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Schengen and the Rosary: Catholic Religion and the Postcolonial Syndrome in Polish National Habitus

*Marta Bucholc**

Abstract: »Schengen und der Rosenkranz: Katholische Religion und das postkoloniale Syndrom im polnischen Nationalhabitus«. The article discusses the formation of national habitus in Poland and its recent transformation in the post-socialist period from the perspective of Norbert Elias's sociology of social processes. The starting point of the analysis is the action "Rosary to the Borders" (*Różaniec do granic*) of 2017: the article analyses the use of universal Catholic and nation-bound symbolic resources in this action referring to Elias's symbol theory, in order to indicate the main characteristics of the mechanism of collective memory in this action connecting Catholic symbols to the national ones. Religious imagery of Polishness is then related to a reconstruction of Polish state-formation process, and two uses of national habitus, the internal and the external one, are identified, in which religious symbols play a significant role. The external use is illustrated by the brief overview of German-Polish antagonism. Finally, the postcolonial syndrome of Polish society is identified as source of the framing combining external and internal use of Polish national habitus, especially after 2015.

Keywords: Poland, national habitus, postcolonial studies, Norbert Elias, Catholicism, collective memory.

1. Introduction

On 7 October 2017, over a million people in Poland took part in an action called "Rosary to the Borders" (Polish: *Różaniec do granic*). Along all the borders of Poland (over 3,500 km in length, including the borders running along or over waterways) the participants gathered to pray the rosary together.¹ This was reported to be the largest mass prayer event in Europe since the 2016 World Youth Day in Kraków, Poland.

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¹ Source: the action's official webpage, <<http://www.rozaniecdogranic.pl/o-rozancu-do-granic>> [16.07.18]. Other media sources confirm the number of participants.

The paradox which struck me when I first heard of the action was that it stressed the existence of state borders which had been, for the most part, rendered socially invisible by the Schengen Agreement of 1985 (which included Poland from 2007). The border is no longer a conspicuous line within the EU. It was not abolished, but it was cognitively deactivated: easily overlooked physical remnants remind Polish EU-citizens that they are about to cross the Western, Southern, Northern, and, in part, also the Eastern border of their country. “Rosary to the Borders” used a rite to restore the borders as division lines by aggregating social action along them. At the very first glance, it seemed a negation of the negated, an apotropaic denial of non-existence, a religious *actus contrarius* to the act of political unification.

In this article, I take “Rosary to the Borders” as a starting point for an historical-sociological analysis of Polish national habitus, in order better to understand why such an action would be happening now. Recent political events in Poland have won the land increased attention internationally, an almost satirical reminder of the glorious times of “Solidarność” in the 1980s. Poland was the vanguard of democratization then and, since 2015, it has replaced Hungary as the lead country in Central and Eastern Europe experiencing democratic backsliding. The Polish variant of democratic backsliding is fueled by the express commitment of the current right-wing Polish government, especially the Law and Justice Party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, “PiS”) to the Catholic religion as a foundation of national identity. After 2015, the apparent failure of the post-socialist liberal transformation process increased interest in the social and cultural dynamic behind political, economic, and legal change. However, the historical perspective stretching back beyond 1989 remains marginal to social scientific inquiry, and a comprehensive study of the cultural underpinnings of political developments remains a task for the future. This is due, in part, to a lack of an interdisciplinary theoretical framework allowing the combination of sociological and historical perspectives with an interpretation of cultural processes.

The focus on national habitus, or, more precisely, on the national layer in the social habitus (it is with this meaning that I use the notion “national habitus” throughout this paper; see Kuzmics and Axtmann 2007, 11), can support our understanding of current developments, while at the same time contributing to a further elaboration of theoretical approaches inspired by Norbert Elias. Elias himself applied his theory of national habitus mostly to Germany (Elias 2013). His analysis, combining social and cultural history with a deep insight into social mechanisms generating what could be called “Germanness,” may serve as a model for those seeking to grasp other national “-nesses” while avoiding the trap of essentialism. Two safeguards against essentialism are inherent in the use of the concept of national habitus. The first is a focus on the historical genesis of any national group, the second is the contingent relationship of group characteristics to the interdependencies within the group as well

as connections to other groups, notably to neighbours. I will refer to the social carrier of a national habitus as a “national group.” While in European history it will usually be co-extensive with a state-society of a modern nation-state, this need not always be the case, as shown by Helmut Kuzmics and Roland Axtmann in the case of imperial Austria and England. Therefore, it is more useful to reason in terms of layers and to keep in mind that research into national habitus is not about what nations are but about what and how they are being made (or unmade).

“Polishness” is, therefore, not a free-standing historical entity. Neither is it a cultural epiphenomenon of social processes: it cannot be explained away by a precise historical reconstruction. Moreover, the “Polishness” which expresses itself in “Rosary to the borders,” is not the only cultural outcome of historical process which led to the formation of current Polish state-society. While Elias analyzed a single German national habitus (though, admittedly, a contested one), there is no single Polish habitus, but rather a battlefield between various projects of national habitus for a state-society which has been undergoing a deep transformation for more than 200 years. On this battlefield, the habitus metonymized by the “Rosary to the Borders” seems to come up as a winner, to dominate and to take the upper hand in the management, generation and mobilization of symbolic resources. “Polishness,” as described in this article, is the runner-up in a long-standing contest which predates the Polish nation-state. In this paper, I dub the current competitors “liberals” and “national conservatives” or, simply, “the Right.” The interplay between these two variants of “Polishness” and their respective relation to Catholicism belongs to the socio-historical analysis of Polish national habitus just as much as the diagnosis of the outcome, which may be the unqualified triumph of one contestant and the end of Polish cultural wars.

Cultural war is a metaphor for the contest between various orientations in national habitus formation. The orientation nearest to the Right which has governed in Poland since 2015 is marked by intensive work on memory. Historically loaded symbols are brought back and emotionally charged or recharged in a form of an “affective household” consistent with the political project of the Right, providing material for politically mobilizable collective identity. While the processes of habitus formation are hardly describable in the language of purposeful action – because unintended consequences bear upon their outcomes at least as much as do decisions, agendas, and designs – it is possible to identify actors whose intention it is to transform the society according to their own design of a national habitus. My contention is that the Right currently advocates a powerful design of Polish national habitus, and that its strategy begs for socio-historical research: it is a habitus marked by a variant of postcolonial mentality in which the past and the present of the nation is reinterpreted in terms of dependency, deficient sovereignty, lack of autonomy, and limited authenticity of self-expression.

To substantiate this claim, I begin with a review of Elias's insights in symbol theory from the perspective of research into national habitus. Then I proceed towards an analysis of "Rosary to the Borders," including symbols, discourses, and practices involved and their historical embedding, based on publicly available visual and textual data. I next reconstruct the mnemonic transposition of symbols, stressing correspondences between contemporary contexts and historical resources. My particular attention goes to the distinction between external and internal uses of national habitus design. I look closely into those dividing lines which serve the direct goal of cutting off the alternative habitus project of the "liberals" by using religious symbolic resources and, as a result, cutting off the liberals from Polishness. This informs my discussion of the postcolonial syndrome, including the uses to which postcolonial studies are put today in both scientific and political discourses in Poland. I will expound the double binds of Polish national habitus design advocated by the Right in order to conclude with its potential figurational effects for Poland and Europe.

2. Symbols and Habitus Formation: Contested Labels and Emotional Charges

The gist of Elias's symbol theory is contained in two works: *An Essay on Time* (2007a) and *The Symbol Theory* (2011), although valuable insights can also be found elsewhere. Secondary literature on Elias's symbol theory is growing, but inspirations and affinities of his highly original approach still largely remain to be identified, despite excellent work done by Stephen Mennell (Elias 2006; 2007a), Richard Kilminster (Elias 2011), Robert van Krieken (Elias 2010), Jason Hughes, Eric Dunning (Dunning, Hughes 2012), and many others. Much less can be said of the empirical use of Elias's symbol theory, despite its significant research potential, especially in the field of memory studies (see Bucholtz 2013).

