

Lascars: Living Conditions on Board Ship



History

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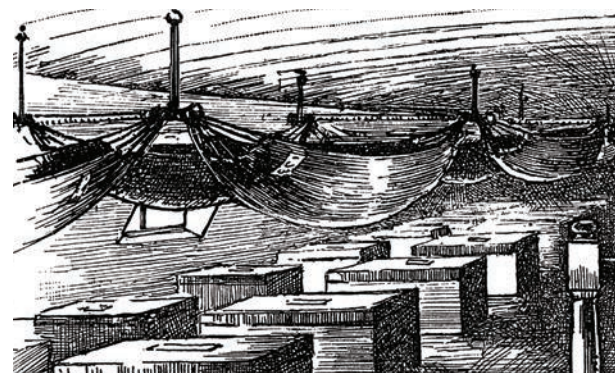
Lascars: Living Conditions on Board Ship

The Lascars' living conditions were not what anyone would call luxurious. In fact, they were pretty awful.

Sleeping

These sleeping quarters would have been like a palace for the Lascars.

They were reserved for British sailors. Although not even the British were always treated that well. But they were always treated better than the Lascars.



The Lascars slept on the floor, very close together. We hope they had a blanket or a sheet, but we don't know. For over two centuries, there were no laws about people's sleeping spaces. Once there were laws, they were hardly helpful for the Lascars, as the following laws show (European means British and other Europeans):

This is a story, based on what we've learnt about the Lascars. The pictures are not necessarily of the exact people in the story.



Merchant Shipping Law 1859

- Each European should have 9 square feet.
- Each Lascar should have 4 square feet.

Less than half the space of the Europeans, and yet they were not half their size!

Indian Merchant Shipping Act of 1876

- Each European should now have 10 square feet
- Each Lascar should have 6 square feet.

More than half the space of the European, but not by very much...

Merchant Shipping Act 1894

"Every place in any British ship occupied by seamen and appropriated to their use, shall have for each of those seamen a space of not less than 72 cubic feet, and of not less than 12 square feet."

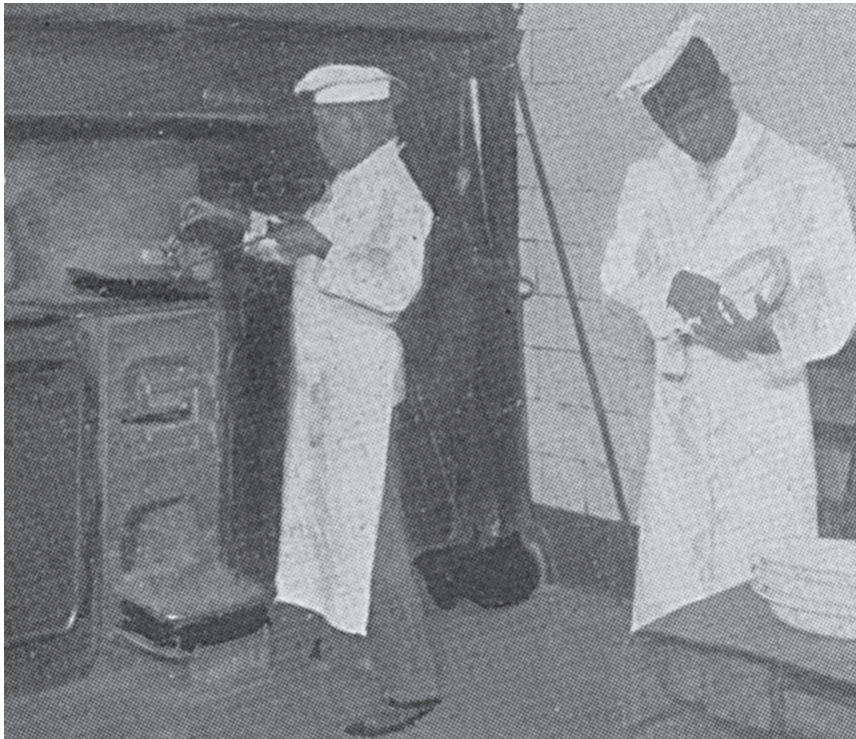
Translated, this means that every sailor should have at least 12 square feet. That was better! But then came the next law:

Merchant Shipping Act 1906

It said the rules about sleeping space should not be applied to space "occupied solely by Lascars or appropriated for their use". Basically, if you were a Lascar, the sleeping space rules didn't count.



Food



There were also rules about food for the seafarers. These didn't do much to keep the Lascars healthy and strong either. The British had more "energy foods", or carbohydrates, such as potatoes. The Lascars had rice, in smaller quantities. Not enough for the hard work of a sailor.



Toilets

There don't seem to be many records of the toilet situation on board ships in the old days.

But the Lascars probably had a bucket, which they possibly all shared.

We do have records of some people (who were concerned about the Lascars and tried to investigate), describing the Lascars' sleeping quarters as "filthy and stinking". That could give us a clue...



Whether eating or sleeping, life was very hard for the Lascars. They faced injustice and cruel treatment.