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**HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY OF  
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CZARNOWSKI**

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## **HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY OF MEMORY BY STEFAN CZARNOWSKI<sup>2</sup>**

The paper is focused on Stefan Czarnowski (1879-1937), early Polish sociologist, one of the founders of professional sociology in Poland, and author of an original concept in the historical sociology of culture. His ideas about forms and ways of functioning of the past in the present as well as mechanisms of nation-building (using the example of St. Patrick as a resource of formation of national identity of Irish people) are considered in the context of history of memory studies and nationalism studies.

Key words: Stefan Czarnowski, memory studies, nationalism studies, the past, history, historiography, national hero, nation-building, national identity.

JEL Classification: Z.

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## Stefan Czarnowski: introduction

The name Stefan Czarnowski does not say much outside Poland, even to a well-informed scholar of the humanities<sup>3</sup>. In the best case, his name can be met in the list of “representatives of the Durkheimian school”, a list that spread over several lines on the pages of general treatises on the history of sociology. He was a prominent Polish scholar of the inter-war period, one of the founders and most brilliant representatives of professional sociology in Poland, and the author of an original concept in the historical sociology of culture. Thanks to his efforts, the University of Warsaw became the second university in Poland, after Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, to offer academic training in sociology. Stefan Czarnowski was held in high esteem internationally. 1919 saw the publication of the book he completed yet in 1911, “The Cult of Heroes and Its Social Conditions. St. Patrick, the National Hero of Ireland”: it was printed in French in Paris. A foreword to the study was written by Henri Hubert, Czarnowski’s teacher and one of the leading followers of Durkheim’s theory. This work won Czarnowski international renown first of all as a specialist in the history of religion. After retirement from the army Czarnowski taught in different educational establishments. The only non-French follower of the Durkheimian school, in 1924 he was invited to take part in the establishment of the French Institute of Sociology (l’Institut français de sociologie), founded by Marcel Mauss at the Sorbonne. In 1928, the École pratique des hautes études in Paris invited Czarnowski, who received his degree there, to deliver a series of lectures. He represented Polish academia many times at the largest international conferences devoted to history and religion studies. In 1925 he was granted the habilitation in history of religion at the University of Warsaw, where he became a full-time employee in 1926. In 1929 Czarnowski became an associate member of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Polskiej Akademii Umiejętności), and in 1931 – a full member of the Warsaw Scientific Society (Towarzystwo Naukowe Warszawskie). In 1930 he became a chair of the department of history of culture and non-tenured professor at the University of Warsaw, and in 1934 – a professor of sociology and history of culture at the University of Warsaw, and his department became a department of sociology and history of culture – the University’s first department to offer degrees in sociology. In 1934, Czarnowski became a professor of sociology and history of culture at the University of Warsaw.

The scholar’s academic methodology was a creative synthesis of the main principles of Durkheim and Marxism, whose appeal for him was growing over time. His political views went through complex transformations, from a right-wing national democracy through the Polish Socialist Party to increasingly leftist attitudes and sympathy for the workers’ movement. He was an active anti-fascist, speaking out fervently against pro-fascist organizations and their attempts to influence the academic community and against anti-Semitism of Polish right-wingers, and actively participated in the Human Rights League founded by Polish intellectuals. As a consequence, he was persecuted by the right-wing nationalist press, and he died suddenly, aged 58, on December 29, 1937. He was buried on the New Year’s Eve, and it was the saddest day for Polish sociologists. There are tragic parallels between his life and the biography of his teacher Durkheim. Like

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<sup>3</sup> Considering this, we want to sketch out Czarnowski’s biography. Stefan Zygmunt Czarnowski was born on September 1, 1879, in a village called Kroczewo in east Poland, which was then a part of the Russian Empire. In 1898-1902 he studied in Leipzig and Berlin. In 1902, as a punishment for his participation in Polish organizations, he was banished from Germany and moved to Paris. He studied sociology at the Sorbonne and Collège de France. In 1911 he graduated from the École pratique des hautes études. In 1912 he returned to Poland and began his career as a journalist and community activist in Warsaw, publishing the Polish Weekly. A Polish patriot, public figure and social commentator, Stefan Czarnowski was always active in public affairs. Before Poland gained independence, he was arrested and sent into exile by both Russian and German authorities. Giving up his academic career and turning down the offer of a professorship at the University of Warsaw, Czarnowski joined the Polish Legions in 1915, where he put a lot of time and effort into training Polish officers before leaving the army in 1923. In 1920, when the fate of Poland was being determined, he was doing military service. He died in Warsaw on December 29, 1937. The most comprehensive account of Czarnowski’s life and work was written by his student Nina Assorodobraj. See: Assorodobraj N. *Życie i dzieło Stefana Czarnowskiego / Czarnowski S. Dzieła*. T.V. Warszawa. Państwowe wydawnictwo naukowe, 1956. Pp. 105-156.

Durkheim, he lost his only son; like the French sociologist, he died shortly before turning 60. Unlike Durkheim, however, Czarnowski embarked on an academic career late in life and did not found a school. At that point, one begins to see more parallels with Max Weber – he, too, did not found a school and was semi-forgotten until the beginning of the Weberian Renaissance, which, decades after his death, won him recognition as one of the world's foremost social scientist and scholar of the humanities.

