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## From Tycho Brahe to Incorrect “Tycho de Brahe”. A Searching for the First Occurrence, when the Mistaken Name of Famous Astronomer Appeared

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Tycho Brahe was born in an aristocratic family in Knudstrup in 1546. His first name was Tyge, later he accepted the latinized form Tycho. He never used the particle “de” in his signature. At present the use of the particle “de” in the name of the famous astronomer Tycho Brahe extends. It is applied by many authors of different nations. In this contribution we introduce a hypothesis that the mistake has arisen only in the Czech kingdom during the 19<sup>th</sup> century is not true. The usage “de” in the name is not a Czech speciality, but even the mistake is widely dispersed all over the world.

The biographers of Tycho Brahe (1546–1601) such as Pierre Gassendi (1654), J. L. E. Dreyer, Victor E. Thoren, professor of history and philosophy of science in Indiana University use the right name (see [G], [D], [T]). First biography of Gassendi in Latin language from the 17<sup>th</sup> century inspired many next writers on the life of Tycho Brahe and it was studied by many historians of science.

Information resource dictionaries and encyclopedies as Poggendorf, Rieger, Otto (see [Po], [R], [O]) draw readers attention to misapplication of the particle “de” in the Tycho’s name. The author of the article *Tycho Brahe* in Otto Encyclopedy V. Láska was supported by the first professor of mathematics at Prague’s University in the Czech language Fr. J. Studnička. Their emphatic warning is dated 1896.

The particle “de” was not found in Latin papers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (see, for instance, P. Gassendi biography [G, 1654] or Jessenius necrologue or a Jesuit historian B. Balbín [BA, 1687]). Sources from the 18<sup>th</sup> century did not show any

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occassion of it. For instance Godefried B. Cassenburg described the life of Tycho Brahe in Germany and Bohemia in the paper [C] from 1730. We found a brief remark in Faustin Prochazka from 1782 (see [Pr]). The most important source is the collection of biographies of scientists written by Fr. Martin Pelzel, the first professor of the Czech language at Prague's University, [Pe, 1782]. The article Tycho Brahe in the 4<sup>th</sup> volume is extended by Brahe's bibliography. All authors used the right form of Tycho Brahe's name.

Despite of these facts it is indurated the contexture "Tycho de Brahe" in wide consciousness of public analogous to the story about the death of Tycho at the table during the last banquet in the Rosenberg Palace near the Prague Castle.

The mistaken contexture was firstly used around the celebration of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Brahe's birthday in German and Czech literature.

### **The oldest occurrence in a German historical novel**

The oldest occurrence from the year 1839 was found in the bank of dates of the "Project of Historischer Roman" [HMR]. The historical novel of Amalia Schoppe in two volumes was named "Tycho de Brahe" and published in Leipzig (see Fig. 1), [SCH]. A book review exists from December, 9, of the same year 1839 in LB newspapers [LB]. Before the celebration of the 300th anniversary of Brahe's birth (December 14, 1846) there were prepared occasional articles in Prague, too. One of them was written by Anton Fährnich in 1941. He wrote "*der grosse Sternforscher Tycho de Brahe*" in his text [F1]. This article was republished in *Ost und West* [F2] in 1846. Why did not the author use for instance "Tycho von Brahe"? Or Tycho "zu" Brahe? To what language did the author translate the full name of Brahe?

### **A brief biography of Anton Fährnich**

Who was the author of this article? A biography of Anton Fährnich is published in the Czech journal *Lumír* in 1853 [Be]. He was born in the Czech-German family in Štáhlavy near Plzeň (Pilsen) in 1802 and he died in Jičín in 1852. His father Jan Baptist, the Czech from Slané, was a medical officer who was careful of badly wounded people during the last Turkish war. He died in 1810. The mother of Anton Fährnich was of the German origin from the village Rosovice near Děčín. Anton was educated by uncle František, a priest and dean in Zlonice in north-west Bohemia. Then he studied philosophy, mathematics, and natural sciences at the Philosophical Faculty of Prague's University, later theology at seminar in Prague. Here he was in closed contacts with Czech patriots (for instance Vinařický) and in those days he started cultivate the national language. He published translations

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# Projekt Historischer Roman Datenbank

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**Titel** Schoppe, Amalia: Tycho de Brahe. Historischer Roman  
**Jahr** 1839  
**Bandzahl** 2  
**Seiten** 199+168  
**Ort** Leipzig  
**Verlag** Taubert  
Das Buch wurde in der 1. Auflage eingesehen und kollationiert.

