

OLEKSANDRA KRUSHYNSKA  
University of Vienna  
ORCID: 0000-0001-9201-4394

## BECOMING SUBALTERN? THE APPLICATION OF POSTCOLONIAL THEORIES TO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GALICIAN NOBILITY AND THE HABSBURG MONARCHY (1772–1815)

### Abstract

The article deals with the applicability of postcolonial theoretical framework to the relationship between the Habsburg Monarchy agents and the noble elites of the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria following the First Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It is argued that the imperial government attempted to implement “subalternization” strategies concerning the local elites by depriving them of the opportunities to influence provincial politics, in order to transform the Galician *szlachta* into loyal “enlightened” subordinates of the absolutist monarchy. The reactions of the Kingdom nobility to these politics, their attempts to retain dominant positions through creating a symbiotic government model, and the eventual outcome of the Habsburg homogenization politics in Galicia by the end of Napoleonic Wars are also examined in the article.

**Keywords:** Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, Habsburg Monarchy, postcolonial studies, civilizing mission, subalternization.



## INTRODUCTION

The option of postcolonial approaches' application to research on the history of the Habsburg Monarchy has been successfully shown by a vast number of studies, with some prominent examples being the *Habsburg Postcolonial: Machtstrukturen und kollektives Gedächtnis*<sup>1</sup> or the multiple contributions to the interdisciplinary *Kakanien Revisited*<sup>2</sup> platform. Moreover, postcolonial theories have been frequently applied to writings on CEE history in a broader sense, including Larry Wolff's influential *Inventing Eastern Europe*<sup>3</sup> and Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans*<sup>4</sup>. The chapters of the study *Konstruierte (Fremd-?)Bilder: Das Östliche Europa im Diskurs des 18. Jahrhunderts*<sup>5</sup> deal with the reflection of the various CEE territories in the discourses of the "enlightened" contemporaries in the 18th century. The *Ostmitteleuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*<sup>6</sup> presents multidimensional research of the CEE within a broader network of the complex political, social and economic relations of the European continent.

Postcolonial instruments have also been applied to various Habsburg regions and territories, in particular to the history of Galicia, acquired by the Monarchy in course of the Partitions of the *Rzeczpospolita*. The study *Galizien: Peripherie der Moderne – Moderne der Peripherie?*<sup>7</sup> is aimed at giving a postcolonial reflection on various aspects of Galician history within the context of "modernizing" processes in the monarchy in general and in the Kingdom in particular, beginning in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The article collection *Post-Colonial Perspectives on Habsburg Galicia*<sup>8</sup> deals mostly with the creation of the narratives that would dominate the discourses on the Habsburg Galicia until the very end of its existence. *The Idea of Galicia. History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture*<sup>9</sup> examines Galicia through the lens of "intellectual history", studying the perception of the land and its heterogenous population by both the local and imperial elites.

The goal of this article is to examine the potential applicability of postcolonial instruments to the relationship between the agents of the Habsburg Monarchy and the indigenous elites (Galician *szlachta*) between the First Partition of the *Rzecz-*

<sup>1</sup> *Habsburg postcolonial: Machtstrukturen und kollektives Gedächtnis*, ed. Johannes Feichtinger, Ursula Prutsch, and Moritz Csáky (Innsbruck, Wien: StudienVerlag, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> "Kakanien Revisited," <https://www.kakanien-revisited.at/>.

<sup>3</sup> Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> *Konstruierte (Fremd-?)Bilder: das östliche Europa im Diskurs des 18. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Christoph Augustynowicz, Agnieszka Pufelska (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Joachim von Puttkamer, *Ostmitteleuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (München: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> *Galizien: Peripherie der Moderne - Moderne der Peripherie?*, ed. Elisabeth Haid, Stephanie Weismann, and Burkhard Wöller (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> *Post-Colonial Perspectives on Habsburg Galicia*, ed. Klemens Kaps, Jan Surman (Kraków: Instytut Historii UJ, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Larry Wolff, *The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

*pospolita* (1772) and the Congress of Vienna (1815). Although the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Galician history, have received considerable attention in postcolonial literature on CEE, the period of the Napoleonic Wars has been largely omitted in this regard. The article shall attempt to bridge this gap at least partially by presenting the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a direct continuation of the reforms of the 1770s–1780s and the Vienna Congress – as the end of the “incorporation” period in Galician Habsburg history. It shall be argued that this period saw the opposition of the two discourses concerning the future of the land and its management – that of the new, foreign government and that of the former Commonwealth elites. These discourses shall be reconstructed by examining the narratives contained in texts authored by the representatives of both antagonizing groups. The first part of the article is devoted to the attempts by the empire to impose an ambivalent status of the “colonized colonizers”<sup>10</sup> over the *szlachta* and to deprive it of virtually unlimited power over the land. The second part studies the resistance of the *szlachta* towards its subalternization, as well as the nobility’s attempts to justify the privileges and “freedoms” existing in the Commonwealth, and to insert themselves into the newly erected socio-political system. The final part researches the development both discourses took during the Napoleonic Wars, considering the transition from radical “enlightened” reformism to the defensive reactionism, which took place after the death of Leopold II in 1792<sup>11</sup>. Throughout the text, the narratives and events shall be examined for applicability of key postcolonial concepts, such as “othering”, “civilizing mission”, “hybridity”, “ambivalence”, and “subaltern group”, to their description, based on the fundamental works on postcolonialism. Within this research, both the Habsburg Monarchy and the Galician *szlachta* shall be treated according to the framework of imperial history suggested by Peter Judson, namely “placing empire at the centre of investigation”, studying the influence of imperial institutions on local society and examining how the inhabitants of the Crownland appropriated the practices of the monarchy to their benefit<sup>12</sup>.

In the context of this paper, the “Habsburg” discourse should be understood as that formed by the imperial elites, that is government officials, as well as members of political and intellectual higher circles, who identified themselves with the goals set by the Viennese government in Galicia. In addition, for the purposes of this research, the *szlachta* shall be regarded as a relatively homogenous group, possessing formal inner equality and unlimited influence under the legislation of the *Rzeczpospolita*, and therefore largely unsatisfied with the radical transformations imposed by the new government. Therefore, the proprietary, confessional, and ethnic differences within the *szlachta* will mostly be disregarded, except when mentioning those differences would facilitate reaching the research goal.

<sup>10</sup> For the position of *szlachta* as both the “colonizers” of *Kresy Wschodnie* and “colonized” by the three partitioning states in late 18<sup>th</sup> century see: Maria Janion, *Niesamowita słowiańszczyzna. Fantazmaty literatury* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2006), 170.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2016), 89–90.

<sup>12</sup> Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 4.

## THE “HABSBURG” DISCOURSE

The very creation of the “Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria” in 1772 could be regarded as its first postcolonial moment, as since then, “its regional and cultural identity became a direct consequence of a political action related to imperial expansion”, making its identity “typologically [...] similar to that of a number of colonial formations”<sup>13</sup>. Maria Theresa’s government went to great lengths to legitimize Habsburg rule over the land, challenging historians to justify their claims. As a result, the study *Wywod Poprzedzający Praw Korony Węgierskiej Do Rusi Czerwonej Y Do Podola, Tak Jako Korony Czeskiej Do Xięstw Oswiecimskiego Y Zatorskiego* was published<sup>14</sup>. That enabled the empire to treat new territories in any fashion it deemed necessary while also preventing other states from questioning its rule. In reality, no single entity conforming to the land claimed bore the name “Galicia” or any of its cognates prior to 1772. The territories occupied belonged to different administrative units within the *Rzeczpospolita*, with the references to the medieval Rus principalities of Halych and Volodymyr problematic since the city of Volodymyr (the capital of the latter) never came under Habsburg control and would later become part of the Russian Empire. As such, in creating the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, the Habsburg state fashioned a new reality, following the model described in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* with

a usurper claim[ing] his place and, if need be [...] defending it by every means at his disposal. [...] He endeavours to falsify history, he rewrites laws, he would extinguish memories – anything to succeed in transforming his usurpation into legitimacy<sup>15</sup>.

