

Photoblog: The African Diaspora in the Indian Ocean World

In recent times, the growing economic relationship between India and African countries has been the subject of academic research and newspaper articles. Yet, as this collection of images courtesy of the [New York Public Library](#) shows, the relationship between these two entities has existed for centuries. [Read more articles in the “Why India-Africa relations matter” blog series.](#)



Zanjis Fighting This miniature painting in India comes from the Persian story of Darab fighting the Zanjis (Africans). Mughal, India c.1580-85 Courtesy of the British Library



Malik Ambar (1549-1626), born in Harar, Ethiopia, was sold as a child into slavery and became one of the most celebrated rulers in the Deccan region of India. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum



African Muslim Theologians Shah Jahan, ruler of the Mughal Empire between 1628 and 1658—and builder of the famous Taj-Mahal—honors Muslim



learned men, including two Africans.
Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution



Noble Ikhlas Khan In 1490, an African guard, Sidi Badr, seized power in Bengal and ruled for three years before being murdered. Five thousand of the 30,000 men in his army were Ethiopians. After Sidi Badr's assassination, high-level Africans were driven out and migrated to Gujarat and the Deccan. In the Deccan sultanate of Bijapur, Africans formerly enslaved—they were called the "Abyssinian party"—took control. The African regent Dilawar Khan exercised power from 1580 and was succeeded by Ikhlas Khan. The Abyssinian party dominated the Bijapur Sultanate and conquered new territories until the Mughal invasion in 1686. Courtesy of the San Diego Museum of Art



Porters at a Wedding Procession In the 18th century, Africans from the East Coast and Madagascar were transported to the Makran coast in Pakistan, and to Gujarat (India). Some were then sent to serve Indian and European elites in the north and east as far away as Bengal. Courtesy of the New York Public Library



Indian Musicians, Early 1800s Adult men were the most in demand in India. They were barbers, musicians, field laborers, water carriers, guards, soldiers and sailors. By the 1820s preference shifted toward boys—who were more easily controlled than adults—and women for domestic work and as concubines and prostitutes. The slave trade to India was organized at different times by the Arabs, the Portuguese, the British and the Indians. Courtesy of the New York Public Library



Blowing up a Slave Dhow in the Arabian Gulf, 1868: In 1863 and 1864, a total of 2,179 Africans were freed from slave ships in the Indian Ocean. Most were settled in the Seychelles, while others were sent to Bombay (Mumbai), India, and Aden, Yemen. Courtesy of the New York Public Library

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