

Hungarian Jesuits in Brazil in the middle of the 18th century

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I. Why have I chosen this subject?

The survey on the activity of the four Hungarian Jesuits who worked at the Portuguese overseas provinces in the eighteenth century would seem very simple at first glance. At least so did for the author of this thesis at the very beginning, as it is supposed to be only the research of one decade of activity of the four Hungarian black robes and the refinement of their curriculum vitae. Initially the main obstacle was the very few primary resources and the fact that in Hungary most of the relevant works were not accessible. As the research went on, it became clear that it is not such a simple task. It turned out that here's a need for further approach in examining the activity of Dávid Fáy, József Kayling, Ignác Szentmártonyi and János Szluha from the point of view of cartographical, ethnological and literary studies, comparing the results with the findings of the national and the foreign studies. It was Dr. István Eördögh, the previous tutor of my thesis who advised me of this subject and he also called my attention of its great importance therefore it is due to him that I choose this field of research. In the Hungarian studies we can scarcely find works based on trustworthy sources, the majority of them keep repeating the same topoi either for or against the Jesuit order. Therefore, the main purpose of my research was finding as many contemporaneous sources as I can, and then, by means of these documents, reconstruct the exploratory, missionary and academic career of these Jesuits. Besides this, it was necessary to get familiar with the relevant international, principally Portuguese works. This could not be achieved at home, as most of the Hungarian papers dealing with the history of the South American continent focus on the provinces of the Spanish Crown. The curiosity of this field of historical research is that both the Spanish and the Portuguese historians completely neglect each other's writings. In the light of the above-mentioned specific characteristics, it was necessary to survey not only the manuals on the history of the Society of Jesuits but also the studies on cartography, ethnography and history of literature.

II. Former researches on this topic

According to the aforementioned words, the research was based on a multi-topic literature of diverse quality. It's worth noting that not any monograph exists on this subject, as the „historical novel” of Father Béla Bangha about the life and death of Dávid Fáy, entitled *Magyar jezsuiták Pombál börtöneiben* [Hungarian Jesuits in the

dungeons of Pombal] was not written with the aim of representing its topic with scientific claims. In the literature about the history of the Society of Jesus the work of these Hungarian Jesuits is also unknown. Almost the only one who provides us with some data on the life of the Fathers Szentmártonyi, Szluha and Fáy was Serafim Leite in his monumental work on the history of the Jesuit order in Brazil (*História da Companhia de Jesus no Brasil*). One specific school within the historians of the Jesuit order deals with the activity of the German-speaking missionaries come from the former Jesuit German Assistancy, who were working on the overseas Spanish and Portuguese colonies. Its illustrious representative was Anton Huonder in the nineteenth century; Johannes Meier, who compiled a three-volume bio-bibliography on the Central European Jesuits, resumed his tradition one century later. In the first volume of his manual (*Jesuiten aus Zentraleuropa in Portugiesisch- und Spanisch-Amerika. Band 1: Brasilien*) published in 2005 we can find the biographic profile set up on the base of the most recent works and researches in several archives of the Jesuits who worked in Brazil. The main field of research for Dauril Alden was the economic characteristics of the presence of the order in Brazil; see for example his monograph *The Making of an Enterprise. The Society of Jesus in Portugal, its Empire, and Beyond*. Based on the enormous quantity of data, he analyzed in details the economic policies and the routines used by the Society, not to speak about the description of the sugar-mills and huge sugar-cane estates, that ensured the wealth of the order; the economic activities of the missions in the Amazon basin based on the collection of the *drogas do sertão*; and what is more, on the governmental policy of the secularization and the distribution of the Jesuit wealth after the expulsion. There are so many works discussing the Brazilian history, one of them is the already classical *História geral do Brasil antes da sua separação e independência de Portugal* from Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen, which was published several times in modern versions after its first edition in the middle of the nineteenth century. Carlos Guilherme Mota, the renowned Brazilian cultural historian, published the most recent summary with new approaches on this subject in 2008 (*História do Brasil: uma interpretação*). According to his interpretation, the overture of the absolutistic turn in the Pombalian government was the complete reorganization of the administration and the economy of the colony, and the first step of this process was no other than the investigations started on the Jesuit missions in the Amazon basin. Charles Ralph Boxer, who was a researcher of incomparable style of the late colonial period in Brazil, in his book, entitled *The Golden Age of Brazil*, through a complex economical and social analysis depicted the colony as a land that got richer and richer and tried to secede from Portugal. We should also mention the work of Lúcio de Azevedo entitled *Os Jesuítas no Grão-Pará*, where the author published hardly accessible documents from the eighteenth century while examining the presence of the Jesuits in the Maranhão region. In the relevant Hungarian bibliography, the first signs of the interest on this subject can be observed in the works of Tivadar Ács, edited in the thirties and the forties. In his books *Akik elvándoroltak* [Immigrants] and *Magyarok Latin-Amerikában* [Hungarians in Latin America] he collected the data on the biography of the Jesuits working overseas, but unfortunately he rarely quoted the exact source of them. The Argentine journalist of Hungarian origin, László Szabó wrote about his own findings on the his-

