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Translations of Kepler's Astrological Writings

Part I. Kepler as Practising Astrologer

Section 3. Historical Charts

Subsection 1. The Nativities of Mohammed and Martin Luther, 1604

Translated from the German and Latin by Cornelia Linde; edited and annotated by Dorian Greenbaum

Taken from Opera Omnia 8.1, pp. 305-307

This excerpt is taken from a longer discourse on a commentary by Johann Paul Sutorius (ca. 1562-1599), a pastor, theologian and astrologer, on the nativity of Mohammed, among other things.¹ Kepler begins with a discussion of the birthchart for Mohammed proposed by Sutorius. Helisaeus Röslin, the doctor who had first interpreted Kepler's own chart, wrote a commentary on Sutorius's proposed chart, in which he corrected Sutorius's 'astronomical errors' and correctly recalculated the chart for the date and time given by Sutorius: 23 April 594 at 10 a.m. Kepler acknowledges that Röslin's calculations are correct, but is skeptical of the date itself (one reason being that it would make Mohammed far too young to have done what he did by 622, when he made the flight from Mecca – the Hejira – with his followers; he also

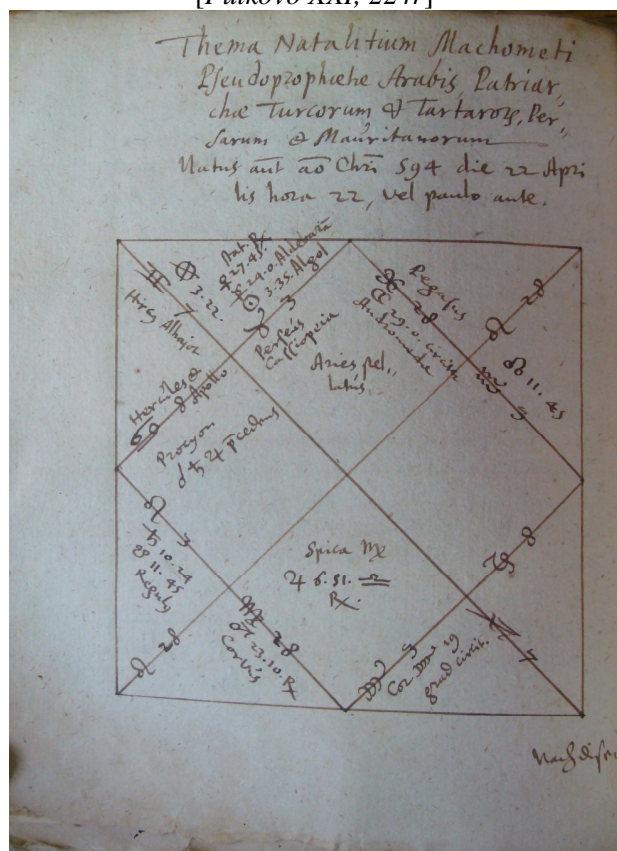
¹ See *OO* 8.1, pp. 300-320, in Frisch's title: 'Judicium Kepleri de prognostico P. Sutorii' ('Kepler's Judgement on the Prognostication of P. Sutorius'). Sutorius's commentary on Mohammed's nativity appeared in his book on the prophecy in the Book of Daniel (ch. 11).

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wonders where Sutorius got the date in the first place). Kepler mentions other proposed dates for Mohammed: 569 A.D. (from Mercator); 21 September 571 (from a Chronicle of the Koran, which Kepler accepts later in the excerpt); and 23 April 596 (from 'others', not specified).²

Though Kepler gives the positions of his own proposed chart for Mohammed in this excerpt, a drawing of it has not survived. Extant is a square form of the chart for the date Sutorius proposed.

Figure 1. Mohammed's Birthchart according to Sutorius and Röslin
[Pulkovo XXI, 224r]³



² This information in this paragraph is taken from *OO* 8, pp. 301-302. The date of 23 April 596 is given in a chart form drawn by Kepler (No. 621 in *GW* 21, 2.2, p. 267), but no planets or house cusps appear in the form.

³ This part of the folio is not transcribed in *GW* 21, 2.2.

After discussing Röslin's and Sutorius's attempts, Kepler moves on to his own thoughts about Mohammed's nativity.

