



Non-European Voyagers on European Sailing Ships

While the majority of ship crews were of Caucasian/European background, occasionally indigenous people from other countries boarded ships during the voyage. Africans from Cape Horn; Asians; Pacific Islanders and others joined ships for entire or part journeys. When berthed in a harbour, Pacific Islander dignitaries were often invited on board to exchange gifts or were given a tour of the ship as an act of hospitality and friendship.

The best known Pacific Islander to voyage with Cook was Omai, who joined HMS *Resolution* I from the island of Ulitea. This was part of the Society Islands, which are found north of Tahiti in the area now known as French Polynesia. Omai was very valuable to Cook as a navigator, an interpreter, a cultural adviser and as negotiator when meeting with Polynesian people. He sailed on HMS *Resolution* I and HMS *Adventure* back to the United Kingdom, where he stayed for three years. Omai was treated with much publicity and curiosity, being received by the King of England and made the subject of various plays, poems and novels. He returned to Ulitea on HMS *Resolution* II finding that the neighbouring island of Bolabola had invaded his home island. While Omai wished Cook to help him fight the invaders, Cook refused. Omai was left on the island of Huaheine on 2 November 1777, with two young Maoris from New Zealand. Cook records in his journal that he and the crew were very fond of Omai and were sad to part with his company before they headed to Hawaii.

Also taken on board in 1769 on HMS *Resolution* I from the Society Islands was a priest called Tupaia and his boy servant. Similar to Omai, Tupaia was of great assistance to Cook in navigating and negotiating with the Maoris in New Zealand. Tupaia died on the return voyage to the United Kingdom in Batavia.

There were no recorded sailors of Chinese background on the voyages of James Cook and William Bligh. Exploration was great during the 15th century, then decreased as trade by sea became more prominent. Chinese sailing ships were more commonly used as merchant ships in trade with the Spanish and Mexicans from the mid 16th century onwards. During the 17th to 18th centuries, Chinese sailors migrated to England and the United States to help build ships and from 1760 a silk and porcelain trade route opened up between China and England. A British sea captain took several Chinese master ship builders to British Columbia via Hawaii. Europeans harvested sandalwood from Hawaii and sold it to China, resulting in Hawaii being called 'Tan-heung-san' or 'Sandalwood Mountains' by the Chinese. By the 1830s, several Chinese migrants worked in Hawaii on sugar plantations.

African sailors were often carried on sailing ships. Sir Joseph Banks had two servants of African descent on HMB *Endeavour* – Thomas Richmond and George Dalton. They died of hypothermia and exhaustion in Tierra del Fuego during a plant collecting expedition. Joseph Banks sat with them by a fire and covered them with branches to keep them warm, but they passed away after several hours. Many African sailors also worked on whaling ships during the 19th century. Some African sailors joined and left merchant ships from the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Horn for parts of a ship's journey.