

6.D. Products of negative numbers

We have noted that negative numbers and zero are manipulated systematically and correctly (except for division by zero) in Brahmagupta's writings from the 7th century. In particular, he understood the topic well enough to recognize a fact that has been troublesome for many students of mathematics over the ages:

The product of two negative numbers is positive.

This many have been known to others before Brahmagupta, but his work gives the earliest known statement. It is not known how he or others may have discovered this fact, but in any case here are some online references which attempt to explain it; some are informal while others are more abstract.

<http://mathforum.org/dr.math/faq/faq.negxneg.html>

<http://planetmath.org/encyclopedia/ProductOfTwoNegativeNumbers.html>