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The Representation of Power
and
the Power of Representation

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The state is invisible. Nobody has ever seen it. You may perhaps get a chance to look at or even to touch a certain prime minister but you can never touch the state. The state is a mere fiction, however a very effective fiction, one that remains effective even after it has been unmasked as fictional. *The state is an arrangement to simulate power in order to produce it.*[1] Power needs representation but on the other hand representation creates power. The state is *enchanted* and this enchantment produces power.[2]

Max Weber defined power as every opportunity to enforce one's own will.[3] According to Michael Mann social power originates through organisations, or at least through networks of ideology, economy, military, and politics.[4] Power has not necessarily to be exercised personally. On the contrary, according to Michel Foucault power remains anonymous and therefore is not represented directly.[5]

Domination, however, occurs on a more personalized level than social power in general. According to Weber, legitimate political rule is either legal or traditional or charismatic. Legal rule is based upon law and bureaucratic organisation whereas traditional rule originates from a supposed sacred world order. Therefore, traditional officials are not the superiors of subjects but the

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[1] Volker Reinhardt, *Machiavelli oder Die Kunst der Macht. Eine Biographie*, München 2012, p. 256: "Der Staat ist eine Inszenierung, die Macht vorspiegelt, um sie zu erzeugen."

[2] Sudipta Kaviraj, On the Enchantment of the State: Indian Thought on the Role of the State in the Narrative of Modernity, in: *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 46 (2005) 2, pp. 263–296.

[3] Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Tübingen 1922, § 16: Macht und Herrschaft.

[4] Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 4 vols., Cambridge 1986–2013.

[5] Gary Gutting (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, Cambridge 2003, pp. 101–112.

lords of servants. Their relationship is not neutral but a personal or even a moral one. By contrast, charisma is based upon the extraordinary qualities of a leader who attracts followers and thereby makes domination possible. The secret of successful charisma consists as much in the reaction of followers as in the influence of a charismatic personality.

Weber's ideal types are artificially purified abstractions which do not exist in reality. Charisma, for instance, may turn into an everyday tradition and ultimately into an institution with bureaucratic officials. On the other hand, both legal and traditional domination include elements of faith and sacrality and therefore, to some extent, partake of charisma. The state ends when nobody believes in it. Even in this faithless age, below the level of Max Weber's ideal type a kind of elementary legitimization is necessary. The state is simply accepted because it is there, and sometimes it is needed. This circular argument of credibility is able to counter brute force through the discourse of justice, and to establish legitimate domination in its place. Nevertheless, subjects can never completely elude the possibility that violence will be abused.[6]

As early as 1830 a formula was coined which retains its validity for Elizabeth II and other contemporary monarchies. It proclaims: The Queen rules but she does not govern.[7] In 1867, Walter Bagehot produced a lucid explication of the English system of government under Queen Victoria.[8] He makes a distinction between *dignified parts* and *efficient parts* of the constitution. The dignified parts "excite and preserve the reverence of the population. The mystic reverence, the religious allegiance, which are essential to a true monarchy, are imaginative sentiments that no legislature can manufacture in any people. These semi-filial feelings in government are inherited just as the true filial feelings in common life […] There are two great objects which every constitution must attain to be successful […]: every constitution must first *gain* authority, and then *use* authority; it must first win the loyalty and confidence of mankind, and then employ that homage in the work of government […] The dignified parts of government are those which bring it force – which attract its motive power. The

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[6] Paul Ricoeur, *Gedächtnis, Geschichte, Vergessen*, München 2004, pp. 415, 430.

[7] „Der König herrscht, aber er regiert nicht." – Adolphe Thiers, *Zeitung Le National* on 20 January and 4 February 1830.

[8] Walter Bagehot, The English Constitution [1867] (*The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot*, ed. by Norman St John-Stevas, vol. 5), London 1974, pp. 206–207, 226, 229–230, 232, 234, 239–240.

efficient parts only employ that power […] The elements which excite the most reverence will be the *theatrical* elements – those which appeal to the senses, which claim to be the embodiments of the greatest human ideas, which boast in some cases of far more than human origin."

Because "the best reason why monarchy is a strong government, is, that it is an intelligible government." It is personal not abstract. "It is often said that men are ruled by their imaginations; but it would be truer to say that they are governed by the weakness of their imaginations". According to Blaise Pascal "the Power of kings is based upon the intelligence of kings and upon the stupidity of the populace – and to the larger extent upon the stupidity."[9] Max Weber preferred to call this "charismatic rule".