**Rezension(en)** LB, 9. Dezember 1839, Nr. 124, S. 495

**Schlagwort(e)** Tycho de Brahe – 1546–1601 (Astronom) 2. Hälfte 16. Jahrhundert Kopenhagen  
Leipzig Rostock

**Standort(e)** Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Universitätsbibliothek – Yt 70708  
Universitätsbibliothek Gießen – Ott 867

**Quelle(n)** Allgemeines Verzeichniß der Bücher, welche in der Frankfurter und Leipziger Oster[- bzw. Michaelis]messe des 1839 Jahres entweder ganz neu gedruckt, oder sonst verbessert wieder aufgelegt worden sind, auch inskünftige noch herauskommen sollen. Leipzig: Weidmann 1839. Kapitel: „Romane“ Brinker-Gabler, Gisela: Lexikon deutschsprachiger Schriftstellerinnen. 1800–1945. München: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag 1986, 363 S. (= dtv 3282) Deutsches Literatur-Lexikon. 3. völlig neu bearbeitete Auflage. Bern, München, Stuttgart: Francke 1968ff. Goetze, Edmund: Grundriß zur Geschichte der Deutschen Dichtung. Aus den Quellen. Von Karl Goedeke. Neunter Band. Vom Weltfrieden bis zur französischen Revolution 1830. Achstes Buch. Zweite Abteilung. Zweite ganz neu bearbeitete Auflage. Dresden: Ehlermann 1910, 563 S.

Fig. 1 The oldest occurrence of “Tycho de Brahe”.

of Pignot’s fables and riddles in the journal *Čechoslav*. He studied medicine and music with Jan Slavík, famous violonist. In 1844 he married Ann, a daughter of Václav Hartmann from Hostinné. She was only 22 years old when she died in 1846. Anton started wrote German description of the ruin Bezděz and a polemic (dispute) on Czech spelling. His last publication *Počtověda (Number Science)* is in two volumes. In this work we find same new theories on primes and divisibility etc. He closed his professional journey as a professor of philosophy, physics, and chemistry in the secondary school (named lyceum) in the town Jičín (north Bohemia). From 1847 he was ill with the typical diagnosis of scientist of this time: the tuberculosis.

## How deceptive is writing of panegyric articles!

The atmosphere around the 300<sup>th</sup> jubilee of Tycho's birthday inspired more serious and light-handed authors to write on this celebrated man. First Jakub Malý published a biography of Brahe in the *Gallery of famous men of nation* with a bibliography in 1840 (see [Ma]). He went from Pelzel [Pe]. In 1846 J. M. Druchsa remembers Brahe in [D]. Both authors used the right Brahe's name. But very next writer Ferdinand Mikovec uses in titles of his articles both forms (see [Mi1], [Mi2]) in 1847 and 1853. These are easy readable essays. Mikovec's successor P. J. Štulc acquainted young people with famous astronomer in the article *Tycho de Brahe* in the journal *Zlaté klasy (Gold spikes)* in 1855 (see [Š]).

In 1850 Paul A. Klar published a paper: *Leben und Wirken Tycho de Brahe's in Böhmen*, in annual almanac *Libussa* (see [K]). This paper was used by Czechs and Germans to illustrate Brahe's life. The author states own sources in footnotes. The paper was translated to the French language. The use of the mistaken name of Brahe is regretful.

