nical power. Accordingly, in-depth analysis often reveals established constellations of power to be sediments of power transformations that developed from a simple act of violence. At the same time, different forms of power can complement and reinforce one other synchronously. Technical power, as soon as we enter the realm of inter-state conflict, is a crucial prerequisite for action power. Only those who have the technological and the economic capacity to produce military weapons on an industrial scale also have the potential to harm other state actors or to influence their actions by threatening military force. On the other hand, only those who have the power of action to protect their communities from external and internal adversaries can continue to perfect the technical resources required for superior technical power. These amalgamations suggest that all four forms of power are interdependent and enable one another, and thus are not separate forms, but are elements of a singular, internally differentiated power phenomenon.

By classifying the four forms of power, we have exposed the general structure of this phenomenon and developed a universal systemization for all eras, cultures and areas of society. What remains unresolved, however, is the crucial question of how these forms are made clear and communicable in interaction between persons and organizations, and how they are manifested in concrete terms in the various fields of society. We cannot avoid addressing this issue if we want to understand power as a historically concrete, mutable phenomenon (see Chapter 1.3). In the following sections, therefore, we will first shift our analytical focus to the relation of power and symbolism (Chapter 2.2), in order then to outline the central power fields of the community and their internal logics (Chapter 2.3).

2.2 POWER AND SYMBOLISM

Power and symbolism are closely linked to each other in our everyday language and public perception. When a politician chastises subordinates in front of an assembled press, we naturally speak of a ‘demonstration of power’. A North Korean missile test or a Russian military parade is declared a ‘display of power’, and the glass palace of the European Central Bank in the German banking center of Frankfurt is described as a ‘monument of power’. In his commendable monograph, Niklas Luhmann points out that this interconnection is not merely coincidental. Rather, in his eyes, it is an indispensable requisite for the formation of power.[20] The historian Norbert Elias quickly identifies the reason for this, claiming that people do not believe in power which is not made visible. They have to see it in order to

20 Luhmann, Niklas ([1975] 2003): *Macht,* Stuttgart: UTB.; p. 32.

believe it.[21] Power is, the argument goes, only potential to act, only an opportunity to further one's interests, and thus it is necessarily abstract. It is, metaphorically speaking, invisible. In order for it to be successfully exercized and expanded, it must be made visible through sensory symbols. This reasoning is plausible. However, it is useful to dig even deeper and to more precisely determine the multilayered, complex relationship between power and symbolism.

First, the concept of symbolism. What exactly a symbol is and in what relation it stands to what it symbolizes, is a persistent issue of contention among language theorists, linguists and epistemologists. In what follows, we derive orientation from the classical definition by Ernst Cassirer, who uses 'symbolic form' to refer to that energy of the mind through which a mental meaning or content is linked to a concrete sensory sign.[22] The generic term symbol thus designates all concrete objects and facts which can be grasped by our natural senses to which, by convention, a meaning is added that extends beyond the actual object and refers to an abstract, conceptual content. In addition to pictures (the anti-nuclear smiling sun, the imperial eagle, the dollar sign), these include gestures (finger wagging, Black Panther fist, Hitler salute), characters (Latin alphabet, hieroglyphs, operators of propositional, predicate and modal logic), sounds (warning sirens, fanfares, referee whistles), ceremonies (Christian communion, Labor Day demonstrations, yoga) and monuments (emperor statues, embassy buildings, triumphal arches). All symbols have in common that they do not provide their own interpretation, with the exception of certain warning colors, for which we humans have an evolutionarily developed sensitivity.[23] They require a community of interpreters and speakers who can decipher, communicate and pass them on. Accordingly, the significance of symbols is never permanent, but relative to the established, although mutable, community conventions; there are therefore repeated conflicts of interpreta

21 Elias, Norbert (1983): *Die höfische Gesellschaft. Untersuchung zur Soziologie des Königtums und der höfischen Aristokratie,* Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.; p. 179. In the original text: *"An die Macht, die zwar vorhanden ist, aber nicht sichtbar im Auftreten des Machthabers in Erscheinung tritt, glaubt das Volk nicht. Es muss sehen, um zu glauben."*

22 Cf. Cassirer, Ernst (1955): *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms,* translated by Ralph Menheim, introduced by Charles W. Hendel, New Haven/London: Yale University Press. See also Cassirer, Ernst ([1910] 2010): *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff*, Werkausgabe Vol. 6, Hamburg: Felix Meiner.; p. 161.

