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SAINTS AND NON-SAINTS. PATRONAGE IN HANGING CULTURAL AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Abstract. Patrons have played a very important role in the past not only in religious terms, but also as a keystone connecting local communities and even different countries. They therefore influenced international relations. Today, they still play a role at the local and regional government or school levels. They are an element that integrates local communities. This analysis is an attempt to define the phenomenon of patronage and to analyze the cultural and political dimension of the phenomenon, showing how religious, political, and ideological issues have affected the perception and the cultural and political role of patronage in history. Each historical period gave the function of “patronage” its own peculiar feature and the purpose of this paper is to show the phenomenon of the formation of historical memory through the veneration of “saint and non-saint” patrons and to grasp the causes and nature of changes in the perception of patronage.

Keywords: Patron, patronage, politics, conflict, international relations.

The phenomenon of patronage must take into account the ambiguity of this concept, which can include specific regulations of an institutional and legal nature, behaviors and customary norms, issues relating directly to worship, tradition, culture, or, finally, specific forms of political relations (Hale 2005)¹. In each of these approaches, the terms “patron” and “patronage” appear in different roles, even though they share a common perception of the relations involving the “provision of care” in the patron-client arrangement, whereby the clients may be either individual or collective. Patronage

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has historically regulated mutual relations at the level of the rulers and the ruled. It penetrated both the secular and clerical systems, and affected political and ideological issues. It is also present in Europe's contemporary cultural and political conditions, although it sometimes takes on a more entertaining dimension than a political and legal or spiritual one. Nevertheless, patronage continues to be a form of commemoration of figures and issues that are important to the identity and culture of individual social communities, a phenomenon of a spiritual nature, and is sometimes the axis of real political and worldview disputes regarding the problem of falsification of history and creation of counterfactual narratives.

Patronage – especially in the context of the law of patronage – is the subject of research carried out by both legal historians and scholars of socio-religious history. Each of these groups sees different elements in patronage. Legal historians focus on an analysis of legislation, and church historians consider the socio-spiritual context and the role of the patron in the organization of religious life. Despite the seemingly common object of study, in the two approaches the term “patronage” has different meanings. The study of patronage as a religious and cultural phenomenon and, in the current view, also a political one, is therefore difficult and requires an interdisciplinary approach that involves the use of the tools used in the sciences of history, sociology, anthropology, theology, and political science.

The existence of various meanings of patronage is a fundamental issue that requires clarification of the research perspective. In this analysis, I will focus on the cultural and political dimension of this phenomenon. I will not analyze how the issue of patronage is regulated in the ecclesiastical or state legal order or as a socio-political phenomenon; instead, I will show how religious, political, and ideological issues have influenced the perception and cultural and political role of patronage in history.

Each historical period gave the function of “patronage” its own peculiar feature and the purpose of this paper is to show the phenomenon of the formation of historical memory through the veneration of “saint and non-saint” patrons (the latter not having a religious dimension) and to grasp the causes and nature of changes in the perception of patronage. It seems interesting to find the answer to the following question: Why do communities, but also nations, still appeal for the care of patrons and fundamental ideological and political disputes on this issue still take place today, in the third decade of the 21st century? The analysis will be conducted through the lens of the functions of patronage, which have evolved from strictly religious, through ideological and political, to commercial and entertainment-related.

1. Patron and patronage – the essence of the phenomenon

The *Polish Language Dictionary of the PWN* contains several definitions of the term “patron”: 1. A distinguished and usually deceased person whose name is given to an institution or a site; 2. A holy person or tutelary deity to whose care a country, object, person or group is submitted; 3. A saint whose name is given at baptism; 4. A person or institution caring for someone or something; 5. A lawyer directly supervising a trainee’s work; 6. In ancient Rome: a patrician providing care to freed slaves or clients (*Słownik języka polskiego* 2005 p. 626). The term itself is derived directly from Roman law. In ancient Rome, a patron was a patrician who provided care to either freed slaves or poor but free Roman citizens, i.e., clients (Świdorski 2022, p. 30.). Over time, the term has taken on a variety of meanings, both legal and colloquial: In the legal context, patronage was the right to designate a person to hold a benefice. In ecclesiastical legislation, the right of patronage was given to people who had rendered a special service to the church; as such, it was an element of the benefice system. The patron was usually a sponsor of the Church and church property. This resulted in a series of conflicts between the ecclesiastical authority and the sponsor/patron, the essence of which was an attempt to reduce the clergy to the role of clients under the “care” of the secular authority. Canonists link the emergence of the law of patronage to Pope Alexander III (1159–1181). He was the author of most of the paragraphs on this issue that were included in the *Corpus Iuris Canonici* (decrees of Gregory IX, 1227–1241) (Abraham 1889, p. 11). Alexander III primarily restricted the right of sponsor to fill church positions. Sponsors could henceforth only present candidates for ecclesiastical positions, and the right to select and appoint a candidate was left to bishops. The final amendment to the law of patronage on ecclesiastical grounds, as a result of which lay people were deprived of the privilege of nominating candidates for ecclesiastical positions and disposing of benefices, was made at the Council of Trent in 1545–1547 (Pankiewicz 2013, p. 45). After the Council of Trent, the veneration of patron saints, associations, and confraternities was also developed. However, the separation between the institutional church (clergy) and the lay community was illusory. The two spheres overlapped on many levels, from the highest level of mutual relations between the state and the Church, to relations in local parish communities.