Elias contented himself with a simplistic vision of a symbol as something assigned to an object (whether concrete or abstract, existent or fictional) by a human collective and applied by individuals. His notion of a symbol becomes a vehicle for the idea that humans organize the world around them, imposing an arbitrary order onto reality. But instead of values or meanings favored by the Neo-Kantian philosophy in which Elias was first trained, he spoke about symbols, and this small difference is a strength of his theory. While values and meanings can be described as putting plus and minus signs onto elements of reality, symbols are more elementary: they are extracting elements of reality, they, so to say, make them appear as something relevant and potentially useful. The positive and negative valuations are secondary to the very fact of being represented: symbols can be strongly loaded or neutral. This small shift allows

sociology to look into two kinds of processes: first, what is there for people operating different sets of symbols, and second, how the valuations of these symbols change over time. Imposing a net of relations of symbolic representation onto reality works like a colour filter: it sharpens some hues and modifies, blurs, or obfuscates others. People cannot relate to things that are not represented, even though they can represent things that do not exist.

Symbols are used by way of four analytically distinguishable but empirically inseparable symbolic functions (Elias 2011, 85ff): knowing, speaking, thinking and remembering. But using symbols in any way requires operations on images stored in memory (ibid., 91ff), and remembering is present in every occurrence of thinking, speaking, and knowing (ibid., 86ff).

Remembering is the symbolic function whose link to the formation of national habitus is the closest, as Giseline Kuipers puts it:

Habitus is congealed history, absorbed into our bodies – our personal history, which, in turn, has been shaped by the history of the society of which we are part. This larger history determines the ground-tone of our individual history. Thus, our ‘self’, our self-evident, automatic, yet learned behaviour, is partly determined by the country where we have grown up. (Kuipers 2012, 20)

Determination of our behaviour is a function of our personal – individual – history, which in turn is a function of the history of the society in which we live. We absorb history as we live. This means that a causal link between events of the past and elements of national habitus can be established, if only by way of an exemplification or an analogy, or by quoting similarities in individual experiences as a proof of their inherent social character. But the theoretical question remains: how exactly do people absorb history? The answer is: *through* symbols and *as* symbols.

Any habitus is related to the past experiences of individuals as represented by symbols. An experience becomes collective because the symbols are social, not the other way around. Even though Elias strongly opposed the sociological fiction of an isolated human being, *homo clausus*, the locus of sociality in his symbol theory is not the experience itself, but the way of remembering it and sharing knowledge of it in image, speech, and writing. Interdependent individuals use the channels of their social network to communicate employing the resources put at their disposal by their habitus, but the habitus are also made up of the very same resources. Communications, messages, and their recipients are, however, conditioned but not fully determined by the properties of the network: behind each communication, as behind each action, there is an agent and an agency limited by interdependencies which do not leave any human being uninvolved. That is why – as Jeffrey K. Olick once put it – “people do things with words [or, rather, with symbols] but not always [...] in circumstances of their own choosing” (Olick 2016, 52).

This account of remembering and its role in the national habitus would be incomplete without a mention of forgetting. Forgetting has long been a primary

concern of memory studies, especially those dealing with modern societies (Connerton 2009). But it is the link between forgetting and fantasizing which bears the most on the construction of national habitus. Fantasizing not only fills the gaps left by forgetting, but it also helps to provide a frame for remembering by imagining things which never were. The work on symbols is thus conducted by memory, which selects symbols to be used, condemning others to be (temporarily or permanently) forgotten, and “gluing” the pieces together by fantasies wherever necessary.

Detecting forgetting and fantasy by juxtaposing what is remembered and what could be remembered by contrasting memories of different groups (including different national groups) is common in memory studies. For example, it is fruitful to compare memories of war of nations which were fighting one another, including their reciprocal group images (cf. Szacka 2006; Jakoubek, Svoboda, and Budilova 2009; Karstedt 2009). Sometimes national memories clash in political institutions or artworks, or even in a single family (Obradović 2016). Competition of memories, a common phenomenon in a global world, may be a sign and an effect of shifting power balances and can help understand integration and disintegration above the level of the nation-state. Similarly, analyzing the particular design of a national habitus competing with others can shed light upon power balances within a nation-state-society, and the competition of alternative framings may explain the proportion of fantasy in the collective memory.

The connection between symbol theory and the concept of national habitus runs through memory management of past events by way of remembering, forgetting, and fantasizing. This locates my research in the line similar to, though not identical with, that of, for example, Gad Yair’s work on the link between cultural trauma and national habitus among Israelis (Yair 2015). While Yair stresses the impact of cultural trauma on aspects of Israeli habitus, I focus on the use of symbolic functions as the social mechanism mediating between the events of the past (which may and often are but need not necessarily be traumatic) and habitual behaviour in the present, including ways of feeling about the world. Symbolic resources frame and maintain the national habitus as an “affective household of nations” (Kuzmics and Axtmann 2007, 5f.).

3. A Borderline Prayer Close Up

The Solo Dios Basta Foundation, a Catholic NGO (established in 2015), which acted as the organizer of “Rosary to the Borders,” chose 7 October 2017 for a number of reasons: October is a month of rosary prayer in the Catholic Church, and the 7th of this month is the day of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of

the Rosary.² The action was named “*Różaniec do granic*,” and the English translation “Rosary to the Borders” conveys the double meaning of the original: the rosary was, literally, to be taken to the borders, and the rosary prayer was also metaphorically taken to its limits because of the unusual character of the event.

The webpage of the action³ opens with the poster representing a physical map of Earth on which the shape of Poland is visible in a blow-up, made out by rosary beads radiating an unearthly whitish light illuminating the globe. A caption “Save Poland and the world with the rosary!” is placed in the upper part, and underneath we read: “In the end, my immaculate heart will triumph,” a reference to the revelation of the Blessed Virgin Mary which the Catholic Church recognizes as having taken place in Fatima, Portugal in 1917.

Even though “Rosary to the Borders” was not organized by the Catholic Church itself, it was endorsed and supported by it. The Conference of the Episcopate of Poland, the highest decision-making body of Catholic Church in Poland, issued a statement in which the scope of involvement was left for the local bishops to decide. On the web page of the action, materials and instructions were made available to those priests taking part in the action, listed together with other downloadable content coming from the organizers (posters, maps etc.).

The detailed content of Church materials prepared by the relevant Commission of the Episcopate (54 pages altogether, *Różaniec...* 2017), strikes an observer familiar with Catholic rites and celebrations as somewhat subdued under the circumstances. Their wording is relatively balanced (compared to the material provided by the organizers), and so is their message. This may in itself be informative of the Church’s official, slightly reserved, standpoint. However, the action was an unreserved success in terms of the turnout and organization, even though it was not very spectacular if observed at close quarters.⁴

Compared to the Church documents, the materials of the organizers seem much richer in historical references and rhetorical effects. They differ in form, from a two-pages-long press release (*Solo Dios...* 2017), through a set of media comments and interviews, up to an album *Podnieście głowy* [Raise your heads] (*Podnieście...* 2017), published in the aftermath of the action.

² The Rosary prayer consists of a repeated series of ten Hail Marys (*Ave Maria*) preceded by the Lord’s Prayer (*Pater Noster*) and followed by the Gloria prayer (*Gloria Patri*). The decades of Ave Marias are counted on beads on a string arranged in tenths. Each tenth of Ave Marias is dedicated to a particular event from the Gospels (a “Mystery”), of which there are currently 20 (four sets of five).

