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## The Horoscope of Barbarossa's First-Born

LYNN THORNDIKE

WHEN the *Annales Stadensis*, composed about 1230, were published in 1859 in the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*,<sup>1</sup> they included a *figura coeli* or horoscope, which unfortunately was reproduced in a garbled form by a Philip, of a place the name of which had been obliterated, of the nativity "of his lord Frederick, son of lord Frederick, Emperor of the Romans, whom lady Beatrix Augusta bore on Thursday, July 16, 1164, at the third hour in the city of Pavia."<sup>2</sup> It is known from other sources that Barbarossa and Beatrix were in Pavia at that date, but historians had long accepted Henry VI as the oldest son of Frederick Barbarossa, so that the editor of the *Annales Stadensis* in the *Monumenta* added in a note: "It is not clear to what Frederick this is to be referred; we know that the son of Frederick Barbarossa named Frederick was not older than Henry VI, born in 1165; for Frederick of Swabia was younger than Henry."<sup>3</sup> In 1890 the author of a doctoral dissertation on the children of Barbarossa dismissed the horoscope as "das Ganze Spielerei eines gelehrten Mönchs."<sup>4</sup>

On the contrary, no more precise record of the date and place of one's birth can be expected from that period by the historian. In an age when astronomy-astrology was the supreme natural science, the method of drawing up a nativity was made as scientific and mathematical as possible. For if one wished to predict the future life and destiny of an individual, it was absolutely essential that the time of his birth should be as exactly determined

<sup>1</sup> *Annales Stadensis auctore Alberto*, ed. Io. M. Iappenberg, I.U.D., *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, XVI (1859), 271-379.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 329: ". . . Philippi . . . -sis monasterii per quem sibi factam astronomicam de nativitate domni sui Friderici filii domni Friderici Romanorum imperatoris, quem domna Beatrix augusta enixa est a.D. 1164, 16 die Iulii, 5 feria, hora 3, in civitate Papia. Cuius Beatricis obitum infra habet a.D. 1185 cum papa Lucio. Et idem Fridericus frater erat Philippi [*sic*] regis."

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*, "Ad quemnam Fridericum haec sint referenda non liquet; Friderici Barbarossae filium cui Friderico nomen natu maiorem Heinrico VI. a. 1165 nato non novimus; Fridericus enim Suavicus minor Heinrico fuit natu."

<sup>4</sup> Karl Wilhelm Hug, *Die Kinder Kaiser Friedrich Barbarossas* (Heidelberg Diss., Würzburg, 1890), 42.

as possible. Rather, records of birth became fewer and less reliable as astrology went out.

Meanwhile, other evidence that Frederick was the first-born and Henry the second son had come to light and been accepted by Wilhelm Giesebrecht and Paul Scheffer-Boichorst. But some still contended that the first Frederick had died in infancy and that the name had been given again to a later son of Barbarossa.<sup>5</sup> In 1935 Güterboch completely confuted this contention.<sup>6</sup>

The purpose of the present note is to adduce another version of the horoscope of Frederick from a manuscript of the thirteenth century,<sup>7</sup> where it occurs in a different context. The contents of this manuscript are largely mathematical and astronomical, including Euclid's *Elements*, Hermann Contractus, and the *Computus* and *Sphere* of John of Sacrobosco. Opposite the horoscope, in the left-hand column of fol. 183 recto, are instructions written in a different hand, on how to make an astrolabe. These instructions end with the first line of the right-hand column. Then comes the horoscope, and beneath it, in the same hand, is a statement of the positions of the planets in A.D. 1254. The text that accompanies the horoscope differs somewhat from that in the *Annales Stadensis* and runs thus:

Hanc tabulam collegit magister Philippus Ianuensis inventam astronomicis argumentis de nativitate domini sui Friderici filii Friderici Romanorum imperatoris, quem Beatrix augusta enixa est anno domini M. C. lxiiii Iulii xvi die v feria hora iii in civitate Papia, et deprehense sunt ab eo planete tunc in eisdem signis et gradibus extitisse.