However, justifying the change of administration was not the only challenge that the Habsburgs faced after 1772. In order to truly absorb Galicia, they had to adapt the structures existing there so that they would benefit the empire and not pose a threat to it. That meant radically transforming the former state system, centered institutionally around the *szlachta*. It occupied an extremely privileged position in the *Rzeczpospolita*, even in comparison to the nobility in other European states at the time. Traditionally, only the *szlachta* was seen as the “real” representatives of the Polish nation, capable of leading the country towards power and prosperity<sup>16</sup>. Only the noblemen were given access to the highest secular and clerical offices

<sup>13</sup> Andriy Zayarnyuk, „Empire, Peasants, National Movements – Galician Postcolonial Triangle?”, *Historyka. Studia Metodologiczne* XLII (2012): 138.

<sup>14</sup> Christoph Augustynowicz, „Johann Thomas Trattners (Nicht-)Wirken im Neuen Bildungszentrum der Habsburgermonarchie Lemberg”, in *Der Buchdrucker Maria Theresias: Johann Thomas Trattner (1717–1798) und sein Medienimperium*, ed. Christoph Augustynowicz, Johannes Frimmel (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2019), 85.

<sup>15</sup> Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (London: Earthscan, 2003), 96.

<sup>16</sup> Adam Kucharski, „The Polish Noblemen’s Nation vs. the Neighbouring Powers. Defending the Independence of the Country and the Freedom of the Nation from the Perspective of the Polish Handwritten Press during the Reign of Stanisław August Poniatowski (1764–1795)”, in *Gruppenidentitäten in Ostmitteleuropa*, ed. Bogusław Dybaś, Jacek Bojarski (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2021), 168–169.

(and to voting in legislatures). The king was also elected by the *szlachta*, and had to adhere to a number of obligations to the “nation” (that is, the nobility), depriving him of any capability of taking significant decisions without the *szlachta*’s approval, and even restricting his private life<sup>17</sup>. Due to the exclusive right to own landholdings, to profit from owned serf labor, and to be exempt from taxes and custom fees, the *szlachta* was the major beneficiary of local resources. Finally, every member of the noble class, regardless of his wealth or position in power, enjoyed legal protection against various injustices, which located him above the rest of the land’s society<sup>18</sup>. Thus, the *szlachta* definitely occupied the position of an indigenous elite in Galicia, and all the reforms carried out by the new administration would affect its interests.

To “prepare the ground” for the transit from “noble’s republic” to absolute monarchy, the Habsburg Empire had immediately started applying two interdependent colonial strategies aimed at depriving the *szlachta* of their privileged position and, eventually, molding them into harmless and loyal subjects – the “othering” process and the “civilizing mission”. According to Edward Said,

The development and maintenance of every culture requires the existence of another different and competing alter ego. The construction of identity [...] involves establishing opposites and otherness whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and reinterpretation of their differences from us<sup>19</sup>.

By purposefully putting the natives in an incomparably inferior position towards itself, the “settler” – in this case, the Habsburg Monarchy – not only aimed at strengthening its status in Galicia, but also prepared the ground for “civilizing” the land in the course of the future transformations.

The “othering” narrative can be traced throughout the description of Galicia submitted by the very first Galician Habsburg Governor, Count Anton von Pergen, in 1773. It can be seen as a quintessential enlightened bureaucrat’s estimation of the “noble’s republic”. Its purpose was clearly not just to inform Joseph II about the characteristics of his newest acquisition, but to suggest a suitable justification for the future assimilation practices towards it. The *szlachta* became one of the major subjects of the description. Von Pergen referred to the *Rzeczpospolita* king and his government as “slaves” to the nobility, since the latter constantly injected their interests into the state’s actions<sup>20</sup>. The nobility was incapable of

<sup>17</sup> Antoni Mączak, „Pierwsza Rzeczpospolita: władza i przestrzeń”, in *Rzeczpospolita–Europa: XVI–XVII wiek. Próba Konfrontacji*, ed. Michał Kopczyński, Wojciech Tygielski (Warszawa: Optima JG, 1999), 18.

<sup>18</sup> Łukasz Jewuła, Tomasz Kargol, Krzysztof Ślusarek, *Dwór, wieś i plebania w przestrzeni społecznej zachodniej Małopolski w latach 1772–1815* (Kraków: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze „Historia Iagellonica”, 2015), 117–118.

<sup>19</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, reprinted with a new afterword (London: Penguin Books Limited, 1995), 332.

<sup>20</sup> *Beschreibung der Königreiche Galizien und Lodomerien nach dem Zustand, in welchem Sie Sich zur Zeit der Revindicirung durch Ihro Kais. Königl. Apostolischen Majestät und Besonders im Monat Julius 1773 Befunden Haben*, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-

managing the land due to a lack of education and their primary interest being in pursuing personal power and wealth, and not to serve the state and people<sup>21</sup>. To achieve higher positions, nobles would resort to petty intrigue and corruption<sup>22</sup>. Although possessing equal privileges on paper, the poorer nobles usually had to submit to the will of the wealthier ones, transforming the country into a patchwork of magnate clans constantly clashing with one another<sup>23</sup>.

The allegedly low moral standard of the *szlachta* is reflected upon in several literary works of the period, the most famous of them being *Briefe über den itzigen Zustand von Galizien: ein Beitrag zur Staatistik und Menschenkenntnis* by Franz Kratter. Kratter, a young German intellectual, travelled to Galicia in 1784, hoping to gain employment at the University of L'viv. Failing that, he published his impressions of the crownland. Since Kratter was an outspoken proponent of Enlightenment Absolutism, he justified the “civilizing” transformations in Galicia by degrading the former socio-political system of the crownland and its proponents<sup>24</sup>. At the same time, he made it clear that he did not serve any state or regime and felt free to criticize both the remnants of the *Rzeczpospolita* culture and the failures of the new administration<sup>25</sup>. Because of this, his book could be regarded as valuable evidence of the “enlightened” external outlook over Galicia after 1772. Kratter referred to the *szlachta* as “inhumane, despicable wild creatures”, who possessed neither honour nor truly noble upbringing, whiling away their days with games, feasts, and other “immoral entertainment”<sup>26</sup>. Since the nobility had been responsible for administering the state in the past, Kratter blamed it entirely for the Commonwealth’s demise, claiming that the nobility had “betrayed the nation”<sup>27</sup>.

Another *Rzeczpospolita* practice that repelled its “enlightened” contemporaries was serfdom, usually described in no milder terms than “slavery”. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the grim conditions of the peasantry in states such as the Russian Empire, the *Rzeczpospolita*, or the Ottoman Empire were very much taken as a symptom of extreme backwardness<sup>28</sup>. Von Pergen described the Galician peasants as “stupid”, noting their ignorance of Christianity, matters of social life, and agriculture, blaming the enormous daily oppression suffered from noble landlords for these

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Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Hausarchiv, Hofreisen, Ktn. 5, fol. 457–582, 41 (citations in translation by the author of the paper).

<sup>21</sup> *Beschreibung*, 34–35, 52.

<sup>22</sup> *Beschreibung*, 36–37.

<sup>23</sup> *Beschreibung*, 50–51.

<sup>24</sup> Maria Kłańska, *Daleko od Wiednia: Galicja w oczach pisarzy niemieckojęzycznych, 1771–1918* (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 1991), 28.

<sup>25</sup> Hans-Christian Maner, *Galizien: eine Grenzregion im Kalkül der Donaumonarchie im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (München: IKGS Verlag, 2007), 223.

<sup>26</sup> Franz Kratter, *Briefe über den itzigen Zustand von Galizien: Ein Beitrag zur Staatistik und Menschenkenntnis* (Leipzig: Verlag G. Ph. Wucherers, 1786), 165 (citations in translation by the author of the paper).

<sup>27</sup> Kratter, *Briefe*, 154–155.

<sup>28</sup> Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 52.

deficits. Since the serf had no right to the fruits of his labour, and no opportunity to protect his interests legally, there was no reason for him to better his morality or to work more diligently<sup>29</sup>. That, in turn, led to the general decline of the local economy<sup>30</sup>.

