

# Bombay

Written by Bahar Hussain Shah

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The oldest known names for the city are Kakamuchee and Galajunkja; these are sometimes still used.

from £78\*

Mumbai is built on what was once an archipelago of seven islands: Bombay Island, Parel, Mazagaon, Mahim, Colaba, Worli, and Old Woman's Island (also known as Little Colaba). It is not exactly known when these islands were first inhabited. Pleistocene sediments found along the coastal areas around Kandivali in northern Mumbai by archaeologist Todd in 1939 suggest that the islands were inhabited since the Stone Age. Perhaps at the beginning of the Common era (2000 years ago), or possibly earlier, they came to be occupied by the Koli fishing community.

In the third century BCE, the islands formed part of the Maurya Empire, during its expansion in the south, ruled by the Buddhist emperor, Ashoka of Magadha. The Kanheri Caves in Borivali were excavated in the mid-third century BCE, and served as an important centre of Buddhism in

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Western India during ancient Times. The city then was known as Heptanesia (Ancient Greek: A Cluster of Seven Islands) to the Greek geographer Ptolemy in 150 CE.

Between the second century BCE and ninth century CE, the islands came under the control of successive indigenous dynasties: Satavahanas, Western Kshatrapas, Abhiras, Vakatakas, Kalachuris, Konkan Mauryas, Chalukyas and Rashtrakutas, before being ruled by the Silhara dynasty from 810 to 1260. Some of the oldest edifices in the city built during this period are, Jogeshwari Caves (between 520 to 525),<sup>[36]</sup> Elephanta Caves (between the sixth to seventh century), Walkeshwar Temple (10th century),<sup>[38]</sup> and Banganga Tank (12th century).

King Bhimdev founded his kingdom in the region in the late 13th century, and established his capital in Mahikawati (present day Mahim). The Pathare Prabhus, one of the earliest known settlers of the city, were brought to Mahikawati from Saurashtra in Gujarat around 1298 by Bhimdev. The Delhi Sultanate annexed the islands in 1347–48, and controlled it till 1407. During this time, the islands were administered by the Muslim Governors of Gujarat, who were appointed by the Delhi Sultanate.

The Haji Ali Dargah was built in 1431, when Mumbai was under the rule of the Gujarat Sultanate. The islands were later governed by the independent Gujarat Sultanate, which was established in 1407. The Sultanate's patronage led to the construction of many mosques, prominent being the Haji Ali Dargah in Worli, built in honour of the Muslim saint Haji Ali in 1431. From 1429 to 1431, the islands were a source of contention between the Gujarat Sultanate and the Bahamani Sultanate of Deccan. In 1493, Bahadur Khan Gilani of the Bahamani Sultanate attempted to conquer the islands, but was defeated.

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