

A stylized black and white graphic of a globe, showing the continents of Europe and Africa. The globe is partially obscured by the text 'STUDIA GEOHISTORICA'.

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## A Few Comments on the Historical Borders in Poland

Henryk Rutkowski

Throughout Poland's history, the lands the state occupied generally lay in between the broad Eastern European block and the gradually narrowing, segmented Western Europe. The original shape of the country from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> century was similar to its present one, though the borders have seen much change throughout centuries, roughly expanding as far as the Baltic Sea and the area covering the right-bank tributaries of the Daugava river in the north, the Dnieper river-basin in the east, the Dniester as well as the Carpathians and the Sudetes mountain ranges in the south, and the Oder river-basin in the west<sup>1</sup>; at the same time, the reach of areas ethnically occupied mainly, or at least in considerable numbers, by the Polish remained much more humble. In 1386, Poland entered a personal union with Lithuania, under the reign of the Jagiellonian dynasty. Two centuries later, in 1569, it was replaced by a real union, conjoining the Kingdom of Poland (the Crown) and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania into a single federal state, called thenceforth the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, or, as it was commonly, but less accurately called, Poland; the two countries shared the person of the monarch, the Sejm (the lower chamber), and foreign policy, while central institutions, the treasury, and the military remained separate. The Commonwealth had lasted until the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the country itself was dismantled in three subsequent partitions (1772, 1793, 1795) by the neighbouring Prussia, Austria, and Russia.

Since the beginnings of historical geography, one of its main tasks has been to establish the historical shape of state and administrative territorial division units, court jurisdictions, as well as territories governed by the Church and the estimated extent of privately owned property; even today, borders are still subject to all kinds of research. This paper will explore some issues concerning the borders of Poland *sensu stricto*, i.e.: the Crown or, rather, the ethnically Polish regions only, thus excluding Lithuania. The issue boils down to the question of how accurate the depiction of borders has been in historical cartography, compared to the actual shape of those borders at a given historical period, with attention to detail depending solely on the map's scale, that is cartographic generalisation.

As it is commonly understood, a border is a line drawn on the ground, dividing a given territory from other areas. The borders of countries either emerge through negotiation, or their shape is otherwise imposed unilaterally, while borders of internal territorial units are delineated by the state. Today we use the word *border* to denote a linear border, though historically it has also been used in a wider, more generic sense, as a buffer zone between settlements of ethnically divergent groups. These areas had emerged in the past when diverse peoples settled and made economic use of lands that gradually approximated one another. The natural landscape factored in the shaping of borders, namely the natural obstructions that either stopped or impeded the expansion of settlement processes, like seashores, mountain ranges, swamps and marshes, lakes, rivers, and primeval forests. Based

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<sup>1</sup> *Map of Poland 1582–1795*, in: K. Buczek, *The History of Polish Cartography from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*, Wrocław–Kraków 1966; S. Herbst, *Potrzeba historii, czyli o polskim stylu życia. Wybór pism*, cz. 2, Warszawa 1978, p. 435–443, map *Polski teatr wojny* at the end of the volume.



Fig. 1. Polish boundaries from 10<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century

on the placement in relation to the landscape, borders could be either categorised as natural, determined by the aforementioned elements of the natural landscape, or artificial, determined by anthropogenic topographic features, such as roads, levees, canals, and mounds.

The role of rivers in border formation has been a topic of discussion in Poland for some time. Jan Tyszkiewicz contributed on the topic in relation to the Middle Ages: “It can be said without a shred of doubt that the so-called natural borders, particularly seashores and mountain ranges, formed a convenient, all-purpose border. Settlement processes and historical politics prompted the formation of less-disputed borders based on widespread marshlands, forests, and rivers. [...] The extent of settlement, ethnic identity, and

the elements of the geographical landscape are more accurately identified for the period of the High Middle Ages; earlier borders are estimated with the use of retrospective methods, with the optimistic assumption that they had not changed significantly. However, when it comes to research concerning borders based on rivers, the margin of error becomes slimmer and the use of retrospective methods is more justified. [...] A major or medium-sized river forms a spatial obstacle for certain forms of settlement and communication networks, which is why it is useful in determining territorial divisions”<sup>2</sup>.

