

# Simon Mayr | Encyclopedia.com

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(*b* Gunzenhausen, Germany, 20 January 1573; *d.* Ansbach, Germany, 26 December 1624) *astronomy*.

Mayr was the first to mention in print the nebula in Andromeda, to publish tables of the mean periodic motions of the four satellites of Jupiter then known, to direct attention to the variation in their brightness, and to identify the brightest of the four, which are still called by the names he bestowed on them.<sup>1</sup>

After studying at Gunzenhausen and later at the Margrave's School in Heilbronn from 1589 to 1601, he was appointed mathematician of the margrave of Ansbach and was sent to Prague, with a recommendation dated 22 May 1601, to join the staff of [Tycho Brahe](#), the mathematician of Emperor Rudolph II.<sup>2</sup> Arriving toward the end of May, Mayr learned how to use Tycho's observational instruments.<sup>3</sup> He remained less than four months, however, since on 25 September he passed through Znojmo in Moravia, and then Vienna, on his way south.<sup>4</sup>

Deciding to study medicine in Padua, Mayr was admitted to the Association of German Students of the Arts in the University of Padua on 18 December 1601.<sup>5</sup> On that occasion he donated six Venetian lire to the association and in each of the next four years he contributed ten lire. Because the association's proctor was unable to complete his term of office, Mayr replaced him on 5 March 1604. On 27 July Mayr was elected librarian or second counselor, to serve until 14 April 1605. On 1 July 1605 he announced that he had to return home.<sup>6</sup> During this journey he spent the night of 25 July near Donauwörth.<sup>7</sup> The association's official minutes for 24 July record that he had misinformed it about the German law students' attitude toward an impending election.<sup>8</sup> In 1606 Mayr married Felicitas Lauer, daughter of his publisher in Nuremberg. In October 1613 he met [Johannes Kepler](#), Brahe's successor as imperial mathematician, at the Diet held in Regensburg.<sup>9</sup>

Shortly after his arrival in Padua, on 24 December 1601, Mayr had observed a solar eclipse: and on 10 October 1604 he noticed that year's nova while with a pupil who a few years later, on 4 May 1607, was convicted of plagiarizing a work by Galileo.<sup>10</sup> In his published denunciation of the plagiarist, Galileo refrained from mentioning Mayr by name, perhaps to avoid arousing the powerful Association of German Students, but referred to him as an "old adversary," poisonous reptile, and "enemy ... of all mankind."<sup>11</sup> Sixteen years later, after Galileo had left Padua, in his *Assayer* of 1623 he condemned Mayr's *World of Jupiter* (Nuremberg, 1614, two editions) as itself an outright plagiarism. But Galileo spoiled his case by suggesting that Jupiter's satellites had never been seen by Mayr, whose tables of their mean motions preceded and surpassed Galileo's.<sup>12</sup>

## NOTES

1. Pierre Humberd, "Le baptême de satellites de Jupiter," in *Revue des questions scientifiques* **117** (1940). 171, 175.

2. J. Klug, "Simon Marius..." p. 397; E. Zinner, "Zur Ehrenrettung ...." pp. 25, 66, 70; [Johannes Kepler](#). *Gesammelte Werke*, XIV (Munich, 1946), 168, 170.

3. Zinner, *op. cit.*, pp. 49, 54, 66.

4. *ibid* PP 59, 60, 61, 70.

5. Antonio Favaro, Galileo Galilei a padova Contributi alla Storia dell'Università di Padova, V (Padua, 1968), 218, with Mayr's coat of arms on p. 219; repr. of Favaro's *Stemmi ed iscrizioni concernenti personaggi galileiani nella 'Università di Padova* (Padua. 1893).

6. *Atti della nazione germanica artista nelto studio di Padova*, Antonio Favaro, ed., Monumenti Storici Pubblicati dalla R. Deputazione Veneta di Storia Patria. no. 19–20, 1st ser., Documenti. no. 13–14 (Venice, 1911–1912) II, 189, 195, 211, 214, 220, 225, 231, 236.