Thus the one who drew up the horoscope is precisely indicated as a master Philip of Genoa, without the misleading mention of a monastery found in the *Annales Stadensis*. The positions of the planets, as given in the conventional *figura coeli*, a square with twelve right-angled triangles representing the signs of the zodiac and surrounding an inner square, are as follows:

The horoscope (indicated as *hora solis* in both manuscript and *Monu-*

<sup>5</sup> It was perhaps for that reason that Ulysse Chevalier, *Répertoire des sources historiques du moyen âge, Bio-Bibliographie*, 1905, gave the date of birth of Frederic V of Swabia as 1168-69. And in the *Cambridge Medieval History*, V (New York, 1929), 407, "the knighting of the two elder sons of Frederick, King Henry and Duke Frederick of Swabia," gives the impression that Henry was the older.

<sup>6</sup> Ferdinand Güterboch, "Barbarossas ältesten Sohn und die Thronfolge des Zweitegeborenen," *Historische Vierteljahrschrift*, XXIX (1935), 509-40, which see for previous bibliography. At page 511, he says: Hier entsteht nun aber die schon viel erörterte, jedoch noch nicht sicher beantwortete Frage, ob Heinrich VI als ältester der Bruder auf den Thron erhoben wurde oder ob der bald nach dem Vater auf dem dritten Kreuzzug gestorbene Herzog Friedrich von Schwaben als älterer das Licht der Welt erblickt hat.

<sup>7</sup> Copenhagen Gl. kgl. S.277, folio membrane, saec. xiii, now comprising only fols. 86-117, 135-43, 145-46, 148-59, 161-67, 169-93. See Ellen Jørgensen, *Catalogus codicum latinorum mediæ aevi Bibliothecae Regiae Hafniensis* (1926), 417-18.

menta) or sign in the ascendent at the moment of birth, is Leo with the planet Venus in its first degree. Next comes Jupiter in 26° Libra (*Monumenta* has 76° Libra, which is absurd, as there are only thirty degrees to a sign; apparently the old Arabic numeral for 2 has been misread as 7). The triangle for Scorpio is left blank in the manuscript, although the others bear the names of their signs, but in the figure of the *Annales Stadensis* has Mars 9°. Saturn is indicated as retrograde in 11° Sagittarius. After four signs unoccupied by any planet, the moon is marked in 22° Taurus (again *Monumenta* has the impossible number 77°). *Caput draconis* is in 14° Gemini (the 9° of *Monumenta* would seem due to mistaking the Arabic 14 for a Roman ix). Finally, Mercury occupies 10° Cancer.

Professor O. Neugebauer has very obligingly checked these planetary positions of the manuscript horoscope, and writes:

I have no doubt that this horoscope corresponds to the given date. The consistent deviations are probably due to the zero point for longitude used in the tables. Saturn and Venus are rather inaccurate (I would check all readings), but no change in date is possible which would repair the situation.

There remains one question. For the historian the chief value of a horoscope may be chronological, but for the twelfth century it was astrological. The time of one's birth and the positions of the planets then were valued as the basis for an estimate of one's physical constitution, mental traits, career, and character. There had been a great output of Latin translations of Arabic astrologers in the second quarter of the twelfth century, which shows the widespread enthusiasm for and intense interest in astrology that then prevailed. No prediction based upon the nativity of Frederick accompanies the horoscope as it has come down in the *Annales Stadensis* and the Copenhagen manuscript. But it is hard to believe that one was not drawn up originally, and the probability is that the same is true in the case of Henry VI, for whom not even a *figura coeli* seems to be extant. The remaining question, therefore, is whether the forecasts for the two boys were such as to lead Barbarossa to decide to make the younger king of the Romans and the older only duke of Swabia?<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Güterboch, 538, suggests that "der Kaiser so die freie Königswahl gegenüber dem Erbrechtsanspruch unterstrich und vor allen die Trennung von Königskrone und schwäbischen Herzogtum einer bereits bestehenden Tradition entsprechend festlegte." It might be objected that the choice of Henry at the age of four does not indicate a very free election. On the other hand, just as one would expect Barbarossa's oldest son to be named Frederick like his father, grandfather, and greatgrandfather (even Henry VI gave the same name to his son), so there may have been a like motive to make him duke of Swabia. Güterboch does not note the parallel of William the Conqueror's oldest son Robert succeeding him as duke of Normandy, and his second son William Rufus as king of England. And there Robert did not have his father's name.

Fate, we may perhaps finally remind the reader, was not kind with respect to their life span, to the progeny of Barbarossa and Beatrix. All five sons, like their mother, died before they were forty.

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