Czarnowski's collected works were published in Poland only in 1956, nearly 20 years after his death. His book "The Cult of Heroes and Its Social Conditions. St. Patrick, the National Hero of Ireland"<sup>4</sup>, which won him international renown, was first published in Polish in the fourth volume of this collection. The sociologist's centennial caused a new stirring of interest in his work in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The first monograph devoted to him was printed, in Poland, in 1989<sup>5</sup>. However, only in recent years has a strong wave of interest in the scholar's legacy in Poland been seen. The publication, in 2008, of the collection of articles "Stefan Czarnowski: Looking at Him Seventy Years Later"<sup>6</sup>, on the occasion of the sociologist's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death, became a landmark event. The author of one of the articles, Robert Traba, who is a leading modern Polish historian researching Polish-German 'sites of memory', very aptly remarked on the surprising fact that Czarnowski's works, although very much in tune with the spirit of the day, had been forgotten<sup>7</sup>. Traditionally, both in Poland and abroad, when Czarnowski was mentioned, if at all, he was presented more often as a scholar of religion, a specialist in 'folk religion', rather than as a sociologist, historian and theoretician of culture<sup>8</sup>.

Czarnowski's sociological project (for all the seminal differences between the methodologies of the French school of sociology and the German *Verstehen* sociology<sup>9</sup>) was akin to Weber's in two aspects. First, Czarnowski did not separate sociology from history and believed that only historical sociology was a truly academic discipline. His approach was based on the premise that historical facts should be compared and typologized rather than viewed as unique and unrepeatable<sup>10</sup>. Second, his academic activities were also centered on culture, which puts Czarnowski in the same league as Weber, the foremost scholar of culture and the author of "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism". The study of culture, he believed, should be based on understanding value systems typical for the societies one studied. In this respect, too, he is very close to *Verstehen* sociology. Czarnowski's last book, on which he worked from 1932, publishing one piece at a time, and which was released in its entirety after his death, was called "Culture"<sup>11</sup> and contained an analysis of the most important issues of cultural sciences.

We think that "the turn to Czarnowski" happening today in the Polish humanities is not at all accidental. Only the modern scholarly context has provided an appropriate lens for reading his works and evaluating his activities. It is the cultural turn of the 1980s, whose sway has extended over sociology, among other things, and an emphasis on studying culture in modern sociology, the

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<sup>4</sup> Czarnowski S. *Kult bohaterów i jego społeczne podłoże. Święty Patryk bohater narodowy Irlandii* / Czarnowski S. *Dzieła*. Tom. IV. Warszawa. Państwowe wydawnictwo naukowe, 1956.

<sup>5</sup> Legiędz-Galuszka M. *Czarnowski*. Warszawa. Wiedza Powszechna, 1989.

<sup>6</sup> Jabłonowski, Marek (ed.). *Stefan Czarnowski z perspektywy siedemdziesięciolecia* / Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Traba R. Wkład do badań nad pamięcią zbiorową / w: *Stefan Czarnowski z perspektywy siedemdziesięciolecia*. Red. Marek Jabłonowski. Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance: François-A. Isambert. 'At the Frontier of Folklore and Sociology: Hubert, Hertz and Czarnowski, Founders of a Sociology of Folk Religion' / *The Sociological Domain*, Philippe Besnard (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. Yet in 1976 another prominent Polish sociologist Florian Znaniecki wrote: "So far, only his accomplishments in religion studies have been recognized and appreciated..." (Znaniecki F. *Stefan Czarnowski: 1879-1937 / Przegląd Socjologiczny*, T. 5: 1937 z. 3/4. Pp. 521-529).

<sup>9</sup> Czarnowski, however, had some exposure to the German sociological tradition. In 1901/1902 he studied at Leipzig University under Georg Simmel.

<sup>10</sup> Stefan Czarnowski wrote: "the marriage of... sociology and history of culture is not a formality – it corresponds with the most vital facts, namely, the fact that cultural phenomena, on the one hand, are social phenomena, which, in order to become intelligible, must be approached sociologically. And on the other hand, all social facts, including cultural facts, are historical and must be studied from a historical perspective." (Sprawozdanie z działalności Wydziału Humanistycznego Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego za rok 1931/1932. Warszawa 1932. P. 82. Quoted from: *Stefan Czarnowski z perspektywy siedemdziesięciolecia*. P.89).

<sup>11</sup> Czarnowski S. *Kultura* / Czarnowski S. *Dzieła*. Tom. I. Warszawa. Państwowe wydawnictwo naukowe, 1956.

birth of new cultural history, and the development of cultural studies, that have laid a new foundation for the perception of Stefan Czarnowski's ideas. Especially important for us, the birth of memory studies – the discipline addressing collective / cultural / social memory – has made it important to revisit Czarnowski. When looked at through this lens, Czarnowski appears to be one of the main founders of this discipline in Poland and one of the international giants of this discipline, on a par with Maurice Halbwachs and Aby Warburg. However, discussions about Czarnowski are usually limited to the Polish academic (and linguistic) contexts. International scholars specializing in memory studies, nationalism studies and cultural studies in most cases know a little about him. The current situation, meanwhile, highlights the importance of his legacy, especially the ideas about the development of national identities, and the role of commemorative practices related to national heroes in this process, the analysis of the functioning of the past in the present, the exploration of structure and dynamics of culture, and issues of intercultural interaction<sup>12</sup>. Our thoughts, set forth in this article, are intended to partially fill this gap for the international academic community. Our objective is to review Czarnowski's key ideas pertaining to memory studies both in the context of the Durkheimian school, to which he belonged, and in the modern international context.