tory of the Hungarian immigration in South America in his work *Magyar múlt Dél-Amerikában* [Hungarian Past in South America]. His account is almost independent from the researches made in Hungary, therefore we can find many useful data on this subject, but unfortunately he applied many statements that proved to be false later. Lajos Boglár the noted ethnologist, anthropologist in his essay entitled *XVIII. századi magyar utazók Dél-Amerikában* [Eighteenth-century Hungarian Travellers in South America], on the basis of the works published in Hungarian so far, prepared a catalogue of the Hungarian Jesuits who ever worked in the New World, so becoming the reference point for the further researches. In his article published in 1955 (*The Ethnographic Legacy of Eighteenth-century Hungarian Travelers in South America*) he valued the missionary activity of the Jesuits (especially of Dávid Fáy) from ethnological aspects, and in the same article published two letters of Father Fáy in Latin and in English versions. The founder and leader of the Department of Hispanic Studies, Ádám Anderle, and his graduates dedicated their studies on the history of migrations to the Hungarian immigration leading to South America. In this model, the Jesuits of the eighteenth century appeared as the first wave of the Hungarian presence on this continent. Dénes Balázs, the Hungarian geographer and world traveler examines the activity of the Hungarian Jesuits from his special viewpoint in two articles published in the journal of the Museum of Geography, founded by him. In these works he reconstructs and geographically defines the travels of the Jesuits made in Spanish and Portuguese America, and values the discoveries made by the aspects of the history of the sciences. Besides Fathers Szentmártonyi, Szluha and Fáy he analyses more profoundly the life and work of Father Károly Brentán, and also writes about his outcomes in the *Magyar utazók lexikona* [Lexicon of the Hungarian Travellers] edited by him. István Rákóczi, associate professor of the Department of Portuguese Language and Culture, ELTE, Budapest, in his essay *Kémek vagy atyák? (magyarázó észrevételek Szentmártonyi Ignác S. I. tudományos jelentőségéhez)* [Spies or Fathers? (Comments on the Scientific Values of Ignác Szentmártonyi S.I.)] he determines the course of the researches that need to be followed in the future, namely using new sources and facts instead of the ideologically influenced writings. From the point of view of history of science, he analyses the involvement of Father Szentmártonyi in the expedition led to the Amazon region in order to measure the boundaries between Spain and Portugal. According to Rákóczi, by the geographical and topographical measurements made during this expedition this Jesuit astronomer transmitted to the New World the topographical and cartographical results of the mining school of Northern Hungary. The quality of the maps made by the Jesuits on several areas of South America was highly appraised in the international studies, and also the importance of the Jesuit cartography in general. Isa Adonias edited the catalogue of the excellent map collection of Itamaraty, Brazil, and he published the hydrographic map made by the expedition led to the Amazon basin. Ignác Szentmártonyi, as the legend on the map attests, performed the astronomical measurements for this map. Francisco Marques de Sousa Viterbo's *Expedições científico-militares enviadas ao Brasil* introduces the participants of the military-scientific expeditions sent from Portugal based on the complete range of the then known documents. In his essay *Jesuit Cartography in Central and South America* published in 1997, David Buis-

