹⁵

The opportunity of leading this training squadron¹⁶ through the Adriatic and Mediterranean from Trieste as its Supreme Commander gave the young Archduke his last opportunity to fulfil his desire for a long sea voyage before ultimately taking up his duties in his office after his return in the autumn of 1855.



Fig. 1. Franz Mai, *The frigate Novara*, September/October 1855, salted paper print 14.2 × 22.6 cm (detail). Austrian National Library, Vienna Pk 5806,1.

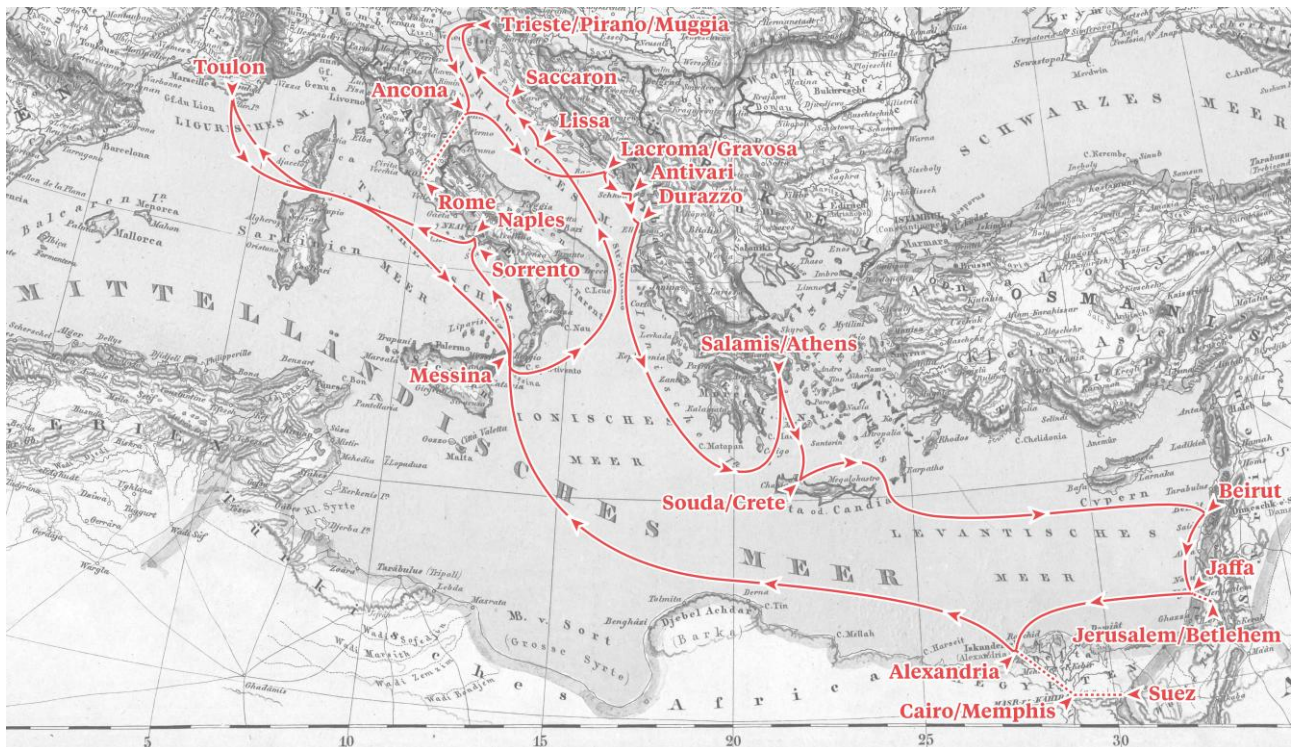
¹² He announced his desire to join the navy after a visit to Venice in 1845. Wladimir Aichelburg, *Maximilian. Erzherzog von Österreich, Kaiser von Mexiko*; in zeitgenössischen Photographien, Vienna, 1987, 15.

¹³ David Pruonto, *Die Orientreisen der Habsburger*, in: Barbara Haider-Wilson, Maximilian Graf (eds.), *Orient & Okzident*, Vienna, 2017, 451.

¹⁴ Aichelburg 1987 (reference 12), 12ff.

¹⁵ Erzherzog Ferdinand Maximilian cited after: Gabriele Praschl-Bichler, *Ich bin bloß Corvetten-Kapitän. Private Briefe Maximilians und seiner Familie*, Vienna, 2006, 159.

¹⁶ One frigate: *Novara* (1850); three corvettes: *Carolina* (1847), *Minerva* (1838) and *Leipzig* (1826); one brig: *Oreste* (1832); two paddle steamers: *Kaiserin Elisabeth* (1854) and *Volta* (1850).



Itinerary of Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian May–Oct. 1855, map taken from Heinrich Kiepert, Neuer Handatlas, Berlin 1860.

Start of the sea voyage from Trieste to Durazzo via Piran

Trieste. 19 May. His Imperial Highness, the Serene Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian, Supreme Commander, left this harbour on board of the Frigate Novara¹⁷ this morning. [...] At the wish of His Imperial Highness, a photographer from the Imperial and Government Printing Establishment accompanied the fleet to capture the most notable landscapes and buildings in the harbours it has contact with.¹⁸

Already at the beginning of the voyage in Trieste, the reports in the media mentioned the participation of a member of the staff of the highly esteemed “Imperial and Government Printing Establishment”, which underlines the significance photographic “accompaniment” had in the sense of providing a documentation of this enterprise. The photographer was Franz Mai: Little is known about this young man. Franz Mai was probably about the same age as Archduke Maximilian,¹⁹ but it is unknown whether the Archduke and the photographer already knew each other personally or whether the Archduke was specifically looking for a photographer who could cope with the great physical exertions of a long sea voyage. Although he certainly had a sound education and was familiar with the photographic processes of the time, it can be assumed that a young man with a good physical constitution was specifically chosen for the voyage rather than an older photographer with many years of professional experience in a photographic laboratory. Only a few weeks before his departure Franz Mai received his passport that made it possible for him to take part in excursions ashore.²⁰ One of the first examples of his activity was taken just a couple of days after sailing from Trieste at the first stopover on the journey and is included in the series of photographs in the album: a veduta view of

¹⁷ The Archduke came to admire the frigate *Novara* to such an extent that he was inspired to build the room of the same name in Miramare Castle: a study that is reminiscent in style and decoration of a ship’s cabin (of course, it is much more spacious and extravagantly furnished). See: Egon C. Corti, *Maximilian und Charlotte von Mexiko*, vol.1, Vienna, 1924, 91.

¹⁸ *Wiener Zeitung* 22.5.1855.

¹⁹ *Faber 2005* (reference 2), 22. The original sources from the Austrian State Archives cited there were not available for a new verification of the data. See also: Albertina Bio-Bibliographie “Mai, Franz”.

²⁰ *Faber 2005* (reference 2), 25. The original sources from the Austrian State Archives cited there were not available for a new verification of the data.

the harbour at Pirano (Piran, SI)²¹ (Fig. 2). The photograph was taken between 19th and 21st of May during a brief layover of the paddle steamer *Kaiserin Elisabeth*²² on which Franz Mai had taken up quarters for the duration of the voyage.²³ This photograph – most likely taken from aboard the ship – is considered to be the first photographic depiction of Piran known to date. The photographer was to use the compositionally identical motif of the prospective view of the harbour and quarters of the town at further stops in Durazzo, Jaffa and Toulon.

The squadron reached Ancona (IT) on 25th of May. The Archduke visited Rome from 26th of May to 30th of May without photographic company,²⁴ as the transport of the equipment required for the wet collodion process – including a mobile darkroom to develop the glass-plate negatives immediately after exposure – was thought to be too great an high effort.²⁵ For this reason, the only visual record of his stay in Rome is an ‘ad vivum’ portrait study of the Archduke by the Austrian artist Joseph Selleny,²⁶ who was on a study visit to Rome and Naples at the time (Fig. 3).