In a religious context, a patron is a person who is a guardian or special advocate of a social group, religious community, locality, profession, religious building, school, etc. Saints were patrons of specific days and seasons. In ev-

everyday life, instead of dates, the names of church holidays associated with specific patron saints were used with reference to seasons ("On St. Martin's day, winter begins"), weather phenomena ("On St. Casimir's day, the day covenants with the night"), farm work ("St. John mows the grass"), and the beginning of religious periods ("St. Catherine begins Advent"). The number of saints known to the population was very large, partly due to the popularity of hagiographic literature. However, the legends based on their biographies had little to do with their true lives. People's imagination was also eager to invent "saints" who did not exist in church records.

Patrons can also be persons without the status of a saint (*Kodeks Prawa Kanonicznego*, 1984 can. 1187)². Many of them are historical figures who are important to local communities and revered as patrons by local communities or professional groups. In the case of persons without the status of a saint, their veneration is limited to local communities, and in some cases they may be recognized by the Church at the national level, but not at the level of the entire universal Church. In the Christian tradition, patronage, in addition to its socio-legal dimension, also has a cultural and religious dimension. A patron in this sense is a person recognized as an intercessor with God. According to current church legislation, a patron has to have the rank of a canonized saint. Thus, in the Christian world, persons recognized as saints were chosen as patrons. As early as the 4th century AD, Christian communities assigned the martyr whose tomb was located within the city limits as the patron saint of a given locality. Christians held in deep reverence the memory of heroes who defended their faith at the cost of their lives. Solemn ceremonies were closely linked to the burial places of martyrs, and the sites for new buildings were naturally selected in places of their execution or worship. The practice of placing the corpse or some of the martyr's relics under the sacrificial altar became established in the Church, but this consecration was soon extended to confessors and holy women who were not martyrs. The fundamental doctrinal basis of the worship of patron saints is the doctrine of the communion of saints, or the bond of spiritual unity that exists between God's servants on earth, in heaven, or in purgatory. Saints are considered intercessors for those who make their earthly pilgrimage. Until the 17th century, the faithful, led by church authorities, chose as patrons of churches men and women famous for their miracles, holy lives, or apostolic service in converting the nation into Christians. Urban VIII (March 23, 1638) established rules to guide the faithful in the future selection of patrons of churches, cities, and countries, but did not interfere with the traditional patrons venerated at the time (*Acta S. Sedis*, XI, 292). After the Council of Trent, the veneration of patron saints continued to develop,

and confraternities and associations could also place themselves under the protection of saints. The custom of choosing saints as patrons of nations, countries, regions, districts, dioceses, ecclesiastical institutes, and universities spread after the Second Vatican Council (Syczewski 2017, p. 120–121). It began to spread very widely, virtually every profession has its own patron. During the pontificate of Urban VIII (March 23, 1630), norms for the selection and approval of new patrons for particular localities or kingdoms were specified for the first time: a) a patron *nem loci vel regni* could from now on be only a saint, not a blessed person; b) a request from those in power was not sufficient for the selection of a patron; the patron should be chosen by the people with the consent of the local clergy and the bishop; c) the approval of a patron is done by the Congregation of Rites after examining the request submitted.