23 Cf. Marples, Nicola M., Kelly, David J., and Thomas, Robert J. (2005): Perspective: The Evolution of Warning Colors is Not Paradoxical, *Evolution,* 59 (5), pp. 933-940.

tion over the significance of symbols, which are directly relevant to the analysis of power.

What connections exist concretely between power and symbolism? First of all, those who want to carry out a complex power action in cooperation with other persons over a longer period of time and a greater distance depend upon written communication – and thus on symbolic signs. This applies to a general who wants to implement a battle plan as well as to a taxation official developing a revenue plan or to a CEO who plans to take over a new business. Without recourse to symbolic signs through which instructions and goals can be communicated, the exercise of power remains temporally and spatially limited. In view of this, it is hardly surprising that the first expansive high culture in history, the Sumerians, were also the inventors of writing.[24]

Symbols, however, are not only a necessary *precondition* for the effective and efficient use of power. They themselves function in multiple ways as a *means of power.* First, domination, i.e. institutional power consolidated by supra-personal social positions (see Chapter 1.2), is reproduced and organized by means of continuous ritualization. Flaig points to this fact: "The function, the 'sense' and the character of an institution are not fixed once and for all. An institution exists only by being organized and staged over and over again. It exists *only in the execution of rituals*."[25] Flaig himself has here the ancient Roman people's assembly in view, whose meeting, decision-making and interaction with other institutions of the Roman Empire was highly ceremonial. But we can look at contemporary examples as well: election campaigns in representative democracies are *de facto* symbolic ritualizations of institutional power structures. They follow strict rules and conventions, are determined by clear sequences of events – from the publication of election programs to verbal exchanges in parliament to voting – and they include a clear allocation of the roles of the actors involved (the parties, the media, trade

24 Cf. Diakonoff, Igor. M. (1976): Ancient Writing and Ancient Written Language: Pitfalls and Peculiarities in the Study of Sumerian, *Assyriological Studies*, Vol. 20, Sumerological Studies in Honor of Thorkild Jakobsen, pp. 99–121. See also Volk, Konrad (ed.) (2015): *Erzählungen aus dem Land Sumer,* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.

25 Flaig, Egon (1998): War die römische Volksversammlung ein Entscheidungsorgan? Institution und soziale Praktik, in: Rainhard Blänker and Bernd Jussen (eds.), *Institution und Ereignis. Über historische Praktiken und Vorstellungen gesellschaftlichen Handelns.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, pp. 49-73.; p. 71. For more in-depth analysis, we highly recommend the standard work: Veyne, Paul (1992): *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism.* Oswyn Murray (ed.), translated by Brian Pearce. London: Penguin.

unions and churches). Through their regular staging, they not only serve to reproduce the democratic regime, but also create a sense of expectation within the community. That this political-symbolic work requires a colossal and exhausting effort on the part of those with power, is obvious. Accordingly, Flaig points out that the execution of a power rite can never be completely controlled.[26] In every ritual situation, certain groups are able to intervene in the ritual process and to modify it. If they are heard by significant numbers of participants, then the political semiotics of the ritual will be shaken.[27] In other words, if the almost identical reproduction of previous rites serves to stabilize the balance of power, the disturbance or modification of the rite can be used to influence the status quo. Examples of symbolic attacks of this kind are found even in recent political history. Interestingly enough, several of them revolve around inaugural rituals in Western democracies. Among them are two memorable events in modern German political history. One is the apparent undermining of the parliamentary dress code in the German state of Hessen in 1985 at the swearing-in ceremony of the sneaker-wearing, Green Party politician Joschka Fischer, later Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor; Fischer thus challenged the bourgeois establishment's sovereignty of interpretation over the political discourse. The second event was the omission of the phrase 'So help me God' by Gerhard Schröder in 1998, when he took office as German Chancellor, which symbolized a rejection of the close fusion of church and state.