The squadron sailed south and reached the harbour of Gravosa (Dubrovnik, HR) on 3rd of June. Ferdinand Maximilian visited the offshore island of Lacrova (Lokrum, HR) where three photographs of the deserted Benedictine abbey were taken to document the condition of the building²⁷ (Fig. 4). In the previous literature, it is falsely claimed that Ferdinand Maximilian and his wife Charlotte discovered the abbey not before a cruise in 1859.²⁸ However, the three photographs by Franz Mai prove that the Archduke was aware of the abandoned property before that time.



Fig. 2. Franz Mai, *Piran*, May 1855, salted paper print 14.5 × 26 cm. Austrian National Library, Vienna Pk 5806,30.

²¹ Austrian National Library, Vienna, Pk 5806, 30.

²² Austrian State Archives KA Marine NMA Schiffsakten Tagebücher 416/4, 17–19.

²³ The consistency from data of the steamer’s logbooks with the motifs of the photographs make this assumption appear feasible – especially because, with his cumbersome and valuable photographic equipment, it is extremely unlikely that Mai changed his accommodation frequently.

²⁴ For further details on this stay see Mathias Böhm, Uwe Schögl, *The Habsburg Dynasty Photographs the Mediterranean. Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian’s Sea Voyage in 1855*, Photoresearcher, no. 40/2023, 51–52. www.eshph.org/journal/ (proved active 4th of March 2025).

²⁵ Franz Waller, *Die Sammlung historischer Fotografien Wilhelm Reiss in den Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen Mannheim*, in: Alfred Wiczorek, Claude W. Sui (eds.), *Zu den Ufern des Nil. Historische Fotografien des 19. Jahrhunderts aus der Sammlung des Forum Internationale Photographie der Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen Mannheim*, Mannheim, 2005, 17.

²⁶ Two years later, Joseph Selleny participated in the circumnavigation of the world on board the imperial frigate *Novara* that the Archduke had initiated during which he created many watercolours and drawings.

²⁷ Museo Storico e il Parco del Castello di Miramare 0600181518,17-19.

²⁸ Joan Haslip, *Maximilian. Kaiser von Mexiko*, Munich, 1972, 129 and Praschl-Bichler 2006 (reference 15), 198.

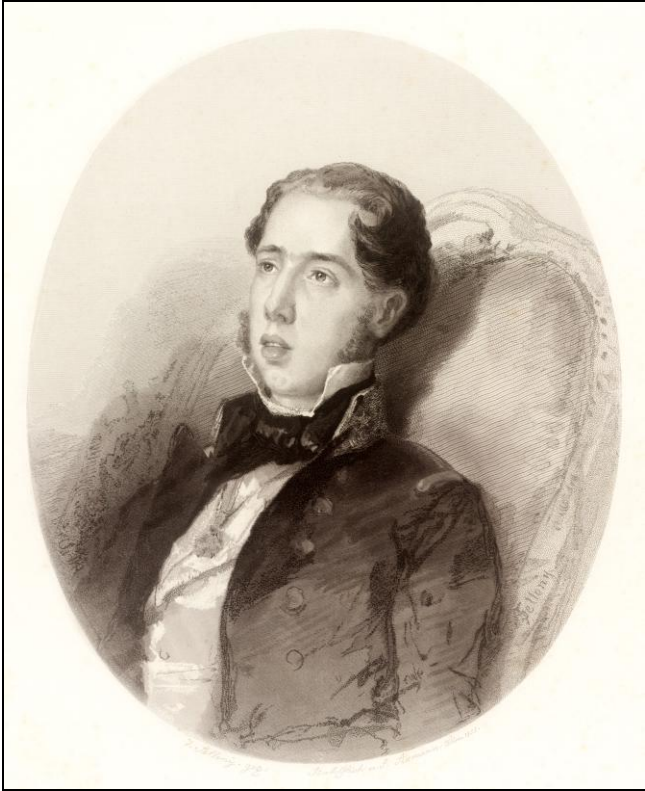


Fig. 3. Joseph Selleny (artist) and Joseph Axmann (engraver), *Portrait of Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian of Austria during his visit of Rome, May 1855*, steel engraving 36.6 × 26.5 cm. Austrian National Library, Vienna Pk 4449,82.



Fig. 4. Franz Mai, *Abbey of Lokrum*, June 1855, salted paper print. Museo Storico e il Parco del Castello di Miramare 0600181518,19.

On 6th of June, the fleet sailed over Antivari (Bar Island, ME) to Durazzo (Durrës, AL). Ferdinand Maximilian had already successfully carried out his first diplomatic mission in the city two years previously when he managed to free the bishop who had been taken hostage. The young supreme commander still had vivid memories of the subsequent impressive religious service that took place onboard the *Minerva* in front of the population and crew.²⁹ A single image documents the coastal town,³⁰ where they participated in the Corpus Christi celebrations on the following day. However, in keeping with the Archduke's taste, these were rather modest on this occasion.³¹

Greece – antique sites and consolidation of the fleet

After a one day stay in Durazzo, the squadron put to sea and headed for Salamis. That was where the frigates *Schwarzenberg*³² and *Radetzky*,³³ together with the goelette schooner *Elisabeth*,³⁴ were waiting to join the training squadron. There was usually a permanent coming and going with the squadron seeing those ships, which were not stationed directly on the squadron's route, took part in the manoeuvre exercises. An Austrian correspondent made the following report when the *Radetzky* left Constantinople:

*We would have really liked to also see the noble Austrian fleet that has gathered now in Greek waters and numbers twelve warships here to show the Turks that the German Emperor also has naval power.*³⁵

The fleet arrived in Salamis on 15th of June before leaving for the Bay of Phaleron, the harbour of Athens, where it anchored from 16th of to 21th of June. This is where the squadron reached its greatest strength: The Archduke had a total of sixteen ships under his command.³⁶ Franz Mai now had five days at his disposal to document the fleet from the shore. This was essential, for technical reasons seeing that the long exposure times demanded an unmoving surface. The effort was enormous: It was not only necessary to take the transport of a box stand and the glass plates into consideration, but probably also the transfer of a mobile darkroom from the ship to the shore and back again.³⁷ Mai photographed the fleet twice from an almost identical position as shown in details of these images. Influenced by the changing direction of the wind, the ships are shown in differing orientations.

Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian not only spent the five days in Athens with sightseeing in the city and the ancient Acropolis. On behalf of Emperor Franz Joseph I, he also took on the role of official envoy³⁸ to King Otto I³⁹ and his wife. He stayed at the Embassy Hotel and visited the Athens royal court on 16th of June where he was received with full honours and a festive reception organised.⁴⁰ The Archduke returned the royal family's favour with a dinner on board the frigate *Schwarzenberg* to which the most important representatives of the Greek government were also invited. However, the official representatives of France and England, who

²⁹ Maximilian I von Mexiko, Aus meinem Leben. Bd.4 Reiseskizzen IX Ein Stück Albanien, Leipzig, 1867, 157–163 and Haslip 1972 (reference 28), 64f.

³⁰ Museo Storico e il Parco del Castello di Miramare 0600181518,20.

³¹ *His Imperial Highness desired that the Corpus Christi festivities taking place on the next day be celebrated with solemn pomp. [...] However, after the priest had explained the impossibility of having a procession in the appropriate way, His Imperial Highness and his entourage attended the service in the Catholic chapel in great reverence., Wiener Zeitung* 23. 6. 1855.

³² The frigate, which was also known as *Fürst Felix Schwarzenberg* (1853), already arrived near Salamis on 18th of May.