The current regulations of the Latin Church on the choice of patron saints are contained in two documents of the Holy See. The first is the instruction of the Congregation for Divine Worship entitled *Calendaria particularia. On the revision of particular calendars and of the propers for offices and Masses* of June 24, 1970 (Congregation for Divine 2024). The provisions contain in paragraphs 28–35 relate to patrons and titles. The second document is the norms of the Congregation for Divine Worship on the assignment of patron saints entitled *De Patronis constituendis* (Congregation for Divine 2024) of March 19, 1973. According to that document, the Blessed Virgin Mary, a saint, or a blessed person who, according to ancient tradition or legal recognition, is venerated as a protector or intercessor with God, is to be chosen as a patron in the liturgical sense. Patrons are assigned to *places* (i.e. countries, regions, dioceses, cities, settlements or villages, and parishes), religious families, legal entities, associations, institutes, and groups – both ecclesiastical and secular. Patrons who may be chosen are *the Blessed Virgin Mary*, under any title adopted in the sacred liturgy, *Angels*, and *Saints*. Blessed persons can be chosen as patrons only with special permission from the Holy See. Divine Persons are excluded. Patrons of places should be chosen by the clergy and the faithful or by those who submit themselves to the patron's care. Patrons of religious families, legal entities, associations, institutes, or groups, should be chosen by those concerned, i.e. by the members who make up the religious family, legal entity, association, institute, or group. The selection must be made either by consultation i.e. vote, or by requests i.e. signatures. The selection of the patron should be approved by the competent ecclesiastical authority, i.e. by the *bishop* for a diocese, by the *Conference of Bishops* for an ecclesiastical province, region, or country, by the *Provincial Chapter* for an ecclesiastical province, or by

the *General Chapter* for the entire religious family. For legal entities, associations, institutes, or groups existing in different parts of the world, the matter is presented to the Holy See. The selection and recognition of the patron must be confirmed by the Congregation for Divine Worship. Confirmation is made by the said Congregation by decree and, when it comes to patrons of a wider region, also by sending an Apostolic Letter in the form of a *breve*. In places where the veneration of, and devotion to, a patron assigned or adopted on the basis of a historical tradition has died out over time or where there is no certain knowledge about the saint, a new patron may be assigned in compliance with the established rules (Congregation for Divine 2024).

Patrons – without ecclesiastical sanction and, of course, without a religious dimension – can also be lay people, but this is a matter of identification with the patron, not faith or expectation of “care.” A lay person can thus be selected as a patron because of his or her special merits, achievements, or influence in a particular field. For example, prominent athletes are often selected as patrons of sports schools. In a social context, a patron is a person or institution that supports or funds an initiative, project, organization, or person. For example, a company may be a patron of a local soccer club, if it provides the club with financial support or sponsorship. In the context of art, patronage can be equated with sponsorship, where a person or institution commissions a work of art or funds an artist to create a piece of art. In a political context, a patron is a person who supports and protects a politician or political party by offering financial support, media endorsement, or influence on political decisions. A patron can be an business owner, celebrity, social activist, or other influential person. A patron can provide “care” to a particular project, initiative, or event. Patronage can be an element of memorial policy and a way of commemorating outstanding figures that are important to the nation. In secular terms, a patron primarily serves to establish an image. Such a patron, along with a flag and coat of arms, is part of the image of the local government community (Ożóg 2017, p. 51).

Modern patrons can also be people who can be described as heroes: figures worthy of emulation and moral role models that integrate a particular group. Role models, as well as the ideological and material activities of people associated with the local community or the national culture, are an important link in the process of upbringing, but also the formation of attitudes. Familiarization with the achievements of distinguished people is a way of passing on knowledge, an outgoing tradition, and at the same time an impulse that forms local ties.

2. Patron saints

Patron saints are important figures in the history of Poland – to a large extent, Polish statehood was consolidated around them. This is not an original phenomenon – the same can be said of other countries within the circle of Christian civilization with the exception that in Poland it lasted longer and had a more profound character. There are two reasons for this. The first is a very strong Catholic tradition that has survived until recent times, and the second is the unique history that has caused Poland and Poles to function for centuries in a politically, religiously, and culturally hostile environment.

The assignment of saints as patrons of Poland dates back to the time of the Piast monarchy, although at that time it probably did not have a formalized character. Patrons served not only a purely religious purpose. Their images were used in monarchical and episcopal iconography to legitimize the king's and bishop's power: having a saint's relic was a great ennoblement for those in power and put their representatives in a better position in the political and international arena. Having a patron saint (and his or her relics) was thus more than a religiously motivated symbol – it was a kind of manifestation of authority and power. The elevation of representatives of ruling dynasties to the altars legitimized the family's rights to hold power. The veneration of patron saints must therefore be considered not only in religious, but also in political terms. Patrons were treated as a weapon in political disputes, as they legitimized the actions of the parties. The promotion of the veneration of saints also served to build unity in the emerging state. However, for unknown reasons, the Piasts did not invest in building their sacred identification, although they were certainly familiar with that practice from other courts. At the turn of the thirteenth century, Saints Olaf, Canute, and Erik were already venerated in Scandinavia – which, incidentally, was one of the foundations of the Kalmar Union in 1397; also, Saints Stephen, Emeric, and Ladislaus were venerated in Hungary and Saints Wenceslas and Ludmila were venerated in Bohemia. Wherever representatives of one or more families clashed in battles for the throne, reference was made to ties linking them to their ancestors recognized as saints. The Piasts were unable to develop veneration of Mieszko I or Boleslaw the Brave. No Polish king has attained the status of a saint. The first saint in the Piast dynasty was Hedwig of Silesia³ (however, she was German), the wife of Henry I the Bearded. The reason for this may have been the strong position of the Cracow bishop and Church hierarchy, which venerated St. Stanislas as a saint murdered by the monarch, which thus defiled the Piasts with an indelible

“original sin” and weakened them in their disputes with the bishop of Cracow. In the Middle Ages, his status as the patron saint of Poland was already firmly established, which was especially supported precisely by the diocese of Cracow.

