

Title: *Chung kuo t'u*

Date: 1653

Author: Michael Boym

Description: Three general maps of China compiled by the prominent Polish priest and sinologue Michael Boym (1612-1659) are currently preserved: 1) *Mappa Imperii Sinarum* of the Bibliotheque du Service Hydrographique de la Marine in Paris; 2) the map which bears the Chinese title *Chung kuo t'u* [map of the Middle Kingdom]; and 3) *Sinarum Universalis Mappa*, which constitutes the first general map of the Boym atlas in the Vatican Library, Fondo Borgia Cinese 531.

The Polish Jesuit Michel Boym, 1612-1659, was sent to China as a missionary and reached Macao in 1649. From here, he soon came in touch with the last princes of the overthrown the Ming dynasty just by invading Manchu and temporarily residing at Kuangsi. At the end of 1650 he was entrusted by the court with a mission to Rome where he arrived two years later. Leaving Europe again for China early in 1656 he died in Kuangsi in 1659.

When in Europe, M. Boym had drawn, between 1653 and 1655, a number of maps of China that were discovered in 1933 by Professor Paul Pelliot in the Vatican Library. Later, Pelliot also found in the Bibliotheque du Service Hydrographique de la Marine in Paris a large and somewhat detailed of China, *Mappa Imperii Sinarum*.

The first map, that in Paris discovered by Pelliot was described by Robert Chabri in 1933. The map was found in the crypt of the Church of Notre Dame des Victoires in Paris, among the papers assembled from Versailles and from the monasteries suppressed during the Revolution. This large and beautiful map of all China, Chabri affirms, was embellished with drawings and inscriptions which closely resemble the pictures of Boym's *Flora Sinensis* ((Father Boym's famous botanical work from 1656), or the ones on the map preserved in the Vatican Library. It has been reported by Boleslaw Szczesniak that the map disappeared under the German administration of the Bibliotheque during the occupation of Paris in 1940-1945. It was taken with other old manuscript maps and sent to Germany. As this map most probably originated from the Versailles collection, it should be, in my opinion, connected with the map of China published in 1670 by Pierre Mariette of Paris, and with the one made by the Royal Geographer of Louis XIV, Nicolas Sanson D'Abbeville (1600-1667). It is entitled: *Abrigj de la Chine du R. P. Bouyn Iesuiste*. The cartographer, or his engraver, misspelled the name of Boym. Sanson observed that the manuscript of the Boym map was considered by "the late M. Mariette, the Father, for engraving and publication; its Author esteeming it the best and most exact of the ones he ever had." Sanson prepared it for publication; not, however, with confidence in its geographical exactness. Sanson's drawing of the Boym map is preserved in the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, in the Departement des Cartes et Plans, Collection d'Anville, carton No. 7152. To this general map the author added a concise description of the Empire of China, *Rerurn Sinensium Compendiosa Descriptio*. This was found by the Szczesniak in the collection of MSS in the library of the Jesuit House of Studies, Les Fontaines, in Chantilly. The description apparently came to this place, established after the restoration of the Society, from the celebrated house of Ste Genevieve in Paris.

In the second Boym map of China the handwriting on the map, all of the cartographical data, the embellishments, as well as the Chinese characters, show the map to be practically identical with the one preserved in the Vatican Library. The similarity is enhanced by the very same technique of drawing used in the Boym atlas of