In my opinion, these claims are accurate. However, Elżbieta Kowalczyk-Heyman

<sup>2</sup> J. Tyszkiewicz, *Średniowieczne granice wytyczone wzdłuż rzek w Europie Środkowej*, in: *Z dziejów Średniowiecznej Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej. Zbiór studiów*, cz. 2, red. J. Tyszkiewicz, Warszawa 2007, p. 146–148.

in her article *Rzeki – granice naturalne czy sztuczne?* ('Rivers – natural or artificial borders?') presented an argument that is only partially in agreement with Tyszkiewicz's. She argues that with regard to linear borders "the rivers of which beds already corresponded with borders negotiated were readily used, as rivers could constitute a stable, readily identifiable element of landscape, which enabled the delineation of a border sections of considerable length". It is important to add that river names played key roles in the process, as they facilitated delimitation. Because of the expansion of settlements and the growing population density, and especially in the context of the emergence of various political entities, "the natural borders at wastelands, including drainage divides, vast swaths of infertile soils overgrown by forests, and extensive marsh and swamplands, were moved to clearer, more recognisable elements of landscape, namely rivers"<sup>3</sup>.

Referencing works by Stanisław Kałuski, Kowalczyk-Heyman contradicts the argument made by Tyszkiewicz; according to her, only those rivers whose beds were surrounded by swampland or which ran adjacent to swamplands formed natural topographical barriers inhibiting settlement and could thus be considered "natural" borders; barring that, "rivers did not constitute borders of settlements"<sup>4</sup>. However, I can find no reason why there would be a need to change the meaning of the word *natural*. The basic meaning of the word is something that belongs to the natural world (nature), formed without human interference<sup>5</sup>. In relation to

a linear border of a buffer zone between human-populated areas of differing ethnicities, religions, cultures, etc., another, more appropriate term, like *clear, unquestionable, or indisputable* border could be introduced instead.

It would be appropriate here to look at some of the oldest maps which included historically Polish lands. At the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the texts of Claudius Ptolemy (Ptolemaios), a great astronomer and geographer of ancient Alexandria, were translated from Greek to Latin, which sparked the development of European cartography. The major part of Ptolemy's *Geography*, dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, was a list of over 8,000 locations: settlements, rivers, mountains, countries and lands inhabited by various peoples, all usually accompanied by geographical coordinates. Additionally, accompanying the text were maps, two of which are relevant in the context of Poland: the 4<sup>th</sup> map of Europe, depicting Greater Germany spanning from the Rhine to the Vistula river, and the 8<sup>th</sup> map of Europe, depicting European Sarmatia spanning from the Vistula to the Don (Tanais). In 1475, *Geography* saw its first printed edition, but Ptolemy's authority in the Renaissance prompted over 40 further editions. Later, editions saw the text printed with commentary, the maps modernised, and new maps (*tabulae modernae*) added to the original. The first map of Central Europe was elaborated by Nicholas de Cusa (1401–1464), a prominent scholar based in Rome, who included elements borrowed from Ptolemy into his own maps. De Cusa's map was then edited by Francesco Roselli, and then improved by a Polish scholar, Bernard Wapowski. Included in the Roman edition of Ptolemy from 1507, Wapowski's map was the first printed map to have the name *Poland* in its title<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> E. Kowalczyk-Heyman, *Rzeki – granice naturalne czy sztuczne?*, in: *O rzecze i wodzie w życiu codziennym człowieka Średniowiecza*, red. S. Możdżoch, K. Chrzan, Wrocław 2015, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 63–65.

<sup>5</sup> A natural border is "determined by a river, mountain range, sea, etc." according to the dictionary of the Polish language. *Słownik języka polskiego*, t. 2, red. M. Szymczak, Warszawa 1979, p. 299. Cf. J. Bohdanowicz, M. Dziecielski, *Zarys geografii historycznej i politycznej cywilizacji. Podstawy metodologiczne*, Gdańsk 2007, p. 81–83.

