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Tycho Brahe and Prague: Crossroads of European Science *(Acta Historica Astronomiae 16)*

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The 16th volume of the Acta Historica Astronomiae is the Proceedings of the *International Symposium on the History of Science in the Rudolphine Period.* The meeting was held in Prague from 22 to 25 October 2001, on the 400th anniversary of Tycho's sudden death, and was attended by approximately 65 scientists and historians. The volume contains 36 contributions dealing with the life and work of Tycho Brahe, the astronomy of the era, and many cultural aspects of Rudolphine Prague.

One of the first papers is an eye-opener on the fact that Tycho Brahe was a cosmologically-driven observer. This is followed by a very illuminating paper on gender roles in science in the late 16th century, with emphasis on the role of Sophie Brahe, Tycho's youngest sister.

Several subsequent papers reveal the existence of barely known links between Tycho and his contemporaneous colleagues. These extremely-well documented papers also deal with the broader philosophical investigation he was involved in, viz. meteorology, medicine, astrology, alchemy and even theology. Important names of Tycho's days are Petrus Severinus, Johannes Pratensis, Theophrastus Paracelsus, John Craig, Ursus (Nicolai Reymers Baer) etc. Very illuminating is the information on the relations between Tycho and the Jesuits in Prague, explaining the reason why this order was very supportive of the Tychonic cosmological model. The relationship with Kepler, and also Kepler's observational activities (after Tycho's death) are highlighted as well as the hideous mode of communication between Galileo and Kepler.

More than one paper deals with the accuracy and precision of Tycho's observations, and the causal impact of this accuracy on the scientific revolution. Another study discusses the study of Tycho's handwriting, this paper brings the aditional bonus of a list of accessible works which contain annotations by him. One very interesting project was Brahe's proposal to the Republic of Venice to determine the exact latitudes of geographical points at different epochs in order to prove that the value of the precession is constant, which would support his cosmological model.

Technically, the book has several regrettable shortcomings: there is no subject nor object index, the layout is rather heterogeneous (some papers have figure captions and others not, only 7 papers have a list of references at the end, some papers are structured in Sections but several are not). Most references appear in footnotes, and several of these footnotes cover a full page or even more, a truly irritating situation for the reader. About 10% of the papers are written in German, the remaining are in English.

Despite the editorial imperfections, this is a delightful book, a treasure trove of detailed information which usually is not available in textbooks on the history of astronomy. It is one of these rare proceedings that makes the reader truly regret the fact that he or she could not participate at the conference. This is great informative value for the money.

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