Milan Radovanović
Academy of Arts, Alfa BK University, Belgrade, Serbia

Political Power and Its Representation

Abstract: Understanding the concept of representation as a key factor involved in the process of meaning production in a society, can help us answer the following questions: what does the concept of representation mean in the context of constituting and producing political power, what does the process of representation entail, and how does it function? Our focus will be on the idea that political power is produced through regimes of verbal and visual representation that actively shape our perception of reality, including existing social norms and values. Representation is not only the result of certain social tendencies and changes, but also their instigator. The status of a ruler is determined not only based on their historical or social relevance, but also on how they are represented. In shaping the perception of a ruler as a legitimate holder of power, representation often plays a more dominant role than the subject itself. We will treat the concepts of power and representation as interdependent and interconnected variables. We will pay attention to how their reciprocal subordination produces two effects: the institution of power appropriates representation as something inherently its own, and representation is actually what transfers its power onto it.

Keywords: representation; language; power; ruler; portrait.

The construction of meaning in language and understanding between members of a social community is possible because language functions as a *representational system*. In language, we use signs such as words or images, which represent or convey our desires, needs, feelings, or thoughts to other people. This enables us to establish a relationship with the 'real' or 'imaginary' world of objects, people, and events: "Meaning depends on the relationship between things in the world – people, objects and events, real or fictional – and the conceptual system, which can operate as *their mental representations*."[1] In this way, we have a 'system' which connects all elements to concepts or mental representations in our minds. Without them, it would not be possible to interpret the world in a meaningful way. It involves different ways of organizing, combining, arranging, and classifying concepts, as well as establishing relations between them. However, to exchange meanings, we must have access to language, which is a system of representations that participates in the process of

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[1] Stuart Hall, ed., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practises* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2013), 4.

Author's contact information: drscimilan@yahoo.com

meaning production. Our conceptual map must be translated into language so that we can correlate concepts with spoken, written, or visual content and express meanings in communication with other people. Every sound, word, image, or object that functions as a sign, organized with other signs in a system that conveys and expresses meanings, is used as 'language'. According to Stuart Hall, there are two systems of representation in the process of meaning production. The first enables us to give meaning to the world by constructing a chain of equivalences between things (people, objects, events, etc.) and our conceptual system, our conceptual maps. The second is based on a set of correspondences between our conceptual maps and a set of signs, arranged and organized into different languages that represent these concepts. The established relationship between 'things', concepts, and signs is a prerequisite for the production of meaning in language. The process that links these three elements is called 'representation': "Why do we refer to all these different ways of producing and communicating meaning as 'languages' or as 'working like languages'? How do languages work? The simple answer is that languages work *through representation*. They are 'systems of representation.'"[2] Representation is the production of meaning that occurs through language.

Theories of representation

Theories of representation can be classified into three basic categories: reflective, intentional, and constructionist. Each of them attempts to find an answer to the question: Where do meanings come from? The *reflective theory* believes that language simply reflects meanings that already exist in the world around us. Since Plato's time, the Greeks have used the concept of *mimesis* to explain how language, as well as art, reflects and imitates things and phenomena found in nature. The term mimesis is derived from the Greek noun *μίμησις*, which denotes *imitation* and is used to express the relation between a real object and its representation. The theory that language functions by reflecting or imitating a truth that already exists as fixed in the world is called 'mimetic'. Although it seems obvious according to this theory that, for example, visual representation bears some resemblance to the form of the object it represents, we will show that the connection between representation and the object it refers to is conventionally established. For example, if an artistic painting represents a king, we will never say that the king also represents that artistic painting, although we imply that there is an obvious similarity between them. The act of representation is not explained by the concept of similarity because similarity is a social construct and falls under processes of meaning production. For something to be a representation, it must stand for something else, and this is determined by social convention. According to the *intentional theory*, language expresses only what someone wants to say. Although people use language to try to convey their personal view of the world to others, one must bear in mind that language represents communication that cannot take place

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[2] Ibid., XX.

