

# Coins

## 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Publication of the Statute by Łaski



|            |                   |
|------------|-------------------|
| face value | <b>100 zł</b>     |
| metal      | <b>900/1000Au</b> |
| finish     | <b>proof</b>      |
| diameter   | <b>21.00 mm</b>   |
| weight     | <b>8.00 g</b>     |
| mintage    | <b>9,000 pcs</b>  |

**Obverse:** At the top, an image of the Eagle established as the State Emblem of the Republic of Poland. Below the Eagle, a stylised image of a book with a hanging seal attached and an inscription, 100 ZŁ. On the left side of the book a notation of the year of issue, 2006. At the top, a semicircular inscription, RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA. The Mint's mark,  $\frac{m}{w}$ , under the Eagle's left leg.

**Reverse:** The image of the Chancellor Jan Łaski holding a book. On the left side, on a stylised board, an inscription: 500-LECIE WYDANIA STATUTU ŁASKIEGO (500th anniversary of the publication of the Statute by Łaski).

*Coin designer: Roussanka Nowakowska*



|            |                    |
|------------|--------------------|
| face value | <b>10 zł</b>       |
| metal      | <b>925/1000 Ag</b> |
| finish     | <b>proof</b>       |
| diameter   | <b>32.00 mm</b>    |
| weight     | <b>14.14 g</b>     |
| mintage    | <b>57,000 pcs</b>  |

**Obverse:** On the right side, an image of the Eagle established as the State Emblem of the Republic of Poland, on the left side, an image of a pair of scales. Below, a stylised image of a book with a hanging seal attached and an inscription, 10 ZŁ. Above the Eagle and a pair of scales, a notation of the year of issue, 2006. At the top, a semicircular inscription, RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA. The Mint's mark,  $\frac{m}{w}$ , under the Eagle's left leg.

**Reverse:** In the central part, a stylised image of a fragment of woodcut representing the King Aleksander Jagiellończyk (Alexander Jagiellon) sitting on a throne and the Chancellor Jan Łaski holding the Statute and a seal die. Above the throne a semicircular inscription, 500-LECIE WYDANIA STATUTU ŁASKIEGO (500th anniversary of the publication of the Statute by Łaski). On the rim, stylised images of 23 coats of arms of: state, fiefdoms and lands encompassed in the Kingdom of Poland.

*Coin designer: Roussanka Nowakowska*



|            |                          |
|------------|--------------------------|
| face value | <b>2 zł</b>              |
| metal      | <b>CuAl5Zn5Sn1 alloy</b> |
| finish     | <b>standard</b>          |
| diameter   | <b>27.00 mm</b>          |
| weight     | <b>8.15 g</b>            |
| mintage    | <b>1,000,000 pcs</b>     |

**Obverse:** An image of the Eagle established as the State Emblem of the Republic of Poland. On both sides of the Eagle, a notation of the year of issue, 20-06, Below the Eagle, an inscription, ZŁ 2 ZŁ. On the rim, an inscription, RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA, preceded and followed by six pearls. The Mint' mark,  $\frac{m}{w}$ , under the Eagle's left leg.

**Reverse:** A bust of the Chancellor Jan Łaski. On the right side, a stylised image of a book with a hanging seal attached. At the top a semicircular inscription, 500-LECIE WYDANIA STATUTU ŁASKIEGO (500th anniversary of the publication of the Statute by Łaski).

**On the edge:** The inscription, NBP, repeated eight times, every second one inverted by 180 degrees, separated by stars.

*Obverse designer: Ewa Tyc-Karpińska*  
*Reverse designer: Roussanka Nowakowska*



*Coins struck by the Mint of Poland plc. in Warsaw.*

*Printed by NBP Printing Office*

On 6 November 2006, the National Bank of Poland is putting into circulation collector coins commemorating the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of the Statute by Łaski, with the following denominations:

- 100 zł – struck in proof-finish in gold,
- 10 zł – struck in proof-finish in silver,
- 2 zł – struck in standard finish in Nordic Gold alloy.

Jan Łaski, (*John a Lasco*), the coat of arms of Korab, was one of the most outstanding Poles of the turn of 15th and 16th century. He was born in 1456. A graduate of a parish school, with no higher education, he did not travel abroad for education, as many clergymen of his epoch did. He was ordained priest in 1471. In about 1480 he became a member of the chancellery of Krzesław z Kurozwęk (*Krzesław of Kurozwęki*), the royal arch-secretary and next the chancellor, who introduced Jan Łaski to the royal court of Jan Olbracht (*John I Albert of Poland*). In 1490, being the royal secretary, he was sent on foreign missions to Vienna, Rome and Flanders.

The brilliant career of Łaski commenced when Aleksander Jagiellończyk (*Alexander Jagiellon*) ascended the throne, in 1501. Łaski became the political advisor to the King and won his trust. In 1502, he was appointed the royal secretary and the following year he was elevated by the King to the office of the Grand Chancellor for the Crown. In his capacity, he had a large influence on drafting new bills. He co-authored an act which put a ban on holding of a number of functions and offices by one and the same individual (that practice contributed to the excessive enrichment of the magnates and to the expansion of their powers). Łaski also significantly contributed to developing the act of *Nihil novi* ("Nothing new without the consensus of all") adopted during the Sejm session in Radom in 1505, which forbade adopting new laws and imposing new taxes without the joint consent of the King, the Senate and the deputies from the Sejm (a lower chamber of the Parliament).