### **The 1980s: reappearance of Stefan Czarnowski in the context of developing memory studies**

Speaking about Stefan Czarnowski's contribution to the development of memory studies, one should first of all give some thought to his book about St. Patrick, which we have already mentioned, as well as several articles, the most important among them, in our opinion, being Czarnowski's two late works: "The Past and the Present in Culture" (1936)<sup>13</sup> and "The Birth and Social Functions of History" (1937)<sup>14</sup>. His book is a case study in which an exploration of a specific historical subject produced (more or less explicitly) theoretical postulates, whereas the articles have a general theoretical nature. Stefan Czarnowski was working on the question of collective memory at the same time as Durkheim. The study of the cult of St. Patrick was finished a year before the publication of "The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life", although several years passed before it went to print. We can safely assume that Czarnowski pursued his line of inquiry quite independently, relying on the Durkheimian general methodological framework. In 1925, Maurice Halbwachs' book "Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire" (Social Frameworks of Memory) was published. This book for the first time clearly articulated 'the paradigm of memory', highlighting the contribution of Halbwachs' predecessors, Durkheim and Czarnowski, to the creation of the paradigm. The notion of collective memory, introduced by Halbwachs, specified the subject of their academic interest.

The development of social sciences and the humanities in the 20<sup>th</sup> century appear to have brought into focus the essence and meaning of many of Czarnowski's ideas. The appropriate conceptual 'frame' for understanding his ideas was set by the studies of 'sites of memory' and their role in creating and maintaining national identities, and the discussions of the role of cultural memory in the life of a nation, which were stimulated by the development of the constructivist paradigm in the research on nation building. Czarnowski's research is rooted in the seminal principles of Durkheim's theory: society is held together by moral unity transcending individual existence, this unity is sustained by collective ideas, and these ideas are localized in specific images of personages or 'heroes', which should become the embodiment of society and as such are subject to sacralization; they give life to repetitive commemorative rituals which sustain collective solidarity while also drawing on society's moral unity as the source of their sacred might.

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<sup>12</sup> As American sociologist Barry Schwartz remarked, Czarnowski's work about the worship of St. Patrick, despite its indisputable relevance in the light of Durkheim's ideas about social roots of memory, was forgotten. This happened because "Czarnowski's efforts... were too specialized to be appreciated outside a small circle of religion scholars" (Schwartz, Barry. 'Introduction: The Expanding Past' / *Qualitative Sociology*. 1996. Vol. 19. № 3. P.275).

<sup>13</sup> Czarnowski S. *Dawność a terażniejszość w kulturze* / Czarnowski S. *Kultura...*

<sup>14</sup> Czarnowski S. *Powstanie i społeczne funkcje historii* / Czarnowski S. *Dzieła*. Tom. V. Warszawa. Państwowe wydawnictwo naukowe, 1956.

Czarnowski's approach to the study of the cult of a Christian saint and Durkheim's treatment of a totemic cult do not radically differ in this respect.

The difference is in that Czarnowski in his research focused not on tribal communities but on nations, or rather on their historical and cultural roots. He was interested in the role of national heroes as images woven by collective memory in the process of development of national identities. Czarnowski explored the meaning of these images, the social mechanisms of their development and extension, and the reasons why archaic heroes play so important a role in the lives of modern nations. This line of inquiry, pursued by Czarnowski, taps right into the core of the present-day discussions of the 'imagined', 'invented', 'constructed' nature of nations. In these discussions, Czarnowski today would have hardly sided with the proponents of radical constructivism. The latest argue that symbols and images of the past imprinted on collective memory do not play a role in nation-building. Elites construct nations as they please 'here and now', and any national identity can be grafted onto the masses, if only the identity makers apply enough political will, organizational effort, academic and artistic talent, and material resources. Czarnowski did not at all deny that nations, being a modern and constructed phenomenon, were a product of the New Age and they owed their existence to intellectual and political elites. His position, if looked at through a modern lens, is a thoughtful synthesis of elements of constructivism with some elements of the cultural-historical version of primordialism.

Of course, one should keep in mind the specific historical situation when this monograph was created. The politically engaged author of "The Cult of Heroes" certainly could not have remained indifferent to the typological parallels between the history of Ireland and the history of Poland. In both cases the subject discussed was national communities deprived of statehood by external forces and sustaining their national unity despite external pressures, relying on memories of the past which were preserved, in either case, mostly in the Catholic Church and the associated cult. It is difficult not to notice in the Czarnowski quote below a reference to the Poles' as 'a nation without a state' and the related discussions about preserving the Polish identity in the period of the Partitions: "St. Patrick is the embodiment of Irish people's national unity regardless of the vicissitudes of history and the dispersal of his followers. Ireland enjoys his patronage not as a territory or a political entity but first of all as a community of people. St. Patrick is the guarantor of Irish people's continued existence and symbol of all their aspirations"<sup>15</sup>. He also points out Poland's vital question of combining its national and religious identities. 'To be Irish (and) Catholic' as a sort of strong linking was as powerful as 'to be Polish (and) Catholic', and the churches in each country served as a symbol of national unity. This is how Czarnowski describes (not without a modernizing and anachronistic touch) the early medieval period of the Viking raids into Ireland: "The Polish Roman Catholic Church was the only political institution left then. It was then the pivot of national hopes at the time of struggle against pagan barbarians. Irish patriotism interlocked with faith, thus reinvigorating the cult of St. Patrick in order to keep up the spirits of the vanquished"<sup>16</sup>.