<sup>6</sup> H. Rutkowski, *Polska na mapie Europy Środkowej z roku 1507*, in: *O rzeczach minionych. Scripta rerum historicarum Annae Rutkowska-Plachcińska obitata*, red. M. Młynarska-Kaletynowa, J. Kruppé, Warszawa 2006, p. 281–293.



Fig. 2. Surviving fragment of Bernard Wapowski's map

From the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, hand-painted woodcuts and copperplate copies of maps started to emerge, to make a distinction between countries, states, and provinces using colour. With the lack of clear delineated borders, these maps often contained significant errors. The inclusion of borderlines on carvings was slowly introduced in the span of the 16<sup>th</sup> century; Poland did not lag behind in this field, which could be attributed to the founding father of Polish cartography, the aforementioned Bernard Wapowski (ca. 1475–1535). His cartographic opus magnum was a grand map of Poland and a greater part of Lithuania (scaled at around 1:1,000,000). The woodcut was printed in Cracow, together with two other maps by the same author. Presumably only a portion of the prints managed to be released into circulation before a fire consumed the printing

house. As a result, the map is known from only two surviving fragments found preserved in a book cover in 1932. Loose sheets of printed paper yielded to damage rather easily, but perhaps there is still an unknown, complete copy left somewhere in the world. Wapowski marked political borders on his map with rows of trees, and the surviving fragments show that his creation was not free from error<sup>7</sup>.

This map was used by the leading cartographer of the modern world, Gerardus Mercator, in the editing process of his own map of Europe from 1554 (copperplate print of 15 sheets). Mercator copied the

<sup>7</sup> K. Buczek, *The History*, p. 32–40, fig. 12–14; H. Rutkowski, *Polska na wybranych mapach z pierwszej połowy XVI wieku*, in: *Dawna mapa źródłem wiedzy o świecie*, red. S. Alexandrowicz, R. Skrycki, Warszawa 2008 (Z dziejów Kartografii, 14), p. 221–226; Wapowski Bernard, in: *Polski wkład w przyrodznawstwo i technikę. Słownik polskich i związanych z Polską odkrywców, wynalazców oraz pionierów nauk matematyczno-przyrodniczych i techniki*, t. 4, red. B. Orłowski, Warszawa 2015, p. 351–353.

borders from Wapowski, changing the depiction of borderlines from rows of trees to dotted lines. The border itself surrounds the particular part of the Crown which fully deserves its Latin name *Polonia*, that is lands ethnically Polish and gathered under Polish rule. This border also divides the Duchy of Masovia from the core Polish lands, which was its outdated state line from before 1526, when the last of the Dukes of Masovia had died and the region had been annexed by the Crown. Aside from this error, the Mercator map delimitates Lithuania, Volhynia, Red Ruthenia, Podolia, Hungary (foregoing the dotted line in favour of a marked mountain range), Silesia (also marking the border partially with a mountain range), Brandenburg, Pomerania, Royal Prussia, and the Duchy of Prussia; as opposed to Wapowski's map, the border between the two separate Prussian regions was not marked. In 1585, Mercator put Poland – in its narrow definition – together with Silesia on a separate map (to the scale of 1:1,600,000)<sup>8</sup>.

Wacław Grodecki (Venceslaus Grodecius) was the author of a map printed most probably around 1562 (to the scale of ca. 1:1,680,000). It was a direct copy of Wapowski's map, with the additional lands in the east, which had not been marked on the map's predecessor; however, while Grodecki copied Wapowski's borders, he did so with a distinct lack of precision, less accurately than Mercator had done before him. The year 1570 saw the publication of three cartographic works: the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Grodecki's map, Andrzej Pograbka's (Andreas Pograbius) map, and the first edition of the *Theatrum orbis terrarum* atlas, the author of which, Abraham Ortelius, used Grodecki's map without significant

changes. Pograbka's map (to the scale of ca. 1:1,950,000) was again an edited version of Grodecki's map, with several features borrowed from Mercator's map of Europe; beginning from the 1595 edition, it was incorporated into the newer editions of Ortelius's atlas as a correction<sup>9</sup>.

