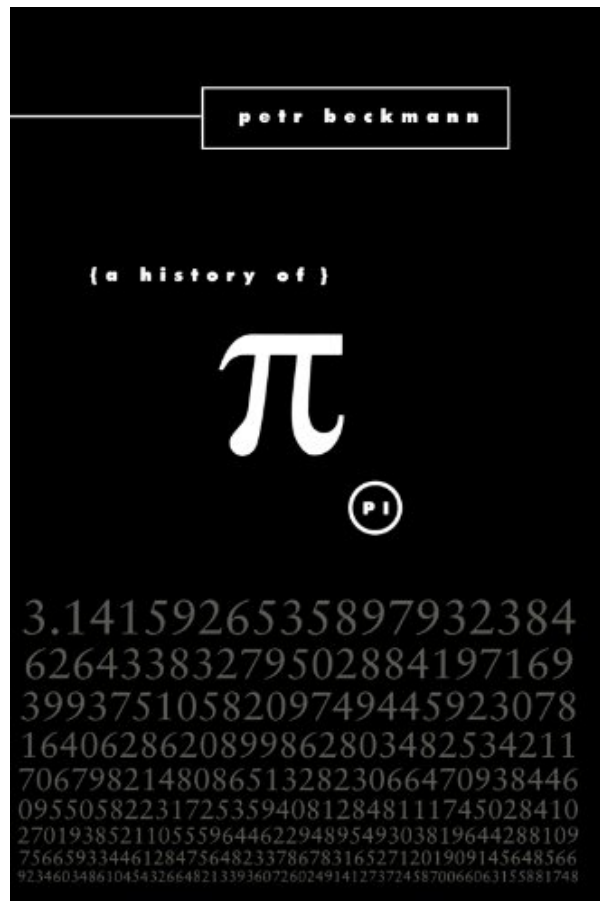


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“A pure delight . . . Entirely offbeat, which gives it its charm.” ?The Denver Post

“A very readable account.” ?Science

“A cheerful work.” ?Scientific American

From the Back Cover

The history of pi, says the author, though a small part of the history of mathematics, is nevertheless a mirror of the history of man. Petr Beckmann holds up this mirror, giving the background of the times when pi made progress and also when it did not, because science was being stifled by militarism or religious fanaticism. The mathematical level of this book is flexible, and there is plenty for readers of all ages and interests.

About the Author

Petr Beckmann was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in 1924. Until 1963, he worked as a research scientist for the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, when he was invited as a Visiting Professor to the University of Colorado, where he decided to stay permanently as professor of electrical engineering. He has authored eleven books and more than fifty scientific papers, mostly on probability theory and electromagnetic wave propagation.

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A Nice Insightful Book on Mathematics

By Khalifa Alhazaa

One of the reviewers complained about this book's continuous digressions. Well, you must know before reading this book that mathematicians were never great historians. Dr Beckmann is a professor of Electrical Engineering and this is more in the Physics side. This makes him potentially worse of a historian. But then would you please stop for a second and tell me what you want to know in a book about "Pi!"

I know I want to know almost anything there is about it. I want to know its origin, how people dealt with it in ancient days, and how people are dealing with it nowadays or in the past 100 year. Do not be mystified, for this number was known long long ago.

Then what is wrong with digressions? We want to know as much as possible, don't we? I saw that Dr Beckmann insights were all interesting. You would say, "Oh, yeah, another one of those geeky mathematicians." But I would only answer that I hate computers but read the section about applying the computer in computing new digits of this strange number.

This number appears in so many places in mathematics. The most famous is in the formula relating the circumference of the circle to the radius. And it appears in so many other sciences. It was the passion of so many amateur mathematicians to compete in the memorization of as many as a million digits after the decimal point.

Do you see why I decided to read the book? It is worth your time. Read it you too.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

good quality,

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quick ship, good quality, thanks

3 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

A readable history of pi for high school algebra students...

By Stephen Armstrong

...or higher. The math in this book will not intimidate the reader, and the general audience with a high school algebra or geometry course can find something interesting in almost all portions of the book. (It was here that I learned that pi is not simply "irrational," it is also "transcendental"--that is, not capable of being a root of any algebraic formula.) The time format runs from 2000 BC to 1970s AD, when computers could be developed and used in order to compute values of pi. My little PC can compute 3000 digits of pi in less than a second, using Mathematica.

I had only one reservation about the book, which is the author's abhorrence of organized religions. He states several times that Christianity held science and math back through the post Roman Empire era until the Enlightenment ages. He is harshest on Christianity, but he also reserves a few hard barbs for the Persian and Muslim leaders. I thought that the author's heartfelt views on religion distracted the reader from his mathematical insights about Pi.

Amazon also sells a competing book, Alfred S. Posamentier and Ingmar Lehmann, Pi: A biography of the world's most mysterious number (Prometheus Books, 2004). That book has more "real" math in it, and less about the role of organized religion.

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