³ <<http://www.rozaniecdogranic.pl/start>> (Polish only; accessed 30.09.2018).

⁴ A task accomplished by my collaborator Joanna Mazur in Zgorzelec on the Polish-German border. I am indebted to Joanna for her engaged and competent help as data-gatherer and for her assistance in relating the results of her unobtrusive observation.

The album is an important document for it covers not only the “Rosary to the Borders,” but also another event organized by the same NGO a year before: “*Wielka Pokuta*” (The Great Atonement). It was a mass prayer in Jasna Góra (the most important religious centre in Poland) held on 15 October 2015, preceded by “the Jericho of Atonement” (*Jerycho Przeblagalne*),⁵ a continuous prayer, with the intention of “repenting for the sins of Poles.” On the webpage of the Great Atonement⁶ (much less impressive than the Rosary to the Borders, with no visuals on the homepage but with a large load of downloadable content), a blurb of *Podnieście głowy* informs the reader that this joint summary of The Great Atonement and Rosary to the Borders is aimed at discovering “God’s plan for the Poles.” It further reads: “We usually regard history through the lens of great historical events: treaties, wars, uprisings. But are we also capable of seeing God’s action in the history of our Homeland?”⁷ God is the Lord of history, after all!” Further, prayer is announced to be “the best way to fight for peace and for a strong Homeland,” and both the Great Atonement and Rosary to the Borders are said to be an effort to “read the signs of the time.” That is why the album is declared an “obligatory reading on the 100th anniversary of Poland’s independence.”⁸ Consequently, I decided to include the Jericho of Atonement in this analysis as a variation on the theme of the “nation penitent” (see Porter 2001).

The instructions for the Jericho of Atonement praise the atonement as means to “reverse the course of history of the nation and the whole world” (*Jericho...* 2016, 1). History is outlined by way of cataloguing sins covered by the national repentance. However, anyone interested in the Catholic perception of sins particular for the Polish national group would be disappointed. In the long list of sins beginning on page 3 of the document only two are nation-specific,⁹ and a further four have a direct political meaning: atonement for “treason and collaboration,” “social injustice,” “hatred and prejudice against other nationalities,” and “permitting ideologies promoting violence, terror and sexual deviation.” The combination of violence and terrorism with sexual deviation seems particularly puzzling, as they are usually associated with mutually hostile ideologies. However, most of the sins for which the prayer was held were probably committed by non-Catholics (such as “libeling the Catholic Church”). A large majority of the sins in question concerned family and sexual life and religious practices which are universal in Catholic teaching.

⁵ <http://wielkapokuta.pl/sites/default/files/Jerycho_przeblagalne_za_grzechy_polakow.pdf> [accessed 30.09.2018].

⁶ <<http://wielkapokuta.pl/>> (accessed 30.09.2018).

⁷ Capitalized in original.

⁸ <<http://wielkapokuta.pl/>> (accessed 30.09.2018).

⁹ “Breaking faith to the vows of Jasna Góra,” and “failing to do everything [...] to make Poland a real Kingdom of God’s Mother and Jesus Christ [...] in personal, family, national and social life.”

On the other hand, the act of forgiveness also included in the rite is historically and politically very nation-specific: “we forgive all wrongdoings against us by other nations: we forgive the destruction of our national identity by those who partitioned our land, the crimes of the communist system, the crimes of Hitlerism, Stalinism, the Katyń and the Volhynia crimes” (*Jericho...* 2016, 4). The order of crimes is significant, even though the catalogue itself is quite standard, and the inclusion of the Volhynia slaughter (of Polish civilians by the Ukrainians at the end of World War II) is an addition which nobody would probably have thought of 30 years ago. Incidentally, there are evident similarities between the wording of the prayer and the law of 26 January 2018 later dubbed by the international press the “Polish Holocaust Law” (see Bucholc and Komornik 2019) – one of the main innovations of which consisted in granting legal equality between the Volhynia crimes and the crimes committed by the Nazis and the Soviets. In *Jericho*, the partitions come first, communism comes next, and Nazism and Stalinism are put together with Katyń (a Soviet mass murder of Polish officers during World War II) and Volhynia. The overall message is that other nations have sinned against the Polish nation on a number of very specific occasions, whereas the sins of Poles are mostly general, usually committed by non-Catholics, and they are never sins committed specifically against named other nations (“hatred and prejudice” against other nations is generalized). The Great Atonement presents the picture of the Polish nation as a victim of history, an image culminating in the Litany of the Polish Nation, the main part of the Atonement rite, where a long list of national calamities from times immemorial is included (*Jericho...* 2016, 5ff). The Great Atonement was described as a Polish penitential prayer, but a detailed analysis proves that it was much more a prayer of remembrance of the sins against the Poles.

The Great Atonement was a very innovative prayer action, though probably less so than the Rosary to the Borders – for which it paved the way – and it provided initial networking and organizational know-how. The timing of the two actions meant that the political context of the second action had changed. In the press announcement of *Solo Dios Basta* published on 20 July 2017, it is implied that Poland finds itself at a critical moment in history, in particular, that unspecified “recent events” clearly showed the need of divine support for Poland. The events in question would include not only the continuing discussions around the distribution of Muslim migrants throughout the EU, but also the acute social conflict inflicted upon the country by the so-called “reform of the judiciary” in summer 2017, when the political takeover of the judiciary led to protests and demonstrations across the country (Bucholc and Komornik 2018). Where the biblical story of Jericho was about bringing walls down, Rosary to the Borders was about reconstructing the walls protecting Poland from the outside world.

In the press release informing of the action, which was the main document produced by the organizers, we read:

We are praying “to the limit of our possibilities”. We invite the Poles to get off the couch, to leave their cozy life in front of the TV or a computer, to take up the arms of prayer and to fight for the salvation of the world. We invite them to go to the borders of Poland, to the borders of their own weakness, the borders of the safe world, maybe even the border of fear. (Solo Dios 2017)

The suggestion of fear in the context of the Schengen borders, which millions of Poles cross yearly in a casual manner, must be read as a call to endow them with a new meaning. Beyond the borders, the safe world ends and, perhaps, something to be feared begins. Of course, habitus formation is a process which happens over decades and centuries, and it would be naïve to expect a mere ten years after the beginning of the “affective household” of the Polish people that we would see reflected a new state of international inclusiveness and unrestrained mobility. Rather, what we see is an illuminating example of the drag effect of habitus (see Ernst, Weischer, and Alikhani 2017) and an incompatibility between the new political reality and the state of affectively-loaded symbolic resources. Equally, it is an illustration of the manipulative potential of discrepancies created by the dragging effects in habitus formation.

The organizers of the action also stressed the international impact of Rosary to the Borders in a different context.¹⁰ The action had a sizeable ripple effect. Catholics in many countries, including Australia,¹¹ Italy, Ireland,¹² the UK,¹³ and the US¹⁴ organized similar events, acknowledging the Polish inspiration. A detailed comparative analysis would warrant a separate article, but a provisional overview suggests that ritual demarcation of a state territory did not feature equally strongly in all cases. For example, instead of the delimitating effect of the radiant rosary represented in the poster of the Polish action and, to an extent, in the Australian one, the aspect of the string of rosary beads as a form of connectivity dominates the visuals of the British action. The idea behind the American action was actually to connect the two US coasts and not to overwrite the national borders (but the US is not part to any equivalent of the Schengen Agreement). The juxtaposition of one country and the rest of the world is also less pronounced in most other national rosary actions.¹⁵

Apart from the international impact, the fact that prayer was also organized by Polish Catholics abroad was represented as one more proof of success (*Pod-*

¹⁰ See: <<https://wpolityce.pl/kosciol/403219-rozaniec-do-granic-coraz-bardziej-popularny-na-swiecie>> (Accessed 02.10.2018).