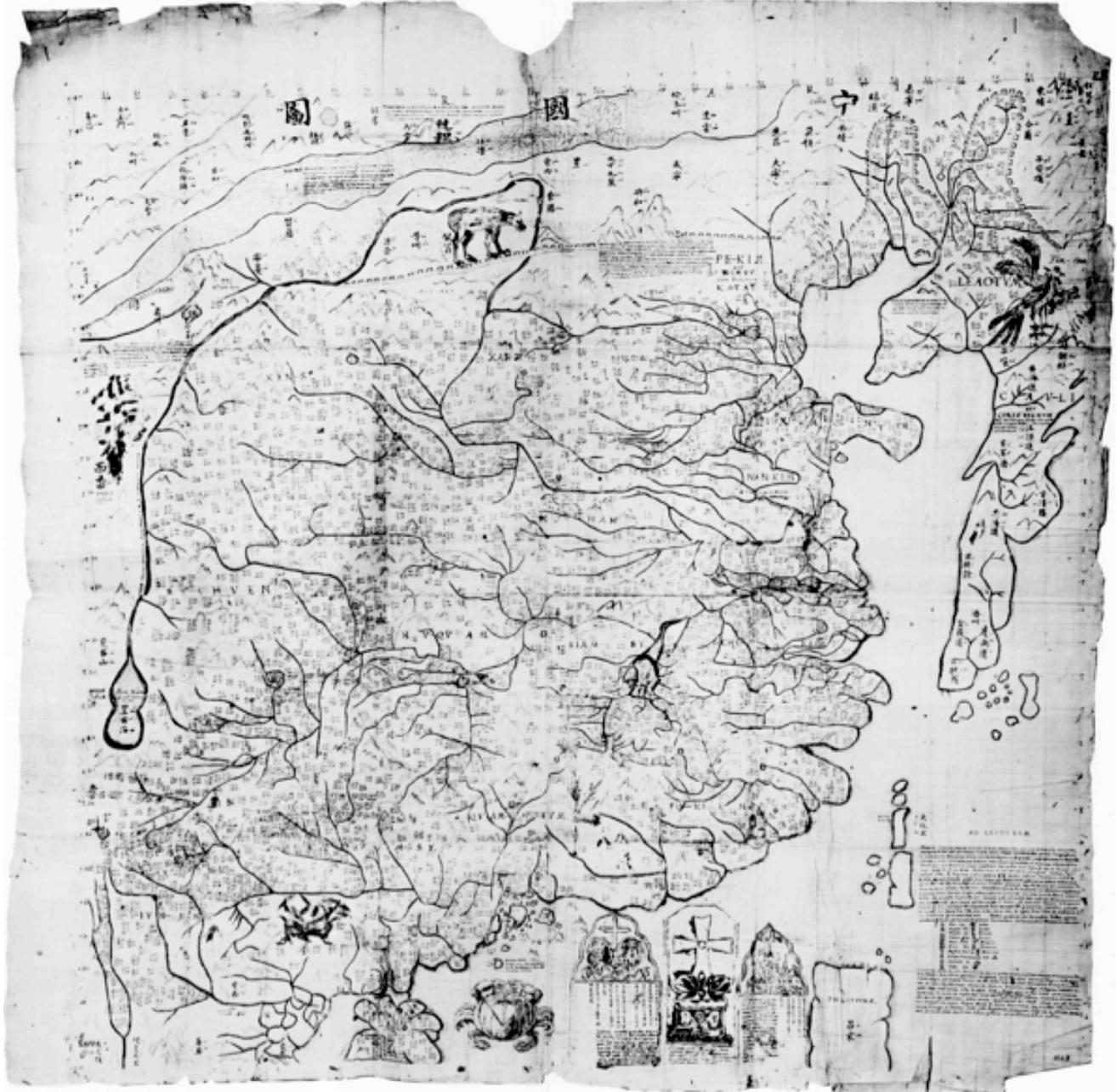
the Borgia Cinese collection. This map, owned by Mr. Philip Robinson of Pall Mall in London, was acquired in 1824 by Sir Thomas Phillipps, the celebrated English bibliophile and collector. Sir Thomas purchased it from the Dutch collector Gerhard Meerman, who in turn had acquired it in 1764 from the library of the Jesuit College at Clermont near Paris, which also owned other Chinese manuscripts. This map is drawn on five sheets of paper pasted together to provide the area of around 60 x 60 inches, but the work itself measures 54.5 inches from top to bottom and 55.5 inches from side to side. It bears signs of an unfinished copy, however complete in its character. In comparison with the Vatican map the coloring is of inferior quality. It has no Latin title as other Boym's maps have, only the Chinese characters *Chung kuo t'u*, or the map of the Middle Kingdom.

This second copy presents a problem of several identifications. According to Boleslaw Szczesniak it was drawn before 1653. Boym arrived in Italy from China in November 1652. The appearance on the map of the name *Hai Chou* in Manchuria, which was changed in 1653 to *Hai Ch'eng Hsien*, confirms Szczesniak's supposition. But adding *Fu* [prefecture] to *Fu Ning* does not point to the date of 1734, when that prefecture was created. According to Szczesniak it is only one of the "administrative" errors and mistakes made by the missionary cartographer. The handwriting and the calligraphic characteristics are those of the Boym map preserved in the Vatican Library. The Chinese characters, which are seen on the Vatican and the Robinson copies, are written by a Chinese hand. Boym brought with him to Italy his assistant, a "Chinese scholar", Andreas Chen, who, perhaps, put the Chinese names on the map.

