

# ASIANN ART

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# AFRICANS IN INDIA

## From Slaves to Generals to Rulers

THIS GROUND-BREAKING exhibition retraces the history of Africans in the Indian subcontinent from the 16th to the 20th centuries.

The show features over 100 photographic reproductions of paintings and contemporary photographs documenting the lives and achievements of some of the East African diaspora in India, known as Habshis and Siddis. Generals, commanders, admirals, prime ministers, and rulers, East Africans – over the centuries – have greatly distinguished

themselves in India. They have written a story unparalleled in the rest of the world – that of enslaved Africans attaining the pinnacle of military and political authority not only in a foreign country but also on another continent.

The success was theirs, but it is also a strong testimony to the open-mindedness of a society in which they were a small religious and ethnic minority, originally of low status. As foreigners and Muslims, Africans ruled over indigenous Hindu, Muslim and Jewish populations.



*African musicians and guards at the court of Prince Lakpatji, Kutch. The Kenneth and Joyce Robbins Collection*

Besides appearing in written documents, the Africans have been immortalised in the rich paintings of different eras, states, and styles that form an important component of Indian culture. Because of their high positions, they were captured in vivid and exquisite portraits as principal subjects or in the immediate vicinity of non-African rulers.

As rulers, city planners, and architects, the Africans have left an impressive historical and architectural legacy that attests to their determination, skills, and intellectual, cultural, military and political savvy. The imposing forts, mosques, mausoleums, and other edifices they built – some more than 500 years ago – still grace the Indian landscape. The exhibition was curated by Dr Sylviane A Diouf of the New York Public Library's Schomburg-Mellon Humanities Summer Institute and Kenneth X Robbins, who is a collector and expert in Indian art.

• From 8 March to 6 May at Charles B Wang Center, Zodiac Gallery, 100 Nicolls Road, Stony Brook, NY 11794, [wangcenter.org](http://wangcenter.org)



*Wakashu with a Shou by Hosoda Eisui (acti Sir Edmund Walker ( Royal Ontario Museum*

## A THIR Beautiful Japan

*A THIRD GENDER Beautiful Youths in Japan Prints* is devoted to the portrayal of *wakashu*, beautiful youths – a 'third gender' occupying a position in the social sexual hierarchy of Japan during the Edo period (1603–1868).

Four hundred years ago, Japan, a complex social structure existed in which a third gender involved more than a person's biological sex. This position in the sexual hierarchy, and appearance, were also considered. Fundamental to this structure were youths called *wakashu*. Neither 'adult' nor 'woman' (each a separate gender). *Wakashu* were

## ART IN A TIME OF CHAOS

### Masterworks from Six Dynasties China

THE SIX DYNASTIES period, from the 3rd to 6th centuries, was one of the most dynamic periods in Chinese art history, akin to the European Renaissance in the impact it had on artistic creativity and the celebration of individual expression.



period and in the exhibition. They are the Northern Wei, Eastern Wei, Northern Qi, Western Wei, and Northern Zhou. Artworks have been borrowed from the Nanjing Museum, Nanjing Municipal Museum, and Shanxi Museum, Nanjing was