In addition*,* to continue with the words of Bagehot, a dynasty "brings down the pride of sovereignty to the level of petty life. No feeling could be more childish than the enthusiasm of the English at the marriage of the Prince of Wales […] To state the matter shortly, royalty is a government in which the attention of the nation is concentrated on one person doing interesting actions. A republic is a government in which the attention is divided between many, who are all doing uninteresting actions. Accordingly, so long as the human heart is strong and the human reason weak, royalty will be strong because it appeals to diffused feeling, and republics are weak because they appeal to the understanding.

Secondly, the English monarchy strengthens our government with the strength of religion. […] The […] majority of the Queen's subjects […] will say she rules by "God's grace"; they believe that they have a mystic obligation to obey her. […] [T]he crown […] preserves its mystery […] to be a visible symbol of unity […]." – Even if England's religion is no longer up to much!

"Thirdly, the Queen is the head of our society." In England more than anywhere else the crown is still the fountain of prestige; the crown represents prestige, because "our court is but the head of an unequal, competing, aristocratic society." The crown is still, even today, the prime source of social distinction. Businessmen and football stars, politicians and scientists, all are equally eligible for elevation to noble rank and for decorations.

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[9] Blaise Pascal, Pensées, 26–330: *Œuvres complètes*. ed. by. Louis Lafuma, (Éditions du Seuil) Paris 1963.

Figure 1: Britain's Queen Elizabeth II ahead of delivering the Queen's Speech at the official State Opening of Parliament in London, Monday Oct. 14, 2019. (Toby Melville/Pool via AP)

"Fourthly, we have come to regard the Crown as the head of our morality. The virtues of Queen Victoria […] have sunk deep into the popular heart. […] But a little experience and less thought show that royalty cannot take credit for domestic excellence." This statement is still as true as ever.

"Lastly, constitutional monarchy […] acts as a disguise. It enables our real rulers to change without heedless people knowing it."

Long after Bagehot's time, people are still under the spell of monarchy to an extent which no elected president can ever achieve. For thousands of years monarchy was the standard model for larger political communities. The symbolic pattern of monarchy might change, but symbolic representation always remained essential. A certain kind of residence was usually one of these essentials, which might or might not resemble the chateau of Versailles or the Forbidden City in Beijing.[10] Another essential was representation as a performative sequence of actions. Performance as representative action requires an active subject. Performativity, by contrast, does not require autonomous or intentionally acting subjects, because performative acts produce their subjects during action – this "creativity of action" reproduces the monarchy by stealth.[11]

We may consider the primeval European monarchies of the Middle Ages as political societies whose members are physically present.[12] Under such circumstances representation was limited to the public self-presentation of the ruler under the sacred crown. Kings relied primarily on their royal insignia to represent monarchy. The crown together with the sceptre and the imperial orb ranked highest, followed by other objects such as the imperial sword or the holy lance, ring, bracelet, and mantle.[13]

However, the development of the modern state and the colonial expansion of Europe promoted political societies consisting for the most part of absent members. From this point on the representation of an absent monarch by a deputy became regular practice. As early as the 10th century a process of demythologization and abstraction was initiated which transformed the person of the medieval ruler. Lawyers distinguished two bodies of the king, the mortal *body natural* and the immortal *body politic*. At royal funeral ceremonies the former could be represented *in effigy* through elaborate works of art. However, because of the concept of dynastic continuity the royal body natural could also claim immortality. *The king is dead – long live the king*![14]

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[10] Uwe Fleckner et al. (eds.), *Handbuch der politischen Ikonographie*, 2nd ed., München 2011, vol. 2, pp. 310–318.

[11] Hans Joas, *The Creativity of Action*, Chicago 1996.

[12] Rudolf Schlögl, *Anwesende und Abwesende. Grundriss für eine Gesellschaftsgeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit*, Konstanz 2014.

[13] Fleckner, Handbuch, vol. 1, pp. 491–498.

[14] Id., vol. 2, pp. 559–566.