¹¹ <<https://www.churchmilitant.com/news/article/australian-catholics-have-their-own-national-rosary>> (Accessed 02.10.2018).

¹² <<https://www.coastalrosaryireland.ie/>> (Accessed 30.09.2018).

¹³ <<https://www.rosaryonthecoast.co.uk>> (Accessed 30.09.2018).

¹⁴ <<http://rosarycoasttocoast.com/>> (accessed 30.09.2018).

¹⁵ This juxtaposition caused a certain upheaval in the international press: For example, an Italian newspaper even tagged the prayer as “la marcia dei cattolici polacchi contro i migranti,” see: <<https://www.giornalettismo.com/archives/2634920/rosario-alle-frontiere-polonia>> (accessed 30.09.2018).

nieście... 2017). Anthropologically speaking, the fact that a borderline prayer was also organized in places where there was no border at all constitutes an extrapolation and transposition of the notion of a border. A border is a geographical and political concept, but it is also an anthropological one, and the border on which the rosary is prayed transforms each homogenous space into a divided one: the prayer becomes a weapon against spatial and social non-differentiation.

4. Framing the Habitus: Mnemonic Transposition of Symbolic Resources in Rosary to the Borders

Rosary to the Borders was an extraordinarily, symbolically-loaded action. I propose to divide symbolic resources referring to history which were employed in the action into three categories: (1) common Catholic resources, (2) country-specific Catholic resources, and (3) national memory resources. I focus on the past-oriented symbols, and I stop at the national level; I do not account for resources available on lower levels of the figuration (like local saints, local ritual idiosyncrasies, etc.), which also mattered in how the prayer played out in various locations.

4.1 Common Catholic Resources

Symbols in this category are available and meaningful for all Catholics, even though they may carry a different emotional load for various groups. They would also, typically, be of limited use for those who do not belong to the Catholic Church. Common resources include universal Church rites, practices, celebrations, and the history of the Church and of the Catholic religion.

The most important of the many common Catholic resources employed in the Rosary to the Borders is the rosary prayer as a common religious rite, evidenced by the Fatima Revelations of 1917 (exactly a hundred years earlier). As mentioned in the Introduction, October is a month of rosary, and 7 October is the day of Our Lady of the Rosary. The circumstances in which this particular date was chosen by Pope Pius V, who introduced this day into the Church calendar, is probably unknown to most Catholics. The date is the date of battle of Lepanto in 1571 when united Catholic forces defeated a Muslim Ottoman fleet in a great sea battle in which, according to Church tradition, Mary intervened on the side of the Catholics (the day was the feast day of Our Lady of Victory) and Pope Pius V had a corresponding vision while praying the rosary. The story is told in detail in Church documents and is referred to on the action's website as one of the express reasons to observe this precise date. Further common resources contribute to the framing of the prayer: omnipresent motives of defence of faith, human life, and family.

Common symbolic resources bestow a glamour of universality and discharge the suspicion of parochiality. Moreover, they make it easier for others to follow: Italian or US Catholics may find it implausible to pray for Poland, but it is possible for them to imitate the Poles in praying for something which is common for all. Figurational analysis of the use of common resources would point in the direction of a higher integration level emerging within the global religious organization. It does not possess the typical means of securing the level of civilization corresponding to the scope and strength of integration available to states, but its substantial power over its members is supported by a stock of common symbols maintained by common practices.

For example, the remembrance of Mary as one of the central figures of the global Catholic pantheon is maintained by the rosary prayer as a practice which protects the symbols related to Mary from elimination or replacement by other symbols. To realize that this could happen, it suffices merely to reflect on the many saints who were once central to universal Church rites and practices and who are now virtually forgotten to the extent that some of their names no longer “ring any bells” for most Catholics.

The metaphor of bell-ringing may be restated in terms of involvement and detachment (Elias 2007b). While the Catholic community as a whole has detached itself from much of its former cult of saints and, especially, from symbols from the earliest periods of Christianity, these symbols are still preserved in the collective memory: in litanies, local prayers, iconography, and reliquaries. But they will have lost their emotional charge, and the involvement in these symbols in the Catholic community as a whole is minimal. Mary, on the other hand, still carries an inordinate emotional load as probably the single strongest symbol in the Catholic Church (Llywelyn 2016). One of the reasons why this female symbol in the otherwise so male-dominated religious community has achieved such a high standing is its capacity to be adapted to local surroundings and inscribed in symbolic frames of less than universal reach (Warner 1976).

4.2 Country-Specific Catholic Resources

There are also symbols and practices involved in Rosary to the Borders which are specific to Poland, not in the strong sense of being absent from all other national Catholic communities, but in the limited sense of referring to the limited group experience of Polish Catholics. These resources are still predominantly Catholic (they would not be shared by those Poles who are not Catholics, and if they would be understandable to them, it would only be “second-hand” cultural knowledge). But they would be equally unintelligible for Catholics of other nations.

One important resource is the little-known revelation in 1877 at Gietrzwałd in Ermland, now a part of Poland (Polish: *Warmia*). Two Catholic Polish girls

claimed that Lady Mary induced them to pray the rosary. The effect of this revelation for Polish nation-building during the *Kulturkampf* (Culture War) was stressed by Polish sociologist Stanisław Ossowski, who was studying Polish national identity in Warmia in the 1940s. Even though the revelation of Gietrzwałd was recognized by the Church in 1977 and could count as a common Catholic symbol, I classify it as nation-specific due to its close link with the national identity and its predominantly local significance.

A number of prayer practices are referred to in the Church documentation of Rosary to the Borders, which paved the way for its taking place in the public and lay space of everyday life. Apart from the customs common throughout the Church or for many local Churches, such as *Corpus Christi* or the public *Via Crucis*, there are those perceived as locally Polish, like the rural prayer meetings at crossroads shrines and crosses (*Różaniec* 2017, 17). Although the latter would take place in May and the prayer would normally be according to Litany of Loreto, the fact that apart from annual public mass celebrations there is also a custom of praying publicly on a very small scale bears upon the possibility of bricolage of the religious symbols into a different configuration of a similar nature.

Another important country-specific Catholic resource is related to the history of Poland as a country surrounded by non-Catholic populations: heathen, Muslim, Orthodox, and Protestant. In the battles fought against these enemies, the religious motif was invariably of central political importance. The religious coverage of politics included many miracles featuring Mary as defender of Polish Catholic armed forces and civilians against the religious others. Mary was celebrated as a figure of existential relevance for the nation by the Polish king John II Casimir (from the Swedish Vasa dynasty), who declared her the Queen of the Polish Crown in 1656 in Lwów (now Lviv in Ukraine). The act took place in the aftermath of the defence of Jasna Góra, which was believed to have been saved from the Protestant Swedes by a direct intervention of the Mother of God. The narrative of these events was given prominence in the 19th century by Poland's greatest historical novelist, the Nobel-Prize-winning Henryk Sienkiewicz, in his monumental epic *The Deluge* (Sienkiewicz 1904).

Mary as a female symbol turns out to possess a considerable military potential, reinforced by the recurrence over centuries of her intercessions in times of war and oppression (see Porter 2005, 2011). One of the most well-known country-specific Catholic symbols is the so-called "*Apel Jasnogórski*," the Call of Jasna Góra, the wording of which combines the queenship of Lady Mary with the idea of knightly or military vigil and with the religious ideal of an incessant adoration: "Mary, Queen of Poland, I am here, I remember, I keep vigil."¹⁶ This prayer, although it predates World War II, became a widespread national reli-

¹⁶ *Maryjo, Królowo Polski, jestem przy Tobie, pamiętam, czuwam.*

gious symbol during the war and retained its significance later under Communist rule. I would argue that this prayer is the single most powerful symbol in which Polishness and Catholicism became combined in recent Polish history. Nevertheless, the potency of *Apel Jasnogórski* lies precisely in the combination of many emotionally-loaded items. Its essence is being there, constantly, for someone, who is not only the mother of all people (as Catholicism represents Mary), but also a queen and the mother of a particular national group.