Kratter also did not shy away from harsh descriptions. Although the situation should have improved over the decade of Habsburg governance, the peasantry in Galicia remained “stupid, inert, numb, with the soul of a slave [...] led to tottering drinking [...] dirty”<sup>31</sup> and “treated by a nobleman in a way he would never treat a horse”<sup>32</sup>. Kratter’s sympathy, however, is clearly with the peasantry, since the root cause of their misery was the daily oppression endured from the *szlachta*, and not just their inherent characteristics. This way, both texts refer to the nobility and its virtual omnipotence in the *Rzeczpospolita* as the main source of societal miseries, leaving no chance of redemption for the mere idea of the “noble’s republic”.

The radical reforms of 1770s–1780s in Galicia were thus conceived as a “civilizing mission”. Quoting Jürgen Osterhammel, the “civilizing mission”:

[...] includes the self-proclaimed right and duty to propagate and actively introduce one’s own norms and institutions to other peoples and societies, based upon a firm conviction of the inherent superiority and higher legitimacy of one’s own collective way of life<sup>33</sup>.

In the case of Galicia, this introduction coincided chronologically with the enlightened reforms across the rest of the Habsburg Monarchy. The territory of Galicia should have been “built anew”, with any structures of the former regime destroyed that did not correspond with the ideals of the Enlightenment and the centralization tendencies within the empire<sup>34</sup>. Despite its alleged “backwardness”, the population of the *Rzeczpospolita* was believed to be capable of improvement to a certain extent<sup>35</sup>, which made the “civilizing mission” not only possible, but quite desirable. Enlightenment principles were then believed to be universally appropriate to any state or social group, with their application leading to inevitable progress<sup>36</sup>. The empire could eventually benefit from the internal equalizing processes, eliminating the threats stemming from economic, social, and political disparities.

To achieve that goal, the Habsburg administration embarked upon “homogenization” policies aimed at assimilating Galicia. The socio-political order in Ga-

<sup>29</sup> *Beschreibung*, 194–195.

<sup>30</sup> *Beschreibung*, 43.

<sup>31</sup> Kratter, *Briefe*, 217.

<sup>32</sup> Kratter, *Briefe*, 219.

<sup>33</sup> Jürgen Osterhammel, *Europe, the „West” and the Civilizing Mission* (London: German Historical Institute, 2006), 8.

<sup>34</sup> Horst Glassl, *Das österreichische Einrichtungswerk in Galizien (1772–1790)* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1975), 11.

<sup>35</sup> Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 181.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Confino, „Re-inventing the Enlightenment: Western Images of Eastern Realities in the Eighteenth Century”, *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 36, 3–4 (1994): 518.

licia had to be equalized with the circumstances existing in the other crownlands of the empire. As a result, the goal of Habsburg *szlachta* politics was to place it into subordinate status of nobilities of other crownlands (with the exception of Hungary) achieved due to centralization reforms of Maria Theresa and her son<sup>37</sup>. In the reform process, the *szlachta* was steadily deprived of its unique privileges. To begin with, the once “monolithic” group, where every member (at least in theory) possessed equal privileged access to state protection, was divided into several subgroups with different social status in accordance with their titles and possessions<sup>38</sup>. The poor landless *szlachta* was practically equalized with the free peasantry of Bohemia, up to being forced to pay taxes and becoming subject to corporal punishments<sup>39</sup>. Furthermore, the *szlachta* was left little to no opportunity to influence politics of the Kingdom. It was permitted to have the estate representation, the Landtag; however, its functions were largely symbolic and did not have any part in decision-making processes<sup>40</sup>. The main state organ in the crownland was now the Governorate lead by the Governor, with a very broad scope of competencies<sup>41</sup>. Since the officials serving in the new administrative bodies were usually foreigners lacking knowledge of Galicia, they often could not establish proper communication with the population or organize their activities efficiently<sup>42</sup>. At the same time, members of the *szlachta* could not take any positions in government, neither in central nor local offices; only after a lack of capable officials became evident were the noblemen allowed to take certain positions, still being excluded from the highest offices<sup>43</sup>. In addition to this, the *szlachta* lost its unique economic privileges. The agrarian reforms, aimed at emancipating the enserfed peasantry, in combination with the Tax and Land Regulation of 1789, caused irreversible damage to the *szlachta*, as well as putting its wealth in direct dependence of the will of the central government – something unheard of in the age of “golden freedoms”<sup>44</sup>.

Through these measures, the Habsburg government was attempting subalternization of the indigenous elites by depriving them of agency in their own land.

<sup>37</sup> Krzysztof Ślusarek, *Drobna szlachta w Galicji 1772–1848* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 1994), 118.

<sup>38</sup> Irena Rychlikowa, „Galicyjski odłam narodu szlacheckiego w latach 1772–1815”, *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 9, 2 (1988): 100.

<sup>39</sup> Irena Rychlikowa, „Studia nad ziemiaństwem Galicji. Rzecz o marnotrawstwie badawczego trudu”, *Przegląd Historyczny* 77, 3 (1986): 541.

<sup>40</sup> *Continuatio Edictorum et Mandatorum Universalium in Regnis Galiciae et Lodomeriae. A Die 1. Januarii Ad Ultimam Decembris Anno 1782. Emanatorum* (Leopoli: Typis Antonii Piller, 1782), 17–23.

<sup>41</sup> Stanisław Grodziski, *Historia ustroju społeczno-politycznego Galicji 1772–1848* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1971), 157.

<sup>42</sup> Krzysztof Broński, „Blaski i cienie polityki Habsburgów wobec Galicji”, *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Krakowie* 887, 11 (2012): 7.

<sup>43</sup> Iryna Vushko, *The Politics of Cultural Retreat: Imperial Bureaucracy in Austrian Galicia, 1772–1867* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 69.

<sup>44</sup> Glassl, *Das österreichische Einrichtungswerk, 172–183*; Miloš Řezník, *Neuorientierung einer Elite: Aristokratie, Ständewesen und Loyalität in Galizien (1772–1795)* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Edition, 2016), 195–196.



Traditionally, postcolonialism defines subalternity as the exclusion of colonial population from the hierarchy of power built by the metropolis. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak linked subalternity to the absence of a subject in a hegemonic discourse<sup>45</sup>, as well as in all lines of social mobility<sup>46</sup>. Although these elements were certainly present in Habsburg politics, their approach to the subalternization of the *szlachta* was more nuanced. Its inclusion into the imperial elites was possible; Galician noblemen could even be provided with positions at the Viennese Court<sup>47</sup>. However, to become part of the imperial administration at any level, the Galician nobleman had to give up his identity as an omnipotent aristocrat of the *Rzeczpospolita* and become a “Habsburg” subordinate in body and soul. Those refusing to do so had no instrument to influence local politics due to their alleged “uncivility”; those being loyal to the empire could only implement its decisions without any modification. Rephrasing the name of Spivak’s essay<sup>48</sup>, it could be argued that the goal of Vienna was to ensure that the *szlachta* “could not speak” – certainly not with the voice of a powerful group able to independently define the future of the land. Through these attempts at subalternization, the Habsburgs aimed at eliminating the competitor in control over Galicia, and, after taking great effort to prove the historical legitimacy of this control, they felt no obligation to its historical predecessors and their traditions.

## THE DISCOURSE OF THE LOCAL ELITES AND THEIR REACTIONS TO HABSBURG POLITICS

The separate *szlachta* discourse with undoubtful colonial elements already existed in Galician tradition prior to 1772, and did not cease to exist after the First Partition. Although the *Rzeczpospolita* nobility clearly distanced itself culturally from the other European elites through traditions, clothes, and even hairstyles (commonly characterized as “Sarmatian” practices)<sup>49</sup>, its members did not see themselves as barbarians in need of imported progress. On the contrary, the “noble’s republic” regarded itself as an outpost of Europe and a defender of Christian values and civilization against the Ottoman Empire<sup>50</sup>. The endless

<sup>45</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Leon De Kock, „Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa”, *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 23, 2 (1992): 46.