seret deals with the cartography of South America of the seventeenth and eighteenth century and also brings out the reproduction of several Jesuit-made maps of this period. When studying the mission activity of the Jesuit order the first question to ask is what kind of approach and methods they used when contacting the subjects of the evangelization, the indigenous tribes of Brazil, and in connection with this, what kind of economic basis the mission stations allowed in order to reach their goals. John Hemming in his innovative work entitled *Red Gold. The conquest of the Brazilian Indians* discussed the history of the Indians during the colonial era. According to the author, in this period the most important factor of the development was the fight for the work of the natives between the colonists and the Jesuits. In her extraordinarily exhaustive work Ângela Domingues (*Quando os índios eram vassalos: Colonização e relações de poder no Norte do Brasil na segunda metade do século XVIII*) discusses the labor system of Northern Brazil, analyses the legal and theoretical background of the disposal of the colonists on the Indian labor force, and also its practical realization. The present status of the researches, the possible ways for further studies and the most recent methods and approaches on the Amazon region were represented by Neil L. Whitehead in his work published in 1993 (*Recent Research on the Native History of Amazonia and Guayana*). In this article, the author advises to the other researchers the holistic review of this topic by utilizing the results of anthropology, history, archeology and other disciplines. From a completely new point of view, using the methods of sociology examines the history of the Jesuit order Steven J. Harris. In his work (*Mapping Jesuit Science: the Role of Travel in the Geography of Knowledge*) applying the models of modern systems describes the Jesuit order as a long-distance network, that is similar to a modern multi-national organization. In the efficient communication channels of the order not only objects (e.g. collections of mineralogy), but also updated information were circulating. These were relevant to their place of origin, in this way contributing to the education and training of the members on the fields of geography, ethnography, botany and other studies, and this knowledge then was 'recycled' during the process of evangelization.

III. Sources

One of the most important publications of sources on this era is the collection of Marcos Carneiro de Mendonça, who compiled the pieces of correspondence written by Governor of Grão Pará e Maranhão, Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado. These documents dated from the years 1750-1760 are sources of great value concerning the activity of Father Szentmártonyi, who made astronomic measurements along the Amazon River during the campaign to define the borders between the Spanish and the Portugal colonies led by the Governor. Yet in most cases, the sources edited in this field refer to the life and death of Father Fáy: his letters were published in Latin, Hungarian, Portuguese and English as well. János Foltin edited his letters written in 1753, in Lisbon and in Maranhão in 1890. Ödön Sztankovics posted the Hungarian translation of his letters written in 1755 in the journal *Földrajzi Közlemények* [Bulletin of Geography]. Pál Rónai, who also wrote an introductory essay to his publication in 1944, made the Portuguese translation of

his letters (*As cartas do P. Daví Fáy e a sua biografia. Contribuição para a história das missões Jesuíticas no Brasil no século XVIII*). The voluminous Diary of Father Anselm Eckart of German origin about the activity in South America, the expulsion and the imprisonment of the Jesuits was first published by Cristoph Gottlieb von Murr (*Historia Persecutionis Societatis Jesu in Lusitania, 1779-1780, Nurnberg*), and was re-edited in 1987 in Portuguese. We should note that the number of the sources regarding the life of Fathers József Kayling and János Szluha in fact converges to the zero. According to the above mentioned the aim of my work was to find new sources, some foreign academic scholarship helped me to achieve this goal. In Rome, I went over the collections of several libraries and, in possession of the reference of Father László Szilas I was admitted to the central archive of the Order (*Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*) where I reviewed the documents of the former Portuguese Assistancy. As a scholar of the Gulbenkian Foundation, I had the license to make a research in various collections of Portugal, such as in the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, which possesses the widest range of documents relevant to the overseas colonies. Here I consulted the papers of the Pará and Rio Negro Capitaincies. In the National Library (*Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal*), I went through the Pombaline collection, and in the *National Archive Torre do Tombo* I studied the documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Unfortunately, I could spend only one day in the Library of Évora (*Biblioteca Pública de Évora*), where the map of the Maranhão Province made in 1753 is kept. According to my expectations, I found very few relevant documents in the Hungarian archives, except for one, the *Archive of the Franciscan Order*. In the archives of Csongrád (*Csongrád Megyei Levéltár*) and Heves counties (*Heves Megyei Levéltár*), and in the Archive of Hungary (*Magyar Országos Levéltár*) I looked for the traces of the Fáy family in vain. My visit to the Archiepiscopal Library of Pannonhalma brought some minor results relative to the biography of Father Szluha. In the collection of the University Library of ELTE besides the already known documents on the life of Fathers Fáy and Szentmártonyi I also found a letter written in 1767 by another member of the Order, who was imprisoned in the same fortress where Father Fáy died. I published the Hungarian translation of this letter in 2006. The main result of this work beyond doubt is the localization of the correspondence of Father Szluha in the Archive of the Franciscan Order (*Ferences Levéltár*), formerly known only from inaccurate references, and the processing and utilization of this document in the present Ph. D. thesis.