Reference to remembering in the prayer is also illustrative of the fusion of national and sacred history: apart from remembering the Mariological aspects of the symbol (part of the common Catholic tradition), the praying person is also implicitly called upon to remember those which are country-specific and thereby to remember the national history. Universality and groupness are reunited and reconcile what is otherwise irreconcilable.

4.3 National Memory Resources

The irreconcilability is evident if we move further in the direction of national memory. Here, too, a reservation should be made: even though these symbols pertain to Poland, they are not always uniquely Polish. They use religious imagery in order to convey a set of ideas and emotions focusing on the nation, and many national groups may have the same ideas about themselves.

Probably the oldest of those is the idea of *Antemurale Christianitatis* (Bulwark of Christianity): Poland as being in the frontline of the fight against non-Christian forces, from which all Christian nations benefit (Morawiec 2001). This condition was shared by Poland and many other countries on the Eastern outskirts of Christian Europe (Srodecki 2015), and in all of them gave rise to an idea that they had a particular mission of defending Christianity against non-Christianity. The old notion of military mission related to the Christian identity of the nation was refined in the age of Romanticism. The country was, as it is usually put in a well-worn Polish phrase, “wiped off the map” at the end of 18th century until 1918; the period is referred to as the Partitions and I will discuss its huge importance for both state and habitus formation in more detail below. Despite the lack of political independence (or, maybe, because of it), Polish culture in the 19th century forged crucial concepts relating to national identity by means of some of the best literary productions in its history. Motifs of God and homeland were tightly intertwined, in particular in the work of the most acclaimed poet of the Polish language, Adam Mickiewicz. He created a fully-fledged romantic version of Polish messianism, a concept according to which Poland was a “Christ among the Nations,” a Messiah suffering for other nations of the West. The suffering in question, under the repressive Russian administration, was very real, and Mickiewicz translated its political dimension (just as he translated his ideals of universal human solidarity and freedom) into religious terms, thus establishing a fully-fledged political ideology of messian-

ism (Walicki 1978; Krasnodebski 2002) as a part of his political theology. These concepts were preached from the pulpit in a venue as prominent as the College de France in Paris, where Mickiewicz lectured in 1840.

The idea and iconography of Poland as a Christ among the Nations became well embedded in the national imagery, much better than a less religiously loaded, but otherwise very similar symbol of Poland as the “Winkelried of Nations,” forged by another national bard, Juliusz Słowacki, at roughly the same time (Morawiec 2001). The reference is to a Swiss national hero, Arnold Winkelried. Słowacki’s concept, however, shows that the image of Poland as a land offering a redemptory and life-saving self-sacrifice for other nations was in fact a composed symbol with a definite prevalence of the national reference: a projected self-definition of the nation could be assembled of religious elements, but it could equally well be bricolaged using lay imagery. The latter was, however, far less successful in terms of the marketing of ideas and translated far worse into a comprehensive design of a national habitus.

In *Rosary to the Borders* and in the *Jericho of Atonement*, we find the implicit messianic idea of Poland praying for others and suffering for others. The references to national memory resources are less pronounced, possibly to disarm any anti-chauvinist campaigning. The action was attacked anyway: an MP for the opposition debunked it as a prayer “against something,” and “a wave of hate” against the action rose throughout the social media.¹⁷ However, it would hardly be fair to *Rosary to the Borders* to call it a “prayer against something”: it was a prayer for a certain national habitus to prevail in order for the country to be redeemed. The means of redemption in this case is prayer, not suffering, but the implication of it is that Poland, as opposed to many other countries, has retained the ability to pray effectively due to its suffering. This unique quality, imitated by others on a far smaller scale, can in turn be related to historically embedded national symbols with great emotional load, such as “Christ among the Nations.”

5. State Formation and the Two Uses of National Habitus

As demonstrated above, the assimilation of Catholicism and Polishness has a solid symbolic base. However, a national habitus is not a pure self-projection, a we-image created by a national group from within as a response to figurational challenges such as the external political and military threat: it is relational. A habitus is a response to projections of other groups, which leads in the direction of the model of established and outsiders, one of the most operationable

¹⁷ See: <<https://www.tvp.info/34300576/co-za-idiota-to-wymyslil-wielka-akcja-hejtowania-modlitwy-rozancowej>> [Accessed 02.10.2018].

achievements of Eliasian sociology (Elias and Scotson 1994). The national habitus combining the use of Catholic and national symbols was, for a large part of Polish history, a hostile reaction to projections made from without by those for whom the Catholic Polishness also provided an excellent symbol to be used in their own we-image constructions, albeit a negative one. There was a certain symmetry in using Catholic symbolic resources in the we-images of Poles and they-images designed by other national groups.

National habitus works in two directions and has two distinct uses. The first is the external one: a habitus is directed against those outside the national group, as an instrument of distinction. Second, the habitus is used in the internal competition within a larger figuration which may develop within a group (the latter use of habitus was probably more explicit in the works of a zealous student of this problematic, Pierre Bourdieu, see Witte 2017). The internal and the external use of habitus may overlap for some of the time. They very rarely overlap all of the time for any national group, but sometimes they do so for a substantial period of time, and this was the case of Catholic symbols and their affective correlates in Polish national habitus.

The historical dynamic of the relationship between Catholic and national elements would depend, of course, on the vicissitudes of state formation processes in the Early Modern period and in 19th century, which have indirectly brought about the current Polish state society producing actions such as Rosary to the Borders. A detailed account of these processes would be far beyond the scope of this article, but in any piece of writing based on Eliasian premises the particularities of Polish state-formation needs to be stated.¹⁸ It is advisable to focus on the period up to and including the 19th century, not only because it is consistent with the timeframe of Elias's own work in comparative historical sociology, but also because it is the period when the peculiarities of Polish state formation (or, rather, non-state formation) are best observed and their influence on contemporary phenomena can be identified (for a brief overview of Polish history focusing on the link between religion and nation-building, see Porter 2018).

The peculiarities in question include, first and foremost, the incomparable political strength of an exceptionally numerous as well as highly internally stratified nobility, ruthlessly exploiting the peasant class and dominating the few weak cities. The result was an effective monopolization of state-formation processes by landed nobility and the subsequent drag-effect of the class habitus of nobility in 19th and 20th century (analyzed, albeit from a very different theoretical stance, in Leder 2014). From the 15th century onwards the state was an elective monarchy with a gradually weakening central power, especially after the Jagiellonian dynasty ended in 1572. At the (short-lived) climax of its

¹⁸ Readings in English on Polish history, apart from other works cited here, could include: Davies 1981a, 1981b; Kłoczowski 2000; and Kenney 2002, 2007.

territorial expansion, the country comprised the Polish Kingdom and the Great Duchy of Lithuania and stretched from Dorpat to far beyond Kijów (today Kiev, Ukraine) and from Poznań to Smoleńsk (today: Smolensk, Russia). This immense area was largely decentralized, lacked an effective monopoly of violence and tax collection, had next to no standing army, and only an elementary civil administration. The net result was a decrease in the international standing of Poland coinciding with an aggressive territorial expansion of all its powerful neighbours (including Russia, Prussia, Austria, and the Ottoman Empire). Modern state monopoly was never successfully established in any domain. As the country failed to modernize, it gradually became politically and economically subservient to the interests of foreign powers and, at the end of 18th century, was divided up by Austria, Prussia, and Russia. From this point of view, state formation in Poland lacks all the crucial characteristics of the processes taking place in Western Europe analyzed by Elias (2006, 2012).