In a sermon of 1662, the French court theologian Bossuet declared that the very countenance of a king demonstrated that God had appointed him to represent his divine power.[15] From the 18th century, however, the ideology of the two bodies of the king was no longer generally accepted. In 1840, Thackeray even made it an object of ridicule when he compared the pompous official attire of Louis XIV of France to the pathetic private figure of this king.[16]
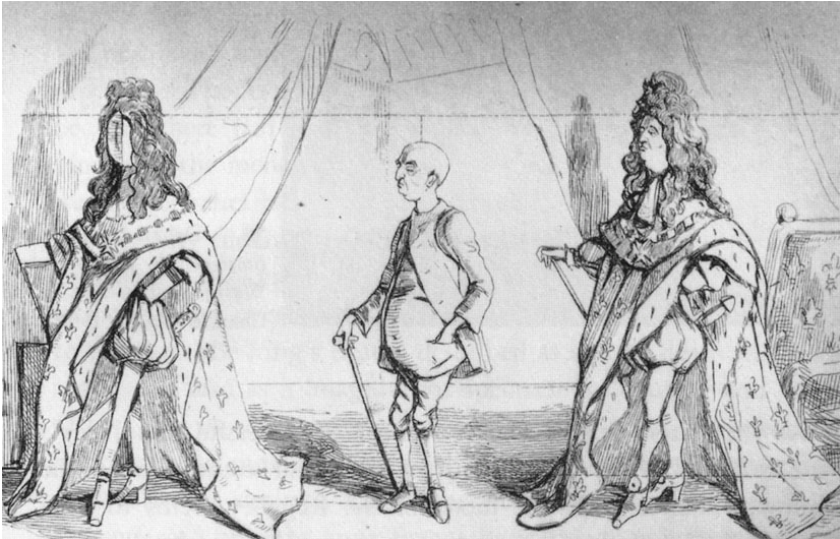

Figure 2: *What makes the King ?, William Makepeace Thackeray, The Paris Sketchbook, 1840.*

Bagehot was not the first authority to argue for a realistic idea of government. Lamartine had written in 1847 that "Monarchy is a government according to the image of God; it is a dream. A republic is a government according to the image of man; it is political reality."[17]

Indeed, not only Europe but the entire world had dreamt for thousands of years the dream of the divine character of monarchy. In consequence, royal rule was considered to be the natural way of representation. Although Thomas Hobbes had demythologized the monarchy and the state and explained them

[15] Id., vol. 1, p. 491.

[16] William M. Thackeray, *The Paris Sketchbook*, London 1840.

[17] Alphonse de Lamartine, *Historie des Girondins*, Paris 1847.

as artificial creations of man, he still considered the state to be the mortal God. Of course, this was just a metaphor, but it was a very consequential metaphor.

Just remember that theologians still discuss the most extreme case of the representation of an absent person by one who is present. The historically present person of Jesus Christ as man and God represents the transcendent and always absent person of God the Father. By analogy, through representation the Roman popes were promoted from vicars of the apostle Peter to vicars of Christ and finally even to vicars of God with a claim to world domination.

It follows that the papacy was and still is the most exemplary case of monarchy. No monarchy has ever been represented with so much perfection as the papacy. The pope, like the state of Thomas Hobbes, was promoted to the divine rank of *Vicedeus,* Vice-God.[18] In the case of the papacy this did not imply Hobbesian secularization but, to the contrary, the maintenance of some mysterious transcendent quality, down to the present day. The *plenitudo potestatis* claim of medieval popes became the model and prototype of European monarchy and even of monarchy in general. At the same time, the real and more modest papal states of the 15th–17th centuries, with their combination of complete spiritual and temporal power, contributed to the development of the modern state.[19]

Of course, in the course of power politics the growth of secular states eventually reduced the papacy to irrelevance. Nevertheless, the Roman baroque monarchy which still exists represents a double and very real claim to power and domination. Since the middle of the 20th century the papacy has very successfully undertaken the role of a self-appointed moral conscience for the world. This role has been reinforced through the global activities of the recent traveling popes. Increasing radicalization of global capitalism required additional inputs of moral authority. The not completely voluntary reduction of papal domination to mere spiritual authority has been more than compensated by achievements of which medieval popes could not even dream. Their grandiose programme of world domination could never be realised because of competing spiritual and temporal authorities. Instead, the loss of temporal power was more

[18] Wolfgang Reinhard, *Paul V. Borghese (1605–1621). Mikropolitische Papstgeschichte*, Stuttgart 2009, p. 51.

