

# Nicolaus Copernicus, as (Polish) ambassador on stamps and currency

Florian Ostrowski | *World Copernican Congress - Toruń* | 13. September 2023



Unconsciously on the traces of Copernicus, Frombork (2013) and Torun (2017)

# Content

1. Stamps and currency as historical sources and media
2. Copernicus between Polish and German Nationalism, 1920s-1940s
3. Copernicus as a revolutionary genius in Communist Poland, 1950s-1960s
4. Copernicus as (Polish) ambassador of science to the world, 1970s-now
5. Summary

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# More than receipts for payment and means to purchase

- Stamps and currency as media (offer a set of meanings)
- Stamps and currency as condensed discourse
  - legitimation/power
  - memory culture
  - identity
- Symbolic tools and historical sources
- accessible for mass communication



Book cover of recent philatelist research in Germany (2019)

# Appreciation of Copernicus as tradition

- Controversies about his work since 16th c.
- Taught in Cracow, read, translated
- Portraits and poems since 16th c.
- Historiographies since 16th/17th c.
- Epitaph in 1580, monuments since 19th c.
- Medals since 18th/19th c.
- Since 19th c. „kopernikologia“
- Societies and museums since 19th c.



Amadée Durand (design), F. Godel (realisation),  
Nicolaus Copernicus, obverse, iron, 1820,  
Photo: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin



# Commemoration as private and national agenda



Władysław Oleszczyński, Unveiling of Nicolaus Copernicus monument in Warsaw in 1830, obverse, varnished plastic mass, 1830, Photo: PAN



Fryderyk Wilhelm Below, Nicolaus Copernicus, 400th birth anniversary, white metal, 1873, Photo: numisbids.com



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# Copernicus a Polish or German astronomer?



**1923** Special stamp edition on the 450th birthday of Copernicus and 150th death anniversary of Konarski, Poland Post, July/Dec. 1923, printed on cigarette paper, Photo: prophilia.de



**1943**

Stamp issue on the 400th death anniversary of Copernicus, General Government, May 1943

## Birthdays and death anniversaries



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# Copernicus, a famous person, scholar and Pole



1st Polish Scientific Congress, Poland (1951)



480th birthday of Copernicus, Poland (1953)



Monuments of Warsaw series, Poland (1955)



10th anniversary of Polish-Soviet-Friendship, Soviet Union (1955)



Famous People series, France (1957)



Famous Scholars series, Poland (1959)



Famous Poles series, Poland (1961)



600th anniversary of the University of Cracow, Poland (1964)

# Copernicus as part of Polish identity



10 Złoty coin with Copernicus, issued 1959-1978, Poland,  
Photo: allegro.pl



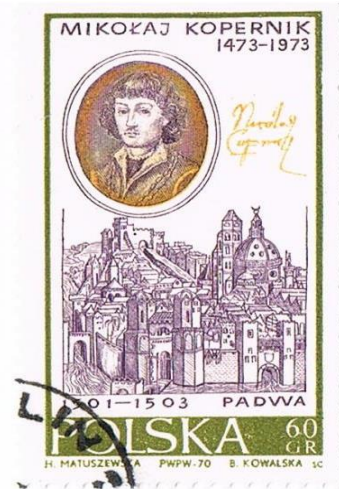
1000 Złoty note with Copernicus, issued 1965-1975,  
Poland, Photo: histmag.org

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# Celebrating Copernicus - 1973 as apogee



Special stamp edition on the 500th birthday of Copernicus, Poland Post (1970)

1970

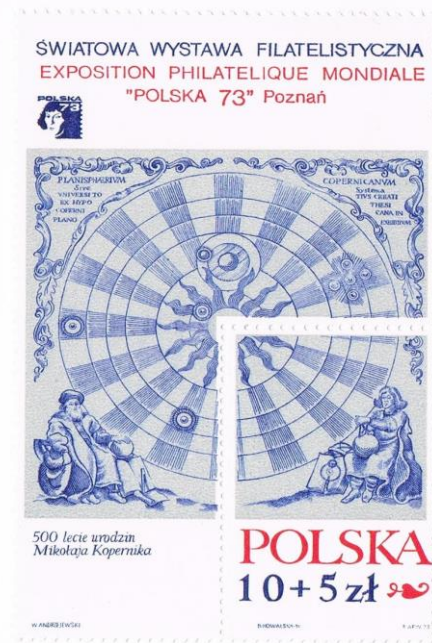
1969

Special stamp edition on the 500th birthday of Copernicus, Poland Post (1969)



**1971**

Special stamp edition Tourism – On the traces of Copernicus, Poland post (1971)