In reliance on the competence of Łaski, Aleksander Jagiellończyk commissioned him to make a compilation of Polish laws. The need to codify the law had prevailed in Poland for long. The privileges conferred by the King, statutes, Sejm constitutions, the lists of common laws, the peace treaties with the Teutonic Order and the Union with Lithuania were known only to a small group of jurists as well as to court and land chancellists. There was a gap of legal knowledge among the public. Chaos persisted in the execution of laws, whereas an average gentryman was not in a position to effectively seek justice or defend himself against accusations.

The collection of laws compiled by Jan Łaski came out in print in 1506 at the Jan Haller's Printing House in Kraków (*Cracow*) under the title *Commune incliti Poloniae regni privilegium constitutionem et indultum publicitus decretorum approbatorumque* (Universal Privilege of Publicly Approved Constitutions, Licenses and Decrees of the Renowned Kingdom of Poland). The collection, commonly referred to as the *Statute by Łaski*, comprised two parts: the former contained the statutes, privileges and other sources of the Polish law and was of the official character; the latter encompassed the provisions of the German law, i.a. *Weichbild and Sachsenspiegel*. The *Statute by Łaski* did not contain all statutory laws, yet for the first time it allowed people to grasp the entire corpus of the legislation, already rich at that time, thereby contributing to the strengthening of knowledge of law in Poland.

The *Statute* was advantageously printed in a number of copies. It possessed the status of the official state print and as such it was given an adequate editorial layout worthy of its name. Printed in *folio* (i.e. a one fold sheet), distinguished itself by the elegance, well-nigh stylish décor of print supplemented by four illustrations made in woodcut. Some part of the issue was printed on parchment, some on paper. Copies of the Statute were assigned for distribution among the regional royal administrators and the castle courts. An exemplary copy, bound in leather and sealed with the Great Seal of the Crown was placed at the Archives of the Crown in Kraków (at present it is in the collection of the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw).

The illustrations in the *Statute* exhibit high standards of graphic art. At the same time, they contain important symbolical meanings. They present the saints: Wacław (*Wenceslaus*), Wojciech (*Adalbert*), Stanisław (*Stanislaus*) and Florian (*Florianus*) as saint patrons of the Kingdom of Poland and the genealogical tree of the Jagiellons, i.e. the offspring of Kazimierz Jagiellończyk (*Casimir IV Jagiellon*) and his wife Elżbieta Habsburżanka (*Elisabeth of Austria*). The images of saints symbolize the guardianship over the state and the nation as well as the vibrant cult of saints in Poland. Meanwhile, the presentation of the dynasty reflects the long-term political plans of the Jagiellons, particularly in the context of their rivalry with the Habsburgs.

A set of illustrations of the Statute is supplemented by two images of Jan Łaski in the act of submitting the King with a document to be sealed by him. The first act is held in a chamber and involves two participants only – the Chancellor and the King. The same ceremony is repeated in the presence of a wide audience – the Sejm and the Senate in session - around them there is a garland of 25 coats of arms of states, provinces, lands and fiefdoms of the

Crown. The coats of arms are to present the territorial scope of the royal power and express the idea of unity of the state irrespective of the multitude of its lands, unified by the figure of the king depicted in the centre. The circle of senators and deputies is the public representative bodies, representing nobles' democracy.

The song *Bogurodzica (Mother of God)* honours even more the ideological agenda of the Statute by Łaski expressed in the above mentioned way. The lyrics of the hymn were incorporated in the collection of laws of the Polish Crown in the character of a "patriotic hymn", as described by the chronicler Jan Długosz (*Joannes Dlugossius*), the first national anthem of the Polish people and the Polish nation. Hence, the work by Łaski acquires a special meaning, the emphasize being laid on its national character.

During the reign of the king Zygmunt Stary (*Sigismund I the Old*), Jan Łaski rose to the supreme office in the church hierarchy – Archbishop of Gniezno (*Gnesen*) and also obtained the title of the Primate of Poland (in 1510). Whereupon, he resigned from the hitherto held office of the Chancellor. He ruled the Archdiocese of Gniezno for 21 years. He elicited benefits for the Diocese of Gniezno and all the Church in Poland from the Pope Leo X as well as completed and published the codification of the synodal legislation for the ecclesiastical province of Gniezno. He also crowned the two Polish queens – subsequent wives of Zygmunt Stary – in 1512, Barbara Zapolya and in 1518, Bona Sforza (*Bona Sforza d'Aragona*). He deceased on 19 May in 1531 in Kalisz (*Calisia*). He is commemorated by a Renaissance memory plaque with the Korab coat of arms placed in the Gniezno cathedral.

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**All coins issued by the NBP are legal tender in Poland.**