[19] Paolo Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice. Un corpo e due anime*, Bologna 1983, English translation: *The Papal Prince: One Body and Two Souls: The Papal Monarchy in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 1988.

than compensated by spiritual monopoly. Today's Roman Church is an excellently organized monarchy with all qualities of a state except the military. The representation of this ecclesiastical monarchy, however, still follows traditional ways of representation.

Whoever enters St Peter's square in Rome is confronted with works of art which still represent the Roman claim to world power. The cupola of St Peter's, completed in 1590, was much more than just the culmination of a papal building spree. It became the most important model for calculated monumental architecture worldwide. It inspired not only innumerable Catholic cupolas but also Anglican, Orthodox, and Lutheran anti-St Peter's, and finally an African variety at Yamoussoukro in the Ivory Coast (see Figure 3). The capitol at Washington DC served as a kind of intermediary model of secularized cupolas. Adolf Hitler had a gigantic cupola hall planned for his future capital, and present-day Berlin has a postmodern cupola adorning the *Reichstag*. Bernini transformed St Peter's square into an impressive stage for religious and secular theatrical performances, thereby enriching the repertoire of baroque and classicist political architecture. Roman monumental architecture has thus had a worldwide impact, not just between Paris and Washington but also from Pretoria to Delhi.[20]

Notwithstanding all crises, papal Rome demonstrated outstanding artistic creativity in representation, because its unique combination of spiritual and temporal rule produced an extraordinary social and cultural coherence among the elite. The Roman elective monarchy had to replace the ruler and his family regularly. In consequence, early modern papal nepotism became an organised institution. The so called cardinal-nephew (*cardinale-nipote*) represented the pope in his qualities as head of the state and as leader of the papal clients.[21]

The dynamics of upcoming rulers and new families were expressed through the conspicuous expenditure of the ruling families on buildings and through their patronage of the arts in general. The buildings of the popes and their nephews were particularly flamboyant and expensive. From the Renaissance onwards, popes endeavoured to give their capital a truly representative character corresponding to their claim to spiritual world power. Rome became a cosmo-

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[20] Wolfgang Reinhard, Historische Anthropologie politischer Architektur, in: id., *Geschichte als Anthropologie*, Köln 2017, pp. 79–103.

[21] Reinhard, *Paul V. Borghese*.

Figure 3: Notre-Dame-de-la-Paix de Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast.
(Clément Bucco-Lechat/CC-BY-SA-3.0)

politan city. Many churches were built or rebuilt. Popes, cardinals, prelates, and noble families had new palaces, villas and gardens constructed. New thoroughfares and new fountains changed the urban scenery. Several other squares beside St Peter's underwent a representative renewal. Painters and sculptors enjoyed patronage. Much money and capital was transformed into cultural capital and accordingly into the social capital of the upwardly mobile.[22]

Representation of dynasties through elaborate symbolic policy was called *pietas*. Pietas is defined as the worship of God, of the home town or country, of parents, and of people who depend on us like parents.[23] *Mimesis*, creative imitation, is the easiest way to perform this. The name adopted by a recently elected pope, the selection of a coat of arms, acceptance of the patronage of a church, or the promotion of a church to a higher ecclesiastical status are all ways to

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[22] Arne Karsten, *Künstler und Kardinäle. Vom Mäzenatentum römischer Kardinalnepoten im 17. Jahrhundert*, Köln 2003.

[23] Wolfgang Reinhard, Papa Pius. Prolegomena zu einer Sozialgeschichte des Papsttums, in: Remigius Bäumer (ed.), *Von Konstanz nach Trient. Festgabe für August Franzen*, Paderborn 1972, pp. 261–299.

demonstrate social dependence. Canonisation, that is elevation to the status of a saint, created a particularly effective relationship of *pietas*. A recently promoted saint had to express his gratitude through intercession with God in favour of the promotor and his family. This transcendent patronage corresponded to the secular patronage of a living protector, who might in sordid reality be a *mafioso*.

Religious ritual and courtly ceremonial are essential elements of pope worship. A ritual is the active variety of a passive symbol. Whereas a fixed sign will do as a symbol, a ritual needs agency. Ritual connects symbolic gestures and actions as chains of agency with a common underlying structure. The standardised behaviour required in rituals reduces complexity, generalizes expectations, and establishes certainty in behaviour and emotions. On the one hand, rituals create distance from spontaneous action, on the other hand they generate standardised emotions such as reverence or even the inclination to violence. Ritual is the place of performativity, because it implies the entire body, beyond mere speech. Ritual is the stage for new representative productions, where non-verbal aesthetic appeal is essential.