The veneration of patron saints performed a community-forming and consolidating function in the Middle Ages. The loss of the relics of Saint Adalbert and the Five Martyr Brothers was painfully felt (Zaleski 1989, p. 199)⁴. This is because in the minds of people at the time, it meant a lack of care and blessing. The veneration of patron saints also had its own political conditions, especially during the period when Poland was divided into a number of smaller duchies. The veneration of some saints was extremely helpful in the path of unification of the state in the late 12th and early 13th centuries. This was fostered, among other things, by the identification of Saint Stanislaus as the steward of the Polish coronation insignia awaiting the rightful ruler in the Wawel castle in Cracow. The bishop’s body, cut into pieces according to chronicles, miraculously bonded together in the same way as the divided state ruled by the Piast dynasty would reunite (*Patroni Polski* 2024). Polish military victories – at Płowce in 1331 and Grunwald in 1410 – were linked to his intercession. Saint Stanislaus as the Polish kingdom’s patron saint was included in the ceremony of handing over power to the new monarch, thus ensuring his special care for the crowned ruler. The monarch’s anointing and coronation was to take place at Saint Stanislaus’ altar and not at the main altar. On the eve of the coronation, the future king was to visit the Skalka Church, a temple strongly associated by tradition with the person of Saint Stanislaus, the site of his veneration, and, according to an account going back as early as the Kadłubek Chronicle, the death of the Cracow bishop (Talarowski 2024).

The first to be recognized as the patron saint of Poland, however, was Saint Adalbert, a bishop and martyr who was murdered during a Christianization mission in Prussia. Adalbert came from Bohemia, where he was bishop of Prague. Prague’s residents did not tolerate him and even openly spoke out against him. With the pope’s approval, Adalbert went to Hungary and then to Poland, where he was received by Boleslaw the Brave. He wanted to keep the bishop at his court, but the bishop wanted to go on a mission to Prussia. His attempt at Christianization ended in his death as a martyr. The news quickly reached the pope, who declared Adalbert a saint already two years after his death, in the year 999. Adalbert’s remains, bought by Boleslaw for their weight of silver, rested in Gniezno, where an independent metropolis was established. In 1000, the German emperor Otto III came to the tomb of Saint Adalbert. This event – known

as the Congress of Gniezno – laid the foundations for the organization of the Polish Church and is considered one of the key moments in the development of Polish statehood. In the 13th century, Saint Adalbert was joined by the aforementioned Saint Stanislaus of Szczepanów (canonized in 1254), the bishop of Cracow killed, according to many accounts, in 1079 on the orders of King Boleslaw II the Bold. His veneration, during the period of Poland's division, became one of the cornerstones of the process of unification of the Polish lands. Over time, the group of Poland's patron saints grew to four figures. It was enlarged by Saint Florian, a Roman officer who lived in the 3rd century and died defending persecuted Christians, and Saint Wenceslaus, prince of Bohemia (921–935), distinguished for the Church, who was killed, according to accounts, by his brother in a power struggle. Although neither of the two saints came from Poland or had any formal ties with the country during their lives, they became enshrined in the consciousness of local followers after their deaths. Saint Wenceslaus became the patron saint of the Wawel Cathedral. Relics of Saint Florian were brought to Cracow in 1184. The bishop of Cracow, Gedko, asked Pope Lucius III for the relics, which in 1184 were solemnly deposited in the Wawel Cathedral and held in great veneration (Schenk 1969, p. 184). A few years earlier, in 1166, Bishop Werner brought from Aachen to Płock, as a gift from Emperor Frederick I, a part of the skull of Saint Sigismund, who became the patron saint of Płock. The patron saints venerated in Polish lands in the Middle Ages also included the Five Martyr Brothers (died in 1003), Saint Andrew Świerad (died in approx. 1034), and Saint Hedwig of Silesia (died in 1243).