<sup>46</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, „Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular”, *Postcolonial Studies* 8, 4 (2005): 475.

<sup>47</sup> Michał Baczkowski, *W służbie Habsburgów: Polscy ochotnicy w austriackich siłach zbrojnych w latach 1772–1815* (Kraków: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze „Historia Iagellonica”, 1998), 88.

<sup>48</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, „Can the Subaltern Speak?”, in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory. A Reader*, ed. Laura Chrisman, Patrick Williams (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>49</sup> Kerstin S. Jobst, „A Sacral and Mythical Landscape: The Crimea in the East European Context”, *Prace Filologiczne. Literaturoznawstwo [PFLIT]* 1, 9 (12) (2019): 16.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Born, Sarah Lemmen, „Einleitende Überlegungen zu Orientalismen in Ostmitteleuropa”, in *Orientalismen in Ostmitteleuropa, Diskurse, Akteure und Disziplinen vom 19. Jahr-*

“freedoms”, looked down upon by “enlightened” contemporaries, were considered the inalienable “true essence” of the state, since only a “free” *szlachta* could ensure the *Rzeczpospolita*’s well-being<sup>51</sup>. Moreover, the “freedoms” gave the nobility the sense of moral superiority, allowing them to claim that their country had all the preconditions to be put on one scale (or even above) the most powerful European states in terms of civilizational progress<sup>52</sup>.

One could claim that in 1772, the Polish-speaking Catholic *szlachta* found itself in the position of the “colonized colonizers”, since they already exercised power over the “others” of their own, namely the Ruthenian (Ukrainian) Orthodox majority of the Galician population, and constructed a colonial narrative around it. The Polish nobility believed that they had brought civilization and progress to the former Red Ruthenia after its annexation in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and that the land had prospered under their rule<sup>53</sup>. This way, the *szlachta* confirmed its conduct of a “civilizing mission” of its own in the past. At the same time, while the Polonization and Catholicization of Orthodox aristocracy could potentially lead to their full assimilation and absorption into the Commonwealth nobility, the approach to the peasant majority was different. The peasants did not possess the “Sarmatian” ancestry of the *szlachta*, and therefore could not make claim for any equality with the upper classes. The references to “Sarmatism” and to the almost mystical superiority of anyone born with noble blood were useful instruments for the *szlachta* to keep “othering” their non-aristocratic subordinates<sup>54</sup>. Moreover, to further justify their privileged position, the *szlachta* defended serfdom practices deemed “inhumane” by the Habsburg elites. In the words of the nobility, the atrocities of serfdom were necessary because the subjects were “lazy”, “stupid”, “prone to drinking”, and could not be managed in any other way<sup>55</sup>. To a certain extent, the “distancing” between the “glorious colonizer” and the “despicable colonized”<sup>56</sup> could be applied in this case, even though it was fashioned more in terms of social status than of ethnic or religious differences. Since the right of the *szlachta* to discipline serfs was won “by the blood of ancestors”, it could not be limited by any inner or outer force. This way, the *szlachta* was itself “subalternizing” anyone who did not belong to their privileged minority, claiming their exclusive right to rule the land and its inhabitants.

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*hundert bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg*, ed. Robert Born, Sarah Lemmen (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2014), 14–15.

<sup>51</sup> Walerian Kalinka, *Galicja i Kraków pod panowaniem austriackim* (Paryż: Księgarnia Polska, 1853), 34–36.

<sup>52</sup> Kalinka, *Galicja*, 27–28

<sup>53</sup> Burkhard Wöller, „Zivilisierungsmission oder Fremdherrschaft? Die Annexion Retreussens unter Kasimir III. im kolonialistischen Diskurs polnischer und ruthenischer Historiker im österreichischen Galizien”, *Historyka. Studia Metodologiczne* XLII (2012): 181–183.

<sup>54</sup> Janusz Tazbir, *Kultura szlachecka w Polsce: rozkwit, upadek, relikt* (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1983), 93.

<sup>55</sup> Klemens Kaps, „Kulturelle Differenzen des Ökonomischen: Galizische Entwicklungsdiskurse im Spannungsfeld Räumlicher Funktionalisierung und Sozialer Bruchlinien (1772–1848)”, *Historyka. Studia Metodologiczne* XLII (2012): 107.

<sup>56</sup> Memmi, *The Colonizer*, 98–99.

The Galician *szlachta* was quite inactive when it came to defending their land against Habsburg military expansion in 1772<sup>57</sup>. Even a decade later, it only voiced measured disagreement with the new government, not indicating any readiness to launch an open revolt, despite the new serfdom legislation deeply troubling the nobility<sup>58</sup>. The rapid Josephinian reforms changed the situation dramatically. The consequences of the Tax and Land Regulation greatly impacted the *szlachta*, as it not only sapped their primary source of income, but also signified the permanence of the new status-quo, established by the 1781 Serfdom Patent of and the 1775–1782 Estates reform<sup>59</sup>. The 1789 reform turned into a catalyst for the Galician nobility to attempt to regain their voice in the land. As the events of subsequent years demonstrated, despite all the efforts to turn the Galician *szlachta* into obedient Habsburg noblemen, it still preserved a heightened sense of belonging to a unique social group with a distinct sense of pride. Even the poorest noblemen practically stripped of all their privileges still considered themselves above any commoner, even if the latter was considerably richer<sup>60</sup>.

The next few years saw several attempts by the *szlachta* to become part of the future processes concerning the crownland. At the same time, it should be noted that these attempts were made while voicing readiness for compromise with the Habsburgs. The threats to conduct an open revolt were seen as the last resort, which would not benefit any of the parties. From a postcolonial perspective, the evolution of the 1790s petitions of the Galician nobility to the emperor and the Viennese government can be seen as signalling the emergence of hybridity in the relationship between the colonial power and those undergoing colonization. As defined by Homi K. Bhabha, hybridity is:

[...] the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination [...sic] For the colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, making its objects at once disciplinary and disseminatory<sup>61</sup>.

For the Galician nobility, engaging in direct confrontation with the imperial centre imposed a considerable risk, which made them ready to voluntarily accept Habsburg government, if Vienna would secure their economic well-being and include the *szlachta* in the major decision-making processes.

The first document reflecting the nobility's discourse in Galicia at the end of the Josephinian era was received by the emperor in January 1790. An anonymous

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<sup>57</sup> Kłańska, *Daleko*, 21.

<sup>58</sup> Waclaw Tokarz, *Galicja w początkach ery józefińskiej w świetle ankiety urzędowej z roku 1783* (Kraków: Akademia umiejętności, 1909), 12–13.

<sup>59</sup> Miloš Řezník, „Das landespatriotische Programm der galizischen Stände um 1790: Von der polnischen Tradition zur Etablierung eines neuen Landespatritismus,” in *Whose Love of Which Country?*, ed. Balazs Trencsenyi, Márton Zászkaliczky (Leiden: BRILL, 2010), 742.

<sup>60</sup> Ślusarek, *Drobna szlachta*, 135.

<sup>61</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), 112.

letter was written in a mild tone, refraining from making any demands or threats, but instead begging the emperor to be merciful towards his Galician subjects. Despite its brevity, the letter managed to touch upon most of the key points of disagreement between the Habsburg government and the Galician aristocracy. The author complained about the crushing tax burden that his compatriots suffered, the major debts they owed as a result, and the willfulness of the Habsburg officials coming from abroad and their almost innate hostility towards Poles and Polishness. The author seemed to be convinced that the emperor was not aware of all these wrongdoings, since “addresses sent to your Imperial Majesty seldom get resolution, and most of them have no effect”. In the end, the unknown nobleman assured the emperor of his loyalty, and claimed that his only intention was to serve his Fatherland<sup>62</sup>.