Rituals create order and community, they open a window into the structure of culture. Power relations are established and represented accordingly. Rituals replace the interaction of agents with submission under a scheme of action. The greater the distance of a ritual from its original location and the fewer the connections with its original meaning, the more discipline or even force is necessary to control the mimetic processes of its tradition. Highly ritualised societies such as the Roman Curia therefore employ professional experts to make sure that rituals maintain both the unity of agency and the unity of faith. Totalitarian regimes (in this context the Roman Curia differs little from communism, fascism or rigid Muslim states) have a tendency towards hyper-ritualisation. This helps us to understand why humanists, reformers, and diverse actors outside the established social frame mount a pluralist critique of ritual and ritualism.

On the other hand, successful ritualisation is realised through the perfect natural behaviour of the early modern "honnête homme who is able to control his body and behaviour so perfectly that he can afford complete nonchalance. This impression of complete naturalness is based upon complete artificiality

– man as a work of art!"[24] Ritual performance is inscribed in the bodies of the actors. Typical prelate-bodies or at least prelate faces may be encountered.

Figure 4: Papal Coronation of Pius XII. (1939)
(Joachim Specht/Public Domain)

On the Roman stage, representation through symbolic and performative activities could be considered as an attempt to domesticate or to de-sacralise the sacred. The Roman cosmic theatre deactivates transcendence through reducing it to everyday dimensions. Cosmic powers, God himself, his angels and saints

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[24] Wolfgang Reinhard, Symbol und Performanz zwischen kurialer Mikropolitik und kosmischer Ordnung, in: Günther Wassilowsky and Hubert Wolf (eds.), *Werte und Symbole im frühneuzeitlichen Rom*, Münster 2005, pp. 37–50, and in: Wolfgang Reinhard, *Geschichte als Anthropologie*, Köln 2017, pp. 123–140, quotation at p. 136.

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become calculable elements of human life available for manipulation. They become parts of the human order of the world, from the sacraments down to minute regulations of ceremonial. The aesthetic representation of performance and symbol is essential in this respect. Pictorial representation makes incomprehensible things comprehensible. The beauty of buildings, paintings, and robes, the choreography of the liturgy, of processions, and of ceremonies, the charm of music all contribute to feelings of confidence in the faith. Unfamiliar and mysterious experiences are domesticated through identification with familiar ones. According to Roman tradition, the usual practice of *pietas* against relatives, friends and clients is extended into the next world because God, together with his celestial allies and the powerful of this earth, are all supposed to obey the same rules. Obviously *pietas* rules the entire Roman cosmos.

Neither Roman claims to world power nor the associated practices of representation are as historically extravagant as modern Europeans sometimes assume. Most premodern empires expressed flowery world power claims of more or less sacred character; think of China and Japan, India and Iran, Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Or at least they indulged in the idea of a universal monarchy (e.g. the Habsburg, Spanish, French, or English cases). Modern European colonial empires as well as fascists and communists dreamt of world power, not to mention the recent American empire. The sacral dimension of dominion may differ but it is always there. Obviously, ideological legitimation is an essential part of the business of politics. Representation therefore remains an essential integrating component of any form of domination and a basic element of political anthropology.[25]

Among the innumerable monarchies of world history, the old Chinese empire in particular generates comparative possibilities extending beyond banal platitudes. In China, we run into many instructive parallels to Rome and Europe, which, however, on a second, historical glance look rather different.

In 221 B. C., after centuries of feudal kingship the ruler of the Qin Dynasty established centralised claims to world power. The new term *Shi Huángdì* which is usually translated as *Emperor,* in contrast to *Wang, king* in traditional terminology, literally means *first divine ruler.* Ancient China and papal Rome

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[25] Wolfgang Reinhard, Einleitung: Weltreiche und Weltmeere – und der Rest der Welt, in: id. (ed), *Geschichte der Welt 1350–1750*, München 2014, pp. 20–21, American translation: *Empires and Encounters 1350–1750*, Cambridge, MA 2015.

both imply sacrally legitimised universal rule. But the Chinese connection to the cosmos differed as much from the historical construct of the papacy as the so called "Middle Kingdom" from continuously re-invented pluralist Europe. In addition, the Chinese "Son of Heaven" of the Confucian tradition, unlike the Roman "Vice-God," did not enjoy a complete monopoly of sacrality but had to reckon with Daoist and Buddhist competition.

