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“Simon Marius 1573 – 1624” Anniversary

The southern German astronomer Simon Marius died 400 years ago. He discovered the four largest moons of Jupiter at the same time as Galileo Galilei and was involved in all the important astronomical observations of the early 17th century. From 1606 until his death, he was the margravian court astronomer in Ansbach.

Marius saw the supernova of 1604 just one day after the first discovery and in 1608 he was probably the first astronomer outside the Netherlands to hear about the newly invented telescope. As a replica could not be built, he had to wait a year before he could begin using an instrument. The Moons of Jupiter discovered in January 1610 showed that there are stars that do not primarily orbit the Earth. Two months after Galileo, he also recognized the phases of Venus, which proved that Venus revolved around the sun. These observations provided arguments for a heliocentric system, which could not be proven at the time. Marius therefore advocated for the Tychonian world system, which was a compromise. Marius was the first person with a telescope to observe the Andromeda Nebula, he measured the parallax of comets and observed sunspots. He also translated Euclid's Elements into German.

Galileo's accusation that Marius had only copied from him has since been refuted but it severely damaged his reputation. The Moons of Jupiter, a lunar crater and an asteroid were named by or after Marius.

The Simon Marius Society has proclaimed the anniversary “Simon Marius 1573 – 1624” on December 27 (os), the 400th anniversary of his death. According to the Gregorian calendar, the anniversary of his death is January 5, 2025.

After three kick-off events, the anniversary was celebrated by a series of lectures, exhibitions, a new edition of the main work, street naming ceremonies and a play that explored the court mathematician's grievances. Highlights included a scientific conference at which the Simon Marius Prize was awarded posthumously to Prof. Dr. Jay M. Pasachoff, the storage of the main work burned on ceramic panels in the oldest salt mine on earth, and a generative AI that answered questions about Marius and the astronomy of his time. A nebula will be named after Marius, a satellite will send a message, and his correspondence is to be published in a new menu on the Marius portal (www.simon-marius.net).