No less prominent U.S. American examples come equally to mind. In 1977, as James Earl 'Jimmy' Carter was sworn into office as the 39th President in Washington, D.C., he broke with tradition and walked rather humbly along Pennsylvania Avenue with his wife, the First Lady Rosalynn, instead of relying on his chauffeur. And, of course, forty years later, as the 45th President was planning to take to the stage, there were some changes made. Donald Trump elected more pomposity for himself and Melania in 2017. Thus, he decided to replace the long-time announcer Charles Brotman (who had served as the inauguration parade announcer for every president since Dwight Eisenhower) with a supporter, displaying his disregard of the non-partisan informal agreement on a well-respected announcer and demonstrating his personal preferences, challenging established political norms and discourse.

Of course, such examples are abundant in other political spheres as well. It is fundamentally the case that the level of observance of the symbolism of power and its ritualization can generally be deemed to be indicative of whether a regime

26 Flaig (1998): p. 71.

27 Ibid.

is functioning smoothly. Wherever ceremonial productions are contested, power relations are in transition.

In addition to the staging and reproduction of relations of domination, symbolism also comes into play as a social means of communication for the subtle exercise of power. Status symbols such as company cars and airplanes, bodyguards, escort motorcycles and sumptuous reception rooms all make the otherwise invisible potential of power visible – as briefly mentioned earlier. They impressively convey a hierarchical order and at the same time provide orientation about responsibilities, competences, duties and dependencies within complex forms of social organization. Thus, as in the case of the ritualized staging of ruling orders, they ensure predictability, cognitive relief and stabilize the balance of power. At the same time, they make it possible to communicate the rise and fall of individuals within hierarchies in the simplest way. Nothing illustrates the growth in power of a department manager in a large corporation as forcefully as the move to a spacious office. And nothing makes the extent of military degradation clearer than the public tearing off of epaulettes and rank insignia by a superior, as was traditionally practiced in Western armies.

Furthermore, within territorial states, the symbolic representation of the ruler by means of statues, banners or television broadcasts makes it possible to bridge the spatial distance between the rulers and the power-subjects. The greater the distance between the ruler, as a physical person, and the ruled, the more important is the metaphorical visualization of the ruler in the everyday world of experience. Those who are constantly exposed to the admonishing gaze of the monarch, president or dictator are less inclined to disregard their laws. In this way, the symbolic representation of rulers contributes to the strengthening of their authoritative power (see Chapter 2.1). We are tempted to associate this form of power stabilization, above all, with totalitarian regimes, and indeed, the cult of personality has nurtured its most bizarre blossoms there. Nevertheless, this assessment falls short. Hans Georg Soffner and Dirk Tänzer show in their worthwhile essay on figurative politics that politicians in modern democracies skillfully employ social media to maintain a symbolic presence in the lives of their constituents, easily equaling that achieved by autocratic rulers.[28]

In proceeding further, we encounter a fourth essential aspect: the symbolic staging of rulers can also be used for their retreat from the world of the ruled, thus

28 Cf. Soeffner, Hans Georg and Tänzer, Dirk (2007): Figurative Politik. Prolegomena zu einer Kultursoziologie politischen Handelns, in: Hans Georg Soeffner and Dirk Tänzer (eds.), *Figurative Politik. Zur Performanz der Macht in der modernen Gesellschaft,* Opladen: Leske und Budrich, pp. 17-33.

enhancing their mystification. In this way, the power gap between rulers and power-subjects is emphasized and consolidated. An early example of this strategy can be found in the history of Herodotus.[29] The Greek historian describes the reign of King Deiokes, who established the Median Empire in modern-day Iran in the eighth century B.C. Immediately after his coronation, Deiokes instituted a court ceremonial that created distance: with the exception of his closest confidants, no one was allowed to enter the throne room, state affairs were handled exclusively by messengers, Deiokes himself disappeared completely from public view. For this isolation, Herodotus has an obvious explanation: Deioke's subjects would regard and revere him as a creature of a different kind if they did not see him. The court ceremonial was thus used by the Median king for self-presentation as a superhuman and overly powerful person. The ruled had no opportunity to perceive him as a flesh-and-blood person – with ailments, signs of aging, physical inadequacies, etc. – and on the basis of these impressions to question his status as ruler. They had only a remote, faceless potentate upon which to project their own hopes, desires and ideals.