without linguistic conventions and codes accepted by all members of a social community. The *constructionist theory* emphasizes that meaning is constructed 'in' language and 'through' language. Things 'in themselves' do not have one fixed and unchanging meaning, but they acquire it based on how we represent them – what words we use for them, what images we create about them, what emotions we attach to them, how we classify them, how we conceptualize them, and how we value them. In other words, things acquire meaning based on how we use them in our everyday practices. Constructionists do not deny the existence of the material world, but they believe that the material world is not the bearer of meaning; rather, it is the linguistic system we use to represent our concepts: "Reality exists outside language, but it is constantly mediated by and through language: and what we can know and say has to be produced in and through discourse."[3] In this work, we will rely on the *constructivist* approach because this perspective helps us most to understand the relationship between representation and practices of meaning production. Saussure's linguistic theory has made a significant contribution to the development of the theory of representation. The implication of his thesis on the arbitrariness of the relationship between the signifier and the signified is that it results from systems of conventions that are specific to a society and culture at a particular historical moment, making the process of meaning production socially, culturally, and historically conditioned.[4]

Representation of political power

The relationship between political power and its representation will be explored through the historical example of the French king Louis XIV. In the 17th century in France, there was an intertwining of secular politics and religious discourse, resulting in the creation of a modern centralized state in which the portrait of the king in all its manifestations played crucial role in maintaining absolutism as the unlimited power of the monarch. Analyzing the role of the representation of political power in the constitution of the ruler's authority reveals the basic pattern by which every absolutist rule is structured. For the representation of the ruler to fulfill its function, it needs to be 'realistic' and as such entirely convincing. The convention of realism has been inherited from ancient art in which 'similarity' and 'recognizability' were culturally valued to ensure the 'presence' of a person who is currently or permanently absent: "When we use the word 'portrait' in modern language(s), there is a strong tendency to assume naturalism in the resulting representation – affected by photograph, by realism in painting, and by a long history of the genre in the West."[5] For Norman Bryson,

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[3] Stuart Hall, "Encoding/decoding," in *Culture, Media, Language*, ed. Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe and Paul Willis (London: Routledge, 2005), 121.

[4] "The bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. Since I mean by sign the whole that results from the associating of the signifier with the signified, I can simply say: *the linguistic sign is arbitrary*." Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York City: Columbia University Press, 2011), 67.

[5] Irene Winter, "What/When Is a Portrait? Royal Images of the Ancient Near East," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 153, 3 (September 2009): 254.

what we call 'reality' has no objective existence independent of different worldviews, which very actively participate in constructing our assumed experience: "It is clear that the term 'realism' cannot draw its validity from any absolute conception of 'the real', because that conception cannot account for the historical and changing character of 'the real' within differing cultures and periods."[6] Therefore, it is more accurate to say that 'reality' is the effect of recognition of representation that corresponds to what a society considers to be 'Reality'. The production of 'reality' involves a complex system of representations and social codes that regulate a person's relationship with their historical environment. For this reason, when we speak of a ruler's portrait, one should bear in mind that it is both in production, in the way it is produced, and in reception, in continuous interaction with existing social practices surrounding it. The realism of the portrait is based on the idea of convincingness that every society chooses as a means to express the existence of a subject in visual form. The historical and social determinism of the idea of convincingness must be concealed for the visual representation to be accepted as a reflection of a pre-existing reality:

> Certain codes may, of course, be so widely distributed in a specific language community or culture, and be learned at so early an age, that they appear not to be constructed – the effect of an articulation between sign and referent – but to be 'naturally' given. Simple visual signs appear to have achieved a 'nearuniversality' in this sense: though evidence remains that even apparently 'natural' visual codes are culture specific. However, this does not mean that no codes have intervened; rather, it means that these codes have been profoundly *naturalized*.[7]

In that sense, representation as a process of meaning production connects three orders of things: the world of reality – people, objects, or events from the external world; the world of concepts – ideas we have in our minds; and signs that constitute language through which we convey ideas in the process of communication.

The verb 'to represent' means to present something again (in the mode of time) or instead of something (in the mode of space). The prefix '*re-*' introduces the concept of substitution into our understanding. Louis Marin believes that the representation inherent in an artistic work is based on the systematic substitution of external referents by signs that represent them:

> An idea represents a thing (it is the thing in the mind), but that representation can only be achieved in relay fashion, by way of another thing that represents the first thing in turn of the second. Thus, if ideas are things in the mind, signs are ideas for the mind, ideas as thinkable and thought, that is, communicable and communicated. Representative repetition

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[6] Norman Bryson, *Word and Image – French painting of the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 8.

[7] Hall, "Encoding/decoding," 121.