In 1436, the fourth article of the statutes of the synod of the Cracow diocese became effective, which formally made equal the liturgical worship of Saint St. Florian with the veneration enjoyed so far by the other patron saints of the kingdom: Adalbert, Stanislaw, and Wenceslaus. The bishop of Cracow, Zbigniew Oleśnicki, thus established a list of the four main patron saints of the Polish Kingdom (*patroni principales*), putting Saint Adalbert in the first place, followed by Saint Stanislaus, Saint Florian and Saint Wenceslaus. He categorized all other saints venerated in the country generally as patron saints of the Kingdom (*patroni et apostoli Regni*) (Nocoń 2007, p. 97–113). From then until the end of the 16th century, this group was recognized as the set of patron saints of the Kingdom of Poland. Bishop Oleśnicki was motivated by a desire to emphasize the patron saints' group's links to Cracow: Saint Wenceslaus was, after all, the first patron saint of Wawel Cathedral, where the body of Saint Florian was also laid to rest. When creating a set of patron saints of the Kingdom of Poland,

Oleśnicki used the historiographical and hagiographical output of several centuries of the Polish Middle Ages. Thus, the main reason for the change was political rather than spiritual: the set of saints closely associated with the Cracow Cathedral gave legitimacy to Cracow's bishops in their disputes with the rulers and bishops of Gniezno. Bishop Oleśnicki tried in every possible way to demonstrate that the Cracow Church could take the initiative from the king in joint undertakings concerning the Kingdom (Rowell 2005, p. 12). The composition of the patronal group thus served as an ideological demonstration of the superiority of the Bishop of Cracow in disputes with the metropolitan bishops of Gniezno and, most importantly, with the kings of the Jagiellonian dynasty. The group of patron saints from the synodal statutes quickly found its way into historiography and liturgical books, then into the invocations of churches and altars. The veneration of patron saints became part of the mission to unify liturgy and legislation in the Kingdom of Poland.

The veneration of the four patron saints was perpetuated by the actions of the bishops of Cracow Jan Konarski and Jan Łaski. Jan Łaski, while still a chancellor, was charged by King Alexander Jagiellon with the task of consolidating the laws of the kingdom. His work resulted in the so-called Łaski's Statute of 1506. Printer Jan Haller published in Cracow a book of more than 1,000 pages with a circulation of more than 150 copies, the title of which, translated into Polish, was: *The privileges, constitutions, and official permits, as well as recognized decrees of the glorious Kingdom of Poland*. The code was distributed to all courts in the Kingdom, with the idea of spreading knowledge of the law among the nobility and to support the unification of the state. The collection of graphic art adorning the Statute included a set of four patron saints⁵. In the introduction, Łaski emphasized that he did his work at the behest of King Alexander and for the glory of God and Saints Adalbert, Stanislaus, Wenceslaus, and Florian, the patron saints of the Kingdom of Poland. Thus the campaign aimed at consolidating the kingdom's laws was carried out under the auspices of the patron saints.

The period of wars and continuous decline of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 17th century fostered the development of religiosity, including that of a devotional nature. Putting oneself "under the protection" of patrons has become commonplace. In its most important dimension, this took the form of the so-called Lviv Vows, which took place on April 1, 1656 at the Cathedral of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Lviv. The Mass was conducted by the papal nuncio, Pietro Vidoni. "Great Mother of God's humanity and Virgin! I, John Casimir, a king at the grace of Your

Son, King of kings and my Lord, as well as at Your grace, coming to Your Most Holy feet, make this commitment: I proclaim Your as my Patroness and the Queen of my State today.”⁶ The Lviv Vows were of little political significance, but their taking is considered one of the most momentous events in the history of Poland. Poland, overwhelmed by the Swedish invasion and the Russian army, was placed under the protection of the Mother of God. The Lviv Vows, although they did not bring an immediate political breakthrough, became a turning point in Poland’s history, as they consolidated the Polish society against a common enemy.

In the modern era, the new patron saints of Poland were most often proclaimed by the popes as a result of the efforts of local bishops and the faithful. In 1676, Clement X bestowed this title on Blessed (now Saint) Stanislaus Kostka, a Jesuit who lived in the 16th century and died at a young age. In 1686, Innocent XI similarly honored Saint Jacek Odrowąż, a 13th-century preacher and missionary who organized the Dominican order in Polish lands. In the 18th century, the group of Poland’s patron saints was joined by Saint Kinga (1234–1295), the wife of the Duke of Cracow and Sandomierz Boleslaw V the Chaste, known, among other things, from the legend according to which she found the salt deposits of Wieliczka, John Kanty (1390–1473), a Cracow preacher and theologian, Saint John of Dukla (1414–1484), a famous hermit from the Franciscan order, and Blessed Ladislaus of Gielniów (1440–1505), a Bernardine friar and gifted preacher.