As for the article "The Past and the Present in Culture", it appears that the most appropriate context for the modern reading of this work is so called tradition studies, or 'traditiology' (to use the definition once suggested by Soviet scholar Eduard Markaryan<sup>17</sup>), *Tradierungsforschung*, etc. – the discipline currently in the making, which, being coterminous with memory studies, engages with forms of cultural transmission and traditions. Czarnowski's unfinished article "The Birth and Social Functions of History" has much in common first of all with the discussions around the historical policy and the relationship between history and memory. Taking into account these considerations, we propose first to analyze the phenomenon of national heroes at the center of Czarnowski's important book.

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<sup>15</sup> Czarnowski S. *Kult bohaterów...* P. 223.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* P. 219.

<sup>17</sup> See: Markaryan E.S. Key issues of the theory of cultural tradition [In Russian] / *Sovetskaya Etnografia*. 1981. № 2.

## The Cult of Hero and National Identity

St. Patrick is approached by Czarnowski precisely as a national hero, and his cult, therefore, appears already as a system of commemorative practices that foster not only Irish Catholics' religious identity, but the national identity of Irish people. The study thus reaches beyond the history of religion and becomes a historical-sociological exploration of the role of cultural memory in shaping and sustaining a national identity. The hero, for Czarnowski, is a social phenomenon. First of all, because he embodies the values, ideals and hopes of a particular social group (embodies 'a moral ideal'<sup>18</sup>). His recognition as a hero is social because he is the patron and protector of the group that he represents, and, finally, his cult, too, is public. His cult becomes imprinted forever on this group's memory: "and although generations one after another fall into the darkness of oblivion, the hero continues to be worshipped in the same manner as before"<sup>19</sup>.

Czarnowski's concept of the hero's social meaning is close to Durkheim's interpretation of totemism<sup>20</sup>. The Polish sociologist writes: "*The group sees itself* [italized in original] *in them* [the heroes. – A.V.]; it externalizes itself in the heroes, and their glory is the group's glory"<sup>21</sup>. Irish society, like Australian society, was organized around clans and kinship groups. Festivals were the main events to bring together members of different clans and let them feel united. So the hero to whom a regularly repeated festival was dedicated would become the main unifying figure. "Festival is the sole instance when society becomes aware of its being a group, and this awareness grows all the stronger as contacts among its members in periods between the festivals become weaker"<sup>22</sup>.

Just like Durkheim engaging with the subject of Australian totemism, Czarnowski, using his material, sees an interrelation between the social structure of the studied society and the cult. The organization of religious life in Ireland, according to the Polish sociologist, reflected ancient Ireland's tribal structure and, therefore, was markedly aristocratic. "The type of a low-born saint, so common in other Christian countries, is practically unknown in Ireland"<sup>23</sup>. This is the reason why St. Patrick is the father figure of all Irish people and the primogenitor of all clans and kinship groups. Czarnowski wrote: "The phrase 'the father of Irish people's faith', when applied to Patrick, is not just a simple figure of speech. St. Patrick, indeed, is related to Irish túatha [tribes. – A.V.]. His cult is the cult of a father figure... However, his relations with the clans and kinship groups are less evident than the other saints' in the same proportion, as his connection with Ireland, as a whole, is stronger. He is not a hero of a separate province or a patron of a separate monastery. He is the national hero"<sup>24</sup>.

From the viewpoint of memory studies, of greatest interest is Czarnowski's analysis of social mechanisms, shaping the Irish national cult of St. Patrick and transforming him into a national saint. So, the scholar is focused on social communities (fraternities) that were present throughout Ireland, across the borders of kinship groups, clans and kingdoms. Ireland had two communities of this type – druids and filid. Responsible for religious affairs, druids were priests of a pagan cult, exercised great influence on social and political life, and had a high social status. Filid practised magic and prophesy, and studied nature. Some of them handled legal affairs. But most importantly, filid were historians and the keepers of memory, epics, legends and myths. Each fili was well versed in the doings of the past. Filid, the experts in history (*sencha*), according to

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<sup>18</sup> Czarnowski S. *Kult bohaterów...* P. 161. The Kraków sociologist Ewa Stawowy in an old article provided the most insightful treatment of this aspect of Czarnowski's work. She approaches Czarnowski's book about St. Patrick as a study of social origins and functioning of values embodied in a national hero's image (Stawowy, Ewa. Stefana Czarnowskiego socjologiczna analiza kultu bohatera / *Rocznik Naukowo-Dydaktyczny WSP* (Kraków) Z. 57: 1975: "Prace Filozoficzne" [nr] 2. Pp. 51-66.).

<sup>19</sup> Czarnowski S. *Kult bohaterów...* P. 27.

<sup>20</sup> In one of the appendixes to "The Cult" Czarnowski reviews arguments about the existence of totemism and its survivals in Celtic culture in light of the fact that totemism perfectly matched the Celts' clan-based social organization (Czarnowski S. *Kult bohaterów...* P. 235).

<sup>21</sup> Czarnowski S. *Kult bohaterów...* P. 160.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. P. 233.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. P. 190.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. P. 193.

Czarnowski, were “a living museum and archive of Irish *tíath*”<sup>25</sup>. When a new king was inaugurated, a fili would recall the tribe’s customs, and it was to him that the king would swear an oath to observe them. Filid’s main mission was keeping and reactivating the collective memory. They were poets and storytellers. Filid were expected to be able to recite a tale on any subject as requested and recall facts from the past, as narrated in myths and epics, relevant to a particular incident. That was the reason why they had a regular presence at all religious ceremonies – they were to explain the meaning of what was going on, engaging with the group’s memories. “At general meetings, while a druid was performing a sacrifice, a fili would talk about and explain the meaning of the ceremony and the rites, narrate myths and legends related to the ceremony’s origin and date and place of its performance”<sup>26</sup>. In their tales, they mostly emphasized gods’ and heroes’ *res gestae*. Filid were the keepers of memory of Irish aristocracy. It was an autonomous cooperative with a high sense of solidarity, as well as a strict training program and hierarchy of disciples and masters.