IV. Content review

This paper is composed of three main chapters. In the first, the relevant bibliography is introduced along with the delineation of the main historical facts and connections referring to the subject. In the second main unit contains the reconstructed biographies of József Kayling, Dávid Fáy, János Szluha and Ignác Szentmártonyi, utilizing the results of the newly found documents. In this chapter, I discussed the origin of the Fathers, their formation within the Order, the months and years they spent in Lisbon and in Brazil and the adversities they suffered from during their expulsion. In the third main chapter I attempted to locate their legacy of writings and scientific achievements in a wider context, by the help of the histo-

ry of literature, the sociology, the ethnography and the cartography. One can find the list of the sources and the bibliography, along with some maps, at the end of the thesis. In the chapter on history, I discuss the main features of the politics of Marquis of Pombal, Sebastião José Carvalho e Melo, who governed Portugal between 1750 and 1777, during the reign of Joseph I. This is one of the most controversial periods in the Portuguese history due to the strong measures that reshaped the life of the mother country and of its colonies. After strengthening his position in power, the extirpation of the noble families and the expulsion of the Jesuit Order he was up to raise the revenues of the state, by the measures of subsidizing the industry, increasing the volume of the export to Brazil and by reducing gradually the dependency of his country from England. His model was the absolutistic administration of Maria Theresa what he could easily examine during his stay in Vienna between 1745 and 1749 as the ambassador of Portugal.

From the point of view of this subject, it is required to know what kind of forces compelled the Pombalian administration that led to the expulsion of the Jesuits. In the bibliography, the most extreme opinions can be read about this subject. In my opinion, the governance of Pombal was basically pragmatic, so the most reasonable assumption might be that the primary intent was the appropriation of the Jesuit wealth and the abolition of their privileges. The ideological propaganda based on the widely spread leaflets (e.g. the *Relação Abreviada*) served only as a pretext to influence the public opinion of Portugal and of the European countries. The province with the biggest territory and of the major economic importance of the Portuguese Empire in the eighteenth century was Brazil. Due to this developing economy by the end of the century, Portugal in fact became dependent from its colony. The specific feature of the Portuguese colonization, deferring from the Spanish one, was that the Portuguese colonists settled virtually only on the coastal line, while in the interior the only representatives of the conquerors were the missionaries sent from different religious orders. The boundaries between the South American territories of the Spanish and the Portuguese Crown were determined only at the middle of the eighteenth century, after the Treaty of Madrid. Father Ignác Szentmártonyi also made some measurements for this settlement as a Royal Astronomer. In the North of Brazil, in the states of Grão-Pará e Maranhão, field of evangelization for Fathers Fáy, Kayling and Szluha the main source of conflict between the indigenous people and the white colonists was about the disposal of the Indian labor force. In this period, the Jesuits who worked along the Amazon river had both the temporary and the spiritual jurisdiction above the Indians, and being the only agents of the European civilization they acted as the colonists of the Brazilian *sertão*, as delegates of the Crown. However, in their evangelization they used many methods that were contradictory to the measures of the government. The fact that was the most repugnant in the eyes of the colonists and the local administration was the prosperity of the *aldeias* and colleges led by the Jesuits. The cause of this wealth were their privileges on using the Indian labor force, the high income from the collection of the *drogas do sertão* and from the trade of the cowhides, and above all the fact that their commercial activity was tax and custom free. By the beginning of the 1750s the Portuguese government classified as the state of *Maranhão* as of primary importance both from external-strategic and ad-