[OO 8.1, p. 305]

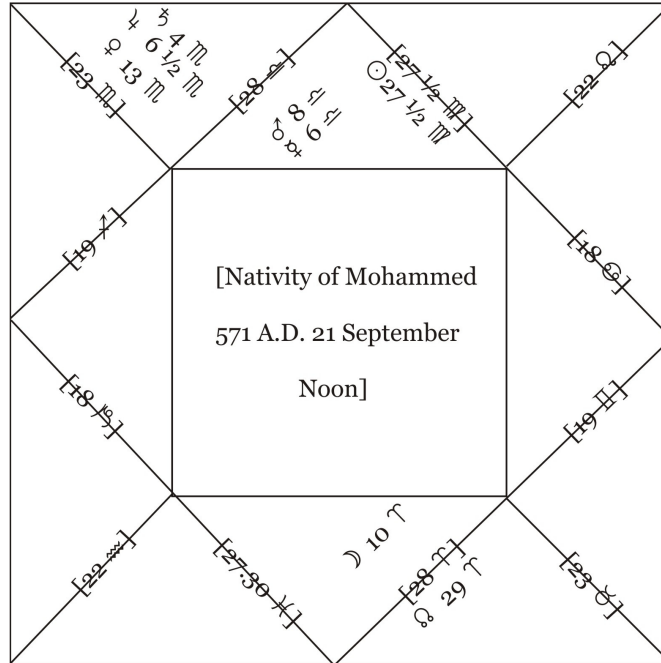
The first part of Röslin's booklet and his astrological judgement of Mohammed's birth shall be duly discussed. But since the first and main argument is drawn from Mohammed's natal chart, and since I have mentioned above that there are other, in part more credible opinions on the correct birth of Mohammed, I calculated the chart of heaven (*Thema coeli*) for 571 A.D., on 21 September, because an Arabic chronicle, added to the Koran, is supposed to give these dates.

Therefore, when Mohammed set out in July of 622 and became the ringleader of his mob of thieves, he would have been 51 years old – a right and suitable age – at that time. Without doubt he must have spent many years on his teachings, for which a certain age is necessary, until he put such hostility and danger on himself that he had to flee.

And at midday on 21 September in the year 571 A.D., this placement of planets is found: the Sun at $27\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ Virgo, Mars at 8° Libra, Mercury at 6° Libra, the Moon at 10° Aries, Saturn at 4° Scorpio, Jupiter at $6\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ Scorpio, Venus at 13° Scorpio, the North Node at 29° Aries.⁴

⁴ Using modern calculations, the day closest to Kepler's positions is 20 September 571 OS at noon in Mecca.

Figure 2. Drawing of Kepler's Nativity of Mohammed, based on positions in text (Positions in square brackets not in original)⁵



The planets are within 45° except for the Moon. The Sun, Moon, Mars and Mercury around the equinoctial points, together with the Head and Tail of the Dragon [*i.e. the Nodes*], means an excellent person, because the eclipses of that and the following year happen in Aries and Libra, and Bodin⁶ introduces, from Plutarch, that the eclipse around the equinoctial

⁵ The Regiomontanus house cusps were calculated in Solar Fire Gold for the time of 11:52 a.m. on 21 September 571 C.E., to give a midheaven of 27°30' Virgo (*i.e.*, the Sun's position).

⁶ Jean Bodin (1530-1596), French philosopher and political scientist. Kepler was familiar with at least two of Bodin's works, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* (Paris, 1566) and *De republica libri sex* (Lyon, 1586); he discusses the latter text in his *Harmonices mundi*, Book III, 'Political Digression on the Three Means' (English translation in ADF, pp. 255-279). For more on Kepler and Bodin, see N. Campion, 'Political Astrology in the Renaissance: Bodin, Kepler and the Reform of Astrology', paper given at the 1999 INSAP conference, Malta (available at

points has always brought great changes with it.⁷ Saturn and Jupiter are joined at the beginning of Scorpio; Venus is not far from them, which is more important than if they were merely connected by a sextile, namely outside of the water signs.⁸ The Sun and Mars joined together bring courage and a favourable nature. Mars and Mercury almost in the same degree on Spica Virginis, after they were stationary for the day, denote a demagogue, thief and murderer, forger and all that which Röslin deduced above just from the triplicity (*triangulation*) of both planets.⁹

Cardano thinks that Spica Virginis is associated with the Christian religion. Here this would mean great damage to the Christian religion by murder and lies, because of Mars and Mercury conjunct Spica, but then – if 594 is the correct year – merciful Jupiter would stand near Spica.¹⁰ Mohammed, now, has not done so much good to the Christian religion that this meaning should be required.¹¹

The Moon in opposition to Mercury denotes intellect (*ingenium*), but it is dazed and confused. The same full Moon in opposition to Mars denotes rage. These two are common astrological rules.