Filid became the driving force of Christianization in Ireland, and their methods of attracting disciples and working with them were emulated by St. Patrick. Unlike druids, filid were not directly related to the religious tradition of paganism. They saw in Christianity a pillar of support in their struggle against druids, with whom they competed for influence. In the course of Christianization, filid, unlike druids, did not lose their status and functions in the society. Only several, obviously pagan disciplines, in their educational canon, were replaced with Christian subjects. In the course of Christianization, many filid became priests. The spiritual hierarchy of the church and the academic hierarchy among filid fitted together well and enriched each other intellectually, creating the canon of Irish national culture. Filid created the cult of saints being worshipped across Ireland, with St. Patrick on top of the list. Filid and their disciples were traveling across the island all the time. They were untouchable and could travel to any section of Ireland, even when neighboring kingdoms were at war with each other. They were carrying along with them knowledge, customs and legends. Chief filid had been assembling at their courts members of the fraternity from Ireland’s most distant corners. This provided an opportunity to learn about different regional traditions. “Thus,” wrote Czarnowski, “the formation of an overarching Irish national tradition was just a question of time. The rest was done by filid’s travels, which cross-pollinated local traditions, and by public contests, attended by the heads of schools. They led to the emergence of large series of myths and epic tales, in which local elements became intertwined so tightly as to become indistinguishable from one another. These series are, indeed, national myths and legends... as a result of filid’s activities, the whole of Ireland began to share common ideas”<sup>27</sup>. Thus, Czarnowski highlights filid’s role in the formation of supra-local forms of group identification, which “rise above the forms circumscribed within the area where the people spend most of their lives”<sup>28</sup>. Later, in the early 1980s, Eric Hobsbawm would classify these forms as one of the types of ‘proto-national bonds’, filing them under the general heading ‘holy icons’. This is a complex of images and worship practices, and memories associated therewith, which, being familiar to, and significant for, the bulk of residents of a particular area, had united these people and later enabled the rise of a modern nation in this area<sup>29</sup>.

Characterizing St. Patrick’s Day, Czarnowski calls it a national festival “which, once a year, unites all Irish people of the world into a single community of thought”<sup>30</sup>. Unlike Durkheim’s

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. P. 202.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. P. 203.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. P. 207.

<sup>28</sup> Hobsbawm E.J. *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge University Press, 1991.

<sup>29</sup> Hobsbawm writes: “The holy icons... are a crucial component of [proto-nationality], as they are of modern nationalism. They represent the symbols and rituals or common collective practices which alone give a palpable reality to otherwise imaginary community... They may be named images identified with territories sufficiently large to constitute a nation... They may be periodic festivals or contests which bring scattered groups together... The most satisfactory icons from a proto-national point of view are obviously [icons] specifically associated with a state, i.e. in the pre-national phase...” (Hobsbawm. *Nations and Nationalism*...). I think this statement of the English researcher does not need commenting. It is perfectly obvious that they correspond with Czarnowski’s conclusions.

<sup>30</sup> Czarnowski S. *Kult bohaterów*... . P. 222. Czarnowski’s approach to study of festivals is a continuation and development of Durkheim’s ideas, as well as the theories, advanced by the Polish sociologist’s mentor Henri Hubert, about the social construction



commemorative rites, which involve 'face to face' interactions, Czarnowski refers to 'the imagined community' of a nation, united by an image of its common hero and the regular remembrance of him. However, Durkheim's general thesis, that the collective identity needs to be sustained by regular rites, intended to reinvigorate the collective memory, appears appropriate in this context as well. Because filid had a monopoly over education, all of the offspring of Irish noble families were educated in their system, receiving from them knowledge in history, genealogy, law and literature, and being initiated by them into the lower order. The ties between filid, the teachers and their disciples would be maintained throughout their lives. This explains the emergence of a kind of supra-tribal 'aristocratic ethnies'<sup>31</sup>, a germ from which Irish national consciousness later developed. The prototype of a nationwide social institution, filid were eliminating local boundaries. "The unity and privileges of filid were the strongest pillar of national unity in Ireland, because the first ideal expression of this unity was their mythopoetic activity. Thus, filid planted in Gaelic society the seed from which Irish national consciousness would later develop"<sup>32</sup>.

Czarnowski ends up his study with conclusions that are directly applicable to the vital and hotly debated issues of the day, such as the essence of nations and nationalism, as well as the role of the past, heritage and cultural memory, in the creation and sustenance of national identities. On the one hand, the researcher of the cult of St. Patrick agrees with the currently prevailing "modernist" paradigm in nationalism studies. Nations are a modern phenomenon that emerged at the time of the French Revolution. This is what Czarnowski wrote: "The creation of nations in the modern sense of the word is a new phenomenon. It is only in modern times that the masses developed the notion of the bond uniting them that is qualitatively different from ties of statehood, or dynastic ties, or even territorial and linguistic ties"<sup>33</sup>. However, the sociologist notes, the conclusions drawn from the research do not warrant the assumption that a nation is the same as a unity forged by language, territorial or religious affiliation, or political institutions. These are only individual elements that can lead to the creation of a nation as the result of a long historical evolution. Czarnowski believed that European nations were formed at the end of the Middle Ages. These considerations, as well as his above mentioned theses about the role of filid in the formation of Irish people's national consciousness, place Czarnowski as a researcher of the genesis of nations in the category of ethno-symbolists, to use Anthony Smith's term<sup>34</sup>. Ethno-symbolists acknowledge that nations are a modern phenomenon, noting, however, that enduring national unity can be obtained on a certain territory only in the presence of such factors as a significant heritage that unites, as well as images of historical memory, shaped over a long period. And, in this sense, nations, for ethno-symbolists, are modern phenomena with deep historical roots, the product of a modern mutation of a very old heritage. "The 'inventions' of modern nationalists," writes the leading modern ethno-symbolist, Anthony D. Smith, "must resonate with large numbers of the designated 'co-nationals', otherwise the project will fail. If they are not perceived as 'authentic', in the sense of having meaning and resonance with 'the people' to whom they are addressed, they will fail to mobilize them for political action"<sup>35</sup>. We presume that Czarnowski, who saw, in Ireland, an example of very early nation building, would have shared this line of argument.