ministrative-economic viewpoints. Pombal appointed his brother, Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado the governor of the state, who was also the lead-commissioner of the delegation to the Northern boundaries from 1752, where his task was the coordination of the measurements, following the regulations of the Treaty of Madrid. The Society of Jesus has two provinces in Brazil: the Brazilian, founded in 1553, and that of Maranhão, which separated as a sub-province in 1627. As in the home country, there was great lack of colonists and missionaries, from the end of the seventh century it was allowed to evangelize in Brazil also to Jesuits of foreign origin. On this field, the absolute primacy was of the missionaries from the Habsburg Empire, who spoke many languages and were heavily supported by the wife of John V, Maria Anna of Austria. From the mid-1750s, the beginning of Joseph I the Portuguese government started an offensive against the Jesuit order: the political conflicts with the nobles, the revolt of Porto in 1757, the attempt against the king in 1758 was assigned to them, and they tried to convince the people that the Jesuits were the instigators of the disturbances. Tension was growing in the colonies as well: in the state Grão-Pará e Maranhão the main reason of the conflict between the Jesuits and the colonists was the profitable economic activity of the Order. The promulgation in 1755 of the laws about the freedom of the indigenous people was also contrary to the Society's interest, since the Portuguese government ordered all members to leave their mission stations. During this process many missionaries from Central Europe were expelled from Brazil, among them were Fathers Anselm Eckart and Dávid Fáy. On 19 January 1759 a royal edict was issued, which decreed the confiscation of all the estates and other properties of the Society, the reason was that they participated in the Guaraní War and in the plot against the king. The royal edict that expelled the Jesuits was divulged on 3 September 1759, the first anniversary of the attack against Joseph I. this decree condemned the Jesuits as rebels and traitors. Then followed the expulsion of the Order: the members working in the colonies and who were in Portugal were gathered together in their colleges and then were embarked to ships heading to the Papal State. The catholic states of Europe, France, Spain, and the Habsburg Empire, following the example of Portugal, suppressed the order on their territories and expelled them from the country. Pope Clement XIV abolished the Society of Jesus with his breve *Dominus ac Redemptor Noster* in 1773. In the second main unit, in separate chapters I review the biography of the Hungarian Jesuits Dávid Fáy, József Kayling, Ignác Szentmártonyi and Szluha János and make an attempt to trace their career in the Portuguese overseas provinces in the 1750s. As the biographies introduced by the former researchers were in many cases incomplete and contained many lacunae I tried to fill these gaps by the support from the primary sources, being fully aware that these biographies can serve as a base for further researches. There were many common links in their life: Fathers Kayling, Fáy and Szluha were born in the so-called Felvidék [Upper Hungary, presentday: Slovakia], and they came from noble families except Father Kayling. Fathers Kayling and Fáy had their three-year course in Theology at Kosice, Slovakia where they became friends. After finishing their professional practice as teacher Fathers Szluha and Szentmártonyi taught Mathematics in the College of Vienna. All the four of them professed his fourth vow, Father Szentmártonyi in Lisbon, the others in Bra-

