

## Nicolaus Copernicus (Polish: Mikołaj Kopernik)



– a Polish astronomer, who discovered the heliocentric theory of the Solar System, cathedral canon of Warmia, administrator of the chapter's estates, doctor, economist, mathematician, translator from Latin into classical Greek, and poet.

Born on 19 February 1473 in the city of Toruń (Thorn), he was a wealthy merchant's son. Following his father's death, after whom Nicolaus was named too, young Nicolaus and his brother, Andrzej, were taken care of by their uncle, Lucas Watzenrode, who would become the Bishop of Warmia (1489-1512). Secured with his uncle's money, Copernicus studied in Cracow (1491-95) as well as at Italian universities in Bologna, Padua, and Ferrara (1496-1503). He received his doctorate in canonical law and medical sciences as had been wished by the

chapter of Warmia. Once back in Poland, he stayed in Lidzbark Warmiński for seven years as the bishop's private doctor. Since 1510 until his death, Copernicus resided in Frombork (Frauenburg). The only exception was his delegation to be a chapter's estates administrator in the city of Olsztyn in the years 1516-19 and 1520-21.

The work devoted to "On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres" was completed in 1536. For fear of disclosing the astronomical order of the world so disapproved of by the Church, Copernicus refrained from announcing the print of his work. In May 1539, Copernicus was visited by Joachim Rheticus from Nuremberg. This young man managed to persuade the astronomer to share his discovery with the scientific world. The print of the first issue was completed in March 1543. Copernicus received the first copy on the day of his death. He died in Frombork on 21 May 1543.



### Nicolaus Copernicus in Warmia was:

- **an astronomer** — at Olsztyn Castle, he constructed his famous Astronomic Table for indicating the vernal and autumnal equinoxes (1516/1517) and used it to observe the Sun; around the year 1520, he began writing his most famous work, i.e. „On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres” containing his revolutionary heliocentric theory of the universe

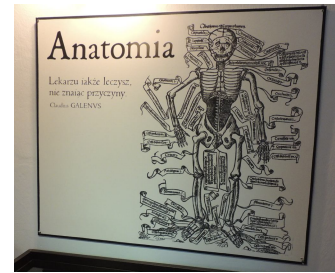
- an inhabitant of Olsztyn Castle, a **canon and administrator** of the estates of the Warmian Chapter, for which, around the year 1520, he developed a modern system for filing documents

- **an economist** — in 1517 he completed an outline of his treatise „On the Value of Coin”, and two years later an expanded version known as „The „Treatise on Coin” with the famous „Copernicus” Law” („bad money drives out good”)

- **a village settler** — he conducted records related to settling peasants on abandoned estates („Locationes mansorum desertorum”; after the war, only two pages of the original were found — now to be found in the Archive of the Warmian Arch-Diocese in Olsztyn ) — between 1516 and 1519 and well as in 1521, he made 71 trips to villages in Warmia (59 in the former area of Olsztyn and 12 in that of Pieniężno ), during which he founded over 40 villages (Bartąg, Brąswald, Jjwity Sietrzwald, Sryżliny, Sutkowo, Jaroty, Jonkowo, Kieźliny, Klebark Mały, Klebark Wielki, Kumajny, Likusy, Linowo, Lubianka, Lajsy, Łoźnik, Lugwaid, Lupstych, Ma/ki, Miłkowo, Myki, Nagłady, Naterki, Osetnik, Pelty, Pistki, Pluski, Porbady, Radziejewo, Redykajny, Skajboty, Slupy, Spręcowo, Stare Kawkowo, Stęki, Sząbruk, Tomaszkowo, Wolowno, Wopy, Wójtowo, Zalbki)



- **a physician** — treated dignitaries, such as the bishops of the Warmian Chapter



- **a cartographer** — in 1519, he drew up a map of the south-western part of the Vistula Lagoon, which was the central element of a territorial dispute between the Warmian Bishopric and the city of Elbląg



- **a defender of the city** — in January 1521, he managed to repulse an attack by the Teutonic Knights on the battlements of Olsztyn

- **a social reformer** — around the year 1531, he devised the „Olsztyn Bread Rate”, which regulated the price of bread, thus protecting the people against high prices

**Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) lived for 70 years, of which as many as 40, i.e. over half of his life, he spent in Warmia:**



-7 years in Lidzbark Warmiński (1503-1510)

- 29 years in Frombork (1510-1543, with the exclusion of two „Olsztyn Periods”)



-4 years in Olsztyn (1516-1519 and 1520-1521)

This was the most prolific time in Copernicus’ life — a time during which his most famous works were created. Thanks to them, he came to be known as one of the most distinguished minds in the history of mankind