> is one side of an operation of which substitution is the other. There is repetition only in the case of substitution, and there is substitution only through repetition.[8]

In other words, something that was present, but is no longer, is now represented. Instead of something that is present elsewhere, representation is what is present here and now. In the place of representation stands the object or person that functions as a kind of double of the one who is absent in a particular time and space. To represent also means: to expose to view, to show, to intensify, to duplicate someone's presence. Thus, the prefix '*re-*' signifies not only substitution but also intensity and frequency. Representation intensifies identity through multiplication. In the process of considering our topic, it is important to emphasize that the basic function of representation is to make something present, but not in a way that is a simple imitation of presence, but rather through the repetition of the imagined present, producing the effect of presence itself: "The first characteristic of ideological authoritarian discourse is that it is definitive and all-encompassing and, in that way, reveals its autoreferentiality. It becomes the place where established principles are repeated and glorified."[9] The second effect of representation is that it forms a legitimate and authoritative subject of power in the form of institutional power:

> At the same time representation constitutes its subject. Such would be the second effect of representation in general, to constitute a subject through reflection of the representational framework: it is as if a subject were producing the representations, the ideas he has of things; it is as if there were neither world nor reality except for and through a subject, the center of that world.[10]

We can confidently assert that representation within discourse creates power because it is productive in itself.[11] Discourses are ways of constructing knowledge about a particular topic or practice, shaping social and institutional life in society. Discursive formations define acceptable and unacceptable elements in our social practices. 'Discursive' has become a general term used wherever meaning, representation, and culture are considered constitutive. While semiotics deals with how meanings are produced in language, the discursive approach focuses more on the effects and consequences of representation – its 'politics'. The aim of discourse analysis is not only how

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[8] Louis Marin, *On Representation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 23.

[9] Alain Goldschläger, "Towards a Semiotics of Authoritarian Discourse," *Poetics Today* 3, 1 (1982): 13.

[10] Louis Marin, *Portrait of the King* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 5–6.

[11] "What makes power effective, what makes one obey it, is not simply that it is felt as a power that says no, but that in fact it produces things, it produces pleasure, it creates knowledge, produces discourse; it has to be seen as a productive network which runs through the social body, and is far more than just a negative instance whose function is to punish.", Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power: an interview with Michel Foucault," *Critique of Anthropology* 4 (13–14) (1979): 137.

language and representation produce meanings but also how knowledge is connected to power, how identities and subjectivities are constructed, and how certain things are represented, thought about, practiced, and studied. In the discursive approach, the emphasis is always on the historical specificity of representation; not on language as a general phenomenon, but on how the current practice of representation operates in a specific historical situation.

During the reign of Louis XIV, the legal and political model of power representation was borrowed from the discourse of Catholic theology, *Corpus mysticum*. We can observe numerous parallels between state rituals and the liturgical practice of the Church. From this perspective, it is possible to explore various domains of verbal and visual language[12] – historical narratives, exegeses and liturgical texts, or images – portraits and coins, as an expansion of the liturgical statement 'This is my body', which transforms the modalities of representation into signs of the state political sacrament and the ruler's 'real' presence. The Eucharistic formula of the Catholic Church applied to the ruler articulates two important statements in 17th century France: first, when Louis XIV uttered the words '*L'état, c'est moi*' ('The state, that is me') in Parliament in 1655; and second, recorded by the logicians of Port-Royal, *Le portrait de Cesar, c'est Cesar* [A portrait of Caesar is Caesar].[13] With the statement "The state, that is me", the ruler is represented as power in his singularity, and absolutism as power in its universality. When the ruler says, "The state, that is me", paradoxically, his body, which is present here and speaking now, is also a body present everywhere and always. The body that is present locally and translocally is precisely what the sacramental host realizes in the universal Catholic Church community. The Eucharistic model could function as a legal and political model because Jesus Christ's words 'This is my body' spoken in the liturgical formula produce a sacramental body visible as real presence on the altar, as a body present in reality in a symbolic manner in the form of bread and wine. It should be noted that the transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ is the starting point of the commemoration of Jesus Christ's historical sacrifice as a constantly repeated narrative that constitutes the holy ritual. Therefore, the absent historical body of Jesus Christ is produced on the altar as representation. Also, this Eucharistic transformation serves to unite the faithful by constructing the ecclesial body as a symbolic community. The transfer of the structure of the liturgical act to the legal and political domain allowed the king's portrait to constitute a sacramental body, which, like the host in the church, is omnipresent in the kingdom and among the subjects. The primary aspect of all absolute powers is that they are dispersed and dissolved in an imaginary position, in an imaginary body,

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[12] "To make their pretences abundantly clear, as monarchs "by Divine Right" – the one through divinely-sanctioned birth, the other through divinely-inspired election – the men who ruled in Versailles and Rome fully exploited all aspects of visual propaganda. In doing so, they also elevated the political rhetoric of capitals to a new height.", Peter Rietbergen, "The Political Rhetoric of Capitals: Rome and Versailles in the Baroque Period, or the Power of Place", in *New Perspectives on Power and Political Representation from Ancient History to the Present Day*, ed. Harm Kaal and Danielle Slootjes (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2019), 74.

