

Ruiz Zúñiga, Ángel (ed.)

The history of mathematics in Costa Rica. An introduction. (Historia de las matemáticas en Costa Rica. Una introducción). (Spanish).

Heredia: Editorial de la Universidad Nacional (EUNA), (ISBN 9977-67-281-4),
 iii, 449 p. (1995).

This monograph is a first approach to a study of the history of mathematics in Costa Rica. As every first attempt, it has its qualities and shortcomings. Although, relatively, Costa Rica is a small country and, therefore, must contain a small mathematical community and tradition, the editor is able to produce a fairly long and insightful book.

The contents of the monograph may be summarized as follows:

First of all, the presentation of the book shows some of the problems associated with the writing of contemporary history. Due to the lack of proper documentation, some of the historical assertions are questionable, others are opened to reinterpretation and discussion. It is very possible that each and every member of the community has its own understanding of the key factors behind the development of mathematics in Costa Rica. Unfortunately, the lack of professional tools and archives - properly classified - is a question that will not be solved in a short run.

Second, the presentation is followed by a fruitful and penetrating preface where the editor discusses the theoretical and methodological foundations of the present volume. Undoubtedly, this section will be extremely useful for future students.

Then, the monograph is divided into four parts: 1) mathematics and education before the 'Universidad de Costa Rica'; 2) the university mathematics; 3) teachers of mathematics, and, 4) other aspects of mathematics in Costa Rica. The first three parts cover the development of Costa Rican mathematics from 1800 to 1960, approximately. The fourth section, that seems to be misplaced, discusses some ethnomathematical issues that belong to a previous historical period.

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