Nevertheless, despite all the differences, the places of worship, the palaces, the rituals and ceremonies corresponded to each other to a remarkable extent. The annual order of religious ceremonies was not limited to the court of the monarch but governed the everyday behaviour of the entire population. In both cases, ceremonies were the essence of world order, more important than the legal system of the so-called legalists and of the Confucians, and more important than the canon and civil law of Rome. The details, however, could not be more different, especially concerning representation through architecture and the fine arts: in the east, hierarchic arrangements of one-storied wooden halls, in the west traditional basilicas and churches with modern cupolas, in the east gigantic systems of imperial tombs, in the west a series of individualised monuments to single popes.

Despite the absence of dynastic succession in Rome, domination was in both cases embedded into extensive networks of elite families, which to some extent lingered until the 1950s. Being elective, the papal monarchy was more easily accessible to ambitious newcomers, whereas imperial China enjoyed greater stability, at least in theory. In reality dynastic crises were anything but rare in China and sometimes imperial unity broke down. But between 1409 and 1415 Europe too had to live with three competing popes. Both systems had structurally similar bureaucracies with particular ideologies, hierarchies and careers. The combined effects of social networks and of the Confucian literary education and examination system produced in China a coherent imperial elite of educated humanists. The Roman curia was governed by officials qualified in canon and civil law, who were recruited in a similar way according to their training and network. Even the compulsory celibacy of the Roman officials was not without a Chinese parallel when, in certain periods, eunuchs controlled the court. We might even identify a kind of common colonialist expansive moment, in the idiom of ethnicity in China and of spirituality in Rome: both systems

knew how to integrate new men into their respective political culture.[26]

Thousands of years of monarchy produced an extensive repertoire of patterns of domination and representation which is still in use today. Nevertheless, the number of possible varieties remains limited because of the very nature of monarchy. Changing cultural circumstances often produce new solutions for very old problems. The emperor is dressed traditionally; he is neither naked nor able to wear new clothes.

The faithful and the tourists both enjoy the well conserved baroque papal monarchy – if both groups of visitors can be distinguished at all. The not completely voluntary but in the end compulsory limitation to the spiritual sphere kept Rome alive. Under such circumstances, representation finally became an end in itself. Papal domination, which formerly had to be represented, is now dead or in the process of dying. Some of the faithful take notice of this development. And we may well ask: what is going to happen to the British monarchy?

China enjoyed great stability for a long time but in the end was not able to resist the wind of change blowing from the West. The last emperor was permitted to represent the theatre state of Manchukuo for a few years. By now the era of traditional monarchies was over. Worldwide European colonialism finished them off, whereas in Europe monarchy was replaced by nationalism. It does not make much difference if the modern nation-state employs the attire of a Republic as in France and in the US or if it retains the representative rituals of a parliamentary monarchy as in Britain or in Scandinavia. During decolonisation the modern nation-state became the political standard worldwide, or at least it tried to do so. In reality, however, quite often bloody conflicts were the consequence. In China they lasted for more than a century until the final victory of the People's Republic in 1949. Meanwhile, several modern European states morphed into authoritarian or totalitarian dictatorships, with millions of victims. In addition, we have experienced the recent rise of new kinds of religious domination, often represented ostentatiously through symbolic changes of the dress code.

All these transformations notwithstanding, modern and postmodern domination still relies on well-established patterns of representation which originate from the practices of monarchy. The traditional insignia of monarchy are no

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[26] Mark Edward Lewis, Das alte China, in: Hans-Joachim Gehrke (ed.), *Geschichte der Welt: Vor 600. Frühe Zivilisationen*, München 2017, pp. 597–762.

longer so crucial (despite the recently promoted veneration of the so-called "Holy Crown" of Hungary). Instead, nationalism has made the flag the outstanding symbol of unity. The burning of enemy flags serves as symbolic enforcement of national identity, because identity needs alterity.[27] Certainly, democracies find it difficult to establish an obligatory iconography for the arts, but the symbols of religion and of monarchy can easily be transformed into national symbols, especially under conditions of restricted democracy.[28] The replacement of religious heroes and martyrs by political heroes and martyrs was a particularly impressive accomplishment of symbolic politics – the veneration of relics included.

