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Junagarh
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Junagarh (Junāgarh, from *jūnun* “old” and *garh* “fort” in Gujarātī; more fanciful etymologies have been proposed) is a city in the Saurashtra or Kathiawar peninsula of India, now the headquarters of the Junagarh district of Gujarat state. From 1167/1754 to 1368/1949, it was the capital of a princely state of the same name, also known as Sorath (a variant of Saurashtra).

1. GEOGRAPHY AND PEOPLE

The state had an area of 8,643 square kilometres in 1947. It included the Girnar mountains and the Gir forest which, in the nineteenth century, covered a third of its territories (the Gir is now a national park and wildlife sanctuary and the home of the world’s last wild Asiatic lions). Wheat, lentils, sorghum, millet, and cotton were grown on fertile plains. Junagarh’s principal ports on the Arabian Sea were Mangrol and Veraval, which were, for centuries, used by trading and fishing vessels, and Veraval was formerly one of the main points of embarkation for Indian pilgrims performing the *hajj*. Some 75 percent of

the state’s 670,719 people (1941 census) were Hindu, 22 percent (including the ruling family) Muslim, and 3 percent Jain. The Muslims included a small community of African descent, the Siddīs, a variation of the Urdū word *Sīdī*, a common name for African-Indians (apparently from the Arabic *sayyidī*, my master).

2. EARLY HISTORY

The documented history of the future state of Junagarh begins with the Mauryan emperor Ashoka (r. c.272–35 B.C.E.), whose “major rock edicts” (a set of policy pronouncements) were carved on a boulder between Junagarh city and the Girnar mountains. The same boulder also bears inscriptions of Rudradāman I (r. c.130–50 C.E.) of the Western Satrap dynasty and Skandagupta (r. c.455–67 C.E.) of the Gupta dynasty. From 261/875 (traditional date) until 874/1470, Junagarh was the core of the dominions of the Chūdāsamās, a Hindu dynasty whose kingdom included the temple of Somnath (Lord Shiva) on the Arabian Sea. Inscriptions record that several Chūdāsamā monarchs rebuilt or repaired the temple. In 416/1025, the temple was plundered by Maḥmūd