[13] Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole, *Logic or the Art of Thinking* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 120.

which is sustained through preferred systems of representation.

The history of rulers, the story of their lives and achievements, is legitimized in narrative and operates in a similar manner to how absolute power controls its subjects. In other words, the history of rulers should not appear to recipients as a written transcript of their regular activities; instead, it should be re/presented as a direct and unmediated expression of the ruler's power. This means that the history of rulers should subject recipients to the same laws that an absolutist monarch enforces on his subjects:

> All forms of power create a pyramid structure to rule the social group. Every hierarchy implies a reduced summit of authority and a large obeying force at the base. Similarly, authoritarian discourse entails a pyramid structure of comprehension of its meaning. The true and complete meaning is available only to the very top; the bottom will receive only a pale reflection of the meaning and, thus, the masses have to be satisfied with what limited sign they receive.[14]

Historical narratives are thus no longer stories of historical facts but simulated productions of the effects of these histories. That's why words are not used alone and isolated. Despite the significant quantity and importance of verbal content, visual content is also necessary, i.e., images which appear in combination with written texts. The ruler's body is simultaneously visible in three ways: as a sacramental body, it is truly present in written and visual artifacts; as a historical body, it is visible as represented, absence becomes a renewed presence in the 'image'; as a political body, it is visible as a symbolic fiction marked in his name, law, and rule.[15] This way, the portrait of the ruler appears in all three dimensions: as presence, as imaginary representation, and as a symbolic name. Physical resemblance is not a necessary condition for a portrait; recognition based on socially accepted criteria of identification is sufficient. The likeness of the king 'in his royal dignity' belongs more to the semiotic than mimetic mode of representation. We can define a portrait of a ruler as a visual representation executed on a specific artifact. However, two aspects of representation should be distinguished: the object consisting of various materials and the visual text as a process of meaning production. In the image of the king, we see and recognize a subject represented not because some aspect of the likeness resembles him, but because the likeness belongs to a kind of representation that we are accustomed to 'read' in a certain way. The relationship between the likeness and the king is not direct and natural but arbitrary. Their similarity is not based on the coincidence of their visual properties but on the

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[14] Goldschläger, "Towards a Semiotics of Authoritarian Discourse," 13.

[15] That function was also held by the architecture of the Palace of Versailles as a representation of the king when he is absent: "Indeed, he also wanted to show himself and his power to all those who never would actually meet him in person, though they might visit Versailles, since the palace was in many ways an open place where tourists – 'avant la lettre' – were welcome, if properly accoutred. Moreover, he wanted to impress the world at large. Therefore, printed descriptions of the palace and its decorations were widely distributed […]." Rietbergen, "The Political Rhetoric of Capitals," 68.

visual practice characteristic of the existing society, in which observers are accustomed to certain forms of representation. Images should not be seen as isolated aesthetic objects because their production and interpretation depend on existing social practices. The following is how Bryson explains this thesis:

> My ability to recognize an image neither involves, *nor makes necessary inference towards*, the isolated perceptual field of the image's creator. It is, rather, an ability which presupposes competence within social, that is, socially constructed, codes of recognition. And the crucial difference between the term 'perception' and the term 'recognition' is that the latter is *social*.[16]