The third map, the general map, and first of the eighteen maps, in the great *Atlas of China* by Michael Boym, is the prototype of his other maps of China. It is a cartographical piece of great elaboration: a beautiful and spectacular map, made during the age of cartographical lore. According to Szczesniak it should be dated 1652, the year Boym arrived in Italy as an ambassador of the Ming Pretender Yung Li.

The title of the beautiful atlas is *Magni Catay, Quod olim Serica, et modo Sinarum est Monarchia. Quindecim Regnorum. Octodecim Geographicae Tabulae*. The title of the description of China preceding the maps is given as: *Sinarum Imperii 160 regiones cum Regnorum confinium descriptione*. No text is now attached to the Atlas, except a table of contents enumerating the titles of ten chapters, which are missing. The general map of the Atlas is considerably larger than the rest of the maps. It measures 85.5 cm wide and 83 cm long.

The Vatican map has three titles: 1) *Sinarum Universalis Mappa*; 2) *Chung kuo t'u*, or the map of the Middle Kingdom, where the Chinese characters stretch over the length of the upper sub-marginal part of the map; and 3) *Chung kuo tsung yü ti t'u*, or the general map of China, where the title is written in the upper corner of the sheet. It is the third title which prompts Szczesniak to accept the Chinese geography *Ti t'u tsung yao*, by Wu Hsüeh-yen, Chu Shao-pen and Chu Kuo-Kan as the source from which the missionary cartographer compiled his Atlas. A copy of this geography in four volumes, published in 1643, is preserved in the *Fondo Borgia Cinese* of the Vatican Library, with numerous marginal annotations, as well as with transliterations of Chinese topographical names on the maps. Examining these volumes Szczesniak was struck with the similarity of the provincial maps, with their characteristic outlines, to the Boym Atlas. The chief compiler and editor of the geography was ChuKuo-ta.



The Chung kuo t'u [Map of the Middle Kingdom], 1653, 151 x 153 cm

Having seen the *Map of China*, formerly kept at the Service Central Hydrographique, Paris, Robert Chabrie described it as follows: "... a large and beautiful map of China, comprising the whole country... Decorated with pictures and inscriptions, it presents certain drawings which recall those in *Flora Sinensis*; some other figures and legends are the same as those which decorate a series of individual maps preserved in Rome, also made by M. Boym."

It is obvious that M. Boym drew his maps after a Chinese original. Walter Fuchs states that it still exists in the Vatican Library and is more or less based upon the fundamental atlas of ca. 1555, the *Kuang-yü-t'u* (#227). However, Boym has added the longitudes and latitudes, a transcription of the Chinese geographical names, mountains

and trees outlined in the European manner, typical Chinese plants or flowers, explanatory notes in Latin, and astronomical symbols of the metals found in the various provinces, some animals and birds, the Gobi Desert and the Great Wall.

