

ARTYKUŁ

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## On the Genealogy of the Symbol of the Cross in the Polish Political Imagination

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This article traces the genealogy of the cross as a key Polish national symbol back to the independence struggles of the nineteenth century and the post-1918 attempts to map the new Polish nation-state over its multiethnic territory. Discussing the shifting meaning ascribed to the symbol in the changing political conditions in the 1860s and during the Second Republic, the article relates the semantic content of the symbol to the cycle of solidification and defiance (corresponding with Victor Turner's "structure" and "anti-structure"). While, in conditions of defiance, during the January Uprising (1863– 1864), the cross connoted progressive and egalitarian ideas of emancipation and solidarity with other nations who were also deemed as deserving their freedom, this changed once Poland regained its independence. After the First World War, the cross came to be employed as a marker of Poland's territorial ambitions and an emblem that redefined ingroup boundaries by excluding from the national community the threatening Others: whether Bolsheviks, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians, or Jews.

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