From the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the internal borders of regions within Poland itself hardly changed, which was perpetuated by the dominant conservatism of the Polish *szlachta* (nobility), the sole social class at the time possessing political power. The territorial structure of the Roman Catholic Church holdings in Poland also became the subject of interest for historians who attempted to recreate the Polish borders as precisely as possible. In 1880, at the first Polish historians' congress in Cracow, Stanisław Smolka presented a paper titled *O przygotowawczych pracach do geografii historycznej Polski* ('On the preliminary work to Polish historical geography'). According to him, the most pressing issue was a precise cartographic elaboration of territorial – especially ecclesiastical, political, and judicial – divisions within the Commonwealth. Taking known sources into consideration and assuming a relative stability of historical internal division, he pointed to the 16<sup>th</sup> century as the possible chronological reference point: "If we were to take the 16<sup>th</sup> century as the basis for our research and, for lack of sources preceding this time period, compare that with later sources, we could recreate the state of territorial organisation in three aforementioned aspects; this recreation could be then corrected here and there for accuracy in regard to later periods, but it would constitute an immensely important reference point for the study of the historical geography of the Polish Middle Ages". Smolka insisted that "accurately mapping court jurisdictions"

<sup>8</sup> K. Buczek, *The History*, p. 45–46, fig. 15, 23; P.H. Meurer, *Les territoires de la Couronne Polonoise*, in: Gérard Mercator cosmographe. Les temps et l'espace, sous la dir. de M. Watelet, Antwerpen 1994, p. 351–359; *Polonia. Atlas map z XVI–XVIII wieku*, Warszawa 2005, no. 28; H. Rutkowski, *Polska na wybranych mapach*, p. 231–232.

<sup>9</sup> K. Buczek, *The History*, p. 41–45, fig. 19, 22; *Polonia. Atlas*, no. 3; Grodecki Wacław, in: *Polski wkład*, t. 1, p. 485–486; Pograbka Andrzej, in: *Polski wkład*, t. 3, p. 330–331.



was as important as delineating the borders of voivodeships and districts, perhaps assuming that the difference between administrative-fiscal and judicial divisions was much more pronounced than it eventually turned out to be. Next on the historian's list was mapping royal estates and Church property in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which was also aimed at aiding the research on the Middle Ages as well as the two subsequent centuries. Finally, he proposed mapping the lands of the most powerful members of the nobility "in various time periods" to shed some light on their political position<sup>10</sup>.

The atlas compiled by Aleksander Jabłonowski, devoted to the Ruthenian-Ukrainian eastern territories belonging to the Crown, could be considered the first realisation of Smolka's programme. A portion of these lands (including Lviv) had belonged to Poland since the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, while another (including Kyiv) had been separated from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in 1569 and annexed into the Crown. Jabłonowski's atlas was published in 1904 on the basis of the so-called Chrzanowski's map from the half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (to the scale of 1:300,000). The author marked all settlements existing around the year 1600, as well as the borders of voivodeships, lands, and districts. Moreover, the atlas marked the extent of land ownership, including royal estates, land belonging to the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches, as well as manors of particular noble families (based on surname, not particular owners at the time)<sup>11</sup>.

The publishing of Jabłonowski atlas began the discussion on what form a historical atlas of Poland should take and

prompted attempts at the realisation of the idea. Throughout the next several decades, with breaks caused by the two World Wars, these plans had slowly taken shape and fragmentary publications appeared, though rather infrequently. Eventually, in 1964, a plan for a series of publications under the title "Atlas Historyczny Polski. Mapy Szczegółowe XVI wieku" ("The historical atlas of Poland. Detailed maps of the 16<sup>th</sup> century"; hereafter: HAP) was presented by the Institute of History at the Polish Academy of Sciences. The series was planned to cover the ethnically Polish territories belonging to the Crown and was planned to come out in eight numbered volumes (issues), containing detailed large-scale maps<sup>12</sup>.