zil. In 1753 the Hungarian Fathers sailed with the same fleet to Maranhão, where they practiced as missionaries, except Father Szentmártonyi, who was engaged in the measurements of the boundaries and was employed by the Portuguese government specifically for this purpose. The most active period of their presence was between 1753 and 1757, after this their activity was gradually set back until the expulsion. Dávid Fáy was expelled in 1757, the others after 1759, along with the other members of the Order. They were imprisoned in Portugal for many years. Father Fáy died in prison in 1767, but his Hungarian companions were released and got home, Father Szluha in the early 1760's, Fathers Kayling and Szentmártonyi in 1777-1778. Still very few details are known about their life after the return; it seems that they worked as teachers and priests in their homeland. In the third main chapter, I attempted to locate the legacy of these four Jesuits in a wider context, and assign the possible ways for future researches by applying the results of the history of literature, sociology, ethnography and cartography. The correspondence of the members written from distant lands in the 18th century was published in several periodicals to inform their readers, the educated people. Until recently, these documents have not been analyzed from the aspects of literary history, however these collections of the *Der Neue Welt-Bott*, *Lettres Édifiantes*, and the *Magyar Könyv-ház* [Hungarian Library] in Hungary are treasures offering rich materials also for the science of history. Besides the printed documentation, the private letters of the Fathers can also reserve valuable data for the researchers, as it was in the case of Father Szluha's collection of letters, found and introduced by the author of this paper. The sociology has also just now discovered the efficient and well-organized Society of Jesus, because this organization can be easily described by the model of the long-distance corporation, created originally to demonstrate the modern organizations of the twentieth century. According to this model, the efficient information swapping within the network and the high qualification of the participants and their loyalty to the organization is the clue to the successful working of the whole system. At the end of the twentieth century a paradigm change was observed within the other social science, the ethnography as well, when the prevalent describing-static view of the history of the American Indians in the Amazon region gave place to another approach, that aimed to reconstruct this history in linear sequences from a temporal perspective. In this context, the contemporary Jesuit accounts on the indigenous people were not estimated being only the first communications on these tribes, but also documents with ethnographic value regarding the past of these people. Regarding the tribes *guajajára*, *amanayé* and *gamella* the texts of Fathers Fáy and Szluha are considerable, while in case of the Rio Negro Indians the report called *Sequentes Notitias* of Father Szentmártonyi is indispensable, as there is no other source about this region from the same period. The analysis of their cartographical activity has lengthy tradition in the history of sciences. Among the four Hungarian Jesuits Fathers Szluha and Szentmártonyi were qualified mathematicians, and the Jesuit curriculum also contained astronomy and cartography, therefore it is less surprising that they might have prepared some maps as well. According to the letter of Father Szluha he sketched a map on the Jesuit province of Maranhão in 1753, but unfortunately this document has not been traced yet. After the Treaty of Madrid, Father Szentmártonyi took some mea-

surements along the Amazon and Rio Negro rivers as the Royal Astronomer of the Portuguese commission for the establishment of the Northern boundaries between the Spanish and Portuguese territories in South America. Some fragments has remained from his legacy, these are discussed in the present thesis. To our knowledge, this is the one and only autograph document written by him. It is to be regretted that because of these documents contained sensitive data his notes were classified as confidential, they are most likely lost forever. He did not put down his memoirs even after he was released from prison and got home.

V. *New results and further prospects of the research*

Several details of the research have been already published in some papers, but most of them is edited in the present thesis for the first time. The Hungarian translation of Karel Prikill's letter about the death of Father Fáy was issued in 2006; annotations to this text can be read in the journal *Mediterrán Világ* [Mediterranean World], thematic number of 2008 on the age of discoveries. I examined the role of Father Fáy in the process of expulsion in my paper published in the *Mediterrán Tanulmányok* [Studies on the Mediterranean]. The documents of Father Szentmártonyi found in the *Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino* were discussed in my essay issued in 2007 in the *Acta Hispanica*. At the *Os descobrimentos portugueses e a Mitteleuropa* international conference I presented for the first time the correspondence of Father Szluha kept at the *Archive of the Franciscan Order*. I utilized this unique document in several sections of my thesis, but most of all when examining the activity of the Jesuits from ethnographical and literary viewpoints. Further ways of research could be surveying the collections of other foreign archives and to seek for other documents regarding the legacy of the Hungarian Jesuits. This work has already started owing to the help of an OTKA research grant. In October 2011, I have made a research in the two collections of the University of Coimbra (*Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra* and *Biblioteca Geral da Universidade de Coimbra*) and in two archives of Lisbon (*Arquivo Histórico da Marinha*, *Arquivo Histórico Militar*). The extraordinarily rich Spanish and Brazilian collections are supposed to be visited in the near future. A totally new and separate field of study could be examining the activity of the Hungarian Jesuits on the colonies of Spain in the same period. The difficulties are the same as in the case of Portugal, that is the lack of reliable sources and the scarcity of relevant literature. My researches therefore were restricted to the analysis of some particular details, like the voyage of Father Károly Brentán on the Amazon River. I discussed this topic in the ethnographic conference *Vallások, határok, kölcsönhatások* [Religions, Boundaries, Interactions] about religions held in Szeged, Hungary in 2010. Nevertheless, the most urgent thing is to publish at least some major details from the letters of Father János Szluha, so that this documentation of great importance could be accessible to other researchers as soon as possible.