

## 18.9 Roads

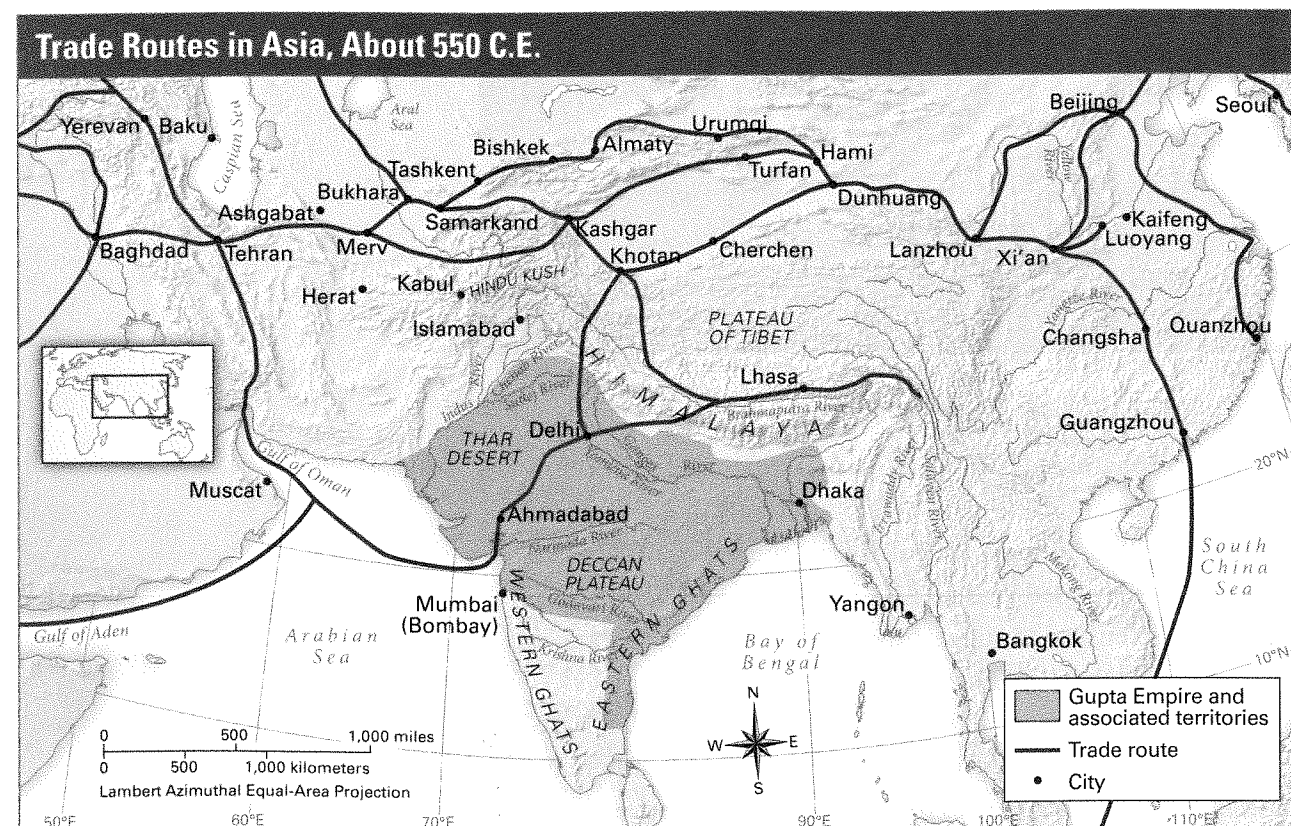
Gupta rulers encouraged trade by creating a system of well-built roads. Care and precision were used to build these roads. First engineers cleared the roadway of plants, trees, and rocks. Then, holes were filled in. Finally, workers smoothed the ground until it was level. The finished roads were made of hard-packed dirt.

The roadways were designed for safety and comfort. They were built a few feet off the ground. Ditches, or canals, ran along either side. These features helped prevent flooding during the rainy monsoon season. Water would run off the road and into the ditches.

Signs along the roadway told travelers where they were. Signs also marked off the distances so people could calculate how far they had traveled. Rest houses gave travelers a place to relax or spend the night. Wells provided water for drinking and cooking.

The empire's roads greatly benefited trade. They enabled busy traders to move easily from city to city within the large empire. Traders could also move goods from the middle of the country to important waterways. From there, traders could ship their goods and sell them in other countries. The roads also connected India to China and the lands east of the Mediterranean Sea.

The network of roads created by Gupta rulers encouraged trade throughout the empire and beyond it. This trade contributed to the empire's prosperity.



## Chapter Summary

**In this chapter, you learned about the many advances made in ancient India during a golden age under the rule of the Gupta Empire.**

**The Rise of the Gupta Empire** The Gupta Empire arose around 320 C.E. under Chandragupta I. Like the Mauryas, the Guptas created a strong central government, while also giving significant independence to local leaders. This strategy helped create an era of stability and prosperity. India experienced a surge of learning and artistic growth in many areas.

**Universities** The Guptas built many Hindu and Buddhist universities attended by students from the upper classes. Nalanda was the most famous school.

**Literature** Writers created poetry, fables, folktales, and plays. Scholars wrote about law and religion. Great works of Sanskrit literature, including the *Puranas* and the *Mahabharata*, were recorded. Some of this work spread beyond India and continues to be influential today.

**Painting and Sculpture** Artists and members of noble families created paintings depicting religious values and noble life. The Ajanta cave murals are among the greatest ancient Indian paintings. Sculptors worked in stone, wood, bronze, and terra-cotta clay. Their work showed Hindu deities, the Buddha, and scenes from important people's lives.

**Metalwork** Skilled metalworkers engraved gold and copper coins. Artisans were famous for their ironwork, including engravings on iron pillars.

**Mathematics** Gupta mathematicians developed a decimal system and were the first to treat zero as a number. One astronomer, named Aryabhata, calculated the length of a year and estimated the size of Earth. We still use their advances today.

**Roads** Engineers designed and built a system of roads that helped improve trade and prosperity.

Each person in this detail of an Ajanta cave mural displays a different mudra, which is a hand position. These Buddhist gestures symbolize beliefs about the gods and communicate such qualities as compassion and fearlessness.