**1972**

Special stamp edition for the International stamp exhibition in Poznan, Poland post (1972)



**1972**

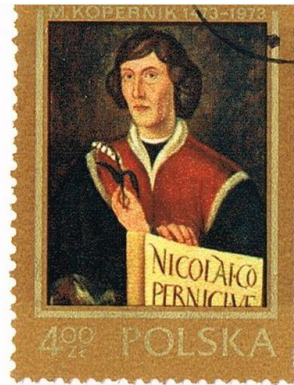
Special stamp edition on the 500th birthday of Copernicus, Poland Post (1972)

**1972**

Regular stamp edition on the 500th birthday of Copernicus, Poland Post (1972)







Special stamp edition on the Day of the postage stamp, Poland Post (1973)

1973

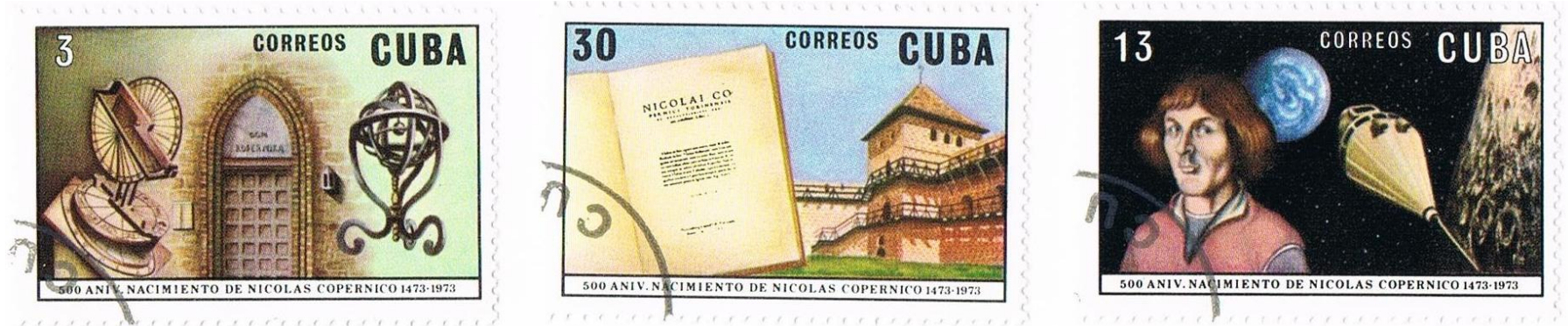


Special stamp edition on the 500th birthday of Copernicus, Poland Post (1973)





# Polish cultural relations and the representation of heliocentrism



Cuba 1973



Cuba 1973

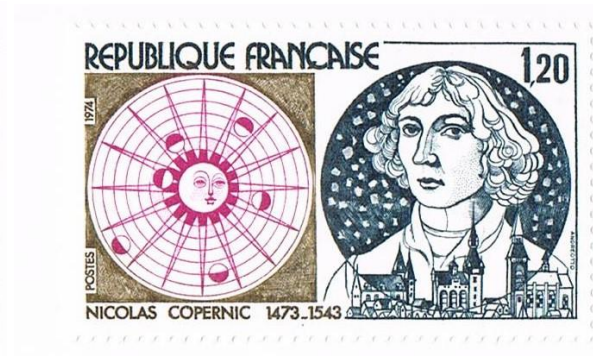


Mongolia 1973

# Polish cultural relations and the representation of heliocentrism



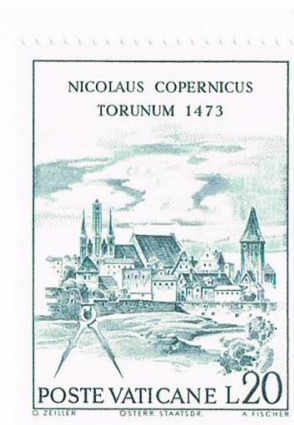
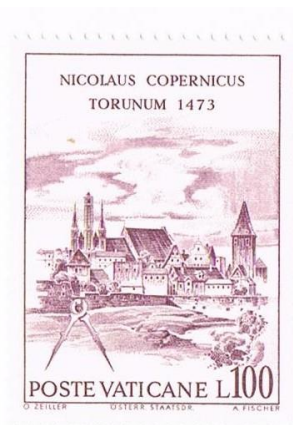
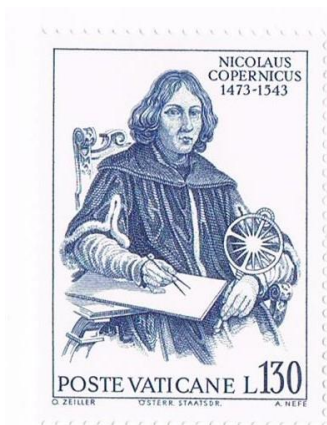
BRD (1973)



