The Crustacean Collection of the Museum of Natural History in Vienna, Austria
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Abstract
The collection of Crustacea of the Natural History Museum in Vienna (NHMW) dates back to the middle of the 18th century. The oldest specimens documented were acquired in 1806. In the 19th century, the collection increased rapidly with material obtained from collectors - e.g., J. Natterer, Brazil; G. Frauenfeld, Red Sea; T. Körte, Gulf of Persia; I. Pfeiffer, Indonesia –, during various expeditions - e.g. the circumnavigation of the 'Novara' 1857-1859, the Austrian-Hungarian Northpole-Expedition (1872-1874), the deep-sea expeditions of the 'Pol' to the Eastern Mediterranean (1890-1893) and the Red Sea (1895-1898) - in exchange with other museums, institutes or scientists - e.g. the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris; the British Museum, London; P. Rioux, Marseille; E. Ehlers, Göttingen; H.N. Kroyer, Copenhagen; J.G. de Man, Liége - or purchased - e.g. Museum Godoffy, Hamburg. Most important among the types are the species described by C. Heller, H. Balss, and O. Pesta. In addition, the collection houses the extensive material of Adriatic decapods on which O. Pesta based his classical monograph 'Die Decapodentauna der Adria'.

Important Expeditions
One of the most important journeys for our museum was the circumnavigation of the earth by the frigate 'Novara', 1857-1859. A number of eminent natural scientists took part, one of them Georg Ritter von Frauenfeld, curator in the invertebrate department. The material he collected was voluminous and continues to be examined and published by prominent scientists until the present time.

The Austrian-Hungarian Northpole-Expedition was under the command of Carl Weyprecht and Julius von Payer. The ship 'Tegelhoff' was trapped in the ice in August 1872 and drifted with it for almost two years. After the discovery of Franz Josef Land the crew finally abandoned the ship. Besides valuable notes, diaries and drawings they saved several samples of animals. It took them 94 days pulling the boats over the ice to reach the open ocean.

The history of the invertebrate collection is much older than that of the Naturhistorische Museum. The first natural history collection was founded by Emperor Francis I (Franz Stephan von Lothringen), who reigned from 1745 to 1765. In 1748 he purchased the collection of the famous scientist Jean de Baillou in Florence. The collection contained more than 30,000 objects like minerals and fossils, snail shells, mussels, corals and also crustaceans. The collections grew rapidly especially in the 19th century through purchases, exchanges, collection activity of the staff members and gifts from scientifically inclined travellers and from persons on duty in foreign countries. Expeditions were organized, ordered by the Emperor as well as by private research organisations and scientific institutions to obtain plants and animals from all over the world. The old Viennese natural collection (k.k. Naturhistorisches Museum) was situated in a part of the old Viennese castle, so-called 'Hofburg'. The government decided to establish a new museum to stop the crippling restriction of space at the museum in the Hofburg. The new k.k. Naturhistorisches Hofmuseum, one of the most representative buildings of historicism in Austria, was inaugurated in August 1889 by Emperor Franz Josef.

Collectors and scientists

Franz Josef Land with abandoned Tegelhoff
S.M.S. 'Pol' in Pula, 1895

Specimens

Allerglas (Allerglas) epixeirous (Aonnes & Wint, 1848); Red Sea, G. v. Frauenfeld coll. 1855, holotype, NHMW 12094 (Photo: A. Schumacher).

Deidaphus nudosternus Hilg., 1861 (currently Carenalpoida) nudosternus (Hilg., 1861), Red Sea, G. v. Frauenfeld coll. 1855, syntype, NHMW 7760

Odilus sympheus Hilg., 1861, Red Sea, G. v. Frauenfeld coll. 1855, syntype, NHMW 10318 (Photo: A. Schumacher).