This is the political playground of symbolic hybridity. Adolf Hitler did not wear the former emperor's uniform but preferred a modernized variety decorated with his personal iron cross. Later he added the knight's cross to the German symbolic repertoire. The role transfer from the German emperor to the pseudo-republican substitute emperor Hindenburg and then to the *Führer* reproduced well established techniques of representation. The Japanese emperor, for instance, who for centuries had been reduced to a mere ceremonial figure, in 1867 could be used as an institutional support for the political takeover of the new regime. Gandhi used the traditional dress – or rather undress – of an Indian ascetic ("a naked fakir" according to Churchill) but transformed this role into the representation of the new Indian nation and enriched it with new political rituals. African dictators enjoy power symbols of traditional African chiefs such as the leopard's skin and the fly whisk. Some of them, like emperors Jean-Jacques Dessalines of Haiti in 1804–1806 and Jean Bédel Bokassa of Central Africa (1976–1979), have even sought to emulate Napoleon.

China in 1949 seemed definitely to have arrived in a radically new condition of modernity. The dictatorship of the party set out to extinguish Chinese traditions and Western habits at the same time. The little red book with the teachings of Chairman Mao became the bible for many Western students; the person of the great chairman was sacralised and religiously venerated. At first glance, this might be dismissed as the simple imitation of European dictatorship. At second glance, however, it reveals considerable cultural hybridisation of domination

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[27] Fleckner, Handbuch, vol. 2, pp. 166–173.

[28] Id., vol. 1, p. 328.

and representation. Chinese elements were integrated and recoded.

In contrast to other dictators, Mao Zedong wrote poems in Chinese calligraphy. The party appropriated the imperial palaces for purposes of representation. They became a top tourist attraction. But in the immediate neighbourhood the party created its own "forbidden city" for political leaders. There were no longer monumental memorial quasi-cities of deified emperors. But once again more or less voluntary socage was used to construct a gigantic mausoleum where the well conserved body of the great chairman can be visited by the masses. Of course, for this the Lenin mausoleum in Moscow served as model, but the aesthetic details are inspired by Chinese cosmology and imperial tradition.[29] Thousands of visitors come every day to see and honour Mao Zedong for a few seconds.

His revolutionary programme and respective activities, however, are no longer of interest. Since Deng Xiaoping they have been replaced by an extremely efficient market economy, under the complete control of the party. So far the Chinese party oligarchy resembles the papal system of domination in its circularity, and it appears to be generating comparably effective political stability. In both cases the members of the elite are appointed by the ruler, but the elite elects the ruler. Officially, everybody pays tribute to the Marxist doctrines of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping and other leaders, and at the moment of course to Xi Jinping. But this amounts to mere verbal symbolism. In reality, the masses do not care for Mao Zedong's murderous historical role, but venerate him simply as the founder of the nation. And the real political programme is also as simple as it is promising. In addition to the conservation of party power, it consists in the increase of prosperity and, above all, of national magnificence and representation.

This is the purpose of the rising defence budget and the emphatic representation of the military in the gigantic parades of 2017 and 2019 to mark the anniversaries of the People's Army and the People's Republic. This is the purpose of the intensive and systematic cultivation of Chinese history. Many museums do not even bother to translate their information because the main target group consists of Chinese tourists, not foreigners. This is the purpose of the brutal

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[29] Lothar Ledderose. Die Gedenkhalle für Mao Zedong. Ein Beispiel für Gedächtnisarchitektur, in: Jan Assmann and Tonio Hölscher (eds.), *Kultur und Gedächtnis*, Frankfurt 1988, pp. 311–339.

repression policy against national minorities who, like the Tibetans and the Uyghurs, are not content with their existence in a Chinese theme park.

All this fits perfectly with the ancient Chinese tradition according to which law is just another instrument of state power, whereas Western traditions insist upon attributing the rule of law a unique power. The ancient Chinese empire had an elaborate system of penal law but civil law in the Western sense did not exist before the 20th century. Until recently, the essential concept of the legal person or entity did not exist either. Natural persons alone could be represented legally. Business in China remains difficult.

Neither the People's Republic of China nor any other state is visible. The power holders and the representations of their power, however, are omnipresent. They use old and new ways to enchant their dominion and their state. They represent power, but much of their power originates from this very representation.