



SPHERE

Laboratoire de Philosophie et d'Histoire des Sciences
UMR 7219



Call for participation in a conference on Colebrooke and the Historiography of mathematics and astral sciences in Sanskrit

*organised by K. Chemla and A. Keller (SPHERE, CNRS & Université Paris Diderot)
to be held in Paris, Laboratoire SPHERE, CNRS, Université Paris Diderot
15th – 16th April, 2019*

*Proposals of contribution to the conference should be sent to Agathe Keller
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A bit more than 200 years have elapsed since the publication of Henry Thomas Colebrooke's Algebra, with Arithmetic and Mensuration, from the Sanscrit of Brahmagupta and Bhāscara. We will grasp this opportunity to organise a two day workshop to be held in Paris on the 15th and 16th of April 2019. The conference will concentrate on Colebrooke's historiography of mathematics and astral sciences, and here are some of the general questions that we invite contributions to this workshop to tackle:

In which contexts did Colebrooke's interest in the mathematics and astral sciences of ancient India take shape? What was the ensuing impact, in Europe and beyond, of the 1817 publication for the writing of the history of mathematics not only in India, but also worldwide? What can be said on how Colebrooke translated and worked with Sanskrit sources dealing with mathematics and astral sciences? How can we situate this work by Colebrooke in the larger context of 18th and 19th century interest for "oriental mathematics and astronomy"? Does Colebrooke's early interest for mathematics and astral sciences echo into his other indological studies? Or, reciprocally, does he translate and study texts of history of mathematics and/or astral sciences in continuity with his other indological studies?

We are in particular interested in the various social environments with which Colebrooke interacted and in which he carried out his work. For example, we know that Colebrooke had close-knit relations actuaries in London, linguists in Germany and Scottish enlightenment mathematicians. Can we trace more specifically how some of these milieux helped structure research questions in the history of mathematics and astral sciences in South Asia?

We are also interested in how Colebrooke chose to translate the Sanskrit sources for which he set out to provide an English translation, and also on the impact of these translations. For example, one could explore why Colebrooke chose to translate some Sanskrit terms, such as the topics of mathematics known under the term vyavahāras, as "logistics". This translation has long endured and is still used sometimes today: Why did he use such a translation, where did it come from, why was it retained for such a long time?