

Siddi Tribes

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About Siddi Tribe

- The Siddi also known as Sidi, Siddhi, Sheedi or Habshi.
- Sometimes referred to as Afro-Indians.
- They are descended from the Bantu peoples of the East African region.
- It is believed that they are of African origin because they clearly show the Negroid racial strain in their physical features.
- Another term for Siddis, habshi, is held to be derived from the common name for the captains of the Abyssinian ships that also first delivered Siddi slaves to the subcontinent.
- They are primarily Muslims, although some are Hindus and others belong to the Catholic Church.

Recent Status

- At present, the Siddis are living on the western coast of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka states. In Karnataka, they mainly live in Dharwad, Belagavi and Uttar Kannada districts.
- In India, the Union government in 2003, classified Siddis under the list of Scheduled Tribes.
- They are included in the Centre's list of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

Historical Background

- The first Siddis are thought to have arrived in India in 628 AD at the Bharuch port.
- Others followed with the first Arab conquest of the subcontinent in 712 AD.
- They have been soldiers in Muhammad bin Qasim's Arab army and were called Zanjis.

- During The Delhi Sultanate period, Jamal-ud-Din Yaqut was a prominent Siddi slave-turned-nobleman who was a close confidant of Razia Sultana.
- Siddis were also brought as slaves by the Deccan Sultanates.
- They also served in the Navy of Shivaji Maharaj.
- Several former slaves rose to high ranks in the military and administration, the most prominent of which was Malik Ambar.
- Later the Siddi added via Bantu peoples from Southeast Africa brought to the Indian subcontinent as slaves by the Portuguese.