Master Martin Luther had almost the same nativity,¹² as far as the close conjunction of the planets is concerned, except that Mercury was not

<http://www.nickcampion.com/Portals/3/BODINSA2.pdf> [accessed 22 April 2011].)

⁷ Plutarch discusses eclipses in *De facie quae in orbe lunae apparet*, 931D-933B. Kepler's commentary on this essay can be found in *OO* 8.1, pp. 76-123.

⁸ Kepler is connecting Mohammed's chart to the cycle of Jupiter-Saturn conjunctions, which astrologers consider to be important in historical cycles.

⁹ I think Kepler is saying that Röslin used the triplicity (air) of Mars and Mercury to come up with his comments, while Kepler is focusing on the conjunction of Mars and Mercury with Spica.

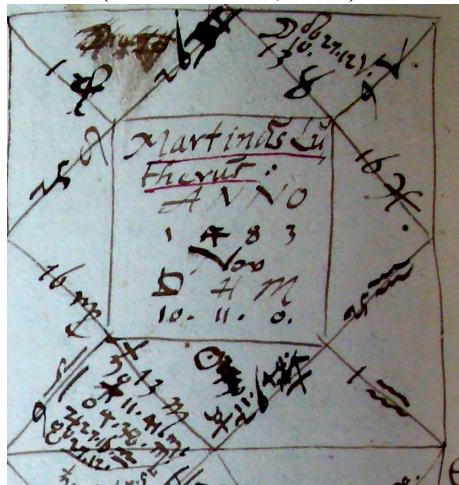
¹⁰ In 594 Jupiter was in Libra and would have passed over Spica (see **Figure 1** above, which shows Jupiter near Spica in the Sutorius/Röslin chart).

¹¹ Kepler contrasts the position of planets near Spica in the 571 and 594 charts, supporting his argument for the 571 date by saying that if the 594 date were correct, the conjunction of Jupiter and Spica in that chart would have meant more good effects for Christianity from Islam, a scenario which Kepler clearly believes is not the case.

¹² Cardano published Luther's birthchart in *Libelli duo* (Nuremberg, 1543) (see Cardano's *Opera Omnia* (Lyon, 1663), vol. 5, Book VII, p. 465, no. XI, with a

placed with Mars, [OO 8.1, p. 306] which is why it also does not signify the vices attracted now. The Sun at 28° Scorpio, Saturn at 23° Scorpio, Venus at 12° Scorpio, Mars at 5° Scorpio, Jupiter at 27° Libra, the South Node at 27° Libra, the Moon at 10° Taurus, Mercury at 12° Sagittarius.¹³ In 1483 A.D., 10 November, 11 o'clock. Since it is uncertain which is the correct year, everyone should favour the one that is most similar to the matters.

Figure 3. Martin Luther's Birthchart in Kepler's Hand
(Pulkovo XVIII, 213v)¹⁴

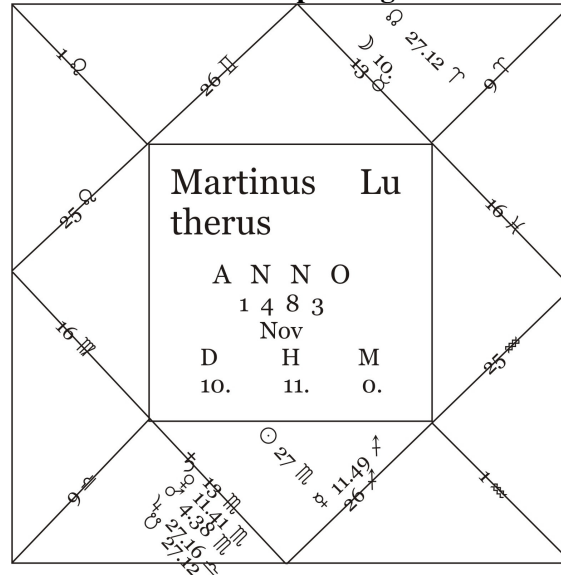


date of 22 October 1483, 10 p.m). The positions differ from Kepler's. Kepler also mentions Luther's chart in *Harmonices mundi*, Book IV, 7 (ADF, p. 379); and in his Calendar for 1603.

¹³ Modern calculation (using Solar Fire Gold) for this date and time, in Eisleben, Germany, gives roughly the same positions as those listed here by Kepler, with the exception of the Moon, which is at 11°3' Aries.

