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Tycho Brahe

1003 words

Born Tyge Ottesen Brahe on 14th December 1546 in Knutstorp Castle at Scania, Denmark, Tycho Brahe, later known as the Lord of Uraniborg was a famous Danish, copper nosed scientist. He was known for his accurate observations in the fields of astronomy and alchemy. With a naked eye he would astonishingly predict precise positions of stars and planets. Not only was he a famous astronomer of his time, Tycho was also a maestro at alchemy, weather predictions, mathematical techniques, astrology, poetry and in the creation of sophisticated instruments such as the armillary sphere.¹ His most famous career works consists of the observations of The 1572 supernova and The Great Comet of 1577.² History has shown that Tycho Brahe had been a man of a rather bizarre character. With various personal and professional ups and downs, he is known for his vivid aspects of life and death. In his childhood, Tycho had been stolen from his parents by his uncle, Jørgen Brahe, who loved him dearly. Later at university, he lost a part of his nose in a sword duel with his another student over who was the best mathematician. After the death of his dear uncle Tycho had been granted the Island of Ven by Danish King Frederick II where he built the castle Uraniborg and the underground observatory Stjärneborg. Tycho and his fellow students, assistant observed the sky and stars from here. Myths renders that Tycho had his favorites; a tame elk who died of drinking too much beer, and a jester called Jepp who entertained Tycho and his associates at court in the castle.

¹ . "Tycho Brahe." *Starry Messenger: Tycho Brahe Biography*. This page is Copyright 1999, Adam Mosley and the Department of History and Philosophy of Science of the University of Cambridge. All Rights Reserved.. Web. 10 Feb 2013. <http://www.hps.cam.ac.uk/starry/tycho.html>

² Wikipedia contributors, . "Tycho Brahe." *Wikipedia, The Free encyclopedia*.. N.p.. Web. 10 Feb 2013. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tycho_Brahe

The controversy regarding the death of Tycho Brahe arouses curiosity in Tycho's affairs till today , and hence it is the most interesting thing about Tycho Brahe. Host of speculations, myths, conspiracies and hypotheses had become arguments of his death .Tycho died at the age of 54 on October 24 1601.

Myths and various inquiry of Tycho's and his associates letters had revealed that perhaps , Tycho had been murdered because he was a reason of jealousy and contempt in most people around him . One story is that perhaps he had been ordered to be killed by King Christian IV of Denmark (1577-1648). Reasons being that ,firstly , upon being gift the Island of Ven , Tycho had become one of the most wealthiest man in Denmark. This made him a figure of great importance in court. Thus , as a result of envy, the King had ordered Tycho's cousin Count Eric Brahe; who had indirectly confessed this crime in his diary , to murder Tycho . Rumors also slip that perhaps Tycho had a love affair with Queen Sophie, the mother of King Christian IV, and therefore he was ordered to be executed.

However , today with advance technology and deep knowledge , recent archaeological and scientific researches and results has pointed that perhaps Tycho has been murdered. Yes, perhaps ,Brahe was deliberately poisoned and put to death. In 1996 , researchers from the University of Lund carried out a PIXE analysis, Particle Induced X-ray Emission of hair from Tycho Brahe . With the PIXE method it has been possible to see not only what substances are present in the hair but also their exact location. If the mercury came from the embalming processes of Tycho's body, the mercury would be found on the outside of the hairs. The researches argued that If Tycho Brahe had been slowly poisoned by chemical experiments or the gold-plating process of his inventions the mercury would be inside long sections of the hairs. As a result the analysis actually has shown that only one of the hairs contained mercury.

This hair was the only one with the hair follicle still attached, and the mercury was present close to the hair follicle. It was inside the hair, which means that it came through the body via the blood. However, the PIXE analysis is still a question among many scientists today. Yet, a drawback of this analysis is that it fails to answer how did Tycho die but only indicates the existence of mercury in Tycho's bone.³

Brahe's successful career gained him power and fame. Another mysterious possibility given to Tycho's death was that perhaps Johannes Kepler's, Tycho's assistant and a man who had visioned one of science's biggest ideas, the laws of planetary motion, mixed mercury in Tycho's Drink and hence murdered him. The reason being that perhaps Kepler who had the means, motive and opportunity of a murder wanted to kill Tycho and so get access to Tycho's researches. Joshua and Anne-Lee Gilder make this bold claim in *Heavenly Intrigue*, in which they focus on the story of Kepler's troubled relationship with Tycho Brahe which indirectly indicates Kepler's deep wish and demand of patronage and lusts after valuable data.

Conversely, in 2010, the latest findings by a team of Danish and Czech researchers in Prague has confirmed that Brahe died from a bladder dysfunction as chemical analysis of Tycho's bones revealed that the mercury levels in Brahe's teeth were not high enough to cause his death.⁴

Therefore, at least today, with the access to current scientific proof a reasonable conclusion can be deduced about the death of Tycho Brahe. Science today proves the

³ TYCHOBRAHE.COM A UNIVERSAL WEBSITE. 2005 the municipality of Landskrona, Tycho Brahe Museum. Web. 10 Feb 2013. <http://www.tychobrahe.com/uk/medicin.html>

⁴. "Tycho Brahe: Mercury Didn't Kill Him." *Scientific BLOGGING*, science 2.0. N.p., 15 NOV 2012. Web. 10 Feb 2013. <http://www.science20.com/news_articles

early historians right on their part; Tycho did die from uremia and that the mercury evidences are that of the medicine he had be eating to cure himself . I personally believe that controversies are always changing and this non static debate is what makes them interesting. Hence from now on until someone else unearths another reason of Tycho Brahe's , we shall, with the help of humanities enjoy , remember and evaluate such controversies ; as the truth of the past and the future is never known but it is always yet to be discovered .