Beyond the self-staging of rulers, the relevance of symbolism to power strategy also comes into play in uniting and delimiting groups. In the language of social psychology, it serves to establish so-called *in-groups* and *out-groups.*[30] The dichotomy of 'us' and 'others', of 'inside' and 'outside', as the sociologist Johannes Scheu in reference to post-structuralist theorists points out, represents a most fundamental feature of the building of human communities in general. A visible and symbolically coded boundary distinguishing outsiders who are not part of the community is indispensable for the formation of the community itself. The French philosopher Jacques Derrida therefore uses the term "constitutive outside" to describe how communities define and sustain themselves by virtue of excluding and distinguishing themselves from those outside the community.[31] Examples of in-group formation through shared symbols can be cited *ad infinitum*: fans of baseball, basketball, football and ice hockey clothe themselves in their club colors, thus distinguishing themselves from supporters of other clubs; devout Muslim women cover their hair with a hijab and distance themselves from non-Muslims and less devout religious sisters; Neo-Nazis wear combat boots with white shoe-

29 Cf. Herodotus (1997): *Histories,* translated by Robin Waterfield (ed.), introduction and notes by Carolyn Dewald, Oxford: Oxford World Classics.

30 Cf. Tajfel, Henri (1981): *Human Groups and Social Categories,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

31 Cf. Derrida, Jacques (2004): *Die Différance. Ausgewählte Texte,* Stuttgart: Reclam.

laces and thus identify themselves as radical opponents of democratic-liberal values. The corresponding symbols have been empirically proved to reinforce solidarity, empathy and cohesion among members – metaphorically, they are the glue that binds social groups together. In addition, the fact that standardized group symbolism offers an immense advantage for the exercise of action power (see Chapter 2.1) was already discovered by the military in antiquity. Exemplary is the introduction of combat uniforms by the Roman Empire. The iconic armor of the legionnaires not only created an esprit de corps that was unrivaled at the time, it also presented the Roman troops to their non-uniformed opponents (for example Germanic tribes) as a super-personal military entity that amounted to more than the sum of its individual members.

The flip side of this strategy is the symbolic exclusion and the concomitant subjugation and disempowerment of social out-groups. The Italian jurist and philosopher Giorgio Agamben has explored these topics in his sometimes dark, yet highly interesting work *Homo Sacer*.[32] Agamben based his analysis on an archaic figure of Roman antiquity – the *homo sacer* (Latin for 'holy man'), who is expelled from the community as the result of a grave offense and can be killed by all others without them being charged for a crime. This figure marks the prototype of social exclusion for Agamben. The *homo sacer* has lost all political and legal guarantees and all claims to procedural norms, and is thus reduced to mere biological existence, to naked life, as it were. Agamben goes so far as to deny the *homo sacer* status as a human person, as this status arises only through relationships of reciprocal recognition among community members – and precisely these are denied to the excluded. *Homines sacri,* we can complement Agamben, are predestined for symbolic labeling. An example thereof in poignant proportions is the marking of European Jews in the German Reich from 1935 to 1945 with the yellow Star of David. The star symbol not only marked the affected population as social outsiders and '*Volksschädlinge*',[33] it also enabled their efficient capture, deportation and elimination by the security authorities. To be sure, this specific combination of power and symbolism was not an original invention of the National Socialists. In addition to different clothing regulations, the labeling of ostracized and marginalized groups of people by branding or mutilation has always been an essential element of symbolic power strategies.