³³ The steam-driven frigate *Radetzky* (1854), which had been built in England, departed from its base near Constantinople on 18th of May and headed for Salamis. *Kronstädter Zeitung* 4. 6. 1855.

³⁴ Goelette *Elisabeth* (1826), not to be confused with the paddle steamer *Kaiserin Elisabeth* (1854).

³⁵ *Kronstädter Zeitung* 4. 6. 1855.

³⁶ Four frigates: *Schwarzenberg* (1853), *Radetzky* (1854), *Novara* (1850), and *Venus* (1832); three corvettes: *Carolina* (1847), *Minerva* (1838), and *Leipzig* (1826); two paddle steamers: *Kaiserin Elisabeth* (1854), and *Volta* (1850); two goellettes: *Arethusa* (1850), and *Elisabeth* (1826); five brigs: *Pylades* (1849), *Dromedar* (1837), *Orest* (1832), *Pola* (1832), and *Montecuccoli* (1831), see: Aichelburg 2002 (reference 4), div. and Austrian State Archives KA Marine AMA 1855 M/b XXIV, adl. M/c 39/106, fol.1r–1v.

³⁷ Due to a lack of source information and the fact that the glass plates have not been preserved, it is not possible to make a conclusive determination of the camera, lens, and size of the plates used.

³⁸ *Die Presse* 25. 5. 1855.

³⁹ Otto I of Greece came from the Bavarian Wittelsbach family and was a cousin of Empress Elisabeth of Austria, the sister-in-law of the Archduke.

⁴⁰ *Die neue Zeit* 5. 7. 1855.

expected to receive special attention as a result of the December Treaty signed in 1854, were not included. He received the French Admiral Tinan, who had paid his respects the day before, instead.⁴¹

It seems that the stay in Athens played a central role for the Archduke as is also shown in the extent of the photographic coverage. This is where Franz Mai took more photos than anywhere else on the voyage and is also reflected in their thematic variety.⁴² In addition to a single view of the exterior of the Royal Palace taken on 16th of June,⁴³ the album includes seven images of Athens' ancient sites shown completely in the (documentary) style of the Grand Tour⁴⁴ (Fig. 5). One particularly noteworthy picture with an ethnographical background was made during a dinner at the royal country estate⁴⁵ (Fig. 6).

Although the Mediterranean voyage lasted almost five months, there is only one photograph of the travelling party: it is a group portrait depicting the most important officers and commanders of the squadron's ships anchored off Phaleron (Fig. 7). It is also the only photograph showing the Archduke himself on this undertaking. The photograph was taken on the deck of the flagship *Schwarzenberg* during the squadron's layover in Athens from 16th to 21st of June 1855.⁴⁶ Completely in the visual tradition of group portraits of the period, the eleven officers surround the most important person who forms the central point of the image: Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian as Supreme Commander of the Navy with folded arms on a kind of improvised seat.⁴⁷



Fig. 5. Franz Mai, *Arch of Hadrian with Acropolis seen in the background*, June 1855, salted paper print 13.3 × 21.6 cm. Austrian National Library, Vienna Pk 5806,32.

⁴¹ *Die neue Zeit* 5. 7. 1855.

⁴² For further details on this stay see Mathias Böhm, Uwe Schögl, *The Habsburg Dynasty Photographs the Mediterranean. Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian's Sea Voyage in 1855*, Photoresearcher no. 40/2023, 54–57, www.eshph.org/journal/ (proved active 4th of March 2025).

⁴³ *Die neue Zeit* 5. 7. 1855 and Austrian National Library, Vienna, Pk 5806,27.

⁴⁴ Austrian National Library, Vienna, Pk 5806,14, 17, 22, 26 (variant of 22), 32, 33, 38.

⁴⁵ *Die neue Zeit* 5. 7. 1855.

⁴⁶ Austrian National Library, Vienna, Pk 5806,19.

⁴⁷ For the full analysis *Group Portrait of high ranked officers of the Squadron in Phaleron near Athens* by Mathias Böhm with nine of twelve depicted persons identified see Mathias Böhm, Uwe Schögl, *The Habsburg Dynasty Photographs the Mediterranean. Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian's Sea Voyage in 1855*, Photoresearcher no. 40/2023, 58–59, www.eshph.org/journal/ (proved active 4th of March 2025).



Fig. 6. Franz Mai, *Man in Greek costume*, June 1855, salted paper print 19.3 × 16.2 cm. Austrian National Library, Vienna Pk 5806,23.



Fig. 7. Franz Mai, *Group portrait of the officers of the fleet*, June 1855, salted paper print 18.9 × 26.9 cm. Austrian National Library, Vienna Pk 5806,19.

The Commander of the goelette Elisabeth, Ship-of-the-line Lieutenant Tegetthoff⁴⁸ – shown on the far left of the picture leaning against one of the ship's cannons with the typical relaxed attitude that can be seen in other photographs of him – described his impressions of this naval operation in a letter to his father:

*The whole affair seems to have been a demonstration vis-à-vis the French and English; [...] In the further course of the voyage, Alexandria, Tunis, Naples and Toulon are to be visited. As usual, the smaller ships will have nothing to do with this voyage; the galleys will remain behind, the brigs will leave before Alexandria for their various stations in the Orient. For my part, I really do not know why I had to wait so long in the boring bay of Salamis for the Duke, since he did not even find time to take a look at my old Elisabeth.*⁴⁹

The squadron left the Bay of Phaleron on 21st of June and set sail towards the southeast. After encountering a storm and stopping over at Souda (Crete, GR),⁵⁰ the sailing ships were ordered to head for the Egyptian city of Alexandria, while the Archduke set out for Lebanon with the steamships *Volta* and *Kaiserin Elisabeth*.⁵¹ While on his way to Beirut, the Archduke put down his thoughts on the voyage so far in a letter to his brother Carl Ludwig that he wrote on board the steamer *Kaiserin Elisabeth* on 27th of June:

*... I am dashing around the world and have a squadron to command. [...] I have been fortunate enough to have been able to accomplish quite a lot in Austria's interests in recent times, in Rome through rapprochement and conviction, in Athens by heartening and calming. Now I am speedily making my way to Jerusalem as a haji. [...] Just how much I thought about you, my dear brother, while I visited all of those interesting spots in Athens that we saw together five years ago in such cheerful company; that was a very pleasant time that will never come again, so soothingly happy ... I have seen all of these places again, this time alone and, even at my age, it is difficult for me to experience any really cheerful days ... I want to celebrate my birthday at the top of the pyramids; definitely an interesting pedestal on which to begin my 23rd year!*⁵²

The Levante. From Beirut to Alexandria

The steamship *Kaiserin Elisabeth* reached Beirut in the early morning of 28th of June. The Archduke only had a single day at his disposal here and the programme was densely packed: In the few hours between his arrival and departure, he attended diplomatic receptions, exchanged gifts with Governor Mahmud Pasha,⁵³ presented his host with the Grand Cross of the Order of the Iron Crown in the name of the Emperor,⁵⁴ and even went for a ride in the city's surrounding countryside. In his notes, he briefly describes his meeting with the imperial consul Gödl:

*Through cactus to Goedl. [...] Cheapskate; miserable house. Wonderful view from the terrace.*⁵⁵

Franz Mai immortalised the view from the consul's house in a photograph depicting the rooftops of the city of Beirut towards the harbour – the prominent railing on the right side of the picture presumably testifies to the great haste that was required on that day⁵⁶ (Fig. 8).

⁴⁸ One of the few personalities in the Habsburg Navy who was well-known beyond the borders of the monarchy, due to his later successes as an Austrian commander of the fleet near Helgoland in 1864 and Lissa in 1866. Wilhelm Joseph Franz Seraph Gabriel von Tegetthoff (23.12.1827–7.4.1871), Antonio Schmidt-Brentano, *Die österreichischen Admirale Bd.1 1808–1895*, Osnabrück, 1997, 176–190.