Between 1966 and 2008 maps of the following territories were published as part of the series (in order of volume number): Kraków (Cracow) voivodeship<sup>13</sup>, Sandomierz voivodeship<sup>14</sup>, Lublin voivodeship<sup>15</sup>, Sieradz and Łęczyca voivodeships<sup>16</sup>, and Masovia, which consisted of the Masovian voivodeship (with the seat in Warsaw), and Płock and Rawa voivodeships<sup>17</sup>. The extent of these volumes, covering the area of around 106,800 km<sup>2</sup>, was combined and translated into English in 2014<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> H. Rutkowski, *Atlas historyczny Polski*, in: *Towarzystwo Naukowe Warszawskie. Sto lat działalności*, red. E. Wolniewicz-Pawłowska, W. Zych, Warszawa 2009, p. 115–121.

<sup>13</sup> *Województwo krakowskie w drugiej połowie XVI wieku*, red. H. Rutkowski, oprac. K. Chłapowski et al., cz. 1–2, Warszawa 2008 (Atlas Historyczny Polski. Mapy Szczegółowe XVI wieku, 1).

<sup>14</sup> *Województwo sandomierskie w drugiej połowie XVI wieku*, red. W. Pałucki, oprac. K. Chłapowski et al., cz. 1–2, Warszawa 1993 (Atlas Historyczny Polski. Mapy Szczegółowe XVI wieku, 2).

<sup>15</sup> *Województwo lubelskie w drugiej połowie XVI wieku*, red. W. Pałucki, oprac. S. Wojciechowski, Warszawa 1966 (Atlas Historyczny Polski. Mapy Szczegółowe XVI wieku, 3).

<sup>16</sup> *Województwo sieradzkie i województwo łęczyckie w drugiej połowie XVI wieku*, cz. 1–2, red. H. Rutkowski, oprac. K. Chłapowski et al., Warszawa 1998 (Atlas Historyczny Polski. Mapy Szczegółowe XVI wieku, 5).

<sup>17</sup> *Mazowsze w drugiej połowie XVI wieku*, red. W. Pałucki, oprac. A. Dunin-Wąsowiczowa et al., cz. 1–2, Warszawa 1973 (Atlas Historyczny Polski. Mapy Szczegółowe XVI wieku, 7).

<sup>18</sup> *Historical Atlas of Poland in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Half of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century: Voivodeships of Cracow, Sandomierz, Lublin, Sieradz, Łęczyca, Rawa, Płock and Mazovia*, ed. M. Słoi, Frankfurt am Main 2014, vol. 1–4, (Geschichte Erinnerung Politik. Posener Studien zur Grschichts-, Kultur- und Politikwissenschaft, 6).

<sup>10</sup> S. Smolka, *O przygotowawczych pracach do geografii historycznej Polski*, "Studia Geohistorica", 1, 2013, p. 9–13.

<sup>11</sup> A. Jabłonowski, *Atlas historyczny Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej wydany z zasłankiem Akademii Umiejętności w Krakowie. Epoka przełomu z wieku XVI na XVII*, dział 2: *Ziemie ruskie Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa–Wiedeń, 1899–1904.

The most recent volume concerns Greater Poland, i.e.: Poznań and Kalisz voivodeships<sup>19</sup>. Volumes covering the regions of Kuyavia (vol. 6) and Podlachia (vol. 8) are in the editing process at the time of the publication of this paper.

The first part of any HAP volume comprises its cartographic content: the central large-scale detailed map to the scale of 1:250,000, and additional maps (usually to the scale of 1:500,000), as well as plans of particular towns (1:10,000). The second part consists of an extensive commentary on the sources, the methodology, and the particular issues concerning the maps, as well as research data and detailed indices.