France (1974)



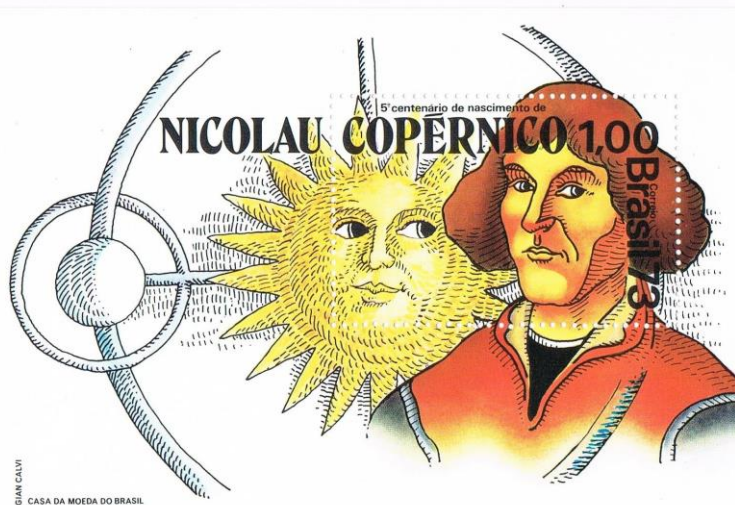
USA (1973)



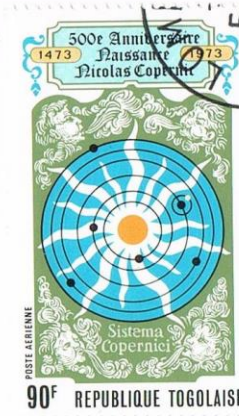
Vatican (1973)



# Copernicus as philatelic support for autocracies



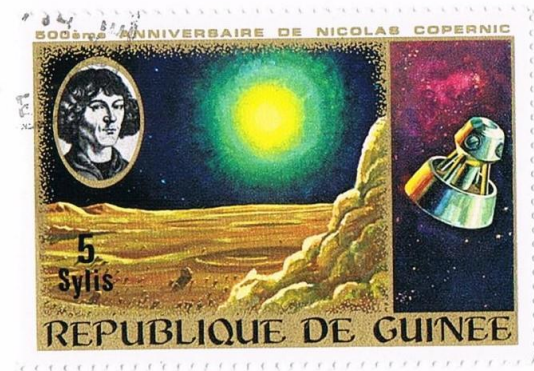
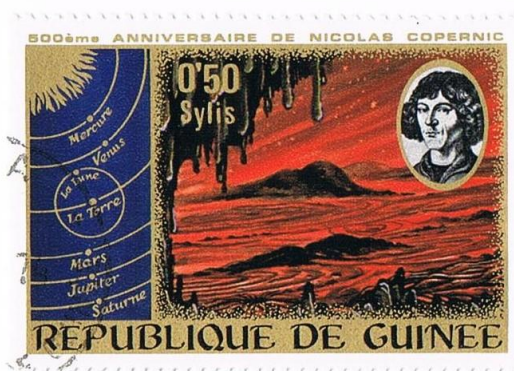
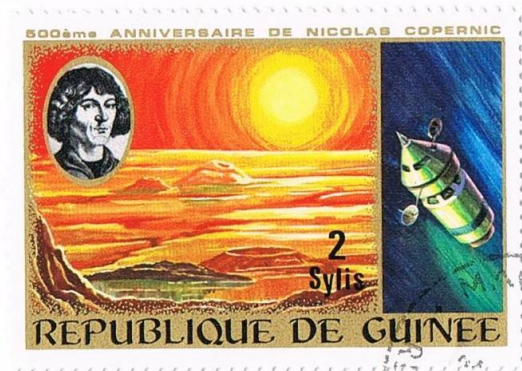
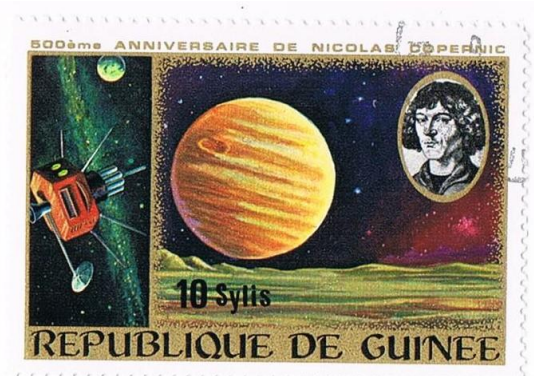
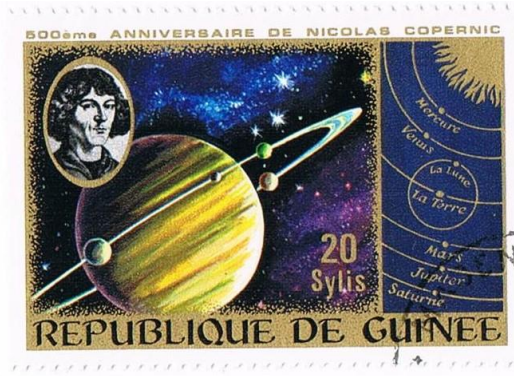
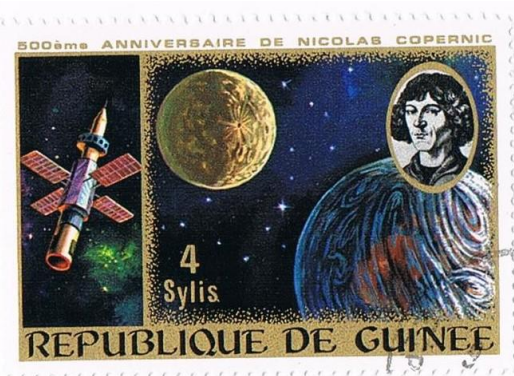
Brasil 1973