⁴⁹ Austrian State Archives KA NL 213 B 1-226 Smyrna 24. Juni 1855, fol.1v–2r.

⁵⁰ Austrian State Archives KA Marine AMA 1855 M/b XXIV, adl. M/c 39/105, fol. 1v.

⁵¹ Austrian State Archives KA Marine AMA 1855 M/b XXIV, adl. M/c 39/130, fol. 1r.

⁵² Praschl-Bichler 2006 (reference 15), 165f.

⁵³ Among the presents were an Arabian horse that the Archduke had shipped to Trieste on a Lloyd's steamship. *Laibacher Zeitung* 20. 7. 1855.

⁵⁴ *Wiener Zeitung* 9. 10. 1855.

⁵⁵ Austrian State Archives HHStA HA MvM K105-28b, fol. 12r.

⁵⁶ Austrian National Library, Vienna, Pk 5806,12.



Fig. 8. Franz Mai, *Beirut*, June 1855, salted paper print 14 × 22.7 cm.
Austrian National Library, Vienna Pk 5806,12.

The steamer once again set out to sea on the late evening of the same day, and travelled over Saida (Sidon, LB) and Haifa (IL) to Jaffa (Tel Aviv-Jaffa, IL), where the Archduke wanted to visit Mount Carmel (IL), Jerusalem (IL) and Bethlehem (IL) until the beginning of July.⁵⁷

The Archduke reached Jaffa on 29th of June⁵⁸ and immediately set out on horseback for Jerusalem where he arrived in the early hours of the following day. He was ceremoniously welcomed by the worldly and spiritual dignitaries of the city and representatives of other nations.⁵⁹ Shortly before, the Governor of Jerusalem had been in the surroundings of the city to put down a Bedouin uprising.⁶⁰ The Archduke visited the holy sites, stayed – like other pilgrims – in the Franciscan Convent, and travelled to Bethlehem on 2nd of July from where he returned to Jaffa.⁶¹ Before leaving, he honoured – once again, as the representative of his imperial brother – the Governor of Jerusalem, Kiamil Pasha, with the Grand Cross of the Franz Joseph Order.⁶²

Franz Mai remained with the steamships until the Archduke returned to Jaffa. Due to the extremely high technical complexity, it was not possible to provide photographic accompaniment and he took advantage of the time to take a veduta photograph of the city (Fig. 9),⁶³ as well as two similar shots showing the population (Fig. 10).⁶⁴ From the visual perspective, these two group portraits by Franz Mai are in keeping with a simple documentary depiction of civil life, without any ethnographic contextualisation or sophisticated composition (e.g., a triangular arrangement), that was typical of the period as a result of the influence of painting on photography. This becomes apparent when a comparison is made with the earliest photographs of the Roma community created by Ludwig Angerer near Bucharest during the conflict of the Crimean War (Fig. 11).⁶⁵

⁵⁷ Austrian State Archives HHStA HA MvM K105-28b, fol. 12r and *Wiener Zeitung* 15. 7. 1855.

⁵⁸ Austrian State Archives KA Marine NMA Schiffsakten Tagebücher 416/4, 58.

⁵⁹ Austrian State Archives HHStA HA MvM K105-28b, fol. 14r.

⁶⁰ *Die Presse* 19. 7. 1855.

⁶¹ Austrian State Archives HHStA HA MvM K105-28b, fol. 15v.

⁶² *Wiener Zeitung* 9. 10. 1855.

⁶³ Museo Storico e il Parco del Castello di Miramare 0600181518,33.

⁶⁴ Austrian National Library, Vienna, Pk 5806,9 and 39.

⁶⁵ Austrian National Library, Vienna, Pk 4400,6 and 8. On the attribution of the authorship to Ludwig Angerer, see: Uwe Schögl, *Sinti und Roma in der historischen Fotografie*, in: Otto Mueller, *Gegenwelten. Sinti und Roma in der historischen Fotografie*. Kunstmuseum Ravensburg, Nicole Fritz (eds.), Heidelberg, Berlin, 2014, 30–95, especially note 3.



Fig. 9. Franz Mai, *View of Tel Aviv-Jaffa from the coast*, June/July 1855, salted paper print, with brush retouches. Museo Storico e il Parco del Castello di Miramare 0600181518,33.



Fig. 10. Franz Mai, *Women in costume*, June/July 1855, salted paper print. Collection Serge Kakou, Paris.



Fig. 11. Ludwig Angerer, *Young women of the Roma community*, 1855, salted paper print 30.8 × 24.8 cm. Austrian National Library, Vienna Pk 4400,6

Egypt

Measured by its three-week duration and the Archduke's programmes, the stopover in Egypt was an additional highlight of the journey. This was also reflected in the reports in the contemporary daily press as the public in the Habsburg monarchy was informed about these days in a detailed report that appeared in the official newspaper *Wiener Zeitung* in mid-August 1855.⁶⁶

The fleet of sailing vessels already appeared in the waters off Alexandria in the morning of 1st of July⁶⁷ before anchoring in the harbour of the ancient metropolis in the early afternoon. Due to the high-ranking visitor, the Viceroy hurried back to the city together with a force from a military action against rebelling Bedouins in the south of the country. In the coming days, additional Austrian ships arrived in Alexandria: First of all, the steamer *Volta* in the evening of 4th of July, followed on the morning of the next day by the steam frigate *Radetzky*, which rejoined the squadron from its station in Constantinople. When the Archduke finally reached Alexandria onboard the steamship *Kaiserin Elisabeth* in the evening of 5th of July, a total of thirteen ships of the Imperial Navy were at anchor in the harbour.⁶⁸ For unknown reasons, Franz Mai abstained from making a photographic presentation of the entire fleet here.

Habsburg foreign policy in the nineteenth century usually acted as an advocate for the Sublime Porte in Constantinople⁶⁹ – a weak, but stable, Ottoman Empire was more in keeping with Habsburg's interests in

⁶⁶ *Wiener Zeitung* 17. 8. 1855.

⁶⁷ Three frigates: *Schwarzenberg* (1853), *Novara* (1850), and *Venus* (1832); three corvettes: *Carolina* (1847), *Minerva* (1838), and *Leipzig* (1826); four brigs: *Pylades* (1849), *Pola* (1832), *Oreste* (1832), and *Montecuccoli* (1831).

⁶⁸ *Laibacher Zeitung* 17. 7. 1855.

⁶⁹ This made no change to the – often strained – diplomacy as the power protecting the Christians in the Ottoman Empire. Bernhard Unckel, *Österreich und der Krimkrieg. Historische Studien 410*, Lübeck, 1969, 33–57 and 94ff.

the Levante than an expanding Tsarist realm – and, therefore, the Archduke was welcomed with open arms. Ferdinand Maximilian meets the most important dignitaries and officials of the city – in particular, the Viceroy Muhammad Said Pasha.

When the highest dignitaries stepped out onto the balcony of the palace, from which a clear view over the entire port of Alexandria opens up, they were greeted with a salute from the cannons of the Austrian warships lined up in imposing order, which was immediately returned by the harbour batteries.⁷⁰

Not only was the Archduke offered every comfort during his stay in Egypt, but the Viceroy also granted him permission to collect antique objects instead of the usual gifts.⁷¹ However, the continuing cholera epidemic in the city, and the uprisings in the south of the country had created a tense atmosphere in Alexandria and, as a result, Ferdinand Maximilian only spent a few days there. In this period, he visited the city and the surrounding sights. On 10th of July, the Archduke and a small accompanying diplomatic entourage travelled to Cairo, which is about 180 kilometres to the south.