Detailed main maps feature all settlements that existed in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, differentiated on the basis of their legal and economic status (villages, towns, mills, manors, etc.), their size, and their ownership (royal estates, lands belonging to the Church, manors, municipal holdings). Towns of particular significance in the region, either in regards of state or Church administration (both of which affected the shape of borders) were given emphasis; the maps show detailed borders of states, voivodeships, lands, and districts, and in regards of ecclesiastical divisions – the borders of particular dioceses, archdeaconries, and parishes (deaneries are only featured on additional maps); also featured are major communication routes present in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Elements of the natural landscape (bodies of water and forests) were recreated on the basis of sources from the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as their earlier state could not be accurately discerned. The settlement network was recreated on the basis of the fiscal register for an extraordinary tax called the *pobór* (lit. ‘collection’; important tax registers of the time derived their name

from *pobór* and were called *rejestrzy poborowe*), which had to be approved by the Sejm each time. The tax was registered in particular districts, but the registers as a general rule adhered to the territorial division based on local parishes, which in turn listed towns, villages, and dwellings. The omission of existing settlements in those registers is regarded as negligible, though this margin included new settlements which still had not paid taxes. Nevertheless, tax registers remain the basic source material for the reconstruction of both the borders of state administrative regions and settlement networks.

The aforementioned early maps outlining the borders of Poland and its provinces could not be used as reliable cartographic sources for the geographic state of the country in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as they were much less precise to be the basis of detailed maps, and they contained glaring errors, e.g. in the delineation of borders. While the oldest maps can still be subject of interest as a testament of the contemporaneous state of knowledge about particular elements of geographical space, this remains a separate issue from the accuracy of those maps. However, a map of the Poznań voivodeship (to the scale of ca. 1:560,000), elaborated by Godfried Freudenhamer and published in 1645, could be of much better use; in this particular case, the information regarding the estimated location of bridges and fords was used in the HAP volume concerning the topic of Greater Poland. The border of the voivodeship was mapped for the major part accurately (when it comes to the span of the border between particular towns and villages), except for the border with the Kalisz voivodeship, where serious mistakes were made by the cartographer, erroneously including within the borders of the Poznań voivodeship, among others, the towns and villages of Jutrosin, Zaniemyśl, Środa, Bnin, Kórnik, Tulce, Skoki, and Wągrowiec; however, despite

<sup>19</sup> *Wielkopolska w drugiej połowie XVI wieku*, cz. 1–2, red. K. Chłapowski, M. Stoń, Warszawa 2017 (Atlas Historyczny Polski. Mapy Szczegółowe XVI wieku, 4).



Fig. 3. Fragment of Godfried Freudenhamer's map – borderland between Poznań and Kalisz voivodeships

its shortcomings, Freudenhamer's map belongs to the best cartographic sources of its time<sup>20</sup>.

The maps which can be considered sources for the cartographic research of historical Polish borders date from as late as the final decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These concern mostly maps of voivodeships within the borders of the Commonwealth after its first partition (1772); all significant settlements were included in these maps. Their author was Charles Perthées (1739–1815), the royal cartographer at the court of Stanislaus August Poniatowski, the last sovereign king of Poland. Between year 1783 and ca. 1804, Perthées elaborated 12 such maps (to the scale of 1:225,000), which cover a significant area of ethnically Polish regions within the Crown. The borders of the state,

the voivodeships, lands, and districts are generally accurate, though mistakes do occur in several places<sup>21</sup>.

Some space should be devoted to the explanation of territorial division in 16<sup>th</sup> century Poland. Voivodeships, as well as "lands", which functioned autonomously within some voivodeships, were the main political division units of within the Crown. They supported the (relatively weak) state administration, and the developing localised self-governance of the *szlachta*. Voivodeships and lands of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which had formed during the Middle Ages, retained their border shapes until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, constituting a long lasting political division. A notable exception from the rule was the incorporation of two Silesian duchies, the Duchy of Oświęcim and the Duchy

<sup>20</sup> K. Buczek, *The History*, p. 75–76, fig. 35; *Polonia. Atlas*, no. 43, 44; Freudenhamer Godfried, in: *Polski wkład*, t. 1, p. 422–423.