In the fiftieths of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Tycho Brahe was the protagonist of the Julie Burrow 3 volumes novel *Johannes Kepler, Historische Erzählung 1857–1858* (see [Bu]). Von Hasner's paper *Tycho Brahe und J. Kepler in Prag* from 1872 (see [H]) was criticized in [Mitt], because von Hasner did not support it by sources, but he used the right form of Brahe's name. The paper *Nové zprávy o Tychonu Brahovi a jeho rodině (New messages on Tycho Brahe and his family)* of F. Dvorský occurred in the Journal of the Czech Museum in 1883 (see [Dv]). Sometimes he used the mistake "de", for example in the name of the son of Tycho: "Otto de Brahe".

On the other hand, further authors of this period alternate both forms of Brahe's name (for example J. Smolík [Sm] and J. Svátek (see [Sv1], [Sv2])). Although V. Láska and F. J. Studnička were strongly highlighting the authentic name the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, evidently it was too late.

### Further examples of usage the mistaken name found in different languages during the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

1. From the history of the University in Rostock:  
Später wurde er zusammen mit dem berühmten Astronomen TYCHO DE BRAHE, der auch kurze Zeit in Rostock tätig war, Ratgeber des Kaisers Rudolf II. in Prag.

\* \* \*

2. XXXVth Meeting of Polish Physicists informed all participants:  
1572 r. – duński astronom Tycho de Brahe (1546–1601) zauważa pojawienie

się nowej gwiazdy (była to supernowa). Burzy to ówczesny pogląd, że wszystko, co znajduje się poza Ziemią, jest niezmiennie. Komety uważano np. za zjawiska atmosferyczne.

\* \* \*

3. One Hungarian source specifies:  
tűzgömb A–4 fényesebb tűzgömbnek vagy bolidának nevezük.  
**Tycho de Brahe** (1546–1601) dán csillagász. ...  
(see <http://www.mimi.hu/scillagaszat/szupernova.html>)

\* \* \*

4. Arkiv for Dansk litteratur has an Ellinger's paper *Tycho de Brahe als lateinischer Dichter* from 1935 (see [E]).

\* \* \*

5. Library of Congress specifies explicitly “de” in the Illustrated Guide European Collections:  
Tycho de Brahe: *Astronomiae instauratae progymnasmata*, Prague, 1602, title page (see <http://loc.gov/rr/european/guide/images/eu041001.jpg>)

\* \* \*

6. At present some historians of science accept both forms of Brahe's name (see for example the personal web page of Peter Brosche).  
**Brahe, Tycho**  
**[Brahe, Tyge; Brahe, Tycho de]**

\* \* \*

7. Decoration of the National Museum in Prague (see Fig. 2), late of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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8. There is a restaurant in Prague with name: Tycho de Brahe  
(see address: Prague 7, Pplk. Sochora 35), late of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

\* \* \*



Fig. 2 “Tycho de Brahe”, National museum in Prague. (Photo the author.)

9. Town Museum in Prague, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, descriptions of exhibits, memorial tablet.

\* \* \*

10. Even Prague Information Servis (PIS) uses Tycho de Brahe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### Conclusions

The question of the source of this mistake is studied for instance in the Peprny’s article *Tycho Brahe v české literatuře* (*Tycho Brahe in Czech literature*) published in the Appendix of the *Czech Journal for Cultivation of Mathematics and Physics* (*Časopis pro pěstování matematiky a fyziky*) in 1901 [P], in the Brdička’s article in *Advances of Mathematics, Physics and Astronomy* (*Pokroky matematiky, fyziky a astronomie*) [B]. The mathematician Ladislav Peprny, who taught at the Prague’s Polytechnics, systematically studied old papers on Tycho Brahe. The physicist Miroslav Brdička was interested in the right use of Brahe’s name in several textbooks of physics of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

We could conclude that at the beginning there were at least two users of the mistaken name: **Amalia Schoppe in 1839** and **Anton Fährnich in 1841**. In the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the mistake is widely dispersed from the wall of the National Museum in Prague to the Library of Congress in Washington. The usage of authentic Brahe's name in future depends on consequentiality, persistence, and patience of historians of science with public.

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