Togo (1973)



# Copernican lineage – from astronomy to astronautics



Guinea (1973)



# Copernican lineage – from astronomy to astronautics



Equatorial Guinea (1973)

# Copernicus - a Polish astronomer and national hero

1992

1993

1994



Expo 92 in Sevilla



450th death anniversary



Europe series  
„Discoveries“



2001

2003



Polish Millenium



Polish Cities - Toruń



1000 Złoty note with Copernicus, issued 1975-1995, Poland

## Copernicus – still a Polish astronomer but more European

- Planetarium renamed after Copernicus (e.g. Chorzów)
- In Austrian *Servus TV*, the programme „Copernicus - Mysteries of the Galaxy“
- *Biographia Copernicana* project at LMU Munich (edition of the complete works)
- German government-funded project „Kopernikus“ for climate-friendly solutions
- EU-funded Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S)



# 2023 - 550th Birthday of Copernicus


**550. ROCZNICA URODZIN MIKOŁAJA KOPERNIKA**  
**Dla każdego pamiątkowy medal za 0 zł**


**BEZ DALSZYCH ZOBOWIĄZAŃ**

**Cena: 0 zł**  
 (+12,95 zł pakowanie i przesyłka)

*Wstrzymał Słońce, ruszył Ziemię...*  
 Nasz genialny astronom i bohater naukowej rewolucji!  
**Mikołaj Kopernik**  
 Człowiek wielu talentów – astronom, matematyk, lekarz, prawnik, ekonomista, urzędnik oraz duchowny. Autor przełomowego dzieła w historii nauki O obrotach sfer niebieskich, a także prawa ekonomicznego, zgodnie z którym pieniądź gorszy wypiera pieniądź lepszy.  
 Z okazji 550. rocznicy urodzin wielkiego polskiego uczonego Skarbnica Narodowa ufundowała dla każdego BEZPŁATNY MEDAL PAMIĄTKOWY.

**Wystarczy wypełnić formularz, aby otrzymać swój egzemplarz!**  
 Cena medalu: 0 zł  
 Koszty pakowania i przesyłka: 12,95 zł

„Free“ commemorative medal with Copernicus, issued by the Polish treasury, 2023, Poland

2023



550th Birthday of Copernicus (together with the Vatican)



20 Złoty note with Copernicus, issued 2023, Poland

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- Copernicus is an **essential figure** on Polish stamps and money
- Copernicus is **used strategically** in the representation of Poland
- Copernicus, as **Polish ambassador of science**, should reach everyone
- Stamps and currency with Copernicus **refers to other media** (e.g. paintings, monuments, buildings)
- Copernicus is shown as a Renaissance **scholar, astronomer** and genius
- On stamps and currency, the **astronomical works** and thesis of Copernicus prevail
- **established iconography** from the 16th-19th c. is used (half portrait, astrolabe, models of heliocentrism)
- Commemoration of Copernicus **is dynamic** – to be continued...?





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**Thank you for your attention!**

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