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of time and its qualitative heterogeneity as 'social fact'. To learn more about it, see Kasperek A. Durkheimowskie inspiracje w Stefana Czarnowskiego koncepcji przestrzeni i czasu / *Emil Durkheim – badacz i inspirator* / red. naukowa W.Majkowski, U.Bejma. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, 2012. Pp. 225-230.

<sup>31</sup> The 'horizontal' ethnies is an antecedent of the modern nation, to use the term of the modern theoretician of nationalism studies Anthony Smith. Such 'horizontal' ethnies are usually aristocratic and advance to nationhood by way of "transformation of a loose, aristocratic ethnies into a territorial nation" (Anthony D. Smith. *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*. Routledge, 1998).

<sup>32</sup> Czarnowski S. *Kult bohaterów*.... P. 209.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. P. 232.

<sup>34</sup> The Polish researcher of Polish-German memory Robert Traba reaches largely similar conclusions with relation to Czarnowski's concept. He writes: "It turns out (sic!) that early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Czarnowski was a predecessor of the moderately constructivist theory of nation building, long before the 1970s-1980s, when we began to emotionally discuss, among other things, the theories of Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner" (Traba R. Wkład do badań nad pamięcią zbiorową / *Stefan Czarnowski z perspektywy siedemdziesięciolecia*. P. 133).

<sup>35</sup> Anthony D. Smith. *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*. P.360.

So, Czarnowski, in his book, showed the process of creation of the memory's imagery, which was later to play the critical role in the formation of a collective (in this case – national) identity. He also demonstrated how the past (Celtic clan- and kinship-based society and paganism) interacts with modern processes (Christianization of Ireland). The past, on the one hand, influenced these processes (the ties between the cult of St. Patrick and Celtic mythology), and, on the other, was changing itself in response to the new situation (Christianization of Ireland's cultural tradition and incorporation of a Christian saint's cult into it). That was how the issue of 'the past in the present' – the interaction between the past and the present, and social functions of memory – was actually formulated.

## Forms and Ways of Functioning of the Past in Culture

Czarnowski's reflections on the subject also produced the already mentioned article "The Past and the Present in Culture", published in the collection of essays called "Culture", which became a sort of testament of the prominent Polish scholar. Any society's life, in its entirety, Czarnowski stresses, is woven of elements of the past (sometimes very distant past at that) and is defined by them to a large degree. However, he does not approach elements of the past in the present in the spirit of the classic evolutionist theory of survivals<sup>36</sup>. Czarnowski's reflections about the past living in the present appear to be influenced by Durkheim's theory of functionalism. Like Durkheim, Czarnowski was convinced that scholarly sociological explanations of social phenomena must be functional. Like Edward B. Tylor in his day, Czarnowski referred to games as an example of archaic elements of culture, surviving in the modern life<sup>37</sup>. The Polish sociologist, however, explained these phenomena in different terms – not through the lens of evolutionism but functionally. A cultural phenomenon not simply survives and moves from the past into the present. It changes its place, function and meaning in the social system – its very essence changes. "The elements of the past survived in a particular way. This is not the same thing as it used to be once; now they are re-worked, occupying a new place and have a weight different from what they had at the time of their inception"<sup>38</sup>. The present shapes the past to suit its needs. The Polish sociologist, therefore, could have hardly agreed with the much respected British anthropologist, Edward B. Tylor, who said that history "has to teach us, first and foremost, how old habits hold their ground in the midst of a new culture, which certainly would never have brought them in, but, on the contrary, presses hard to thrust them out"<sup>39</sup>. Within a functionalist approach, the fact that these habits of the past exist in the modern culture, shows precisely that culture does not at all press hard to thrust them out but, to the contrary, puts them to a new use. It follows, then, that we have to engage, not with history but with modernity, if we seek an answer to the question about the meaning of a particular historical phenomenon 'here and now'. The past is not a static 'heritage' translated, unchanged, via traditions. The past has always been a function of the present. Czarnowski writes about this: "Burdened with the past, modernity restructures it, changing the arrangement of its elements, rejecting some and assimilating others to suit itself"<sup>40</sup>. Generations

<sup>36</sup> Here is Edward B. Tylor's explanation of survivals: "When in the process of time there has come general change in the condition of a people, it is usual, notwithstanding, to find much that manifestly had not its origin in the new state of things, but has simply lasted on into it. On the strength of these survivals, it becomes possible to declare that the civilization of the people [they are observed among] must have been derived from an earlier state, in which the proper home and meaning of these things are to be found" (Edward Burnett Tylor. *Primitive Culture: Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*; in two volumes. Murrey, 1873).

