

Today in Math History...

-10 December 1478

The “Treviso Arithmetic,” the first printed mathematics text, published. The problem to the right appears in the text.

“Three merchants have invested their money in a partnership, whom to make the problem clearer I will mention by name. The first was called Piero, the second Polo, and the third Zuanne. Piero put in 112 ducats, Polo 200 ducats, and Zuanne 142 ducats. At the end of a certain period they found that they had gained 563 ducats. Required is to know how much falls to each man so that no one shall be cheated.”

The Treviso Arithmetic is a practical book intended for self study and for use in Venetian trade. It is written in the Venetian dialect and communicated knowledge to a large population. The Treviso became one of the first mathematics books that were written for the expansion of human knowledge. It gave opportunity for the common person to learn the art of computation instead of only a privileged few. The Treviso Arithmetic provided an early example of the Hindu-Arabic numeral system and computational algorithms.