They left Alexandria by train and continued their journey on a steamship on the left arm of the River Nile. En route, they inspected the Nile barrages known as the “Mohammed Ali Bridge” and arrived in Cairo in the early afternoon of the 11th of July where they were accommodated in the palace of the Viceroy. The next day, they visited the ruins of Heliopolis and, after a torchlit ride, reached the Gizeh Pyramids at sunrise on 13th of July – one week after the Archduke’s 23rd birthday. In the days that followed, Ferdinand Maximilian visited the numerous sights in Cairo and Memphis, went horseback riding, made a boat trip on the Red Sea, and acquired antique sculptures and statues in Cairo, Memphis and Gizeh. The exact number, as well as the exact course of the ‘collecting’ are still not clear today, but it is assumed that the Archduke acquired around 700 objects during this stay in Egypt – some of them directly from the Viceroy’s display collection in the Citadel of Cairo – thereby taking undue advantage of the Viceroy’s hospitality.⁷² Together with some pieces he had purchased previously, the large number of objects acquired during his stay in Egypt formed the basis for a considerable private collection.⁷³ Especially noteworthy from its economic dimension was a visit to Suez on 16th of July where the Archduke was guided through the area of the future canal connecting the Red Sea and Mediterranean by the main engineer Linant Bey and given a great deal of information on the project that the Austrian engineer Alois Negrelli had already recommended constructing at this site in 1847.⁷⁴

He returned to Alexandria on 20th of July where, immediately, preparations for the imminent departure of the fleet were made. On behalf of Emperor Franz Joseph I, Ferdinand Maximilian presented many orders to important people in the city – first and foremost, to Viceroy Said Pasha who received the Grand Cross of the Leopold Order.⁷⁵ After that, invitations were issued to festive dinner onboard the frigate *Schwarzenberg* on the evening of 21st of July. The squadron set sail for Messina on the following morning. In the meantime, the number of ships had reduced. Of the thirteen ships that had anchored in the harbour of Alexandria, only seven continued on the voyage.⁷⁶

Franz Mai’s photographic documentation stands in complete contrast to the Archduke’s highly diversified sojourn. He stayed in Alexandria for the whole Egypt episode and therefore could only devote himself to motifs of this city and the immediate surroundings. Of the six known photographs,⁷⁷ two give an overall impression of the city: taken from a raised position; they show the west and east sections of the metropolis as far as the harbour (Fig. 12).

⁷⁰ *Wiener Zeitung* 17. 8. 1855.

⁷¹ *Wiener Zeitung* 15. 7. 1855.

⁷² Helmut Satzinger, *Das Kunsthistorische Museum in Wien. Die ägyptisch-orientalische Sammlung*, Mainz am Rhein, 1994, 74–77.

⁷³ Together with the Aegyptica that was later acquired for Mexico, this collection is now part of the Egyptian Department of the Kunsthistorische Museum in Vienna, see: Regina Hölzl, *Maximilians Aegyptica – die sogenannte Sammlung Miramar*, in: Ilsebill Barta (ed.), *Maximilian von Mexiko. Der Traum vom Herrschen*, Vienna, 2013, 137.

⁷⁴ Franz Foetterle, *Bericht über die Durchstechung der Landenge von Suez*, in: Franz Foetterle (ed.), *Mittheilungen der k.k. Geographischen Gesellschaft I. Jg.*, Vienna, 1857, Abhandlungen IV, 77.

⁷⁵ *Wiener Zeitung* 9. 10. 1855.

⁷⁶ Three frigates: *Schwarzenberg* (1853), *Novara* (1850), and *Radetzky* (1854); two corvettes: *Carolina* (1847), and *Leipzig* (1826); two paddle steamers: *Kaiserin Elisabeth* (1854), and *Volta* (1850).

⁷⁷ Austrian National Library, Vienna, Pk 5806,5, 10, 18, 21, 35 and 41.



Fig. 12. Franz Mai, *View of Alexandria (west section)*, July 1855, salted paper print 16.4 × 23.3 cm. Austrian National Library, Vienna Pk 5806,18.

The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies – Messina, Naples, Sorrento

On 28th of July, the steamships *Kaiserin Elisabeth* and *Volta* were the first vessels to reach Messina where shore leave was granted.⁷⁸ However, the authorities refused this when the rest of the squadron finally anchored on 5th of August. Due to a Royal Neapolitan decree, which was the result of an outbreak of the plague in Albania, all ships coming from Ottoman territory (and this included Alexandria) had to be quarantined for fourteen days. This led to diplomatic negotiations seeing that the Austrian fleet had left Alexandria in good time and had not stopped at any other harbour since then. However, eight days went past, during which the fleet remained in the waters between Naples and Sicily, before the situation was clarified.⁷⁹ It was not until 13th of August that permission to go on land was finally granted. Two photographs of Messina by Franz Mai are included in the album: A view of the city and its roofscape, and an architectural shot showing the façade of the cathedral.⁸⁰

On 17th of August 1855, Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian was received by the regents of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, King Ferdinand II of Bourbon-Sicily and his wife Maria Theresia of Austria, the Archduke's second-degree aunt,⁸¹ in the Residence Palace in Naples.⁸² During his ten-day sojourn, Ferdinand Maximilian visited the sights of Naples and the vicinity, and invited to a gala dinner onboard the frigate

⁷⁸ Austrian State Archives KA Marine NMA Schiffsakten Tagebücher 416/4, 87, and Aichelburg 2002 (reference 4), 528.

⁷⁹ Austrian State Archives HHStA HA MvM K132, fol.400r–409v and Ost-Deutsche Post 17. 8. 1855.

⁸⁰ Austrian National Library, Vienna, Pk 5806,20 and 28.

⁸¹ In the following years, several marriages between members of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and the House of Habsburg-Lothringen made their familial relationships even closer. The links between the Habsburg lines and those of Bourbon-Sicily are considered to be classic examples of intra-familial marriage.

⁸² *Wiener Zeitung* 28. 8. 1855.

Schwarzenberg that was not only attended by the royal family but also other members of the local aristocracy, and high-ranking officers of the squadron. Although the stay was lengthy, and considering what would have been possible, Franz Mai only managed to deliver a limited photographic portrayal of the city of Naples: views of the façades of the Royal Palace, and the San Francesco Church.⁸³

When compared to the few photographs of Naples, things were much different at Sorrento. The Archduke only spent one night (19/20th of August) in the Hotel Rispoli near Sorrento and set out on an excursion to the excavations at Pompei on the following day.⁸⁴

In the Archduke's absence, the steamship *Kaiserin Elisabeth* arrived at Sorrento on 22nd of August, anchoring there for two more days before returning to Naples.⁸⁵ In this time Franz Mai became very active and of Sorrento and the surroundings. The album includes four photographs⁸⁶ that, when compared with the short period of his stay of just three days, were created with considerable technical effort and motivic variety. An overall view of the coastal town (seen from the southwest) was taken from the difficult terrain of the high mountain ridge, as well as a view of the Hotel Rispoli on a slope leading down to the sea.

Another motif, which shows the façade with the rear entrance to the hotel, is characterised by its compositionally sophisticated structure. It consists of two shots taken in quick succession from the same angle and differing only in one – barely perceptible – detail: the people depicted in the centre of the shots. One shows an elegantly dressed gentleman – presumably a guest of the hotel – standing behind a mule, the other focuses on another guest of the hotel in a white summer suit holding two mules by the bridle⁸⁷ (Fig. 13a). The architecture of the hotel served the photographer as a projection surface for a genre story in which the world of the upper class has found its way into the pictorial narrative.⁸⁸ Founded in 1834, the hotel was already an integral part of the Grand Tour of the European upper class in 1855 and lives up as a glamorous place for vacation for high society today – still owned and operated by the founder's family⁸⁹ (Fig. 13b). The effort and special attention that Franz Mai devoted to documenting Sorrento in general, and the Hotel Rispoli in particular, illustrate the significance of the Archduke's only overnight stay in this place.