<sup>37</sup> "Let us look at our and our children's fun and games. In many of them we shall recognize ancient cultic actions or magic rites" (Czarnowski S. *Dawność a terażniejszość...* P. 101). However, unlike Tylor, Czarnowski sees in this "not just a legacy of the past", an explanation for which is to be found in the past. To the contrary, 'the past' is always a new phenomenon, functioning in a new manner in new circumstances.

<sup>38</sup> Czarnowski S. *Dawność a terażniejszość...* P. 101. He notes in another passage: "Democratic post-revolutionary France raises its youth on Racine and Molière. Soviet Russia publishes for the masses the classics of the tsarist era. It is obvious, however, that 'Phèdre' and 'Le Misanthrope', 'Eugene Onegin' and 'Inspector General' for the modern French or Russian public are not the same thing they were in the period of Sun King or the Romanovs" (Czarnowski S. *Dawność a terażniejszość...* P. 111).

<sup>39</sup> Edward Burnett Tylor. *Primitive Culture: Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*. P.104.

<sup>40</sup> Czarnowski S. *Dawność a terażniejszość...* P. 102.

and social classes, groups and institutions reshape one and the same past to suit their interests. Czarnowski believed that the universal mechanism of culture's functioning consisted in that each novelty was the product of the reworked past, a reinterpretation of the past in the direction, set by the needs of the current moment. But, at the same time, the needs and objectives of modern life undergo 'recasting', taking on shapes of the past.

Czarnowski offers a typology of the states of culture in terms of the 'power balance' between the past and the present. At one extreme of this typology is the state of stability, at another – a cultural overturn. In the former case, the past dominates the present, blocking change. In the latter case, to the contrary, the present brings into line and actively reformats the past to suit its needs<sup>41</sup>. All human societies, Czarnowski notes, have institutions that introduce the young to cultural traditions – in other words, anchor the past in the present. To use the language of modern memory studies, the issue at hand, here, is employing memory for socializing new generations – the process that ensures continuity in the life of culture. At this point, Czarnowski moves on to the issue of the politics of memory. Treatment of the past, according to Czarnowski, depends on the social class which shapes the politics of the past to suit its needs. The higher the position of the class in the social hierarchy, and the longer this class has been dominating the society, the greater the emphasis it places on history, things of the past, things that were, rather than things that could be, in the future. These observations neatly match the description of the 'cold' option of cultural memory, proposed by Jan Assmann<sup>42</sup>. Like the modern German scholar of culture, Czarnowski notes that a society's ruling classes are inclined to show the present as an ongoing repetition of the past.

He argues that history, as an academic discipline, is usually expected to explain the present by analyzing the past. All history syllabi, however, effectively pursue a quite different, moral objective – to inculcate the young generation with respect and love for the past. History is instrumentally used in situations when one applies the argument of longevity, in order to reinforce the justification of the existing order, bolster the legitimacy of the past and lend the past a special emotional weight. With this in mind, Czarnowski distinguishes history that 'justifies' (justificatory history) and history that 'explains' (explanatory history). In modern terms, justificatory history is essentially collective memory, brought into play as an instrument for legitimizing an existing order. This is an apology of a specific version of historical truth in the service of the ruling classes. Justificatory history should be distinguished from explanatory history, which has an analytic, not apologetic, function. These sorts of reflections, argues Robert Traba, make Czarnowski extremely relevant to "the modern debates about the function of history and historians in society"<sup>43</sup>.

Czarnowski's reflections about history, as a form of cultural memory, set out in his late and unfinished work "The Emergence and Social Functions of History", are very thought-provoking and relevant. In this article the Polish sociologist highlights a distinction between history "in the strict sense of the word" and the past that surrounds us always and everywhere, being present in all forms of mundane culture. In fact, it is this latter form of history (or, rather, cultural memory<sup>44</sup>) that he would expand upon further in the essay. By history, Czarnowski understands all forms of records of ideas about the past (oral, sculptural, written, etc.), found in any culture, be it Western Europe, Africa or Polynesia. Czarnowski writes: "We are not talking here about 'history' in the modern academic sense of the word. The matter at hand is all types of verbal or visual, schematic or symbolic representations of events and objects, people and actions,

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<sup>41</sup> In some respect this typology resembles Margaret Mead's typology of culture. As is well known, it is also based on the ties between the past and the present, the world of adults and the world of children.

<sup>42</sup> For reference: Assmann, J. *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und Politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1992.

<sup>43</sup> Traba R. *Op. cit.* P. 137.

<sup>44</sup> The author of this study uses the notion 'collective memory'. Speaking about primitive societies, Czarnowski notes that the bulk of socially important information passed down in these societies is tales of the past. "...sure enough, these manifestations of *collective memory* [italics mine. – A.V.] must have included historical narratives," notes Czarnowski (Czarnowski S. *Powstanie i społeczne funkcje historii* / in: *Dziela t.V.* Warszawa, 1956. P.101). He also references in this passage the notion of 'social frames' of memory, which Halbwachs had already introduced by then: "memory has *cadres sociaux* [italicized by the author]" (Ibid. Pp. 101-102).

which contain, in a condensed form, a group of humans' collective experience, accumulated by generations and expressing the main values of these generations<sup>45</sup>. Given this broad understanding, history would include both an epic poem and a genealogy. It would also comprise a tale about a tribe's resettlements, as well as a totemic pillar with incised images of spirits from whom the pillar's owner descended...; history would also comprise a Western European escutcheon..., symbolizing the line of descent of the person entitled to use it. And the question of whether the content of all these 'stories' is true to so-called historical fact does not make any sense"<sup>46</sup>. Czarnowski believed that what mattered for society was not the 'veracity' of the ideas about the past but suitability of this past for constructing a memorial narrative about one's own identity. The most important thing is to ensure that this image of the past would fit "into the sequence of events stretching all the way into the modern times or, rather, to a certain point in the past which is understood as the endpoint in the chain of events"<sup>47</sup>.

