

of higher Indian civilization. Seleucus Nicator, the founder of the great empire of the Seleucidæ, penetrated from Babylon toward the Ganges, and established political relations with the powerful Sandrocottus (Tschandraguptas) by means of the repeated missions of Megasthenes to Pataliputra.*

In this manner a more animated and lasting contact was established with the most civilized portions of Madhya Desa (the middle land). There were, indeed, learned Brahmins living as anchorites in the Pendschab (Pentapotamia), but we do not know whether those Brahmins and Gymnosophists were acquainted with the admirable Indian system of numbers, in which the value of a few signs is derived merely from position, or whether, as we may however conjecture, the value of position was already at that time known in the most civilized portions of India. What a revolution would have been effected in the more rapid development and the easier application of mathematical knowledge, if the Brahmin Sphines, who accompanied Alexander, and who was known in the army by the name of Calanos—or, at a later period, in the time of Augustus, the Brahmin Bargasos—before they voluntarily ascended the scaffold at Susa and Athens, could have imparted to the Greeks a knowledge of the Indian system of numbers in such a manner as to admit of its being brought into general use! The ingenious and comprehensive investigations of Chasles have certainly shown that the method of the Abacus or Algorismus of Pythagoras, as we find it explained in the geometry of Boëthius, was nearly identical with the Indian numerical system based upon the value of position, but this method, which long continued devoid of practical utility among the Greeks and Romans, first obtained general application in the Middle Ages, and especially when the zero had been substituted for a vacant space. The most beneficent discoveries have often required centuries before they were recognized and fully developed.

Eastern poets), were situated between the Hydraotes and the Hyphasis (the present Ravi and Beas).

* Megasthenes, *Indica*, ed. Schwanbeck, 1846, p. 17.