Sara Drake 2009

Raised in the opulence of Danish nobility, Tycho Brahe helped the advancement of astronomical development during the 16th century while gaining himself a reputation as one of the most colorful and uncanny characters to make an appearance in the history of astronomy.

THE INFAMOUS DUEL

During his early twenties, Brahe and his cousin found themselves in a heated debate over a recent astrological prediction. The disagreement escalated into a fencing duel during which his cousin sliced into his forehead and chopped off his nose. Thereafter, Tycho attached a prosthetic metal nose with paste to fix his cosmetic inconvenience. Some historians have speculated that he wore an assortment of different prosthetics for various occasions. Perhaps adorning a more comfortable copper nose at times over a heavier precious metal one.

POST-MORTEM ADVANCEMENT

"May I not have lived in vain."

After his death Kepler went on to use Tycho's data to prove that a sun-centered model of the universe was indeed more actual than an earth-centered one.

Tycho Brahe's strikingly accurate measurements of planetary motion were his key contribution to the scientific revolution. He not only set a new standard for objective and precise measurements but serves as a reminder that empirical and first hand observations can lead to rational interpretations of the universe we inhabit.

CASTLE OF THE HEAVENS

With a bit of aristocratic sweet-talking, Tycho convinced King Frederick II of Denmark to give him the island of Hven and to finance the best-funded and most hedonistic observatory in history. Uraniborg consumed over five percent of Denmark's gross national product making it an all time world record for research funding. The observatory gained popular appeal across Europe for its decadent party scene and Tycho's notable reputation. Allegedly he kept a clairvoyant dwarf named Jepp as his court jester.

RIGID EXACTITUDE

With the aid of Uraniborg's astronomical instruments, Tycho was able to make observations that were strikingly accurate compared to previous measurements at the time. An impressive feat considering that the telescope had yet to be invented. His data brought observational astronomy to a new level of accuracy. He began doing extensive work on the movements of planets in the sky. The prevailing theory at the time was a geo or earth centered universe instead of the sun-centered model proposed by the astronomer Copernicus at the turn of the century. Without precise data Copernicus's model could not be proven accurate. Tycho's measurements were beginning to allow for a reconsideration of that theory.

THE DARING DOUBLE ACT

Tycho was forced to abandon his research at Uraniborg after King Fredrick II's drunken demise. The new king, Christian IV, refused to give patronage or tolerate Tycho's lavish and over abundant lifestyle. To this Tycho wryly declared, "An astronomer must be cosmopolitan because ignorant statesmen cannot be expected to value their services," before moving his family and astronomical equipment to Prague.

Fortunately the move proved fruitful on the astronomer's behalf. In Prague Tycho enlisted the help of Johannes Kepler, a German mathematician and thinker. Kepler's strong theoretical interpretive skills where the perfect match for Tycho's collection of observations.

Their collaboration was the beginning of a reinvention of the universe.

Their partnership was formed just in time. Shortly after Kepler's arrival, Tycho died tragically during a dinner party fiasco. Supposedly he was reluctant to leave the table to relieve himself during a meal with the Baron of Rosenburg. He claimed that it wasn't in good etiquette to excuse himself. Later in the evening his polite consideration manifested into a bladder infection that lead to his unfortunate death.