Given such an interpretation, 'history' is the basis of self-identification and as such is immanent in all social communities, beginning from the very early savagery<sup>48</sup>. Czarnowski proposes in this unfinished piece a program of research in the field which in the modern historical and cultural sciences is defined as 'an intellectual history of history'. This is a new line of historiographical research based on the premise that each historical and geographical type of society is distinguished by an idiosyncratic type of development, representation and the usage of ideas about the past. Within this approach the modern academic historiography (that what Czarnowski defined as "'history' in the proper sense of the word") is nothing more than one of the elements (albeit a very important one) of the historical culture of a particular society. In Czarnowski's thoughts, there is an astonishing parallel with the statement made by one of the leading modern methodologists of history Lorina Repina: "History, in all forms of representation (myths, religion, art and aesthetics, scientific knowledge) and their numerous topical (sometimes very fanciful) combinations, is viewed as an attribute of any culture, as the most important method of self-awareness and self-discovery of a society that defines its identity by making sense of the past"<sup>49</sup>. History for Czarnowski is a schematic, visual, symbolical representation of events, objects, people and actions, which "contains, in a condensed form, a group of humans' collective experience, accumulated by generations and expressing the main values of these generations"<sup>50</sup>. What we have here in fact is not so much history in the classic sense as a memorial narrative of a collective identity that articulates – to use Pierre Bourdieu's term, very relevant in this context – the 'habitus' of this society.

## Conclusion

As Polish historians and specialists in Polish memory studies note, "responses to Czarnowski's works in Poland, in the context of ideas about the past, have been focused on two aspects of his research interests. First, this is reflections on the theme 'the past in the present'..., and second, his study of St. Patrick... These two lines of inquiry can be seen as a precursor of the ideas advanced by the French historian Pierre Nora in the 1980s"<sup>51</sup>. The matter in hand here is two mutually related concepts advanced by the French researcher – 'history of the second degree'

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Jan Assmann's notion of cultural memory as culture-specific forms of transmission and updating of cultural meanings and the knowledge which governs actions and emotions within specific frames of interaction in a particular society and which must be learned by heart by every generation from its fathers.

<sup>46</sup> Czarnowski S. *Powstanie i społeczne funkcje historii*. Pp. 99-100.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. P. 100. According to the modern Polish researcher Joanna Filipowicz, "in the Polish scholarly literature" this statement "was the first case of bringing into question the social need for historical truth" (Filipowicz J. *Pojęcie pamięci społecznej w nauce polskiej / Kultura i Historia*. 2002. N 2. P. 26).

<sup>48</sup> "...every human group, even the most primitive one, as soon as it develops a self-awareness as such, remakes its tradition into the 'history' in this broad sense" (Czarnowski S. *Powstanie i społeczne funkcje historii*. P.100).

<sup>49</sup> Repina, L. *Historical Science in the Late 20<sup>th</sup> – Early 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries: the Social Theories and Practice of Historiography* [in Russian]. Moscow, Krug Publishing House: 2011. P. 393.

<sup>50</sup> Czarnowski S. *Powstanie i społeczne funkcje historii*... P. 99.

<sup>51</sup> Kończal K., Wawrzyniak J. *Polskie badania pamięcioznawcze: tradycje, koncepcje, (nie)ciągłości / Kultura i Społeczeństwo*. 2011. Vol. LV. Issue 4. P. 14.

(Czarnowski's 'the past in the present') and 'sites of memory' (the worship of St. Patrick described by the Polish sociologist). However, we believe that Czarnowski's contribution to the research on the topics that interest us goes beyond 'history of the second degree' – his explanations of the mechanisms of the formation, presence and utilization of the past by the present in the form of "sites of memory". The message of the author of "The Cult of Heroes..." is much richer and more complex. Using the worship of St. Patrick as an example, he shows how the past, in turn, influences modernity, affecting the sociocultural projects that take place in the present (in our case – the projects of nation building).

Thus, we have a dialectic concept of the interrelation between the activity of the actors of sociocultural space and the influence of collective memory. This approach brings to mind Karl Marx's famous dictum that "men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past"<sup>52</sup>. And in the context of modern social theory this brings us to the ideas advanced by Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens, each of whom, in his own way, searches for and conceptualizes the dialectic of structured and structuring moments of public life. As for memory studies as such, Czarnowski's theses in this field prefigured the dynamic-communicative approach to collective memory<sup>53</sup>, which emphasizes both the activity of modern social actors manipulating images of the past and resistance to unwarranted manipulations on the part of the past itself, calcified in 'memory images' and 'sites of memory'.

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<sup>52</sup> Karl Marx. The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte /

<https://web.archive.org/web/20170303190424/http://www.marx2mao.com/M&E/EBLB52.html>

<sup>53</sup> This approach is based initially on the concept of cultural memory of Juri Lotman and sociocultural theory of Lev Vygotsky. See: Lotman J. *Culture, Memory and History: Essays in Cultural Semiotics* / Marek Tamm (ed.), Palgrave Macmillan, 2019; Luria A.R. and Lev S. Vygotsky. *Ape, Primitive Man and Child: Essays in the History of Behaviour* / Pearson Higher Education, 1992.

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