The Archduke returned to Naples from Pompeii before visiting Paestum and Salerno on the following days.⁹⁰ No photographs were taken of these sights. After more meetings and dinners with the royal family, Ferdinand Maximilian and his company left Naples for Toulon on 26th of August.⁹¹ In order not to waste any more time, the Archduke ordered that only the steam-driven ships should accompany him to Toulon.⁹² He sent the slower sailing ships straight back to Lissa (Vis, HR) under the command of the Ship-of-the-line Captain Fautz.⁹³

Toulon – base of The French Navy

The stay in Toulon, the main base of the French Navy in the Mediterranean, turned out to be different than planned. The original idea was to travel from Toulon to Paris to visit the Exposition Universelle. However, when it became known that Prince Albert⁹⁴ would probably be there at the same time, these plans were thrown overboard in order to avoid any discussions about rank and name. Instead, Ferdinand Maximilian sent his adjutant Count Hadik⁹⁵ with a personal message to Paris where he was received at an audience in the Archduke's name by Emperor Napoleon III.⁹⁶ At this time, Ferdinand Maximilian had no

⁸³ Austrian National Library, Vienna, Pk 5806,2 and Museo Storico e il Parco del Castello di Miramare 0600181518,44.

⁸⁴ *Wiener Zeitung* 2. 9. 1855.

⁸⁵ Austrian State Archives KA Marine NMA Schiffsakten Tagebücher 416/5, 22–24.

⁸⁶ Austrian National Library, Vienna, Pk 5806,7, 11, 24, and Photoinstitut Bonartes, Vienna, BON_1686/15.

⁸⁷ The group of women in front of the stairs on the right edge of the picture can also be assumed as hotel guests.

⁸⁸ The two photos are included equally in the albums, albeit with only one of the variants in each. The first variant see Austrian National Library, Vienna and Museo Storico e il Parco del Castello di Miramare, the second variant – shown as fig. 13a – see Photoinstitut Bonartes, Vienna and Artstetten Castle Archive.

⁸⁹ The hotel still exists today, named *Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria* <<https://excelsiorvittoria.com/>> (proved active 4 March 2025).

⁹⁰ *Wiener Zeitung* 4. 9. 1855.

⁹¹ *Wiener Zeitung* 8. 9. 1855.

⁹² Including only the screw driven steam frigate *Radetzky* (1854), as well as the two paddle steamers *Kaiserin Elisabeth* (1854) and *Volta* (1850).

⁹³ Austrian State Archives KA Marine AMA 1855 M/b XXIV, adl. M/c 39/156, fol. 1r.

⁹⁴ Prinz Albert von Sachsen-Coburg und Gotha (26. 8. 1819–14. 12. 1861), the husband of Queen Victoria.

⁹⁵ Hadik von Futak, Béla Mathias Anton Graf (27. 9. 1822–19. 12. 1885). Schmidt-Brentano 1997 (reference 10), 171–175.

⁹⁶ *Leipziger Illustrirte Zeitung* 22. 9. 1855.

great desire to get to know the Emperor of the French personally himself. Even when his brother Emperor Franz Joseph I sent him to Paris as a diplomat in the year 1856, he initially expressed a negative opinion of the Emperor in Paris and his court of parvenus:

*This small unsightly figure, his thoroughly un noble exterior, his rattling gait, the unattractive hands, the craftily searching gaze of his dull eyes, all of these things form an ensemble that is, in no way, suited for making the first impression any more positive.*⁹⁷

However, this attitude would soon change, and Napoleon III and the Archduke developed an active interest in the ideas and plans of each other. Around a decade later, he had initially been elevated to the position of Emperor of Mexico with the help of Napoleon III and, after barely three years in power, shot after a trial in front of a military court on 19th of June 1867.

During the short stay in Toulon at the end of August 1855, the Archduke presented himself as a Supreme Commander of the Navy with a great interest in technology and visited the large arsenal and artillery training ship Suffren several times. The naval prefect of Toulon, Vice-Admiral Dubourdieu,⁹⁸ proved to be the perfect host. The Archduke also met important officers and citizens of the city, and the French and Austrians raised toasts to the wellbeing of the other's emperor. On 30th of August, they went on an excursion to La-Seyne-sur-Mer, where the Compagnie des Forges et Chantiers de la Méditerranée had been producing iron ship hulls and steam engines since 1853 under the direction of the English civil engineer Philip Taylor.⁹⁹ In the evening, Ferdinand Maximilian issued an invitation to a dinner on board one of his ships – this time he presented his guests with the new steam-driven frigate *Radetzky*, which had been built in England.¹⁰⁰



Fig. 13a. Franz Mai, *Hotel Rispoli at Sorrento, Guest with two mules*, August 1855, salted paper print 18.1 × 23.4 cm. Photoinstitut Bonartes, Vienna, BON_1686/15.

⁹⁷ Haslip 1972 (reference 28), 74.

⁹⁸ Louis Dubourdieu (15.6.1804 – 26.6.1857), see: Etienne Taillemite, *Dictionnaire des marins français*, Paris, 2002, 573 and <https://data.bnf.fr/en/10736356/louis_dubourdieu/> (20. 07. 23).

⁹⁹ Olivier Raveux, *Un Technicien Britannique en Europe meridionale: Philip Taylor (1786–1870)*, in: *Histoire, Économie et Société*, Vol. 19, No. 2, Paris, 2000, 264.

¹⁰⁰ *Wiener Zeitung* 4. 9. 1855.



Fig. 13b. The Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria, as seen from the South, 2024. Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria.

Even though the stay in Toulon was short but eventful and provided the Archduke with numerous ideas for the rebuilding and modernisation of the Imperial Navy, the only photograph by Franz Mai that has been preserved is a view of the commercial harbour¹⁰¹ (Fig. 14). It is unclear why Mai did not take the opportunity to photograph the combined British and French naval forces off the coast of southern France. Aspects of secrecy can probably be disregarded, as the French fleet was often the focus of artistic representation – whether as an oil painting, drawing or photograph, as the one shown here by Charles Nègre, who was able to depict the French fleet off the port of Toulon in autumn 1852 (Fig. 15).



Fig. 14. Franz Mai, Toulon, *Commercial harbour*, August 1855, salted paper print 13.7 × 26.2 cm, with brush retouches. Austrian National Library, Vienna Pk 5806,37.

¹⁰¹ Austrian National Library, Vienna, Pk 5806,37.



Fig. 15. Charles Nègre, *Toulon, La rade et l'escadre*, September 1852, salted paper print 21.6 × 33 cm. Millon, Collection Alex Novak, 8 November 2024, Lot 42.

The Archduke returns to Trieste

While the major part of the squadron did not arrive in Lissa (Vis, HR) from Naples until 7th of September,¹⁰² the Archduke hurried back to Trieste from Toulon onboard the steamship *Kaiserin Elisabeth* and reached the harbour on 4th of September.¹⁰³ He spent the next days in his then abode, the Villa Lazarovich, from where he wrote the following lines to his brother Carl Ludwig:

*My last letter was from Sorrento, from all the lushness of the beautiful south; leaving the magnificent Gulf, steam soon took me quickly to France, to the busy war harbour at Toulon – I stayed for two days, there were many interesting things for a seaman to look at.*¹⁰⁴

Mai accompanied the Archduke to Trieste (Fig. 16a) and photographed the magnificent garden of the Villa Lazarovich from the terrace, as well as the neighbouring building at the town's hillside.¹⁰⁵ The Archduke lived in this refuge at Via Tigor 23 in the years from 1854 to 1859 before moving to Miramare Castle (built 1856–1860) with his wife Princess Charlotte of Belgium where the two lived until their departure for Mexico in the year 1864. Mai' did not create a photograph of the villa, but a painting shows the 'reverse shot' to Mai's view of the garden: the building with terrace seen from the garden – and the flag of the imperial navy at the top of the tower (Fig. 16b).

