Brahmagupta Encyclopedia Article

Brahmagupta

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Brahmagupta

598-670

Indian astronomer and mathematician whose discussions of number theory prefigured ideas now accepted in mathematics. His *Brahmasphutasiddhanta* (628), translated as *The Opening of the Universe,* defined zero as the result obtained when a number is subtracted from itself—by far the best definition of zero up to that time. Brahmagupta also provided rules for "fortunes" and "debts" (positive and negative numbers), and used a place-value system much like that which exists today. In addition, *The Opening of the Universe* offered an algorithm for computing square roots, a method for solving quadratic equations, and rudimentary forms of algebraic notation.