From the figurational perspective, during the partitions, the former Polish territory and population was incorporated into three foreign imperial state-formation processes. Only one of the partitioning powers, Austria (later Austro-Hungary), was Catholic, and the other two persecuted Catholicism with varying intensity. Therefore, during the partitions, the Catholic component of Polish national habitus – whose salience has been rising constantly ever since the initial short-termed success of the Reformation among Polish nobility in 16th century – gained even more weight. As a result of the partitions the Poles, as an established Catholic group, became outsiders, and Catholicism gained new importance in their we-image formation, resulting in an enhancement of the now clichéd equation Pole-Catholic (*Polak-Katolik*) (see Porter 2001). While both internal and external uses of Catholic symbols predated the loss of state-formation control to foreigners, its internal use in 19th century greatly boosted the potential of Catholic symbols, as the overview given above of nation-specific Catholic as well as national memory resources partly illustrates. Elias insisted that the Poles and Germans have a lot in common (Elias 1994), but what they had in common most of all was a long-standing antagonism. In the 19th century, its strong religious component became pivotal, as a result of Protestant Prussian participation in the partitions of Poland; from then on, any reconciliation between the two nations could very well be seen as a “miracle” (Wiatr 2014).

In the novels of Gustav Freytag, which were recommended reading for generations of German youth (Adorno 1942/1997) with their ardent anti-Polishness motivated by adoration of the Iron Chancellor, Poles are portrayed as “lazy, uncontrollable, and even wild in comparison to the hard working, superior Germans” (Nance 2008, 46). Freytag offers a literary version of sentiments which, in the academic world, were expressed by no less a scholar than Max Weber. While Weber’s anti-Polish sentiments have been explored in recent

scholarship (Konno 2004; Zimmerman 2006; Boatca 2013), it is worth recalling the passage in which Weber characterized Poles:

And why is it the Polish peasants who are gaining the land? Is it their superior economic intelligence, or their greater supply of capital? It is rather the opposite of both these factors. Under a climate, and on a soil, which favour the growing of cereals and potatoes above all, alongside extensive cattle-raising, the person who is least threatened by an unfavourable market is the one who brings his products to the place where they are least devalued by a collapse in prices: his own stomach. This is the person who produces for his own requirements. And once again, the person who can set his own requirements at the lowest level, the person who makes the smallest physical and mental demands for the maintenance of his life, is the one with the advantage. The small Polish peasant in East Germany is a type far removed from the bustling peasant owner of a dwarf property, whom one may see here in the well-favoured valley of the Rhine as he forges links with the towns via greenhouse cultivation and market-gardening. The small Polish peasant gains more land, because he as it were eats the very grass from off of it [...], he gains not despite but on account of the low level of his physical and intellectual habits of life. (Weber 1980, 434)

In these words, uttered *ex cathedra* as a part of Weber's inaugural lecture at the University of Freiburg in 1895, economic factors neatly interweave with cultural ones. Catholicism is not mentioned expressly, probably because of the assumed religious sympathies of the audience, but low physical and intellectual habits of the Polish peasant are offered as an explanation of the much-feared Polish agricultural offensive in Eastern Germany. Poles were, according to Weber, one of the cultural categories devoid of symbolic resources essential for Western-style modernization, which landed them in the row of cultural "others" from whom Weber, as Jack Goody put it (2006), "stole history."

Even though Weber's anti-Polish philippics did not provoke Polish intellectuals to any reaction worth mentioning, he did receive a letter from (according to the signature) a student from Lemberg (formerly Lwów, now Lviv, Ukraine), which I quote here from Hajime Konno:

Max (imus) scilicet Gemeinster

W(ilder) Eber!

Dieser Name gebührt Dir! Schmach und Schande über die Mutter, die einem der gemeinsten Raubtiere das Leben geschenkt hat. [...] Du aber erkennst als Dein höchstes Ideal an die Vertilgung Deiner Mitmenschen, die Dir nichts schlechtes gemacht haben, der Polen, welche Deine Vorfahren Jahrhunderte schützten vor der Invasion der Tartaren und Türken. Schade daß Deinen Keim nicht aufgeessen hat ein tartarisches Schwein vor Jahrhunderten [...]!

Zduński

aus Lemberg cand. iur. an Weber auf seine Antrittsrede hin am 13. Juli 1895 (Konno 2004, 71)

In this short passage, an expression of national resentment is framed by the idea of *Antemurale Christianitatis*: Weber belongs to the group of beneficiaries of Polish courage in defending Western Europe against (Muslim) Turks and Tatars. In this narrative, Poles were, literally, the necessary condition of existence of the West. For that sacrifice, instead of gratitude, the Poles meet with hostility and oppression: they suffer for others as befits the “Christ among the Nations.”

As soon as Poland returned onto the path of nation-state-formation in 1918, the issue of the external and internal use of Catholic symbols had to be restated, for a great need arose for mobilizable symbolic resources in the internal state-society dynamic. Apart from the external threat, the internal minority question gave rise to intense work on symbols, and this time the mobilization of Catholicism against the Jewish minority (and, to a lesser extent, other religious, ethnic, and linguistic minorities) was of primary importance (see Porter 2014). To make it possible to use the image of a Pole-Catholic against the others (Germans, Soviets, etc.) and at the same time against a (Jewish) sub-group of members of the nascent Polish state society, the Pole-Catholic must be made sufficiently distinct from the non-Catholic (alleged) Poles, but so as not to move him too close to any of the external groups: the fight against the internal outsiders must not lead to a weakening of external resistance. I will not offer my figurational view on the history of the interwar period. It lasted only 21 years, less than one generation. Despite the debates regarding its real significance in the history of Poland, this interwar period would have to be deemed by a figurational sociologist interested in habitus formation as too short to matter due to the drag effects of habitus from previous epochs but for the fact that it was the beginning of modern nation-state-formation in Poland. It was potentially the beginning of a new line of tradition: a developmental line of a republican, democratic, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, centralized nation-state.

Ironically, with the physical extermination or expulsion of most of the minorities and the disappearance of the interwar social complexities in the post-war homogenous socialist Polish-nation state, the salience of Catholicism as a weapon against minorities was as good as annihilated and a new context of power balances for both external and internal use appeared (see Kubik 1994). Dependence on the Soviet Union and Communist rule at home made Catholicism a crucial resource for anti-establishment we-images. Catholic symbols were exploited in power struggles, creating a class-religion conundrum which appeared puzzling from the Western perspective. It was epitomized by the *Solidarność* movement in 1980s: Catholic workers led by Lech Wałęsa with the Black Madonna from Jasna Góra pinned to his chest, supported by priests, and prayed for in churches all over the land. The movement opposed the socialist state governed by a Communist party, while at the same time taking advice from members of intelligentsia, many of whom were of Marxist provenance and/or described themselves as “liberals” (Bernhard 1993). My thesis posits

Solidarność as the last word on a rare variant of national habitus which combined Polishness and Catholicism as an inclusive formation open to people who would in other times hardly pass as Poles. Dynamics of inclusion and exclusion accompany internal and external uses of national habitus: from the period of Solidarność onwards, exclusion prevailed and internal use became more pronounced.

The external and the internal use of a habitus rarely overlap all the time for any national group. The reason for this is that in all usual scenarios, the level of the figuration on which the relationships with other national groups operate is higher than those on which internal struggles for a we-image of a group play out, and there is no simple transfer of symbolic resources from one figuration level to another. However, if the resources can be transmitted so as to allow a unification of the two uses, it can function as a great political asset for a habitus. Such a combination would work both inside and outside the group. One framing which would be inclusive enough, while at the same time still preserving a clear division between external and internal, foreign and domestic, is offered by postcolonialism.