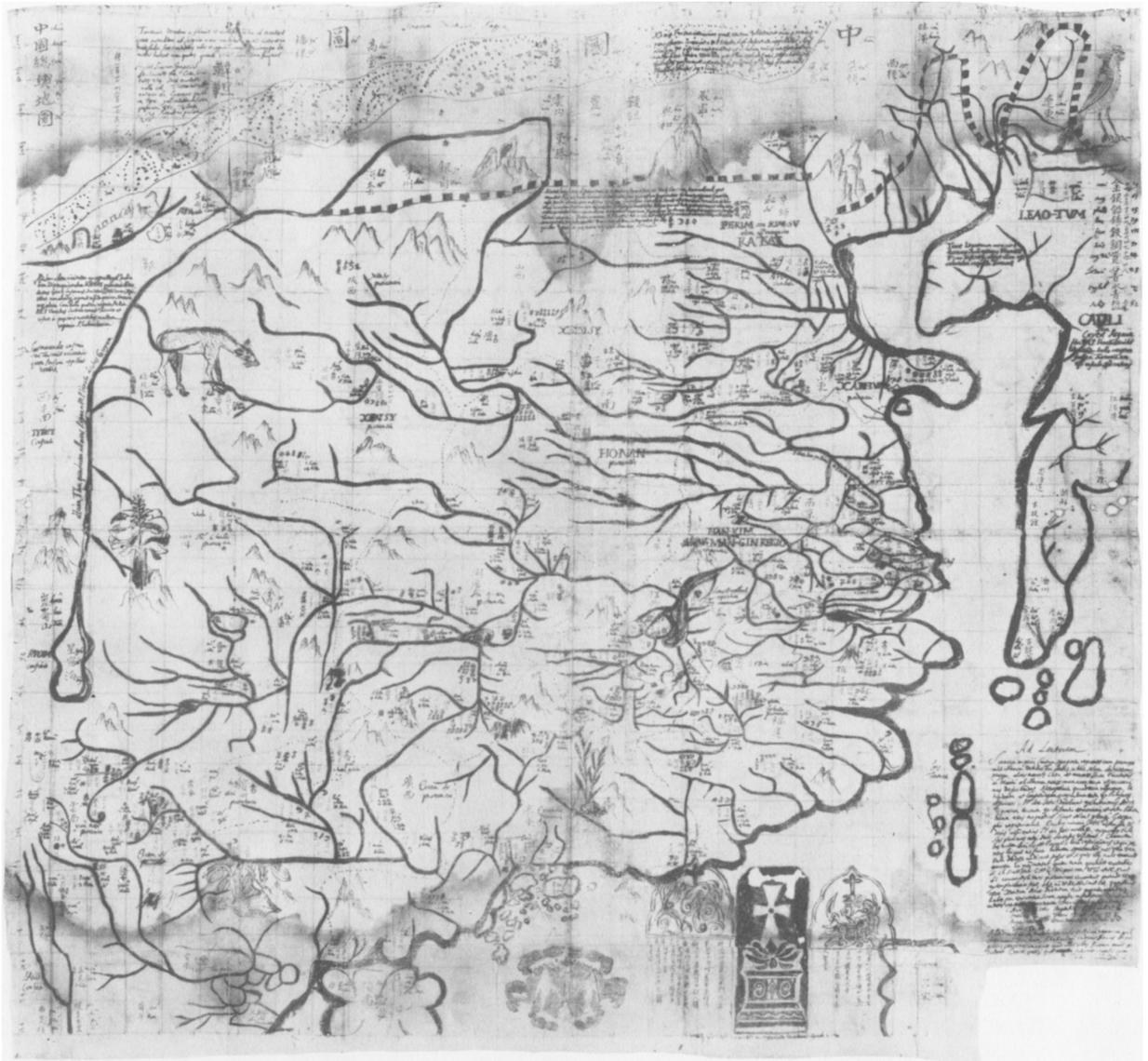
The Chinese characters are written by a native, presumably the young Chinese Christian convert who accompanied Boym to Europe. In addition to the geographical names, there are indicated on each provincial map the metals produced there, short administrative data, and a note saying that "Father Boym (Pu Mi-ko) of the Jesuit order, hailing from the Far West, has composed [these maps]".

The general map of China in the atlas unmistakably betrays its typical Ming origin as seen from the representation of the coast line, the distorted outlines of Korea, the rivers, and the Great Wall with its northeastern extension as a palisade. A hint of the prototype of the atlas may be found in the total number of administrative subdivisions of the whole of China given on the left side at the top of the map, namely 160 *fu*, 234 *chou*, and 1126 (1116?) *hsien*.

In conclusion we can say that P. Boym's atlas, though never printed, occupies an important place in early Jesuit cartography, because it presents, apart from those of P. Martini, the earliest detailed maps of China transmitted to the Western world. And as both atlases were drawn in Europe almost simultaneously, the interesting question arises whether any relationship exists between the two works, or between their Chinese prototypes.

References:

- Chabri, R., *Michel Boym: J.suite polonais et la fin des Ming en Chine (1646-1662)*, (Paris, 1933), pp. 229, 256.
- Fuchs, Walter, "A Note on Father M. Boym's Atlas of China", *Imago Mundi*, Vol. 9 (1952), pp. 71-72.
- Szczesniak, Boleslaw, "The *Mappa Imperii Sinarum* of Michael Boym", *Imago Mundi*, Vol. 19 (1965), pp. 113-115.
- Szczesniak, Boleslaw, "The Atlas and Geographic Description of China: A Manuscript of Michael Boym (1612-1659)", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Volume 73, 1953, No. 2, p. 65.



The Map of China from M. Boym's Atlas, ca. 1655, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vatican