During the period of Poland’s partitions, in the social and spiritual consciousness of Poles, there were many patrons who were symbols of resistance and national unity. One of the most important patron saints of Polishness was Saint Stanislaus Kostka, whose veneration began to develop in the 19th century and became a symbol of the Polish national movement. Saint Stanislaus Kostka was a young Jesuit who died in Rome in 1568. His veneration was revived in the 19th century, when the figure of Saint Stanislaus became a symbol of Polish martyrdom and struggle for independence. Another important patron of the Polish national movement was Jan Kilian, a Polish Catholic clergyman who was active in exile in the USA after the January Uprising. He was a leader of the Polish community in the United States and an important figure for Polish emigres. After returning to Poland, he was assassinated in 1887 for his work in support of the Polish national movement. Tadeusz Kościuszko, hero of the American War of Independence and head of the Kościuszko Uprising in 1794, was also an important patron of Polishness. His figure was a symbol of the struggle for Poland’s independence and freedom. Another such a patron was Napoleon Bonaparte, whose victories were presented as a symbol of the re-

birth of the state and commemorated in the patriotic songs *Dąbrowski's Mazurka* and *Warszawianka* (as a reference to the campaigns and battles fought by Bonaparte).

The partitioning powers tried to impose their patron saints on Poles, especially in the Russian partition. The tsarist authorities sought to Russify the Polish people and one of the elements of this process was the introduction of Russian patron saints in place of traditional Polish ones. A particular manifestation of this phenomenon was baptizing Polish children with giving them Russian first names. Religion and its associated patrons helped redefine national identity. The non-existent state lived in the tradition, culture, and the need for national self-identification, and religion, ethnicity, and traditional culture became the foundations for the survival of Polish national identification.

With the reactivation of local self-government after the fall of the communist government in Poland and after the local government reforms of 1990 and 1999, it became important to emphasize the identity and cultural ties of the new territorial units. Patron saints – traditionally associated with specific cities and regions, or chosen as a symbol of their uniting values and goals – become an important symbol integrating local communities. This was also reflected in the sphere of symbols. Placing an image of a saint on the shield of the coat of arms – often for image-related and promotional purposes – although not formally linked to the issue of patronage in the awareness of the local community, is often perceived precisely as an expression of patronage (Puszyński 2011, pp. 58–59).

3. Non-saint patrons of Poland

Not only patron saints have been venerated in Poland. In the Second Republic, it was common to name schools after Józef Piłsudski and Tadeusz Kościuszko. The school in Sulejówek-Cechówka was named after Piłsudski while he was still alive. During the Polish People's Republic, the veneration of saints and patrons was restricted by the state. The communist government was opposed to religion and sought to drive it out of public life. Nevertheless, they chose not to openly confront the Church. The veneration of patron saints thus developed and even flourished as an expression of opposition to communism: Saint Joseph the Worker was the patron saint of workers, artisans, factory owners, and all working people; Our Lady of Częstochowa, in the perception of the public, was still the patron saint of Poland, and the sanctuary in Częstochowa attracted pilgrims all the time; Saint Andrew

Bobola was not only the patron saint of Poland and a martyr who died at the hands of Cossacks during the Khmelnytsky *Uprising*, but also – during the communist era – was considered a symbol of Polish resistance to Sovietization and repression. The veneration and patronage of Saint Maximilian Kolbe, a Franciscan who voluntarily gave his life in Auschwitz in exchange for the life of another prisoner, was developing. His deeds and sacrifices were especially appreciated by Poles under communism. Other popular saints and patron saints during the communist era included Saint Faustina Kowalska and John Paul II (pope).

The communist authorities realized that religion and religiosity were serious cracks in the ideological monism of the new regime, which is why the communists in power in Poland after 1945 promoted their own “saints.” With the exception of the tolerated President Gabriel Narutowicz, Józef Piłsudski, Marshal Edward Śmigły-Rydz, and General Bronisław Pieracki disappeared from school names. Instead, “heroes” with an ideologically legitimate biography emerged. In a school in Warsaw’s Bródno district, Colonel Leopold Lis-Kula was replaced as the patron by Ludwik Waryński, and in Radom, Prime Minister Ignacy Daszyński was replaced by Janek Krasicki (Henzler 2017). Such creators and ideologues of communism became patrons of streets, schools, and cities as: Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Georgi Dimitrov, Joseph Stalin, Bella Kun, Ho Chi Minh, Mao Zedong, and Che Guevara. The authorities deprived hundreds of schools taken over by the state, previously run by religious orders, educational societies, and private individuals of their Church-related patrons. Atheization extended even to reformist priests whose historical merits lay outside the religious sphere, such as Father Stanisław Konarski, patron of a school in Jarocin. Instead, disregarding the opinion of school communities, the authorities imposed their own patrons. The Communists had a monopoly on the names of the “millennium schools” built to mark the Millennium of the Polish State. The first of them – school no. 7 in Czeladź, built in 1959, was personally opened by the communist party leader Władysław Gomułka, who named it after General Karol Świerczewski (Henzler 2017). The new patrons were figures associated with the communist movement and playing an important role in the development of socialism and Marxism, worker movement activists, and revolutionary leaders: Marceli Nowotko, Ludwik Waryński, Wanda Wasilewska, Janek Krasicki, Marcin Kasprzak, Paweł Finder, Hanka Sawicka, Felix Dzierzhinsky, and various military leaders. In 1967, Edward Gierek opened the Vladimir Lenin School of Construction Crafts in Rybnik. A technical secondary school in Tarnowskie Góry, an elementary school in Piwniczna, and a secondary school in Zabrze also had this patron. Georgi Dimitrov was the

