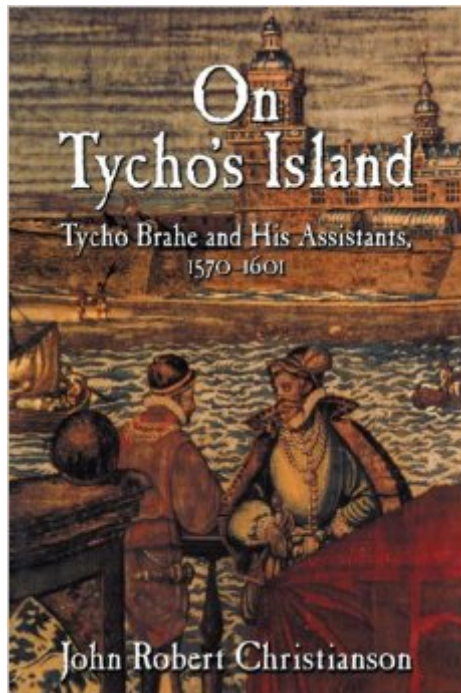


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On Tycho's Island: Tycho Brahe And His Assistants, 1570-1601



Synopsis

A Platonic philosopher, Paracelsian chemist, Ovidian poet, and devoted family man, Tycho Brahe was the last Renaissance man and the first great organizer of modern science. This book provides the fullest portrait available of the research and cultural interests of the man who became the premier patron-practitioner of science in sixteenth-century Europe. Starting from Brahe's well reputed role of astronomer, author Christianson adds lesser known details of the man who was both a geodetic surveyor as well as a garden designer, and ultimately established a new role of scientist as administrator, active reformer, and natural philosopher. Coverage reveals how from his private island in Denmark, Brahe used patronage, printing, friendship, and marriage to incorporate men and women skilled in science, technology, and the fine arts into his program of cosmic reform. Through their teamwork, they achieved breakthroughs in astronomy, scientific method, and research organization that were essential to the birth of modern science. Also included are over 100 capsule biographies of Tycho's clients, coworkers, and friends, including Johannes Kepler, Willebrord Snel, Willem Blaeu, several bishops, and numerous technical specialists all of whom helped shape the culture of the Scientific Revolution. This pioneering exposition will appeal to science history buffs, especially those with an interest in the late Renaissance and will inspire anyone who has a passion for science and a penchant for the world of ideas. John Robert Christianson received his Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota. He was dubbed Knight of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit by King Harald II in 1995.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As it needs to be, *On Tycho's Island* is as much a history of 16th Century Danish society as it is a biography of one of the most dashing characters in the history of science. Tycho's observations, from his "research center" on the remote island of Hven, were made with the naked eye; the goal of such meticulous work was primarily to measure exactly the orbital periods of the planets. These observations were not displaced and supplanted by the next generation of astronomers, who had Galileo's telescope to use. Though Tycho didn't live to see it, his labors were soon consummated by the discoveries of Johannes Kepler. There's a much larger theme, however, in this book: the funding of Tycho's research. Some antagonists of proactive government these days are fond of claiming that great science in the past was achieved without grants and subsidies from government. Yes, perhaps on some occasions, but Tycho's work was massively funded by the Danish monarchy and its bureaucracy, and later by other princely German governments. Tycho spent as much time and energy supplicating government funds as any modern scientist spends on grant applications. Big science can be expensive. In Tycho's case, no capitalist would have had the slightest interest; nothing from which money could be made could possibly have been expected from the tables of observations from Hven, published on government funds. No explicit argument is thrust upon the reader, suggesting that investment of tax money in basic science is a proper function of any government that can afford it, but that is the obvious implicit conclusion. Tycho died in Germany, after an all-night "banquet" with his princely patron.

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