

Bartholomeo Pitiscus Biography

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Biography

A theologist by trade and a strong influence in the Calvinist government of his time, Bartholomeo Pitiscus also essentially coined the term "trigonometry." The term comes from the title of his book *Trigonometria*, which consists of three parts, including five chapters devoted to plane and spherical **geometry**, now known as plane and spherical **trigonometry**. In addition to its contribution to mathematical nomenclature, the text is highly regarded and is especially noteworthy because in it Pitiscus used all six of the trigonometric **functions**.

Pitiscus was born August 24, 1561, in Grünberg, Silesia (now Zielona Góra, Poland), but the details of his upbringing and mathematical education are not known. He studied Calvinist theology at Zerbst and Heidelberg, and, in 1584, was appointed to tutor 10-year-old Friedrich der Aufichtige, known as Frederick IV, elector Palatine of the Rhine. Pitiscus was subsequently appointed court chaplain at Breslau and court preacher to Frederick. Frederick took control of the government of the Palatinate after his uncle, John Casimir, died in 1592 and Pitiscus remained influential in the government's defense of Calvinism under his former pupil.

Trigonometria: sive de solutione triangulorum tractatus brevis et perspicuus was published in 1595 as the final section of A. Scultetus' *Sphaericorum libri tres methodicé conscripti et utilibus scholiis expositi*. The work was published in revised form in 1600 under the title *Trigonometriae sive de dimensione triangulorum libri quinque*.

Trigonometriae is divided into three sections, the first of which contains five books on plane and spherical trigonometry. The second section provides tables for all six of the **trigonometric functions**, carrying them out to five or six decimal places. The third section of the text, "Problem varia" contains 10 books of problems in geodesy, measuring of heights, geography, geometry, and astronomy. An enlarged edition containing the original first and third sections of *Trigonometriae* was published in 1609 with expanded tables at the end of the text. A third edition was published in 1612 with an expanded "Problem varia" section including problems related to architecture. The original *Trigonometria* was translated into English by R. Handson in 1614.

Further details of Pitiscus' life are not known. He died on July 2, 1613, in Heidelberg, Germany.