

Preface

Nearly everybody in Germany knows Adam Ries as the medieval teacher of arithmetic of the German people, at least by the phrase ‘Das macht nach Adam Ries ...’ confirming the exactness of a calculation. But only a few know him as a scholar of algebra. In Ries’s arithmetic books almost any Cossic symbols, in particular that of the unknown, are absent. However, there are some allusions by which Ries refers to himself as a Cossist. It was only after the rediscovery of the long-sought-for manuscript of the ‘Coss’ in 1855 that a study of Ries’s importance as a Cossist was made. Unfortunately, there followed an almost one-hundred year interval in the research on Ries. New important research findings throwing light on Ries’s role as a Cossist and his contributions to the development of mathematics at his time were published only in the 1950s.

The facsimile edition of the ‘Coss’ in 1992 by B. G. Teubner, Leipzig, initiated by Hans Wussing, can be seen as a milestone in recognizing Ries and his immense work. It is hoped that it will continue to encourage historians of mathematics to study the development of European mathematics in the period between the Middle Ages and modern time. The present book is aimed at drawing the attention of English-speaking readers to the person of Adam Ries and his pioneering work. Thus, both scientific papers and popular books have been included into the list of references.

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