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## **Name index to Elizabeth Hill's Biographical Essay on Roger Boscovich**

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### INTRODUCTION

A volume was published by Whyte in 1961 for the anniversary of Boscovich's birth. This volume contains a very readable biographical essay by Elizabeth Hill. However, the continuing value of this essay as a work of reference is unfortunately marred by the lack of an index. In this article, we remedy this defect by providing a complete index of identified persons and places, together with a more selective index of buildings and institutions.



BOSCOVICH'S HOUSE IN PARIS, NEAR ACADEMY OF SCIENCE (PHOTO: ©JEHPS 2007)

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## 1. A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ROGER BOSCOVITCH

The name of Boscovich is well-known to historians of statistics for his development in 1757-60 of a simple geometrical method of fitting a straight line to a set of observations on two variables using the (constrained) sum of absolute deviations as fitting criterion, see Eisenhart (1961) or Farebrother (1993, 1999). This procedure was subsequently popularised in an algebraic form by Laplace under the title of the method of situation.

Rogierius Josephus Boscovich (Italian: Ruggiero Giuseppe Boscovich; Croatian: Rugjer (or Rudjer) Josip Bošković) was born in Ragusa (now Dubrovnik, Croatia), on 18 May 1711, the sixth son of a merchant's agent. He was educated at the (Jesuit) Collegium Ragusinum in Ragusa and at the (Jesuit) Collegium Romanum in Rome (Italy), but long before he had completed his training as a Jesuit priest he discovered his vocation as a teacher of mathematics. Indeed, in 1740 he succeeded his own teacher as professor of mathematics at the Collegium Romanum. In the years following 1743 Boscovich was employed by Pope Benedict XIV as an adviser on a variety of mathematical problems. In particular, in 1750-1752 Boscovich and the English Jesuit Christopher Maire were commissioned to measure an arc of the meridian in the vicinity of Rome and to prepare a new geographical map of the Papal States. A detailed account of this geodetic survey was published by Maire and Boscovich in 1755 and a summary by Boscovich alone in 1757.

The Seven Years War of 1756-63 brought Boscovich's skills as a diplomat into play. In 1758 he was sent to Vienna (Austria) and in 1760 to Paris (France) and London (England). During his visit to London, Boscovich finalised his notes (including the one on his fitting procedure) for the second volume of the poem in Latin hexameters by his fellow Ragusan Benedikt Stay. He also met many leading members of the Royal Society of London and took the opportunity of proposing a geodetic expedition to North America. Later, in 1767, Boscovich was invited to participate in the 1769 astronomical expedition to California, but his invitation was withdrawn when the organisers discovered that Jesuit priests were strictly excluded from Spanish territory in the Americas.

The Jesuit Order was suppressed throughout the world in 1773. However, Boscovich managed to secure a pension from King Louis XV of France which lasted until his death in Milan (Italy) on 13 February 1787.

Besides developing a simple procedure for fitting a straight line to a set of observations, Boscovich also made significant contributions to a wide range of scientific disciplines, his principal contribution being the first modern treatise on the atomic theory of matter. For detailed discussions of these and other aspects of his scientific work, see the relevant articles in the anniversary volumes edited by Whyte (1961) and Bursill-Hall (1993).

## 2. Name Index to Hill's biographical essay on Boscovich

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