patron of a secondary school in Poznań, and Felix Dzerzhinsky was the patron of a Polish secondary school in Moscow as well as schools in Dąbrowa Górnicza, Aleksandrów Kujawski, and Dźbowo near Częstochowa. Bolesław Bierut was the patron of elementary schools in Kłodawa and Bytom, as well as a vocational school in Leszno, while Gomułka was the patron of a school in Łukta near Ostróda (Henzler 2017).

New “heroes” were also promoted as patrons: military men associated with the communist partisan movement and the Polish People’s Army: General Zygmunt Berling, Marshal Rola-Żymierski, General Karol Świerczewski, and Aniela Krzywoń. Still another group of new patrons were historical figures who began to be credited with a positive role in the propagation of the peasants’ movement: Jakub Szela and Kostka-Napierski, or the proletarian movement: Jarosław Dąbrowski and Ludwik Waryński. They were attributed many commendable qualities and presented as role models. The communist authorities also brilliantly harnessed historical figures and events to legitimize their power and ideology, especially in connection with the celebration of the Millennium of the Polish State. Finally, the Second World War caused a great many real secular heroes to appear in the political and cultural space: partisans, athletes, soldiers, heroes of the fight against Nazis, whom the communists tried to incorporate into the ideology of the communist state.

The patrons of the communist period changed with the spirit of political change in the communist camp, but the successive communist governments also promoted their own patrons. The most visible manifestation of this trend was the “de-Stalinization” and “de-Bierutization” of patrons after 1956. Stalin was the main patron of streets or schools until 1956, when, after the Polish October, a de-Stalinization was carried out of street names and patrons of schools and even cities – Katowice became Katowice again, not Stalinogród.

The Third Republic saw a spontaneous rejection of communist-era patrons, although not all of them. The largest wave of decommunization of names of public places, patrons of institutions, took place immediately after 1989. The removal of names and objects symbolizing the communist system from public space was mostly spontaneous, and later the process was stopped. In 2007, Janusz Kurtyka, then the president of the Institute of National Remembrance, began sending letters to local government officials. The institute estimated that there were 1,500 names and patrons associated with communism in Poland. The letters were sent, among others, to Choceń in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Province, where there was still a street named after General Karol Świerczewski, who fought on the side of

Russia in the Polish-Bolshevik war, to Mińsk Mazowiecki, where the patron of one of the streets was General Stanisław Popławski, responsible for the bloody suppression of the Poznań June protests in 1956 (Ferfecki 2015), and to Białowieża, where the main streets were named after Olga Gabiec, who fought for the annexation of Polish lands to the USSR, and Alexander Vashkevich, a Soviet military officer.

The final erasure from public space of names and patrons associated with communism was brought about by the next decommunization act of 2016 (amended in 2017). According to Article 1 of that Act (Journal of Laws of 2017, item 1389), all symbols and names commemorating persons, organizations, events, or dates symbolizing or propagating the non-sovereign system of government in Poland in 1944–1989 were to disappear from streets, squares, parks, and other places. It was assumed that the provisions of the decommunization act would cover more than 1,300 street names. More than 80 streets were still named after Karol Świerczewski, more than 10 – after the Red Army, and more than 15 – after Marcei Nowotko (Niziolek, Jaworski 2018). However, the changes caused great controversy among residents, who often preferred to leave the previous addresses (Pawłowski 2018). They pointed to “being accustomed,” high costs, but also the lack of controversy in the case of many of the patrons deemed “communist” by the new act (Ćwieluch 2016). Many cases ended with administrative court rulings challenging street name changes because of insufficient justification for the changes presented in the orders requiring such changes. The court rulings were issued at the request of political majorities in local governments and were, regardless of the legal rationale, a consequence of the historical and political dispute that took place in Poland. The dispute was a broader phenomenon involving almost the entire social and political life. Disputes over patrons of schools, public buildings, communes, cities, etc. became common⁷. One of the most high-profile cases of this type was a dispute at the School and Kindergarten Complex no. 5 in Wałbrzych, where a vote was held to select a school patron. The winner was Princess Daisy⁸, who received more votes than John Paul II and Saint Faustina Kowalska. Disputes over new street or school patrons also became commonplace, with proposals to commemorate the “cursed soldiers” and, in recent years, also Lech Kaczyński and Maria Kaczyńska, as well as other victims of the Smolensk catastrophe. Conflicts over patrons, who began to divide communities instead of uniting them, were caused by the fact that politicians tried to appropriate the entire sphere of historical experience of Poles and re-impose on them a new historical identity, with patrons being only a tool of that identity.