The year 1790 was a favourable moment for the *szlachta* to voice dissent and suggest negotiations with the Habsburg government. The Monarchy found itself in the middle of numerous external and internal crises. The French Revolution grew into a European security concern. Relations between the Habsburg Monarchy and its neighbours – the Ottoman Empire, Prussia, and the Russian Empire – were strained, with the possibility of armed conflict ever present<sup>63</sup>. Internally, the state was suffering from uprisings among provincial elites owing to the Monarchy’s centralization policies and perceived attacks on traditional privileges. As the previous years had seen the abolition of traditional Hungarian governmental institutions, the attempts by Vienna to introduce German as the administrative language became a pretext for the Magyar nobility to call for an armed revolt. The administrative and church reforms met resistance in the Austrian Netherlands, culminating in the 1789 Brabant Revolution. In addition to this, the new Tax and Land Regulation caused quite a negative reaction by provincial elites, making further uprisings in Habsburg crownlands quite possible<sup>64</sup>. A potential revolt in Galicia would be particularly dangerous, since the radical reforms occurring in the *Rzeczpospolita* at the time could entice the Kingdom’s elites and provide them with a reason to reunify their land with the Commonwealth. Finally, the reforms of Joseph II gradually ran out of support within the government. Due to its destabilizing potential, the Tax and Land Regulation came in for particularly strong criticism from the highest officials of the empire, including Count Josef Brigido, the Galician governor<sup>65</sup>. In this situation, it would have been unwise for the emperor to insist on a long-term “civilizing mission” strategy in Galicia. To preserve peace in the crownland, he had to at least consider the voices of its former elites, which, despite nearly two decades of attempts at “subalternization”, could still pose a threat to the empire in times of unrest.

<sup>62</sup> Marian Tyrowicz, *Galicja od pierwszego rozbioru do wiosny ludów 1772–1849. Wybór tekstów źródłowych* (Kraków, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Zakładu im. Ossolinskich, 1956), 123–125 (citations in translation by the author of the paper).

<sup>63</sup> Řezník, *Neuorientierung*, 311.

<sup>64</sup> Charles Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1618–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 229–232.

<sup>65</sup> Řezník, *Neuorientierung*, 323.

The same month, Governor Brigido received a letter from Vienna demanding a report on the situation in Galicia. Brigido confirmed it to be quite serious, claiming that the financial burden on the *szlachta* was in fact unbearable, and that the provincial economy was near ruin. He also remarked how the crisis was impacting not only the elites, but the peasantry and clergy as well. Brigido warned the emperor of pending revolts, and mentioned that, although they could be temporarily dealt with through violence, over the long term, it would only hasten a Polish-Prussian alliance, transforming Galicia into yet another enemy of the Habsburg Monarchy.

Brigido's report prompted the emperor to form a governmental commission tasked with suggesting ways out of the crisis. The result of the commission's work, issued on 5 February 1790, did not criticize the reforms outright, mentioning "some usefulness of the new system", but did not deny its numerous drawbacks as well. The text even cast the Habsburg officials in Galicia in a negative light, informing the emperor bluntly that they would certainly not help him "win the trust of the nation", as they cared much more for direct personal gains than for the prosperity of the crownland. In the end, the commission strongly recommended lowering the amount of taxes expected from Galicia and collecting them "in a more just way"<sup>66</sup>.

Joseph II died shortly after the report was submitted. The accession to power of his brother, Leopold II, raised hopes among the Galician nobles that their claims and demands would be recognized. During Leopold's short reign, two notable documents emerged giving the fullest written account of the Galician *szlachta* discourse of the period under examination here. In both texts, the *szlachta* demonstrated a readiness to defend the "moral core" of the nation and an adherence to the socio-political ideology of "freedoms". The local nobility saw its role in Galicia as nothing less than an equal partner of the Habsburgs in governance and meant to counter further attempts at its subalternization.

The anonymous *Betrachtungen über die Verfassung von Galizien, die Ursachen seines Verfalls und die Mittel, dem Lande wieder aufzuhelfen* was printed in spring 1790. Unlike the January letter, it was written in a much harsher and more demanding tone. The text began with a description of the nearly perfect relationship between the landlords and serfs in the times of the *Rzeczpospolita*, where "several thousands" provided for "about three million and hundreds of thousands"<sup>67</sup>. The landlord had an obligation to care for the wellbeing of his serfs, for the security of their property, as well as for their souls, and so would pay the local priests and finance church services from his own pocket<sup>68</sup>. The occasional uprisings, such as that led by Bohdan Khmelnytsky in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, took place, ostensibly, owing to "the movement of people from a state of barbarism

<sup>66</sup> Władysław Łoziński, *Galicianiana. Kilka obrazków z pierwszych lat historii galicyjskiej* (Lwów: Wild, 1872), 106–116 (citations in translation by the author of the paper).

<sup>67</sup> Ernst Traugott von Kortum, *Magna Charta von Galizien oder Untersuchung der Beschwerden des galizischen Adels pohnlischer Nation über die österreichische Regierung* (Jassy 1790), 283 (citations in translation by the author of the paper).

<sup>68</sup> von Kortum, *Magna Charta*, 290–291.

to that of civilization” – and the Galician peasantry knew better than to participate in the riots of the past<sup>69</sup>. Thus, the authors of *Betrachtungen* defended the positive role the *szlachta* played in the Galician past and created the point of reference for future claims for power.

The text suggested that the “Arcadia” had been brutally interrupted by the appearance of the Habsburg government. The transfer from a noble’s republic, where the king was “merely the first citizen of the Fatherland”<sup>70</sup> meant an end to the centuries-old traditions which had previously guaranteed the prosperity and honour of the entire nation. In the republic’s “Golden Age”, all societal classes had solemnly fulfilled their duty, while the intrusion of the new government had brought about only chaos and immorality<sup>71</sup>. The text accused the Habsburg Monarchy of sending “foreigners” to serve as officials in Galicia – that is to say, people who had no understanding of local conditions. These “foreigners” harboured serious prejudices against the Galician population, seeing them as barbarians in need of civilizing and not as equals worthy of heeding<sup>72</sup>. Since the new government did not care to explore the crownland thoroughly, the reforms that had aimed at making the lives of the peasantry better actually worsened the situation, nearly ruining the local economy. Moreover, the “civilizing mission” which the Habsburgs had undertaken was destined to fail, as an attempt to equate the peasant with the rest of the population contradicted the natural order of things and would only cause catastrophe similar to that experienced during the French Revolution.<sup>73</sup>

Following a long list of accusations against the Habsburg government, the author(s) nonetheless expressed their hope that the new emperor would be more cooperative and listen to their demands<sup>74</sup>. First and foremost, the Tax and Land Regulation had to be revoked. The “foreign” officials were to be replaced by representatives of the local magnates<sup>75</sup>. The latter were to be given virtually all authority over the land, with the Governor appointed by the emperor serving merely as the symbol of the Monarchy, possessing little more than an overall control function<sup>76</sup>. To ensure smooth communication between the Kingdom and Vienna, a separate Court Chancellery for Galicia could be created, with its members stemming from Galicia and therefore possessing the requisite knowledge and experience<sup>77</sup>. The *Betrachtungen* ended with another expression of hope concerning the positive resolution of the matter, but also with an indirect threat to the Habsburg Monarchy, claiming that the Polish nobleman would always fight against his oppressors when stripped of “freedoms”, and that the

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<sup>69</sup> von Kortum, *Magna Charta*, 284–285.

<sup>70</sup> von Kortum, *Magna Charta*, 294.

<sup>71</sup> von Kortum, *Magna Charta*, 312–314.

<sup>72</sup> von Kortum, *Magna Charta*, 295.

<sup>73</sup> von Kortum, *Magna Charta*, 335.

<sup>74</sup> von Kortum, *Magna Charta*, 344.

<sup>75</sup> von Kortum, *Magna Charta*, 351–352.

<sup>76</sup> von Kortum, *Magna Charta*, 354.

<sup>77</sup> von Kortum, *Magna Charta*, 357.

landowners would not hesitate to lead a plot against the government if their voices were not heard<sup>78</sup>.

