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**Moric Benovsky Biography**Born as **Moritz Benyovszky** (1741 or 1746 - 1786).

Benyowsky was a Slovak/Hungarian noble, adventurer, globetrotter, explorer, colonizer, writer, the King of Madagascar, a French colonel, Polish military commander and Austrian soldier. He was the first European sailor in the North Pacific region—well before James Cook and Jean-François de La Pérouse.

**Variations on his name**

Slovak: (Matúš) Móric Beňovský/Beňovský

Polish: Maurycy August Beniowski

Hungarian: Benyovszky Móric

French: Maurice Auguste de Benyowsky/-ski

English: (Matthew) Maurice Benyowsky/Benovsky

German: Moritz Benjowsky/-wski/Benyowski

Latin: Mauritius Auguste de Benovensius.

**Biography**For more details see: [Benovsky's life](#)

Benyowsky was born in Vrbové near Trnava in present-day Slovakia (at that time part of Hungary). The year of his birth (1741 or 1746) is disputed. His career began as an officer of Austrian army in the Seven Years War, because Hungary was part of the Austrian Monarchy at that time. However, his religious views and attitudes towards authority resulted in his leaving the country. From this time on he was called a sailor, an adventurer, a visionary, a colonizer, an entrepreneur, and a king. In 1768 he joined the Confederation of Bar, Polish national movement against Russian intervention. He was captured by the Russians and interned in Kazan and later exiled in Siberia (Kamchatka). Subsequently, he escaped from Siberia and started a discovery trip through the Northern Pacific. In 1772 Benyowsky arrived in Paris where impressed King Louis XV. He was offered to act in the name of France on Madagascar. In 1776 Benyowsky was elected by the local tribal chiefs an Ampansacabe, (king) of Madagaskar. In 1776 he returned to Paris and in appreciation for his services as Commander of Madagascar, he was awarded with promotion to the rank of General, and granted the military Order of Saint Louis and a life pension by Louis XVI. In 1779 Benyowsky came to America, where he tried to obtain support in proposal to use Madagascar as a base in the struggle against England. He died in 1786 fighting with the French on Madagascar.

**Legacy**

Besides being the author of a bestseller of the break of 18th and 19th century (see 1783), Benovsky became a rich source of inspiration for writers, poets and composers. The opera Benyowsky and the exiles of Kamchatka by François Boieldieu was presented in Paris in 1800. The US premier of the play Count Benyowsky—The Conspiracy of Kamchatka, a tragi-comedy in five acts by the German playwright August Friedrich von Kotzebue, took place in Baltimore along with the first performance of the US national anthem, the Star Spangled Banner, on October 19, 1814. The second of 8 operas by the Austrian composer Albert Franz Doppler (1821-1883), later arranged for piano by the Hungarian composer Mihaly Mosonyi, is also called Benyovszky. And Beniowski is also the name of an epic poem by the Polish poet Juliusz Słowacki (1809-1849). Also in his native Slovakia, many artistic works are associated with the name of Benyowsky, above all the novel The adventures of Móric Beňovský by Jozef Nižňanský (1933) and the Slovak-Hungarian TV series Vivat Beňovský from 1975.

Benovsky is considered a national hero above all by the Slovaks and by the Madagascarians, but also by the Poles. Beňovský's name and memory have survived in Madagascar to the present day. The island opposite Cape East is called the Benyowsky Island on older maps, and on the way from Antalaha to Cape East there is a ford named

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Baron Passage, relating to Benovsky's first stay on the island. When Madagascar gained independence, most European names fell into disuse, but not Benovsky's. One of the main streets in the capital Antananarivo (Rue Benyovski), as well as streets in several other major cities, is named after the unforgettable sovereign.

#### Benyowsky's nationality

There are three nations which consider Benyovský as one of them: Slovaks, Hungarians and Poles. Ethnically Benyowsky's roots were definitely Slovak and his first language was Slovak as well. But he—just like all Slovak nobles—was also a nobleman of the Kingdom of Hungary and could speak Hungarian as fluent as his native language. Besides, as a young man Benyowsky left Hungary and joined the Polish Confederation of Bar fighting for freedom against the Russian Empress Catherine. He became a close associate of his Polish compatriots. Until his death Poles were his brothers-in-arms. In many occasions he also declared himself as a Pole. The myth of Benyowsky's Polish nationality in some extent was created by his "Polish" name and a poem "Beniowski" written by Julius Slowacki, one of the finest Polish poets.

#### Benyowsky's family

Father: Samuel Beňovský, from the noble Beňovský family. At the time of Móric's birth, he was an Austrian colonel.

Mother: Rozália Beňovský (original name: Révaiová), her father was the Bishop of Spiš, this was her second marriage

Wife: Zuzana Beňovská (original name: Hönschová) (1750-1815), daughter of a butcher. She stayed in Baltimore in 1784 and after Móric's death she and her daughters departed America in 1786 and returned to Beňovský's castle in the Slovak town of Beckovská Vieska, where Countess Beňovská died in 1825 (They definitively did not stay in the USA as some sources sometimes suggest).

Brothers and sisters: 2 sisters, 2 brothers. His brother Francis Beňovský (František Beňovský) was an officer and adventurer in the Caribbean around 1780 and the adjutant of Major Polerecky, Head of the Blue Hussars of the French cavalry supervising the British surrender at Yorktown in America around 1781. He died in America in 1789.

Thanks to the help of Benjamin Franklin, Beňovský's descendants kept the spirit of cosmopolitanism and can be found all across Europe, as well as in the United States.

#### Bibliography

Memoirs of Benyowsky

The Memoirs and Travels of Mauritius August Count de Benyowsky, Magnate of the Kingdom of Hungary and Poland. One of the Chiefs of the Confederation of Poland. Consisting of his Military Operations in Poland, his Exile into Kamchatka, his Escape and Voyage from that Peninsula through the Northern Pacific Ocean, Touching at Japan and Formosa, to Canton in China, with an Account of the French Settlement, he was Appointed to Form upon the Island of Madagascar. Written by Himself. Translation from the Original Manuscript. London-Dublin, William Nicholson.

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