<sup>21</sup> K. Buczek, *The History*, p. 98–110, fig. 51–58; H. Rutkowski, *Cartographic Sources*, in: *Historical Atlas*, vol. 2, p. 63–64; Perthées Herman Karol, in: *Polski wkład*, t. 3, p. 283–286.



Fig. 4. Fragment of Charles Perthée's "Mappa szczegulna" ("Separated map")

of Zator, into the Kraków voivodeship in the years 1563 and 1564; the duchies were turned into a single district within the voivodeship.

Districts (Pol. *powiat*, plural form *powiaty*) constituted the lowest, most numerous tier of territorial division within the state; they had emerged as jurisdictions of the local *szlachta* courts, and in the early stages of their formation their shape was highly dependent on land ownership<sup>22</sup>. The jurisdiction of the local courts did not extend to royal estates and Church properties, and the districts covered only the manorial lands of the

*szlachta*. District government seats were towns where the local courts operated, while other towns and villages within the district appeared in court registers (Pol. *księga ziemska*) only when they were mentioned in particular court cases. While districts did not entail royal and Church estates, geographical location of particular towns and villages was always given in relation to their district, for practical reasons. The division of voivodeships into districts had tax collection and tax registration purposes, which was a task also shared by Church parishes, which, in turn, was made difficult by the fact that some parishes spanned different districts or even different voivodeships.

<sup>22</sup> A. Gasiorowski, *Powiat w Wielkopolsce w XIV–XVI wieku*, Poznań 1965, p. 73–79.

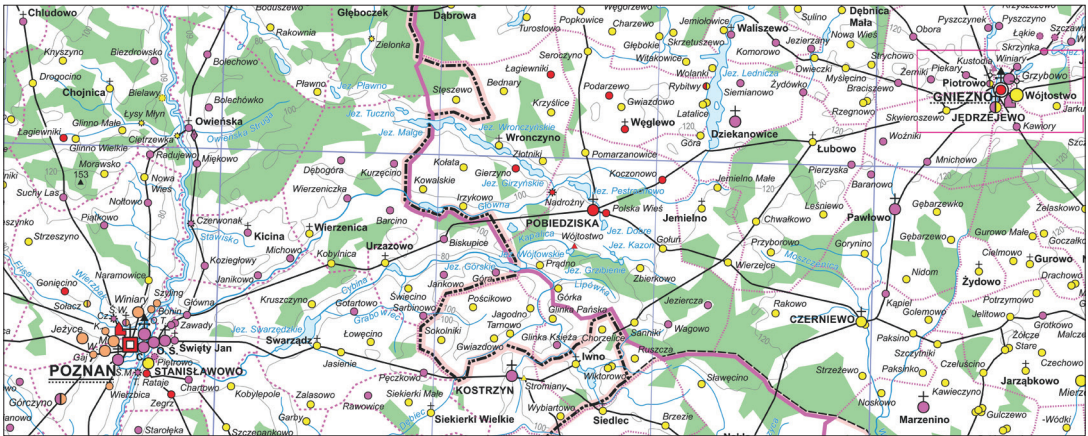


Fig 5. HAP map fragment depicting the border between Poznań and Kalisz voivodeships

As opposed to districts, the lower tier for administrative territorial division within the voivodeship in the 16<sup>th</sup> century were areas subordinate to *starostwo grodowe* [roughly equivalent to a borough, with governance over royal estates – trans.]; these units were differently sized and variably correlated with districts. For example, in 1564, Kraków voivodeship was divided into four *starostwo* units, with the governor (*starosta*) of the *starostwo grodowe* of Kraków governing over four districts (*powiaty*): Kraków, Proszowice, Książ, and Lelów. The seat of a *starostwo* could also be different than the district seat – the *starosta* of Nowy Sącz held jurisdiction over the district of Czchów, which prompted a double name to be given to the district in some sources: “Nowy Sącz or Czchów district” (“*powiat sądecki, czyli czchowski*”); Biecz and Silesian districts also had separate *starostwo* seats. While the use of the state territorial divisions units in tax collection as a general rule made administrative-fiscal districts roughly equivalent to court jurisdictions, there were large disparities in some parts of Kraków voivodeship<sup>23</sup>.