The second document, a prospective Galician Constitution referred to as the *Charta Leopoldina* was presented to the emperor in September 1790. It was prepared by a delegation of Galician nobles who had travelled to Vienna in hopes of conducting negotiations with the central government<sup>79</sup>. The *Charta Leopoldina* signalled the apex of the relationship between the *szlachta* and the Habsburg Monarchy during the period examined here, as neither before nor after were the two parties so close to one another that they were ready to carry out direct negotiations.

For the *szlachta*, the *Charta* became the ultimate manifesto of their sociopolitical aspirations, as well as an attempt to reaffirm their power status in the crownland. The authors claimed to be acting in the name of the entire “nation” and not just their social class<sup>80</sup> (it should be remembered, however, that the *szlachta* considered only itself to be the “true” Polish nation, endowing this portion of the document with some ambiguity). The special position of the Galician nobility in the future was further underlined by a list of fundamental rights and privileges that the emperor had an obligation to defend, such as the inviolability of property or freedom of movement. The *Charta Leopoldina* recognized the right of serfs to personal freedom, but at the same time defended the landlord’s privilege to task them with duties as he saw fit. It was attested that the peasant was unable to work hard and be productive without the landlord’s control, and that modifying this relationship was likely to lead to collapse of the territory’s economy<sup>81</sup>. Such a narrative was persistent in the numerous addresses of the Galician noblemen to the central government starting in 1773, and was even shared by the highest Galician officials, starting with Brigido himself, who believed that the reforms had done more harm than good to the peasantry and the crownland in general. That, in turn, gave the *szlachta* hope that their attempts to reverse the reforms would be fruitful<sup>82</sup>.

To secure the special position of the *szlachta*, the authors of the *Charta* included a detailed vision of the future provincial administration. The nobility was supposed to participate in state affairs as members of both the local diet and provincial assemblies. The former was to be given competencies exceeding those of diets throughout the other Habsburg crownlands, up to creating a separate Civil Code for Galicia<sup>83</sup>. “Foreign” officials were directly demonized as enemies, and the drafters insisted that civil administration over the land had to be given to the indigenous nobles, who had handled these duties for generations<sup>84</sup>. The compe-

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<sup>78</sup> von Kortum, *Magna Charta*, 330.

<sup>79</sup> Řezník, *Neuorientierung*, 374.

<sup>80</sup> Stanisław Grodziski, *Projekt Konstytucji dla Galicji z 1790 r. („Charta Leopoldina”)* (Kraków: Nakładem Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1981), 57 (citations in translation by the author of the paper).

<sup>81</sup> Grodziski, *Projekt*, 63.

<sup>82</sup> Kaps, „Kulturelle Differenzen”, 108–110.

<sup>83</sup> Grodziski, *Projekt*, 93–95.

<sup>84</sup> Grodziski, *Projekt*, 139–143.

tencies of the emperor were to be drastically diminished, making him dependent on the opinion of the Estates in virtually every political matter.

At the same time, the *Charta* suggested full acceptance of Galicia coming under the Habsburg scepter. The land was directly called “an old Hungarian province”, accepting the quasi-historical justification of the events of 1772<sup>85</sup>. The authors claimed that their duty was to “seek stronger ties with the ruling dynasty”<sup>86</sup>. Throughout the text, the Habsburg monarch was called “the king”, thus presenting a continuation of the *Rzeczpospolita*’s political traditions; it was also suggested that by accepting the title of the King of Hungary during the coronation, future Habsburg rulers would adopt the title of the King of Galicia and Lodomeria<sup>87</sup>. Finally, to ensure the personal ties between Vienna and L’viv, the future governors were to be chosen among the Habsburg princes of the blood<sup>88</sup>.

Since the *Charta Leopoldina* demonstrated both the unwillingness of the *szlachta* to cede its status in Galician society and the readiness to several symbolic concessions to the ruling dynasty, it could be perceived as a manifestation of a new, “Galician” identity of the provincial nobility. While not ready to fully adopt the “Habsburg” identity planted during the decades of reform, the *szlachta* preferred living under Viennese rule to opposing it, so long as the central government granted certain powers to the local elites and protected their possession rights<sup>89</sup>. This way, the *szlachta* rejected the “subalternization” component of the Habsburg colonial strategy, but not the entire perspective of dependence on the monarchy. According to Miloš Řezník, at that time one could already speak of the *szlachta*’s “Galician patriotism”, owing to their acceptance of the territory’s state policy framework within the Habsburg Monarchy<sup>90</sup>. Even the eventual rejection of the *Charta Leopoldina* project did not end the development of “hybridity” in the relationship between the Galician nobility and the Habsburg administration, as the *szlachta*’s rejection of open revolt and willingness to find common ground with the foreign government would manifest themselves in the nearest future.

## THE NAPOLEONIC WARS – WEIGHING INTERESTS

The readiness of the Monarchy to negotiate with the Galician *szlachta* and to consider giving it certain political competencies proved to be short lived. Immediately after Emperor Franz II (I) ascended the throne, the document under the title *Prüfung Galiziens, oder freymüthige, aber wahrhaft patriotische und unpartheyliche Abschilderung Galiziens* emerged. The author of the document preferred to remain anonymous, but, judging by numerous clues in the text, he belonged

<sup>85</sup> Grodziski, *Projekt*, 123.

<sup>86</sup> Grodziski, *Projekt*, 129.

<sup>87</sup> Grodziski, *Projekt*, 153.

<sup>88</sup> Grodziski, *Projekt*, 131.

<sup>89</sup> Rychlikowa, „Galicyjski odłam”, 103.

<sup>90</sup> Řezník, „Das landespatriotische Programm”, 757.



to the highest ranks of government, and considered the well-being of the empire to be his utmost priority. The purpose of the document was to inform the emperor of the circumstances in Galicia, to examine the changes imposed by the recent reforms, and to suggest ways in which the Kingdom's economy and social state could be improved.

The general narrative of the Habsburg Empire concerning Galicia had not changed considerably after von Pergen's report was written. On the one hand, the author voiced his sympathy towards the local population, both noble and common, and criticized the agrarian reforms of the 1770s–1780s. In his opinion, the cancellation of serfdom had led to the impoverishment of the crownland, since it ruined its traditional economic system without providing any viable alternatives<sup>91</sup>. He even suggested the reintroduction of the serf's obligations in form of a "voluntary agreement" between the landlord and the peasant, with the government being the guarantor of justice<sup>92</sup>. Also gone were the harsh descriptions of the local nobility as "barbarian" or "wild" – throughout the text, the author mentioned multiple times the "natural" bond between the *szlachta* and the peasants, which had existed before the Partitions to the benefit of both parties,<sup>93</sup> and recalled numerous cases of the nobility providing selfless assistance to their serfs in times of need<sup>94</sup>. On the other hand, the milder attitude towards Galician nobility did not mean "giving them a voice" in the provincial administration. The author firmly believed that only reliance on the Habsburg Monarchy would guarantee Galicia a peaceful and prosperous future. If the aristocracy attempted any revolt against the empire, the land would succumb to chaos and violence, similar to the situation in revolutionary France<sup>95</sup>. In the absolute monarchy led by a wise emperor, no multi-authority was allowed. Nowhere in the text does the author mention guaranteeing the *szlachta* "freedoms" or rights, which would make them partner to the Habsburgs in any regard. Instead, he insisted on the *szlachta* eventually becoming obedient to the "fatherly care" of the emperor<sup>96</sup>. The text directly called Galicia "the youngest daughter" of the Monarchy, which meant she "has earned special fatherly protection" from the central government<sup>97</sup>. This rhetoric demonstrates the persistence of the "civilizing mission" narrative – only instead of being treated like barbarians or wild beasts in need of taming, here the *szlachta* was regarded rather as children requiring discipline, but also compassion. As "children" of the Monarchy, the *szlachta* would still be deprived of any major decision-making powers. The author thus still insisted on *the szlachta* being "subalternized", even though his reasoning differed slightly from that of his predecessors.

<sup>91</sup> *Prüfung Galiziens, oder freymüthige, aber wahrhaft patriotische und unpartheyliche Abschilderung Galiziens*, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Hausarchiv, Kabinettsarchiv, Kaiser-Franz-Akten, Ktn 10, No.1, 14 (citations in translation by the author of the paper).