The fact that visual representations belong to social, rather than natural phenomena, means that they are not just reflections of given social circumstances but also produce effects that can maintain or change the existing social order. The portrayal of rulers as a practice can be examined from two basic theoretical positions: essentialist and relativist. The essentialist position is based on the belief that there is a certain degree of visual similarity between the image and the object it represents. In contrast, relativist theories argue that the idea of visual similarity is not sufficient to determine whether an image represents something; rather, a range of social and cultural factors that participate in the process of representation must be taken into account. Critiques of essentialist theory come from linguistics, where the concept of representation is defined as the production of meaning through language. In representation, we use signs organized into languages of various kinds (verbal or visual)[17] to communicate meaningfully with others. Languages can use signs that refer to objects, people, and events in the so-called 'real' world. However, they can also refer to imaginary things and worlds of fantasy or abstract ideas that are not part of the visible material world. There is no direct relationship, reflection, imitation, or unambiguous correspondence between language and the real world. The world is not accurately reflected in the mirror of language because language does not function as a mirror. The production of meaning depends on two different but connected systems of representation. In the first, concepts are formed as systems of mental representations that classify the world into meaningful categories. If we have a concept of something, we can say that we know its 'meaning'. However, we cannot convey this meaning in communication without another system of representation, which is language consisting of signs organized in different relationships. Signs can convey meaning only if we know the codes that enable us to translate our concepts into language. These codes are of crucial importance for the processes of meaning production and representation. They do not exist in nature but are the result of social conventions and form the basis of our culture – our

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[16] Norman Bryson, "Semiology and Visual Interpretation," in *Visual Theory: Painting and Interpretation*, ed. Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly, and Keith Moxey (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 65.

[17] For more about the relationship between visual and verbal representation see: Arthur Danto, "Depiction and Description," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 43, 1 (September 1982): 1–19.

'maps of meaning' – which we learn and unconsciously adopt as we become part of the culture we belong to.[18]

When discussing the portrayal of rulers, one should not overlook the direct or indirect presence of various forms of verbal language. On the one hand, visual experience is a fundamental way of communicating with the world,[19] while on the other, verbal language shapes our perception of reality.[20] The practice of reading a visual text is determined by numerous intertextual relations between different textual modalities. Moreover, written text is simultaneously visual as it involves practices of looking and reading. Written texts are visually present; they are also 'images'. Verbal text is not isolated from visual phenomena because the process of reading it involves visualizing its 'content', which must not be ignored. Imagination, memories, dreams, fantasies, as well as literary images, belong to the domain of the visual. Without them, it would not be possible to create verbal texts, nor would it be possible to actualize them. Any attempt to draw a clear line between the verbal and visual domains would not be satisfactory because, on the one hand, we describe an image using verbal language, and on the other, words evoke mental images within us.[21] The portrait of a ruler as his sacramental body allows for the exchange between name and visual representation, word and image, narrative and law. The sacramental body of the ruler, the portrait of the king as an absolutist monarch, signifies the transition between names, where the body becomes a signifier, and narrative, through which the law turns into

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[18] "For an image, it can always be shown that it is a form of conventional order. This pictorial order expresses the viewpoint of the artist or their culture. Correspondences between the image and its references (objects depicted) are not simply given as a mirror reflection but are the result of public and implicit rules of symbolic arrangement of pictorial material. The radicalization of such a position leads to the view that an artwork never depicts an object, being, situation, or event in a literal manner but rather depicts how they are seen, experienced, understood, interpreted, and valued in the culture in which the work originated." Miško Šuvaković, *Pojmovnik moderne i postmoderne likovne umetnosti i teorije posle 1950. godine* (Beograd, Novi Sad: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, Prometej, 1999), 271.

[19] "Seeing comes before words. A child looks and recognizes before it can speak." John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 2008), 5. It's important to keep in mind that every written text is also visual. The history of literacy reminds us that initially we had simple pictorial language signs, which evolved over time into hieroglyphs and alphabets. Writing is a practice that has been based on its very beginning on the interplay between the visual and the verbal.

[20] "Language is *experienced* as a nomenclature because its existence precedes our 'understanding' of the world. Words seem to be symbols for things because things are inconceivable outside the system of differences which constitutes the language." Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (London, New York: Routledge, 2005), 39.

[21] We already have this observation in Plato: "Σωκράτης: ἀποδέχου δὴ καὶ ἕτερον δημιουργὸν ἡμῶν ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἐν τῷ τότε χρόνῳ γιγνόμενον. Πρώταρχος: τίνα; Σωκράτης: ζωγράφον, ὃς μετὰ τὸν γραμματιστὴν τῶν λεγομένων εἰκόνας ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τούτων γράφει. Πρώταρχος: πῶς δὴ τοῦτον αὖ καὶ πότε λέγομεν; Σωκράτης: ὅταν ἀπ' ὄψεως ἤ τινος ἄλλης αἰσθήσεως τὰ τότε δοξαζόμενα καὶ λεγόμενα ἀπαγαγών τις τὰς τῶν δοξασθέντων καὶ λεχθέντων εἰκόνας ἐν αὑτῷ ὁρᾷ πως. ἢ τοῦτο οὐκ ἔστι γιγνόμενον παρ' ἡμῖν; Πρώταρχος; σφόδρα μὲν οὖν." (Socrates: I must bespeak your favour also for another artist, who is busy at the same time in the chambers of the soul. Protarchus: Who is he? Socrates: The painter, who, after the scribe has done his work, draws images in the soul of the things which he has described. Protarchus: But when and how does he do this? Socrates: When a man, besides receiving from sight or some other sense certain opinions or statements, sees in his mind the images of the subjects of them; is not this a very common mental phenomenon? Protarchus: Certainly) Plato, *The Statesman, Philebus, Ion*, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 300/39 b–c.