Despite their shortcomings, tax registers are the only sources that allow for

relative precision in delineating state borders in territorial units of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Parish borders could be reconstructed with the use of the oldest documentation of canonical visitations<sup>24</sup>.

Village and town ownership, marked on the main map, supplemented with an addition of a separate map detailing the arrangement of land ownership, which is distinct from the aforementioned territorial divisions. The most detailed mapping, accompanied by a commentary, was of the Kraków voivodeship, where royal estates (and *starostwa*), Church institutions, and manors of prominent members of the *szlachta* (magnates) were given special emphasis. However, map 4 in the English edition of the atlas shows discrepancies within this elaboration<sup>25</sup>.

Interpolation of settlements belonging to different administrative units and with different ownership status was used as the reconstruction method in the delineating borders in the HAP maps. It is more difficult to precisely determine where the borders were in areas of low settlement density, though additional information,

<sup>24</sup> Cf. B. Szady, *Historical Cartography of Confessions and Religions in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: Between Historical Geography and Spatial History* in this volume.

<sup>25</sup> *Historical Atlas*, vol. 1, no. 4: *Distribution of Land Ownership in the End of 16<sup>th</sup> Century*, scale 1:500,000; *ibidem*, vol. 3, p. 445–488; K. Chtapowski, *Cracow voivodeship*.

<sup>23</sup> H. Rutkowski, *Borders of State Territorial Units. Cracow Voivodeship*, in: *Historical Atlas*, vol. 2, p. 124–137.

such as the placement of borders along rivers courses, often facilitates the process; generally speaking, border placement in some locations is predictable, and in some sections it can even be considered certain. The HAP is the most detailed study of borders of historical Poland to date, not only giving us insight to how the country

looked like in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but also (to follow up on Stanisław Smolka's thoughts on the subject), providing us with better means to research Polish borders both preceding and following this time period. ■

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## Summary

The main topic of this paper are the borders of Poland in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The country's state and province borders were first delineated by Bernard Wapowski on his 1526 map from (scale 1:1,000,000). While the map is known only from fragments, Gerardus Mercator used Wapowski's borders in his map of Europe published in 1554. In 1880, Stanisław Smolka proposed elaborating maps of territorial divisions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The first implementation of this program was the *Atlas of the Ruthenian Lands of the Crown*, elaborated by Aleksander Jabłonowski (to the scale of 1:300,000) and published in 1904. In 1964, a plan to publish a series of maps under the title of 'Historical atlas of Poland: detailed maps of the 16<sup>th</sup> century' was announced by the Institute of History at the Polish Academy of Sciences. The series aims at to cover ethnically Polish lands within the Crown. Out of the planned eight volumes, five were published in the years 1966–2008, and then their content was combined and published in English in 2014. The newest volume to date, published in 2017, concerns Greater Poland.

Central large-scale maps (to the scale of 1:250,000) depict all towns and villages that existed in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The maps indicate state borders, borders of voivodeships, lands, districts, and, in relation to lands owned by the Roman Catholic Church, the borders of dioceses, archdeacons and parishes. Settlements and borders of state administration were recreated with the use of extraordinary tax registers called *pobór*, and the basis for marking church boundaries was the documentation of canonical visitations. Additional maps to the scale 1:500,000 concern the distribution of landed property, with borders marked between various categories of land ownership. Interpolation of settlements belonging to different administrative units and having a different ownership status was used as a method in the reconstruction of borders of territorial units. This is the most detailed study on the shape of borders on historical Poland lands, not only presenting this element of geographical space in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but also serving to further our understanding of border shapes in the earlier and later centuries. ■

Keywords: borders, detailed maps, 16<sup>th</sup> century, Historical Atlas of Poland

**Henryk Rutkowski** – emeritus fellow of the Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History at the Polish Academy of Sciences, associate at the Historical Atlas Department at the Institute. His main field of interest is the history of Poland in the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, especially the history of towns, historical geography, and history of cartography (e-mail: h.rutkowski@ihpan.edu.pl)