

BOLESŁAW SZCZEŚNIAK

Note on the spelling of the family name of Michael Boym (1612—1659), missionary in China

The family name of the prominent sinologue and missionary in China, Father Michael Petrus Boym, S. J., known as Michael Boym, has been spelt in different ways during the period from the middle of the XVIIth C. to the present time. This not only created some confusion, but also uncertainty as to the correct transcription of the missionary's name.

When gathering material about this important personality in orientology, and about his diplomatic mission from the last Ming Emperor to Europe (1652), I endeavoured to find out the original spelling from printed material and documents in manuscript. I gathered following known variants:

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| 1. <i>Boym</i> , | 4. <i>Boimus</i> , | 7. <i>Boyn</i> , |
| 2. <i>Boymus</i> , | 5. <i>Boem</i> , | 8. <i>Boyne</i> , |
| 3. <i>Boim</i> , | 6. <i>Boeyn</i> , | 9. <i>Boj̃m</i> , |

of which *Boym* is generally used in European languages.

The form *Boym* is a phonetic equivalent of the Polish *Boim* and was known outside the missionary's native country as is seen in his report printed in Paris in 1654, by Sebastian Cramoisy:

Briefve relation de la notable conversion des personnes royales, et de l'estat de la Religion chrestienne en la Chine, faicte par le tres R. P. Michel Boym de la Compagnie de Iesus, enuoyé par la Cour de ce Royaume là en qualité d'Ambassadeur au S. Siege Apostolique, et recitée par luy-mesme dans l'Eglise de Smyrne, le 29 Septembre de l'an 1652.

The same spelling is to be observed in subsequent publications and Father Michael himself seemed to favour it.

Athanasius Kircher, a great admirer and instructor of our missionary, used three forms of spelling, viz. *Bojm*, *Boymus*, *Boimus*. They are all to be found in his *China Illustrata*, Amsterdam 1667. This book contains a letter from the missionary (pp. 7—11) dated: "Romae, 4 Nov. Anno 1653" and signed "P. Michael Boim".

John Nieuvhoff, steward to the ambassadors from the East India Company of the United Provinces to the Chinese Emperor, in his *Embassy*¹⁾ speaks of Boym as *Boem*. As far as can be ascertained this variant was only used by Nieuvhoff, and is probably a corruption of *Boim*.

In 1653 there appeared in Munich the German edition (a very rare book in libraries) of Boym's *Relation*. Its title gives a somewhat strange variant of the sinologue's name, viz. *Bovyn*: *Sehr werthe vnd angenehme neue Zeitung von der Bekehrung zum Catholischen Glauben desz jungen Königs in China vnd anderer Fürstl. Personen Vnd von der Legation desz Ehrw. P. Michaelis Bovyn der Societet Jesu Priestern Polnischer Nation zu Ihrer Pöbst. Heyligkeit nach Rohm...* This form of his name is unique and apparently is a printing error. In other contemporary German books on China the family name of Father Michael is spelt *Boym*²⁾.

The Belgian Jesuit Philippe Couplet, who was a close friend of Boym, used *Boymus* and *Boym* in his edition of *Clavis medica... Autore R. P. Michaelis Boymo...*, Rome 1686. He issued a list of Jesuits working in China: *Catalogus Patrum Societatis Jesu Qui... ab anno 1581, usque ad 1681 in Imperio Sinarum Iesu-Christi fidem propagarunt* (1686), where he gives the spelling *Boym*.

Father Joseph Tissanier states in a letter³⁾ to the provincial superior of the French Jesuits, dated Tonkin, November 25, 1658, that in July 1658 "arriva icy le P. Michel Boyn pour entrer dans ces Provinces de la Chine, qui ne sont pas suiettes

¹⁾ 2nd ed., London 1673, p. 680.

²⁾ See works of Ch. Mentzel and A. Muller.

³⁾ See p. 5 of *Lettre d'un Pere de la Compagnie de Iesus, ecrite du Tunquin le 25. de Novembre 1656...* (Paris 1660?).

au Tartare". Obviously *Boyn* is a printing error, for it is hardly to be supposed that this Jesuit who was a close friend of Boym and lived with him for a time in the mission, would use this form.

The quite unusual name of *Boyne* appears in *Dictionnaire de Botanique*, vol. I, p. 482, by M. H. Baillon (4 vols, Paris 1876—1892), and seems to be again only a misprint.

A new form has been discovered in the manuscripts preserved in the Central Archives of Belgium. Two original letters sent by Boym to the Rector of Douai College and to the President and Professors of the Douai University, both dated 23. XII. 1652, are very clearly signed "Michael Boÿm Polonus Societatis Iesu Professus". Here by putting diaeresis over the *y* the writer wished to give a phonetic transcription with the accent on the last vowel. Another important manuscript, preserved in the same Archives, is signed "Michael Petrus Boim Polonus". This ms. contains an explanation of the differences of opinions on the Chinese Rites Controversy and suggests some compromise. It is entitled: *Ratio eorum quae a Patribus Societatis Iesu et Christianis in Imperio Sinensibus in Imperio Sinarum fieri solita sunt a Patre Michaelae Boym Polono Societatis Iesu 4 votorum professo Sinico Missionario delucide preposita*. Here the missionary signed according to his own language, as he did on other occasions, in letters and reports preserved in the Central Jesuit Archive in Rome.

A letter from the Carmelite missionary Dionysius a Jesu, a Pole, to his Superior General in Rome (preserved in ms. in the Casa Generalizia dei Carmelitani Scalzi, Rome), dated Goa, May 6, 1652, says that "Il P. Michael Boim Jesuita Polacko, Missionario di China creo che gia in questo arrivè a Roma...", and Father Michael's name is spelt according to the genuine old orthography.

This short note is intended to draw the attention of Orientalists to the fact that Boym's name is spelt in various ways in his bibliography, and that the common spelling *Boym* is usually accepted by Father Michael and his ancestors for the convenience of foreign readers, although *Boim* was the original spelling in his country from the middle of the XVIth C., as has been ascertained by the present author. The foreign form *Boym*

was in use in the early years of the XVIth C., when the prominent Boim family had many cultural and commercial relations with France and Italy. From the time of the missionary's great grandfather down to his own days many members of this Renaissance family studied Philosophy and Medicine in Padua or Bologna. The great hall of Padua University is adorned with Boim crests bearing the inscription *Boym*. This was in fact the foreign phonetic transcription. I have also searched the Archives of the city of Lwów, and especially the *Acta consularia* of this Renaissance city of Poland, which contain documents belonging to the Boym family from the XVIth to the XVIIIth C. written in Latin and in Polish. I did not find many traces of the foreign transcription of the name in the family documents. The same applies to the inscription of the portrait of "GEORGIUS BOIM Secretarius Regis Bathorei...", ancestor, as well as to the inscription on stone of the Bresler family (co-related), preserved in the Boims old Chapel (XVIth C.). On the other hand the portrait of Michael Boym's father, painted for the Chapel by the Italian artist Giani, in 1640, is inscribed "Nobilis, clarissimus, et excellentissimus D. Paul. Boym Philosophiae et M. Doctor....".

The conclusion we come to is that the genuine spelling of the missionary's name is *Boim*, and in the traditional foreign use *Boym*.
