

History of Cartography in Lithuania

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Mapping of the territory of Lithuania has a rather long history and deep traditions. Maps of ancient geographer Claudius Ptolemeus in J. Lelevel's collections are stored in Vilnius University.

Eastern Europe (Sarmatia) with its rivers - Rubon flu (Daugava River), Chrones flu (Nemunas River), Vistula fliuvius (Vistula River) etc. - flowing from the mountains of Venedici and Bodinus are shown on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea (Oceanus Sarmaticus).

This is the oldest cartographic picture of Lithuania and adjacent areas. One of its versions was the map of Central Europe revised and supplemented by Mikalous Kuseanus with rather rich information about Lithuania.

Matheus from Miechovo (or Miechovitus) was the first who denied traditional portrayed mountains of K. Ptolemeus. His views spread during 16th century in the maps of J. Solin (1538), V. Grodetsky (1558), J. Gastaldi (1562), J. Portantius (1578), M. Strubic (1589), G. Mercator (1595) etc. A rather precise hydrographic network is given in the maps of G. Mercator (1595) and K. Radwila (1613). The portraying traditions a la Ptolemeus remain in the maps of 17th and 18th centuries (even till 19th century), but the topographic data about Lithuania's surface are scanty. The attempts to show a relief were more decorative than objective.

At the end of 18th and beginning of 19th centuries, scholars of Vilnius University M. Pochobut, A. Strzecki and J. Snyadecki followed the cartographers of Western Europe. They proposed to map Lithuanian area by new methods of field mapping. Lithuania's territory was a near-border province of Russian Empire, therefore mapping was being carried out by Russian military organizations. Lithuanian cartographers worked together with them.

From 1816, the triangulation works of Russian Empire started. Thus, from 1819 the topographic survey on a half-a-verst scale has already been performed. Moreover, first topographic maps of Lithuanian area appeared: in 1822 (1:42,000), in 1845 (1:126,000), 1865-1871 (1:42,000) and other maps.

In 1888, the large-scale topographic survey started in Lithuania. Alexei Tilo in 1889 published the hypsometric map of the European part of Russia on a scale of 1:2,500,000, where morphology of Lithuanian area was reflected in general outline.