¹⁰² Austrian State Archives KA Marine NMA Schiffsakten Tagebücher 1345/6, 37.

¹⁰³ Austrian State Archives KA Marine NMA Schiffsakten Tagebücher 416/5, 35.

¹⁰⁴ Praschl-Bichler 2006 (reference 15), 168.

¹⁰⁵ Museo Storico e il Parco del Castello di Miramare 0600181518,1 and 2.

The onward journey continued on 11th/12th of September; first of all, to Pola (Pula, HR) where Franz Mai found some time to photograph the amphitheatre, while the Archduke “showed chivalrous defiance of the epidemic and visited the cholera hospital in Pola, where he comforted the sick in a loving manner.”¹⁰⁶ In Trieste, and then in Pola, which would later become the most important harbour of the Austrian Navy, Mai took photographs of the cities and their architecture providing a plain visual documentation.

On 12th of September, the steamship *Kaiserin Elisabeth* once again caught up with the squadron near Lissa.¹⁰⁷ The fleet stayed here for one and a half weeks to engage in manoeuvres and sporting competitions between the crews:

*A regatta with the boats from the imperial squadron was held in Lissa at which the frigate Schwarzenberg and corvette Diana of His Imperial Highness were awarded the prize that was accordingly presented.*¹⁰⁸

The photographic naval parade off Lissa and Triest

From the viewpoint of naval history, Lissa formed a centre of focus in Franz Mai’s documentation. His photographs were devoted to two thematic areas: depictions of the individual ships on the one hand, and the manoeuvres carried out by the sailors, captured in the form of group photographs, on the other. Five motifs in the portfolio in the Austrian National Library present views of the Island of Lissa and its vicinity. The first one depicts a stretch of the coastline; it is possible to make out the Harbour of Lissa on the right edge.¹⁰⁹ Three further photographs each focus on an important ship of the squadron: first, the flagship frigate *Schwarzenberg*, flanked by two other ships,¹¹⁰ further, the steam frigate *Radetzky* with the steamer *Volta* in the background¹¹¹ and, last but not least, the steamship *Kaiserin Elisabeth* at anchor in front of the Gospa od Spilice Church next to the shore (as can be seen in fig. 19).¹¹² The fifth photo in the series of Lissa attempts to show almost the entire naval unit in rather foggy weather off St Andrea’s Island (Sveti Andrija, to the west of Vis, HR): The photo most likely depicts the screw frigate *Radetzky* in the centre, as well as the frigate *Schwarzenberg* on the far left, and the steamship *Kaiserin Elisabeth* on the opposite side on the far right.¹¹³ A circular dated 14th of September makes it possible to give the names of the other six ships (although it is not possible to identify them definitively in the photographs): the frigates *Novara* and *Venus*, corvettes *Diana*, *Leipzig*, and *Carolina*, and the steamship *Volta*.¹¹⁴

The squadron departed from Lissa on 22nd of September and sailed into Muggia Bay on the 27th of the same month, where additional manoeuvres were held.¹¹⁵ The Archduke did not take the direct route but spent a few days on board the steamship *Kaiserin Elisabeth* in Saccaron Bay (Sakarun on the island of Dugi Otok, HR)¹¹⁶ that is now extremely popular with tourists as the “most Caribbean” beach in the Adria region.¹¹⁷

Due to lacking geographical information and the absence of any other identifying factors, it is neither possible to date nor allocate a location to the other three photographs of ships taken by Franz Mai. One image shows the frigate *Novara* with another ship in the background.¹¹⁸ The remaining two are of the corvettes *Carolina* and *Minerva* – both are shown with other unidentifiable ships from the squadron.¹¹⁹

¹⁰⁶ *Leipziger Illustrirte Zeitung* 1. 10. 1855.

¹⁰⁷ Austrian State Archives KA Marine NMA Schiffsakten Tagebücher 416/5, 43.

¹⁰⁸ *Laibacher Zeitung* 24. 9. 1855. The rowing race took place on 16. 9. 1855, see: Austrian State Archives KA Marine AMA 1855 M/b XXIV, 24/8 fol. 1r.

¹⁰⁹ Austrian National Library, Vienna, Pk 5806,29.

¹¹⁰ Austrian National Library, Vienna, Pk 5806,34.

¹¹¹ Austrian National Library, Vienna, Pk 5806,3.

¹¹² Austrian National Library, Vienna, Pk 5806,8 and 31, two identical prints of different quality.

¹¹³ Austrian National Library, Vienna, Pk 5806,6.

¹¹⁴ Austrian State Archives KA Marine AMA 1855 M/b XXIV, 24/8 fol. 3v.

¹¹⁵ Austrian State Archives KA Marine NMA Schiffsakten Tagebücher 1345/6, 52–60, and *Wiener Zeitung* 9. 10. 1855.

¹¹⁶ Austrian State Archives KA Marine NMA Schiffsakten Tagebücher 416/5, 56–58.

¹¹⁷ There is no verifiable source for the description of the activities in Saccaron Bay.

¹¹⁸ Austrian National Library, Vienna, Pk 5806,1.

¹¹⁹ Austrian National Library, Vienna, Pk 5806,25 and 36.



Fig. 16a. Franz Mai, *Garden of the Villa Lazarovich*, September 1855, salted paper print. Museo Storico e il Parco del Castello di Miramare 0600181518,1.



Fig. 16b. Germano Prosdocimi, *The Villa Lazarovich in Trieste as seen from the Garden*, 1850s, gouache on paper. Museo Storico e il Parco del Castello di Miramare.

A new photographic genre: The sailor's life

The sailors' manoeuvre exercises were arranged photographically as staged genre shots to give an impression of a seaman's life in the Imperial Navy. The lengthy exposure times made snapshots of genuine exercise activities impossible during this period. A total of three photographs for which the flagship *Schwarzenberg* most probably provided the setting, as seen in some specific details of the ship, were included in the album. Each of these images shows a different group of sailors on deck. One is of sailors with typical objects of daily use (oars, ropes, and boathooks), another shows a gunning crew posing as if they were hauling back a cannon (Fig. 17), and the third is a group portrait of around twenty members of the crew and (at least) one marine¹²⁰ (Fig. 18).



Fig. 17. Franz Mai, *Gunning crew*, September/October 1855, salted paper print 20.3 × 27.3 cm, with brush retouches. Austrian National Library, Vienna Pk 5806,15.



Fig. 18. Franz Mai, *Group portrait of the crew*, September/October 1855, salted paper print 19 × 26.8 cm, with brush retouches. Austrian National Library, Vienna Pk 5806,16.

¹²⁰ Austrian National Library, Vienna, Pk 5806,13, 15 and 16.