7. Zinner, *op. cit.*, pp. 60, 72.

8. *Atti*, II, 238, 239.

9. Zinner. *op. cit.*, pp. 63, 71

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 48, 51; *Le opere di Galileo Galilei*, II (Florence, 1891; repr, 1968), 293, 560.

11. *Ibid.*, 519.

12. *Ibid.*, VI (1896) 215, 217.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Original Works. Mayr's writings were listed by Erust Zinner, in "Zur Ehrenrettung des Simon Marius," in *Vierteljahrsschrift der Astronomischen Gesellschaft*, **77** (Leipzig, 1942), 27–32. *Mayer's Mendes Jovialis* was trans. into English by Arthur Octavius Prickard in *Observatory*, **39** (1916) 367–381, 403–412, 443–452, 498–503.

II. Secondary Literature. The Dutch Academy of Sciences announced a contest for the best essay submitted by 1 Jan, 1900 on the question whether Galileo was justified in condemning Mayr as a plagiarist. The only entry was submitted by Josef Klug, who published a revised version as "Simon Marius aus Gunenhausen und Galileo Galilei," in *Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Math.-phys. Kl.*, **22** (1906), 385–526. King's attack on Mayr stimulated one of the judges, J. A. C. Oudemans, together with Johannes Bosscha, to defend Mayr in Galilée et Marius," in *Archives néerlandaises des sciences exactes et naturelles*, 2nd ser., **8** (1903), 115–189. After the publication of Klug's article, the reasons why its original version had been rejected were explained by Bosscha in "Simon Marius, réhabilitation d'un astronome catomnié," in *Archives néerlandaises* ..., 2nd ser., **12** (1907), 258–307, 490–528; G. S. Braddy, "Simon Marius (1570–1624)," in *Journal of the British Astronomical Association*, **81** (1970), 64–65.

See also J. B. J. Delambre, *Histoire de l'astronomie moderne* ([New York](#) London, 1969 [repr. of 1821 ed.]), I, 634, 693–703; Antonio Favaro, "Galileo Galilei e Simone Mayr," in *Bibliotheca mathematica*, 3rd ser., **2** (1901), 220–223; "Galileo and Marius," in *Observatory*, **27** (1904), 199–200; "A proposito di Simone Mayr," in *Atti e memorie dell' Accademia di scienze, lettere ed arti* (Padua), n.s. **34** (1917–1918), 17–19; and *Galileo Galilei elo studio di Padova*, 2 vols., Contributi alla Storia dell' Università di Padova, nos. 3–4 (Padua, 1966 [repr. of 1883 ed.]), I, 184, 192, 234, 340–347; Siegmund Günther, "Mayr," in *Allgemeine deutsche Biographie*, XXI (Leipzig, 1885; repr. Berlin, 1970), 141–146; J. H. Johnson, "The Discovery of the First Four Satellites of Jupiter," in *Journal of the British Astronomical Association*, **41** (1930–1931), 164–171; William Thynne Lynn, "Simon Marius and the Satellites of Jupiter," in *Observatory*, **26** (1903), 254–256; "Galilée et Marius," *ibid.*, 389–390; "Galileo and Marius," *ibid.*, **27** (1904), 63–64, 200–201; and "Simon Mayr," *ibid.*, **32** (1909), 355–356; Julius Meyer, "Osiander und Marius," in *Jahresbericht des historischen Vereins für Mittelfranken*, **44** (1892), 59–71; Pietro Pagnini, "Galileo and Simon Mayer," trans. by W. P. Henderson, in *Journal of the British Astronomical Association*, **41** (1930–1931), 415–422; and Emil Wohlwill, *Galilei und sein Kampf für die Copernicanische Lehre* (Wiesbaden, 1969 [repr. of 1909–1926 ed.]), II, 343–426.

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