the body. In the representation of the ruler, three of his bodies are united: the physical-historical body, the juridical-political body, and the semiotic-sacramental body, which entirely enables the exchange between the historical and political body. It is evident that in creating a valid and legitimate history of the ruler, the narrator must present convincing facts to the subjects. For example, we can take the royal coin. What the subject perceives is not its written history but the inscribed power. The inscription on the coin is the representation of the absent monarch's symbolic presence. This way, instead of the king's imaginary absence in history, the subject perceives and sees his symbolic presence. The coin realizes its essential value not as a means of payment but in an aesthetic relationship established between the king and his subjects. The figure on the coin is transformed into text through the absorption of discourse.[22] Descriptive-narrative discourse enters the figure thanks to visual signs placed on the surface of the coin. The discourse that allows us to see the figure as a ruler, transposes it into a text that seems as if it is 'written' on the surface of the coin. On one hand, by reading, the figure is constituted as a meaningful object, and on the other, all these readings surpass the boundaries of the figure and point to other visual and verbal texts, as well as to the culture itself in which the figure is just one of the existing meaning systems. In her exploration study of the Assyrian kings' representations, Irene Winter emphasizes the importance of the text accompanying the image:

> In the representation, in addition to those signature elements marking the physiognomy, there would also have been signs external to the person: headgear, clothing, accoutrements. These markers would, to the ancients, have been so inseparable from identity that recognition of the office, if not the office holder, was immediate. And at that point, it is the textual inscription *on* the image that particularizes the holder of the office into a historical personage.[23]

From this perspective, it should be emphasized that the concept of 'portrait', belonging to the visual genre, is extremely polysemic. Everything that was characteristic of the ways of representing rulers of ancient times can be applied to rulers in other historical periods. For example, the portrait of Louis XIV has a triple structure: first, it depicts a specific historical person; second, it institutionalizes royal ruling power; and third, it reveals the sacred dimension of authority determined by ecclesiastical authority and divine blessing. In this way, the authority and personality of the ruler are realized in his image, in his representation.

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[22] More about the process itself: Louis Marin, *Sublime Poussin* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 45.

[23] Winter, "What/When Is a Portrait? Royal Images of the Ancient Near East," 266.

Conclusion

The distinction between a ruler who multiplies his manifestations and those who are involved in them, establishes a difference that separates the ruler from the subjects. As long as subjects show respect to the ruler by participating in existing social rituals, the continuity of social differences is sustainable. Power in society lies with those who know how to control ideology, where ideology encompasses not only the history and evolution of human ideas but also the state of idealism into which subjects introduce themselves through their everyday social practices. Therefore, power is much more based on controlling ideas than on obvious systems of physical repression such as police or military. In this sense, representation serves as an important and unavoidable means of establishing and maintaining political power. When the influence of ideology is recognized in iconology as an unquestionable set of values of a particular social community or historical epoch, the role of representation in constituting, maintaining, and spreading political power become clearer, as well as in retaining existing social relations and established identities. In the quest to answer the question, "How is political power represented?", we can say that power institutions produce their representations, and in return, representations transfer all their power to them. The process is reversible and serves the constitution of a legitimate subject, as the ruler contemplates representation until their own recognition and identification. Representation is a privileged instrument through which the power of a ruler is not only *de facto* but also *de jure* institutionalized and verified as a legitimate state. Various forms of representation are part of the ruling discourse and help the ruler discipline people without resorting to repression. This process, in which representations are actively involved, enables ruling structures to influence the attitudes and behaviors of their subjects, producing them as subjects susceptible to their authority and control. Therefore, the ruler's power is not a transcendent and immutable given, but a product of human activity that occurs within specific social circumstances shaped by discursive practices of meaning production through which representation creates the *effect* of the real presence of the subject, regardless of its objective existence as such.

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