<sup>92</sup> *Prüfung*, 89.

<sup>93</sup> *Prüfung*, 7.

<sup>94</sup> *Prüfung*, 31.

<sup>95</sup> *Prüfung*, 78.

<sup>96</sup> *Prüfung*, 49.

<sup>97</sup> *Prüfung*, 157.

The text of *Prüfung* was not directly referenced in any official decrees; however, the politics of Franz II (I) have certainly followed the pattern of depriving the *szlachta* of a “voice”. After so-called Western Galicia was acquired by the Habsburg Monarchy in 1795, the local nobility issued their address to the emperor, which, although much humbler and more modest in tone, did not differ greatly in substance from the *Charta Leopoldina*. Essentially, they sought to encourage the emperor to guarantee the inviolability of the property, freedoms, and privileges, and their participation in local state administration<sup>98</sup>. However, the document was largely ignored by Vienna, and the only answer the *szlachta* delegates received was the decree issued in *Gazeta Krakowska*, where the convening of the local diet was postponed “to the times when the inhabitants of Western Galicia are used to Habsburg rule.” The usage of Latin and Polish languages was allowed only in conjunction with German, and the Poles were promised lower positions in local administration and courts<sup>99</sup>. This way, the central government demonstrated that, in times of persistent instability, granting local elites even minor concessions around autonomy was too much of a risk.

During the Napoleonic Wars, the threat of conspiracies aimed at a resurrection of the Polish state became a major concern for the partitioning powers. From a postcolonial perspective, the Habsburg Monarchy was facing the challenge of ambivalent attitudes towards its Galician subjects. Using the definition of Homi K. Bhabha, the colonizers are forced to be ambivalent towards the subjects they attempt to “civilize”, since if the mission were successful, and the colonized became equal to their colonizers, they would inevitably revolt against the colonizing power<sup>100</sup>. Among other matters, this meant inconsistent strategies aimed to integrate Galicians into the imperial army. It was impossible to completely relieve them of military service, as Galicians constituted nearly one-fifth of the empire’s population<sup>101</sup>. The significance of the *szlachta* would become fully apparent with the creation of the Duchy of Warsaw in 1807 and the occupation of Galicia in 1809. Not only would the creation of Polish units strengthen the army, but the recruitment of Polish noble volunteers in large numbers could potentially have a strong galvanizing effect. It was firmly believed that seeing their former compatriots leading the enemy’s units would be demoralizing for the Duchy’s troops<sup>102</sup>. On the other hand, the creation of separate Polish units was seen as risky. The *szlachta* was considered to be potentially disloyal, in particular, by the head of the War Council, Archduke Charles, who believed that if in separate corps, “Polishness” as an ideological concept would be resurrected and the empire betrayed<sup>103</sup>.

<sup>98</sup> Stanisław Grodziski, „Postulaty szlachty Galicji Zachodniej z okazji hołdu w 1796 roku”, *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne* 20 (1968): 87–92.

<sup>99</sup> Tadeusz Mencel, *Galicja Zachodnia: 1795–1809; Studium z dziejów ziem polskich zaboru austriackiego po III rozbiórze* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1976), 66 (citation in translation by the author of the paper).

<sup>100</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, 86.

<sup>101</sup> Baczkowski, *W służbie*, 12–13.

<sup>102</sup> Baczkowski, *W służbie*, 61.

<sup>103</sup> Baczkowski, *W służbie*, 75.

By elevating the status of the *szlachta* in the military formations (and thereby acknowledging them as “civilized” enough), the Habsburg Empire would give them the instruments to eventually engage in direct opposition towards itself, something especially dangerous in times of war. As a result, the creation of Polish units was limited, and always preceded by a hefty discussion of whether a new unit should have a distinct “Polish” character. The most support and enthusiasm were accompanying the formation of a Fourth Polish Uhlan regiment in 1813, after the victory against Napoleon was ensured, and the risks of Galician insurrection minimized<sup>104</sup>.

But how justified were the Monarchy’s fears? The *szlachta*’s loyalty following several decades of Habsburg rule is difficult to state definitively. It is true that many nobles had a rather negative attitude towards the government. The “enlightened” reforms of the 1770s–1780s and the destruction of centuries-old economic and political structures, the perceived oppressiveness of “foreign” officials and their disregard of local circumstances, their neglect of the veritably sacred “freedoms” all greatly irritated the nobility. There was certainly no lack of volunteers among Galicians for Napoleon troops after deserting the Habsburg army. At the same time, participation in the war on the side of the Duchy of Warsaw was not desired by every Galician nobleman, as the majority tended to be pragmatic in their aspirations. The legal system of the Duchy, based on the Code Napoléon, was incredibly different from that of the pre-partition *Rzeczpospolita*. The *szlachta* was aware that, even if the Duchy of Warsaw survived the war and turned into a certain reincarnation of a Polish state, no return of the old “noble’s republic” and its “freedoms” would occur. Moreover, the Duchy’s constitution explicitly abolished serfdom, meaning that the landowners of Galicia would forfeit their main source of income<sup>105</sup>. Such a measure was not even included in the *Rzeczpospolita*’s “enlightened” Constitution of 3 May 1791<sup>106</sup>.

Since the 1794 Kościuszko insurrection, the Galician nobles had wearied of mass uprisings that could further strain or upset social relations,<sup>107</sup> and the new Polish protectorate state was just such a disruption. For this reason, many nobles hesitated to throw their weight behind either side in the conflict so long as its outcome remained uncertain. The events of 1809 exemplify this position (or lack thereof) nicely: When Duchy troops lead by Józef Poniatowski occupied large parts of Galicia, including its capital L’viv, they were initially met with joy. An unprecedentedly large number of citizens welcomed them upon their entrance; however, the population, and the *szlachta* in particular, soon became passive with regard to the rebuilding of the Polish state.<sup>108</sup> No significant anti-Habsburg upris-

<sup>104</sup> Baczkowski, *W służbie*, 29.

<sup>105</sup> Jarosław Czuby, „The Attitudes of the Polish Political Elite towards the State in the Period of the Duchy of Warsaw, 1807–1815”, in *Collaboration and Resistance in Napoleonic Europe*, ed. Michael Rowe (Basingstoke: Springer, 2003), 173–174.

<sup>106</sup> Jerzy Lukowski, *Disorderly Liberty: The Political Culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Eighteenth Century* (London, New York: Continuum, 2010), 227.

<sup>107</sup> Řeznik, *Neuorientierung*, 451.

<sup>108</sup> Tyrowicz, *Galicja*, 145–146.

ing took place, even while the empire was at its weakest, and Galicia remained a non-starter in international politics among the Great Powers, with no attempt made to establish itself as an independent polity.

It would hardly be a mistake to assert that the majority of the Galician *szlachta* were self-seeking in their attitude towards both warring parties. The donation collection drives carried out in Galicia by the Habsburg government illustrate this nicely. The first such campaign was launched in 1796 and proved rather fruitful, at the very least as a propaganda tool. Successive campaigns were progressively less impressive, indicating changes in public opinion caused by the military victories of Napoleon and the Duchy and the hope that they were bringing. However, in 1814, when the defeat of France became obvious, the population of Galicia started donating again with unprecedented enthusiasm, yielding more in 1814 and 1815 than ever before. Many of the noblemen used the occasion to express their loyalty towards the Austrian Empire<sup>109</sup>. After the defeat of Napoleon, the relationship between the foreign hegemon and the Galician elites needed to be re-established. Demonstrating loyalty to the emperor was a way for the *szlachta* to secure its positions locally, even though the hope of recouping all the privileges it had possessed before the partitions was clearly lost.