Conclusion

The purposes of this analysis were to show the problem of formation of historical memory through the veneration of saint and non-saint patrons and to capture the causes and nature of the changes in its perception. Collective memory, or the idea of a group's past, is one of the constitutive features of a community, both at the high (national) and lower (territorial) levels. One of the elements that influence the policy of remembrance, but also integrate the national community and local communities, is the veneration of patrons. The current group of Poland's patron saints includes Saint Adalbert and Saint Stanislaus of Szczepanów. The secondary patrons are Saint Andrew Bobola and Saint Stanislaus Kostka. The patroness of Poland today is also the Blessed Virgin Mary Queen of Poland. Her veneration in this role has been developing on the banks of Vistula since the 16th century, and gained strength, among other periods, during the Swedish Deluge. Today, this group of Poland's patron saints plays a unifying role for the Catholics living in the country, and also commemorates the saints whose veneration has left a particularly large mark on Poland's history. An annual patronage established by the Parliament of the Republic of Poland has been in effect since 2001. In this case, the patrons are figures of particular importance to Poland's history and culture, but it is also a form of commemoration of particularly important events. Patronage therefore exists in two systems. The veneration of a patron saint, which takes place in the sacred sphere, influences the secular sphere by bringing to the fore ethical, historical, and cultural aspects. The selection of a patron is about shaping the image of the unit of local or regional government and facilitates its promotion by symbolically pointing to the values and social attitudes attributed to the patron saint (Ożóg 2019, p. 312).

Patrons still play a special role today at the local and regional government or school level. They are an element that integrates local communities. One of the forms of cultivation of the memory of a patron is the celebration of annual Patron's Days. Such festivities provide many educational benefits, as they involve the local community in the organization of the associated events. Currently, the most common patrons are prominent persons associated with national culture. This is often a continuation of old traditions. Political considerations affecting the choice of patrons are also important, as political disputes influence concrete decisions, with patrons losing their integrating, community-building function and ceasing to be "guardians" and role models. In some cases, there is an overlap between the two systems and spiritual-religious and commercial-entertainment spheres emerge. Saint

Valentine, Saint Patrick, and Saint Nicholas, each being a Christian patron saint, have lost their spiritual function precisely in favor of commercialism and entertainment. Introducing a religious theme also into the promotional policy of units of local and regional government is actually quite common today⁹.

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N O T E S

¹ Henry E. Hale tried to determine the common denominator of the post-Soviet countries by describing their system of government as “patronal presidentialism.” Its essence was to boil down to a much stronger position of the president elected by universal suffrage compared to other institutions of the state. This was the result of both formal powers (law and constitution) and informal powers resulting from the patron-client relationship.

² The 1983 Code of Canon Law clearly specifies that public worship can be given only to those servants of God who have been recognized as saints or blessed persons by the authority of the Church.

³ She died in 1243. As early as 1267, Pope Clement IV canonized her, and her patronal feast was extended to the entire Church in 1680 under the pontificate of Innocent XI. St. Hedwig is considered the patron saint of Silesia and the reconciliation of Germans and Poles.

⁴ In 1038, during the invasion of Poland, the Bohemian prince Bretislav robbed Gniezno and stole the relics of Saint Adalbert and the Five Martyr Brothers.

⁵ See: <https://www.bibliotekacyfrowa.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=77388> (accessed on January 2, 2024).

⁶ See: <https://pelagiusasturiensis.wordpress.com/2016/04/01/tekst-slubow-lwowskich/> (accessed on February 23, 2024).

⁷ An analysis of the “geography” of patrons in Poland imposed to support particular political parties would be an interesting research area.

⁸ Maria Teresa Oliwia Hochberg von Pless, also known as Daisy von Pless, was an English aristocrat, mistress of the Książ Castle in Wałbrzych and the Pszczyna Castle, a philanthropist, pacifist and author of memoirs.

⁹ See: K. Świdorski, *Ustanowienie świętego patrona...* [Assignment of patron saints...], op. cit.

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