6. Postcolonial Syndrome: Threat and Double-Bind

The reception of postcolonial studies¹⁹ in Central and Eastern Europe has accelerated during the last two decades. Stanley Bill argued that post-colonialism was a “stillborn theory” in Poland as late as in 2014 (2014, 2), but his statement could be revised in the light of developments since 2015.²⁰ Bill commented on the fact that “in many cases, the thinkers and writers applying the concepts of postcolonial theory have openly associated themselves with the Polish conservative right” as something “surprising when we consider that postcolonial theory in its canonical forms owes a great deal to Marxist, postmodernist and feminist theories – none of which are especially dear to Polish conservatives” (Bill 2014, 2). Nevertheless, there are at least two aspects to the postcolonial way of thinking about national identity which make it particularly useful in designing a national-conservative habitus, notwithstanding the assumed lack of ideological congeniality.

The first one is its insistence on the value of cultural authenticity, which leads to “strategic essentialism” (Spivak 1985). Tracing authenticity, reconstructing it, and, as it were, constructing it from scratch implies a focus on the past, an

¹⁹ In this article, I do not discuss the differences between dependency studies, postcolonial studies and postcolonial theory, which is not to say that there are none. See Schwarz & Ray (eds.): *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

²⁰ A review of possibilities and criticisms can be found in an excellent volume edited by Jan Kieniewicz (2016, in Polish).

intensive work on symbols, a critical reevaluation of symbolic resources, and channeling or re-channeling memories. In the competition of national habitus, the quest for authenticity is also the quest for demarcation criteria, setting the national group apart. Strategic essentialism posits the essential, unreducible and (frequently though not always) primordial properties of a group as demonstrating its uniqueness.

The quest for authenticity in its postcolonial variant implies a serious effort, both on the part of individuals and societies, consisting in locating the impact of colonialism on the society, such as imposed legal, political, social, and cultural orders. It then seeks either to eliminate such unsolicited imports or, at least, problematize their embeddedness in the colonial dependency. This operation can be performed both on the part of the colonizer and the colonized: both have their respective authenticities at stake in this procedure. The double bind implied in the effort of de-colonizing one's own thinking is clear: for a political community, the quest for authenticity requires a reflection on its own normative and institutional order as an ill-fitted imposition, but the tools for this reflection must engage with this imposition on its own terms, however contested.

At the level of individuals, efforts to become more authentic as members of a national community will not always be successful, precisely because the colonial impositions at the state-society level are mediated through individual involvement and require individual members of both the colonizing and the colonized society to cooperate in the importation and imposition, albeit usually indirectly. The fact that colonization relies on individual involvement is not only the rationale for the ethical commitment to reflect on the nature of such involvement, but also a useful political tool for introducing an internal use of post-colonial framing of national habitus. If the effort is to be made, there may be some who are not making the effort hard enough, some who are not even trying, and yet others constitutionally incapable of it because their involvement in the colonial dependency went too deep. Such individuals can be excluded from national community as they are incapable of ever acquiring an authentic national habitus. In Polish public debates after 2015, the internal use of national habitus follows this line.

The internal and external uses of national habitus described above together form a "post-colonial syndrome." Reverting to a national habitus in order to distinguish one's own group from others and to exclude some individuals or categories within the group is a common property of national habitus. The postcolonial framing additionally stresses the authenticity-adverse impact of dependency and posits authenticity as the core value for the nation-state-society.

The notion of postcolonial syndrome, apart from its use in postcolonial trauma research (Craps 2013), appears in the writings of various authors in postcolonial studies, and it is usually applied to the experience of colonization

in Asia and Africa (see Bouvier 2006). In the Polish case, “postcolonial syndrome” was probably first conceptualized by Jan Sowa (Sowa 2011, 31) as “peripheral postcolonial syndrome.” Sowa used this notion to refer to the “struggles with the form” as a central motif of Polish culture:

the difficulty, or even impossibility, of shaping the most general frames of social life in a way which would allow adaptation to the requirements of the age and to catch up with the main drivers of modernization [...] and, on the other hand, somehow to *express oneself*. (Sowa 2011, 31)

This understanding would be akin to my own but for the fact that, for Sowa, the peripheral status of Poland was of key explanatory importance, whereas for me the pivotal issue is not the “real” status of the land, but the status designed and projected by way of a national habitus, which may be fantastic, falsely locating the “self” to be expressed. Moreover, the struggles with the form are not just a problem of peripheral, colonized nations: they may also affect the central colonial powers, a notion for which Brexit is arguably an excellent recent argument (Bhambra and Narayan 2016). Postcolonial syndrome is not always peripheral, and not always reality-congruent, especially if it is politically instrumentalized.

Another author who referred to the “postcolonial syndrome” among the Polish intelligentsia was Tomasz Zarycki (2014). However, my use of this term significantly diverges from Zarycki’s, and not simply because my subject is not the intelligentsia, even though the proponents of national habitus which I analyze in this article often belong to this group. The difference between Zarycki’s approach and my own consists in my focus on the application of postcolonial framing to the construction of national habitus in its inclusive and exclusive, internal and external uses. Zarycki’s intelligentsia developed a postcolonial syndrome as a reply to being excluded or, more likely, self-excluded from the national community. Therefore, I would argue that Zarycki’s narrative starts too late in the process: it misses the point where the process of the intelligentsia’s exclusion was first set in motion by work on symbols and memories. Identifying that key moment in time would, however, move us back too far from the subject.

My interest lies in the debates around Poland’s colonial and postcolonial status in the past. It is my goal to explain why the habitus framed by postcolonial thinking can be successful in Poland today in terms of its synergy with symbolic resources politically mobilized to fit the postcolonial frame including, in particular, the Catholic resources. For this political mobilization, the convergence of two ideals: authenticity and autonomy, seem of decisive importance.

Sowa insisted that cultural dependency of postcolonial societies expresses itself in their “inability autonomically to shape their own habitus” (Sowa 2011, 434). He thus agreed with the advocates of postcolonial framing on the Right insisting that the authenticity of a national group should express itself in its autonomy of self-creation. This autonomy was allegedly denied to Poland by the West. Poland (or, more precisely, Polish culture) was “orientalized, deni-

grated and devalued.” which resulted in an inauthentic culture, foreign in terms of form and empty in terms of content, driven by the “‘elites’ [which] supposedly deny the native soil from which they have sprung, always looking to Western Europe and the United States for cultural, political and artistic models to follow, disdaining everything naturally ‘Polish’ as inferior” (Bill 2014, 3).

This very apt summary underscores the importance of the recent past for the development of this particular form of postcolonialism. The systemic transformation may have given Poland a new elite, and the mentality of this elite may well have been marked by subservience to the West (cf. Thompson 2007; 2011). The transformation would be an act of colonization by Western ideas of modernity and social development, which the agents of transformation translated into the hierarchy of aspirations of Polish society. These agents not only transplanted Western institutional, legal, and economic solutions into Polish soil, but they also naturalized them as “normality” (a buzzword in liberal discourse of the late 1980s and 1990s, cf. Waśkiewicz 2015). Although it is perfectly plausible to aspire to normality by becoming integrated into a larger unit (such as the West or, more specifically, the European Union) this poses a question of autonomy and of the authenticity of the normality achieved. Becoming “like the West” was yet another effort to teach Polish society to be something other than it was. I refer to this as “liberal pedagogy” (Bucholc 2018b, Bucholc forthcoming). In Poland after 1989, it was part of a utopian project of social engineering (Szacki 1995, 149). Support for liberalism did not last, nor did support for liberal forms. From 2015 onwards, they were debunked as inauthentic and not autonomous. The debunking was applied to the rule of law and liberal democracy as well (see Bucholc 2019). The current Polish Right reinterprets the Polish experience of modernity and, in particular, the period of democratic transformation after 1989, as times of colonization by foreign powers, interests, ideas, and institutions. The essentialized “Polish Nation” has allegedly resisted these attempts and preserved its integrity, so that it could finally be politically articulated in a fully autonomous way. Revitalization of the ideas of state sovereignty, national unity, and cultural uniformity, largely dissolved in liberal discourses, stem from the need to draw a clear dividing line between the colonizers and the colonized, to empower the latter and eliminate the postcolonial mentality represented by the opponents of the governing party. Internal and external needs are thus served.