These naval exercises that had begun on Lissa Island and continued in Muggia Bay lasted until the end of October.¹²¹ That is where Franz Mai took his last photographs¹²² that were most probably made without any direct orders from Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian, who had left the squadron before that time. He returned to Trieste on board a Lloyd's steamer¹²³ on 6th of October, and then visited his family in Bad Ischl in mid-October.¹²⁴ The squadron was definitively dissolved on 22th of October and the ships then left Muggia Bay.¹²⁵ In the meanwhile the Archduke had visited Vienna and returned to Trieste where he arrived in the night of 26th of October.¹²⁶ The city organised a ceremonious reception for him on the following day. The *Wiener Zeitung* published a detailed report of what was now the “official” end of the Archduke's sea voyage:

*The return of His Imperial Highness, the Most Supreme Lord Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian, Supreme Commander of the Navy, from a long and arduous sea voyage, which not only established and increased Austria's esteem in the most distant places, but also shone a favourable light on the rapid progress the Austrian Navy has made in recent times, provided the inhabitants of Trieste with the welcome opportunity to once again display their longstanding loyalty to the Supreme Ruling House in the person of the Most Supreme Prince.*¹²⁷

The photographic Mediterranean mission – a résumé

The carefully planned sea voyage of the young Archduke had a several goals that also included photographic accompaniment for the first time in the history of the Imperial Navy.¹²⁸ Led by the young Supreme Commander, the fleet not only set out to sea to carry out military exercises. The impressive number of ships was also intended to make it clear to the other Mediterranean nations that the Austrian Imperial Dynasty had the intention of developing into a maritime power to be reckoned with. This was mainly highlighted by the ships *Schwarzenberg*, *Radetzky*, and *Kaiserin Elisabeth* whose style and weaponry made them the most powerful and modern vessels of the Imperial Navy. However, the young Archduke was also successful in fulfilling his obligations of charmingly paving the way for Austrian interests (especially, the construction of the Suez Canal), and establishing contacts in keeping with the Emperor's intentions. Nevertheless, from the political and naval historical perspective, this journey had little effect on the geographic cosmos of the Mediterranean region. The album, which was produced in an edition of six pieces, made no historical impact on the public, seeing that they were intended for personal use alone, and – with the variability of the selection of the photographs in these albums – probably took the interests of their specific addressees into consideration. But what is the significance of the photographs that Franz Mai took of this undertaking at the instigation of the Archduke?

Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian's Mediterranean journey is one of the earliest stories in the history of photography. It took place seven years before the famous photographer Francis Bedford accompanied His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, on his “Tour in the East” in 1862, which is generally regarded as the first photographically accompanied Grand Tour or – in this case – Royal Tour.¹²⁹ On the one hand, this reflects the personal interests (Grand Tour) and obligations (representation) of the album's commissioner,

¹²¹ Austrian State Archives KA Marine NMA Schiffsakten Tagebücher 416/5, 83 and Austrian State Archives KA Marine NMA Schiffsakten Tagebücher 1345/6, 85 and Aichelburg 2002 (reference 4), 117f.

¹²² Due to the larger print sizes of these scenic motifs, it can be concluded that Franz Mai had used large format negative plates, of which probably a limited number were at his disposal on this voyage.

¹²³ *Custoza* (1843). Aichelburg 2002 (reference 4), 131f.

¹²⁴ *Wiener Zeitung* 12. 10. 1855 and Praschl-Bichler 2006 (reference 15), 168.

¹²⁵ Austrian State Archives KA Marine NMA Schiffsakten Tagebücher 416/5, 83 and Austrian State Archives KA Marine NMA Schiffsakten Tagebücher 1345/6, 85.

¹²⁶ *Wiener Zeitung* 30. 10. 1855.

¹²⁷ *Wiener Zeitung* 1. 11. 1855.

¹²⁸ The marine historian Wladimir Aichelburg was the first to draw attention to these oldest photographic depictions of ships in the Imperial Navy. Aichelburg 2002 (reference 4), 13.

¹²⁹ Sophie Gordon, *Cairo to Constantinople. Francis Bedford's photographs of the Middle East*, London, 2013, 39.

as well as the approach of the photographer that can be discovered in the (free) choice of motifs and the arrangement of the images on the individual sheets. The album presents itself as a photographic journal with images of the individual stations of the journey, the ships taking part in it, and their crews. Franz Mai played the role of an official travelling companion who visually documented the impressions and perspectives of the Archduke in the countries around the Mediterranean. The photographer's visual narrative style is subordinate here, and only rarely makes an impact.

The numerous photographs of ships in the album were important as they can now function as source material in Austrian photographic history capable of standing on the same level alongside the written documentation (the letters and nautical records). For his depictions of the individual ships, as well as in the case of his photographs showing the fleet, Franz Mai reverted to a documentary visual vocabulary that gave the topographic location, and the presentation of the ships (generally, as a landscape view) equal value (Fig. 19). Although the photographs document the naval operation (Fig. 20), they do so without the claim to heroization or dramatic exaggeration found in the marine photographs by Gustave Le Gray.¹³⁰



Fig. 19. Franz Mai, *The steamship Kaiserin Elisabeth in the harbour of Lissa*, September 1855, salted paper print 15.2 × 24.9 cm. Austrian National Library, Vienna Pk 5806,31.

Franz Mai's photographic mission must be seen in a completely different light, especially when the circumstances – last but not least those resulting from the technical complexity caused by several months of photographic activity on a ship – are taken into consideration. Taking photographs on ships and outdoors was a major technical challenge in the 1850s. The British photographer Francis Frith, who travelled through Egypt in 1856, had studied the photographic technique intensively before his journey¹³¹ and probably worked without time pressure and exclusively on land during his extensive travels.

¹³⁰ Serving at the French court, he invented a particularly sophisticated photographic technique: the sandwich negative. With the help of this technology, Le Gray was able to achieve much sharper detail, as well as include dramatic cloud effects in his photos of ships that he took at approximately the same time. Sylvie Aubenas, *Boulevard des Capucines: The Glory of the Empire*, in: Gordon Baldwin (ed.), *Gustave Le Gray 1820–1884*, Los Angeles, 2002, 105–147.

¹³¹ Douglas A. Nickel, *Francis Frith in Egypt and Palestine. A Victorian Photographer Abroad*, Princeton, 2004, 44.

Furthermore, he was accompanied by engineer Francis H. Wenham, who helped him with the labour-intensive photographic technique of the wet collodion process. In the following lines, Wenham describes the effects that heat and sand could have on photographic work:

*The first bottle of collodion uncorked popped like ginger-beer and its contents bubbled on the plate. After ten seconds exposure the developed picture was all in a fog, and filled with pin-holes from sand dust.*¹³²



Fig. 20. Franz Mai, *The corvette Minerva*, September/October 1855, salted paper print 14.6 × 20.8 cm. Austrian National Library, Vienna Pk 5806,36.

In contrast, the young Franz Mai had to take the photographs under the most diverse external influences, and always in great haste. His equipment was exposed to the salty sea air right from the start due to the early photographs taken on the voyage. In addition, Mai probably had help with the transport (sailors or mules), but he had no assistant who could actually help him with the complicated handling: In addition to the large box camera, tripod, and glass plates, each photograph had to be developed immediately after it was taken using the wet collodion process of the time, which required a mobile darkroom.¹³³ Exposure times were sometimes several seconds per shot, so that group arrangements such as those of the sailors required meticulous planning, similar to the realisation of tableau vivants – today’s snapshots of an ongoing action were simply impossible back then. Seen in this light, Franz Mai’s photo series is a remarkable pioneering achievement in the history of photography – not least because it is one of the world’s first ever photographs of a maritime expedition.

With a future behind a desk before his eyes, Ferdinand Maximilian fled from the serious side of life for a few months when his position as Supreme Commander of the Navy provided him with the opportunity

¹³² Nickel 2004 (reference 131), 48.

¹³³ Waller 2005 (reference 25), 17.

to undertake a 'Grand Tour' through the Mediterranean with his fleet. All of those official appointments that were not captured photographically underline the impression that this was a maritime excursion that provided the Archduke with great space for self-development.

No matter how manifold the reasons for the journey were, it was successful in the Archduke's eyes. Even though having firm ground under his feet after he returned to Trieste was obviously difficult for him, he summed up his experiences in a letter he wrote to his brother Carl Ludwig at the beginning of November in the following way:

Since the 7th of this month, I am once again sitting among the files and my life is dragging on tediously here in Trieste, without any joy, without any lustre, but – if God will – bringing about some good. The Navy is growing piano piano and flourishing, and the Emperor is pleased with me: if I could also flourish personally, but, deep in my heart, I am disgruntled and weary [...] and, even though my villa is really lovely, I hardly ever feel well in it.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Praschl-Bichler 2006 (reference 15), 168/177.