¹⁴ The transcription of this chart, in *GW 21*, 2.2, p. 274 (No. 642), lists the Sun as being in Sagittarius (as one can see from the scan of the chart, the position of the Sun has been crossed out. But the Sun must be in Scorpio, because its orientation in the drawing is to the Scorpio house cusp, not the Sagittarius house cusp. It looks to me as if the degrees are '27' in the drawing. Note that the positions in the manuscript drawing do not match exactly to the positions in the text.

Figure 4. Modern Drawing of Luther's Birthchart from the Manuscript Image



The other part follows, namely why the Turkish Empire should very soon perish according to Röslin's opinion:

The first cause is taken from the arch-heretic Mohammed's nativity. For there [*i.e. in the Sutorius-Röslin chart of Mohammed, Figure 1*] the first part of Cancer is rising, to the position which the great conjunctions reached at that time,¹⁵ so that Mohammed, his new doctrine and empire are associated with the water trigon (*Triangul*). But the Christian [religion] started with the fire trigon. Since the same fire trigon is starting again nowadays, the Christian faith is supposed to be growing again, whereas what is contrary to it should decline. This, furthermore, not incorrectly, shows Sutorius's argument to be invalid, who made, as it were, an allegory out of Mohammed's nativity, and hence wants to force the eight-times-eight main changes of the Turkish Empire by means of the directions of the eight significators.

Opinion: the natal chart may be uncertain, but it cannot be mistaken, even though the time was unknown, that Mohammed was born under the water trigon. If, then, one of the just-mentioned charts is true, the water sign Cancer is rising in Röslin's chart. In mine there is a true conjunction

¹⁵ A Jupiter-Saturn conjunction took place in August 590 in the early degrees of Cancer. 8° Cancer rises in the Röslin chart.

of Saturn and Jupiter in Scorpio, and this meaning is stronger. When one looks at the zodiac, the conjunctions of 1404 to 1604 happen again in the water signs of Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces, just as Röslin specifies.

Concerning the connection [of the water trigon to Islam], even if it is not compulsory, it is nevertheless probable and has happened numerous times, and in this part of astrology we do not have any more certain conclusions. I have introduced this argument in my concerns about the fire trigon, recently handed over to Your Royal Majesty.¹⁶ But numerous limitations show up which somehow put the matter in doubt. First of all, one cannot consider the signs of the zodiac, but the fixed stars.¹⁷ If this matter were then tackled, it seems as though this great conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, as it has been in this year of 1603, and being thought of as the beginning of the fire trigon, has had counterparts in the years 631 and 691 in the water trigon, namely, at both times, not far from the heart of Scorpio.¹⁸ Thus, according to the constellations, we would only be at the beginning of the water trigon. On the other hand, if the constellations had been put aside and only the signs of the zodiac were considered, the conclusion would nevertheless extend further than the preliminary assumptions. There might well be separation in the Turkish Empire, as has also happened in the years 800 to 1000, but it is not necessary that it will perish; this limitation is also to be found in my concerns about the fire trigon. Röslin countered this objection with a political saying by Polybius,¹⁹ the gist of which is that no empire lasts forever, but each one also has its old age. Since the Turkish Empire has been in its prime now for 200 years, it should now slowly or rather all of a sudden grow old and fall.

¹⁶ This was a report Kepler wrote for Rudolf in 1603, the *Ausführlicher Bericht Vom jetzt angehenden feürigen Triangul und seiner Bedeüttung*, in *GW* 11.2, pp. 67-73. See also *De stella nova* (1606), chs 2-7 (Patrick J. Boner's translation of Chapter 7 appears in **Part II** of this volume).

¹⁷ That is, not the tropical signs, but the constellations of the zodiac themselves.

¹⁸ Antares.

¹⁹ Polybius, *Histories*, Book XXXIX.5 (trans. E. Shuckburgh) (London, 1889): 'At the sight of the city utterly perishing amidst the flames Scipio burst into tears, and stood long reflecting on the inevitable change which awaits cities, nations, and dynasties, one and all, as it does every one of us men. This, he thought, had befallen Ilium, once a powerful city, and the once mighty empires of the Assyrians, Medes, Persians, and that of Macedonia lately so splendid.'

This improvisation steps out of astrology into politics and [OO 8.1, p. 307] thus remains, astrologically speaking, within the first limitation set, that no more than a decline of the Turkish Empire has to be expected, and even that only possibly, according indeed to reasons uncertain from an astrological perspective.