This, of course, turns the Polish Right into a postcolonial elite, engaged busily in a struggle against the agents of colonialism. The governing PiS seeks to emancipate itself and its country from any form of historically evidenced imposed inauthenticity, equating the communist with the liberal, the Eastern (Russian) with the Western (German), and interdependence with dependence. Double binds are all too evident here: dealing with imported categories and concepts by way of other imported Western inventions, such as state sovereign-

ty, nationalism and Catholicism as the core of national value system. But there is no such thing as an autonomously forged habitus.

The divergence of the imagery used by the Right and the work on symbols in Rosary to the Borders is striking and paradoxical: the national-conservative government of Poland invests disproportionate energy in a politics of memory and historical politics. If one common denominator in all this politics could be named, it is restoration of national glory. In the rhetoric of the current governing party, a few recurrent phrases express this intention (Bucholc and Komornik 2016; Bucholc 2018a; 2019; Sadurski 2018). Two among them are particularly apt: “getting up from our knees” (*wstać z kolan*) and “pedagogy of shame” (*pedagogika wstydu*). Kneeling is a typically Christian practice of unequivocally positive meaning: it is a pose of prayer. Shame, especially of one own misdeeds, is also a Christian sentiment, a correlate of guilt, leading to apology, repentance, and (hopefully) forgiveness. Nevertheless, by admitting shame and asking for forgiveness one admits one’s own weakness and dependence on other’s mercy. It can be embarrassing if the penitent is a nation-state and the mercy is requested of another nation state or a supranational organization.

In the Rosary to the Borders, the call to “raise the heads” (*Podnieście...* 2017) was meaningfully built into this theological nexus because of the intrinsic link between the Rosary and the Great Atonement a year before. People who repented as a national group were called upon to raise their heads in defense of their values, but without getting up from their knees: the defense also took on a form of a prayer. However, this part of religious framing would be blatantly inconsistent with the views of the Right: it argues for a defence of Catholic values without the readiness to kneel down which provides a theological rationale for the defence.

The notion of “pedagogy of shame” is a response to liberal pedagogy: the latter is debunked as a trick played by the postcolonial elite, successfully trying to force its own society to kneel down before its alleged Western betters. One way to accomplish it was to reveal the national past which was better left undiscovered and forgotten. The cultural conflict around the issue of national guilt and atonement inevitably centred on the history of anti-Semitism in Poland. The direct trigger was the book of Jan Tomasz Gross about Poles mass murdering their Jewish neighbors in 1941 in Jedwabne (Gross 2001) and was later continued on a much smaller scale by Gross himself, and by authors such as (alphabetically) Andrzej Leder (2014), Jan Sowa (2011), Paweł Śpiewak (2005, 2012), Marcin Zaremba (2012), and others, discussing Polish-Jewish, Polish-Ukrainian, and Polish-German relations, usually their less glorious aspects. The movie industry kept pace, and some of the best Polish movies of recent decades are historical pictures in which the demons from national history are unveiled – or obscured.

In this work of memory, the advocates of “shame,” whether within or outside the academy, operate on the simple script: let us find out how it really was and tell it to the people, for the key value is the truth. To this, the advocates of national pride and glory respond with a denial of any truth which would show the national group in any light but the most favorable. This policy not only takes on a form of redirecting public funding (including in science) to congenial activities, renaming streets and organizing coordinated mass-scale public celebrations of events and figures of the past relived through the government propaganda (Bucholc 2018a). It is also accompanied by legislative means. The aforementioned “Polish Holocaust Law” of 26 January 2018 criminalizing any allegations of Polish participation in the Holocaust was a part of the same project to abolish the “pedagogy of shame” once and for all (Bucholc and Komornik 2018; Gliszczyńska-Grabias and Kozłowski 2018). Reconciliation with Israel was finally achieved by the Polish government in June 2018 after diplomatic havoc involving the USA. This was presented to society not as a compromise or an act of repentance, but as a victory of Polish *raison d'état*, another proof that Poland was raising from its knees (Bucholc 2019).

7. Conclusion: National Habitus and Social Integration

The national habitus whose Catholic roots and postcolonial framing I explored in this article is currently used as a powerful political instrument, capable of mobilizing up to 40% of Polish voters in support of the Right which has been in power more than three years. That period has been marked by democratic backsliding, dismantling of the rule of law, international tensions unprecedented in Poland's history after 1989, recurrent waves of social protest, unparalleled decline in the level of public debate, and lack of security in many sectors of public and private life. An analysis of symbolic resources used in the action “Rosary to the Borders” allows us to identify the connection between Catholicism and Polish national habitus advocated by the currently government. The source of strength of this habitus is not only a skillful use of symbolic resources related to national history, but also a bricolage of symbols drawn from Catholic resources, both common to all believers and the country-specific ones.

The function of the habitus which includes all these resources is twofold: to keep the outsiders at bay but it is also used to eliminate internal others. Internal and external uses of national habitus are framed by postcolonial categories, which results in the focus on dependency, sovereignty, authenticity, and autonomy. The quest for authenticity resulting from the postcolonial syndrome of the Polish Right is extended to the whole state-society of Poland of today, not only by religious, but also by purely political means, directed against the “pedagogy of shame” as a part of the pedagogy of transformational liberalism. Intensive work on symbols is taking place in Polish educational institution, in politics, in

the judiciary, and in the legislature. It is set on bringing some symbols back and re-charging them emotionally, but also on fostering forgetfulness.

In the figurational dimension, a direct effect of the habitus design which I have analyzed in this article is first and foremost an increased likelihood that the network of interdependencies between Poland and other countries be disrupted. Even though the so-called “Polexit” remains a journalistic pun, there is a likelihood of Poland being effectively excluded from the European community. Instead of a well-integrated country, Poland would then become a loose satellite of the EU, a state-society with a postcolonial problem. In the lay rationalizing of Rosary to the Borders, if not in its theological dimension, we essentially discover the idea that strength and power can come either from God or from inside the national group. For a sociologist of a Durkheimian persuasion, God is a sacralized society, and if the society in question is devised as a homogenous national group, its habitus is reduced to narcissistic self-idolatry, a dangerous idea changing the nationalized work on symbols into a kind of emotional *perpetuum mobile*.

From an Eliasian point of view, one last remark must be made. Rosary to the Borders is a synecdoche, a figure of speech representing the national habitus, and at its core is fear. Rosary to the Borders was apotropaic, warding off evil, and defensive, not offensive and aggressive. It was also retrospective and restorative, for it looked towards the vanishing borders to resuscitate them by a powerful religious fantasy. It would be a mistake to understand this act as a prideful self-affirmation. Rather, it is a proof of the unsurpassed persistence of yet another emotionally-loaded symbol omnipresent in Polish history: the fear that Poland may be lost after all, contrary to the first words of Polish national anthem, probably the only meaningful sequence of words in Polish ever memorized by Norbert Elias (Gleichmann 2006, 294).

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