Once the war concluded, the Austrian Empire reclaimed Galician territory. The years of conflict had laid bare the fragility of stability in the Kingdom and the goal of making Galicians “model subjects” of the emperor through harsh reforms proved to be unattainable. Nevertheless, keeping them loyal through moderate appeasement and compromise was still possible. In 1815, the Governor of Galicia, Peter von Goëss, suggested that the empire should not try to turn the subordinate Poles into “Germans”, and thus cause further hostilities, but rather “make them into real Galicians”<sup>110</sup>. Creating an artificial regional identity would ensure the allegiance of the *szlachta* first and foremost to the Kingdom, and then – to the entire monarchy. The plan of von Goëss, which was favourably accepted by the emperor, foresaw guaranteeing the *szlachta* political representation and cultural concessions. The subsequent years witnessed a cautious “Polish Renaissance” in the Kingdom with the establishment of the *Ossolineum* cultural centre, and the first Galician Landtag meeting in 1817, decades after its dissolution<sup>111</sup>.

It could be argued that by the end of the Napoleonic wars the two parties discussed in this paper had finally reached a fragile compromise, with neither of them having its ambitions satisfied completely. The Habsburgs had to refuse the implementation of all-encompassing “civilizing mission” which would completely transform the character of Galician nobility. At the same time, they succeeded in establishing a long-term absolutist administration in Galicia, safeguarding it from any attempts by the *szlachta* to reincorporate the features of the “noble’s republic”. In their turn, the *szlachta* had not succeeded in establishing the “hybridity”

<sup>109</sup> Baczkowski, *W służbie*, 98–102.

<sup>110</sup> Maner, *Galizien*, 62. More: Arthur Haas, *Metternich, Reorganization and Nationality, 1813–1818: A Story of Foresight and Frustration in the Rebuilding of the Austrian Empire* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1963), 167–169.

<sup>111</sup> Vushko, *The Politics*, 101–102.

in the provincial administration they were aiming at in early 1790s. However, Vienna had also given up its attempts at the total “subalternization” of the *szlachta*, allowing the nobility to retain most of their wealth and way of life by partially cancelling the Josephinian reforms<sup>112</sup>. In the long run, the peaceful coexistence benefitted both parties – when Waław Zaleski became the first Polish Governor of Galicia in 1848, the crownland and its noble elites were already fully integrated into the Habsburg Monarchy and did not pose a threat to imperial integrity. These events, however, as well as the application of the postcolonial instruments to them, should be the object of a different research project on Galician history.

## CONCLUSION

The years 1772–1815 in the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria saw the emergence, development, and eventual (at least partial) decline of two discourses, which can be studied using postcolonial lenses – that of the hegemonic power (Habsburg Monarchy), and that of the entity it took over (the local elites embodied by the *szlachta*). Despite their antagonism to one another, both overlapped in quite a few ways. The Galician noblemen themselves could be perceived as the colonizers of what was formerly known as Red Ruthenia, as from the 14<sup>th</sup> century they had actively exercised their own colonial practices against the native Ruthenian/Ukrainian population<sup>113</sup>. Both the Polish *szlachta* and the Habsburg administration believed in carrying out their own “civilizing missions” in Galicia, viewing their rule as the only path to progress and prosperity. Both also had their own value systems, which became the centrepieces of their respective political ideologies. For the Habsburg Monarchy, this was the discourse of Enlightened Absolutism; earlier, the *szlachta* had propagated the “freedoms” and the ideal of a “noble’s republic”.

Following the First Partition, the Habsburg administration began its attempts to force the Galician *szlachta* into a subaltern position, conducting the radical reforms without any consideration of their interests. In this context, however, “subalternization” did not mean the complete liquidation of the *szlachta*, but rather equalizing them with the noble elites of the other Habsburg crownlands, who, in their turn, were largely deprived of agency due to the centralization reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II. To give just one example, the virtually unlimited legislative competencies of the *szlachta* were replaced by the introduction of the Galician Landtag – an institution with hardly any power behind it, equivalent to Noble Estates in nearly all imperial provinces<sup>114</sup>. The entire reform

<sup>112</sup> Glassl, *Das österreichische Einrichtungswerk*, 112.

<sup>113</sup> Klemens Kaps, Jan Surman, „Postcolonial or Post-Colonial? Post (-) Colonial Perspectives on Habsburg Galicia”, *Historyka. Studia Metodologiczne* XLII (2012): 24.

<sup>114</sup> William Godsey, Petr Mařa, „Introduction: The Habsburg Monarchy as a Fiscal-Military State”, in *The Habsburg Monarchy as a Fiscal-Military State: Contours and Perspectives 1648–1815*, ed. William D Godsey and Petr Mařa (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 11.

policy generated much discontent among the *szlachta*, which was not ready to give up its dominant power positions and to be forced into a position of “colonized colonizers”. Once the Habsburg government had been forced to slow down the reforms due to the internal and external crises of late 1780s, the *szlachta* used the occasion to try to negotiate with Vienna. Although imperial control over Galicia was not disputed in the noble petitions of early 1790s, they clearly enunciated the *szlachta*’s demand to be recognized as a partner in power, or at the very least, as a mediator between the Habsburgs and the local population. One can only speculate about where the negotiations would have led if not for the sudden death of Leopold II and the further escalation of war in Europe. Since the Habsburg government agreed to discuss the *szlachta*’s demands, it clearly did not feel as secure in Galicia as it had in preceding decades.

The Napoleonic Wars caused both the Habsburg Monarchy and the *szlachta* to reconsider their positions. For the empire, any risky transformations were now unthinkable – the main goal was to facilitate successes on the battlefield through promoting stability across the crownlands. This forced the Habsburg government to be ambivalent towards its Galician noble subjects. Although the *szlachta* could not have been ignored as a socio-political force due to their potential in a conflict, its active engagement in the armed forces posed an underlying risk, since it could potentially betray the empire in an attempt to rebuild the Polish state. As a result, the Monarchy failed to pursue a consistent policy of enticing the Polish nobility to its side, as it feared that any concessions to the *szlachta* would encourage its anti-Habsburg aspirations.

At the same time, the threat of the Galician *szlachta*’s revolt in times of war turned out to be exaggerated. By and large, it pursued a pragmatic course towards Habsburgs, and preferred to adhere to the compromise-oriented discourse of the early 1790s. The idea of resurrecting the Polish nation-state did not gain as many followers as it would later throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and potential union with post-revolutionary France was seen as too risky to the *szlachta* regarding their future wellbeing. In keeping with this, the Galician nobility was quite opportunistic, and once the defeat of Napoleon became inevitable, it rushed to express its loyalty to Vienna in an attempt to secure its positions in the post-war Kingdom.

At the end of this period, both the Habsburg Monarchy and the Galician nobility reached a certain consensus. The former renounced its attempts to completely transform the character of the Galician nobility, going so far as to agree to some modest cultural and political concessions to them. For its part, the *szlachta* consented to tolerating the Habsburg government, as after the war the only alternative to Viennese domination would be surrendering to the rule of St. Petersburg. The narratives examined in this study thus went through fundamental transformation but were not forgotten completely. The alleged “backwardness” of Galicia, as well as the “Golden Age” of the *Rzeczpospolita*, would continue to be revisited nostalgically until the fateful year of 1918, and even beyond. Moreover, up to this day the ambivalent position of Galician – and, by extension, the Polish-Lithuanian – nobility as both oppressing colonizers of the annexed terri-

tories and oppressed former elites of the partitioned state has been a subject of heated discussions in academia and political circles of the entire CEE<sup>115</sup>.

As has been mentioned throughout this paper, key postcolonial concepts, ideas, and theories, such as those suggested by Homi K. Bhabha, Albert Memmi, and Edward Said can be identified in the relationship between the Galician aristocracy and the Habsburg administration starting from 1772. Therefore, a study of the first decades of Habsburg Galician history, including the period of the Napoleonic wars, would benefit from the application of postcolonial theories and discourse analysis. This approach to the 1772–1815 period might be quite relevant in terms of covering the research gap concerning the studies of the end of 18<sup>th</sup> – beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century in the CEE history. Through examining the aforementioned narratives in this way, a more complete picture can be gained of Galicia during this era, and the mistake of treating Galician society (solely) as an irresponsible object of an imperial agenda can be avoided.

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