32 Cf. Agamben, Giorgio (1998): *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life,* Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery (eds.), translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

33 Literally: 'Vermine to the people'.

A sixth point concerns the control of communicative symbols. In her monograph *Literacy and Power*, Hilary Janks states: "[L] anguage, other symbolic forms, and discourse are powerful means of maintaining and reproducing relations of domination."[34] The plausibility of this thesis is impressively demonstrated by the case of literacy. Those who do not master the passive and active use of characters are excluded from many educational and career opportunities as well as many forms of social participation. The lack of access to written sources of information (books, newspapers, the internet) makes it almost impossible for those concerned to have an informed image of existing power structures in their communities. Consequently, power strategists have tried at all times to turn the use of written symbols into an arcane discipline reserved for only a few. The monopolization of writing by the Catholic Church during the European Middle Ages, for example, was partly responsible for its prominent position in the hierarchical order of the monarchical feudal state.[35] Thanks to this monopoly, it became an indispensable pillar of the monarchy and controlled national and international communication. But even in modern times there are examples of this use of symbols as a means of power. For example, forced illiteracy, as historians have documented, was one of the preferred methods of oppression by U.S. American slaveholders and the South African apartheid regime.[36]

Beyond literacy, however, there is another variation on how power can be exercised by controlling communicative symbols. The sociologist Paula-Irene Villa states that domination is assured by leaving the ruled with no symbolic forms other than those by which they are ruled.[37] This is based on the hardly refutable notion that there is a close connection between symbol and meaning, which determines the way in which people can communicate about existing power relations at all. In short, if rulers designate certain communicative symbols as taboo and others as

34 Janks, Hilary (2010): *Literacy and Power,* London/New York: Routledge.; p. 22.

35 Compare, among others: Urlacher, Brian R. (2016): *International Relations as Negotiations,* New York: Routledge.; p. 18; and Taylor, Mark C. (2007): *After God,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.; p. 74.

36 Cf. Petesch, Donald A. (1989): *A Spy in the Enemy's Country. The Emergence of Modern Black Literature,* Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.; and Morar, Tulsi (2006): The South African's Educational System's Evolution to Curriculum 2005, in: Jayja Erneast and David Treagust (eds.), *Education Reform in Societies in Transition. International Perspectives,* Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, pp. 245-258.

37 Villa, Paula-Irene (2011): Symbolische Gewalt und ihr Scheitern. Eine Annäherung zwischen Butler und Bourdieu, *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie,* 36 (4), pp. 51-69.; p. 54.

universally binding norms, they can control social discourse or even completely silence (parts of) the population. A general example of this strategy is seen in the euphemistically labeled concept of 'cultural re-education', which bans ethnic fringe groups from using their own written language. In the long term, such measures mean that the descendants of the minority can only communicate in the written language of the rulers. They become – unwittingly and unwillingly – accomplices of their own oppression.

The founder of the modern Turkish state, Gazi Mustafa Kemal, alias Atatürk, implemented writing reforms as the heart of an overall social transformation project. In 1928, Atatürk ordered the abandonment of the Arabic script and initiated the exclusive usage of the Latin alphabet in Turkey; he also had countless Arabic loan words deleted from Turkish and replaced by neologisms. As the historian Anton J. Walter states, this was linked to the clear objective of separating the people at one stroke from their Arab-Mohammedan cultural basis and, instead, opening them up to the influence of European civilization and culture; Turkey should be disconnected from neighboring countries in the Near East and her foreign affairs instead linked with Western Europe.[38] The radical nature of this measure opens up a Pandora's Box, if one considers that the Arabic script is, according to Islamic interpretation, the writing of God, in that the angel Gabriel dictated the Koran to Mohammed. Atatürk, an enthusiastic secularist, thus cut off the Turkish people from the Islamic cultural and written tradition and at the same time minimized the influence of Muslim clerics on the shaping of politics. Now, almost 90 years later, it is still possible to note how durable the effect of this power strategy has been. With the rise of political Islam under the current Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, nevertheless, doubts also arise. Nevertheless, it is clear that Atatürk's reform contributed decisively to the fact that Turkey today occupies a strategically important position between East and West, the Orient and the Occident.

The last form of the articulation of power and symbolism that we wish to look at here concerns the culture of remembrance.[39] History is that what we make of it. *The* past *per se* does not exist, at least not in a robust, objective sense, there thus can only be different and potentially competing interpretations of the past. This

38 Cf. Walter, Anton J. (1960): Schriftentwicklung unter dem Einfluß von Diktatoren, *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichstforschung,* 68, pp. 337-361.; p. 340.

39 For standard works pertaining to the culture of remembrance, see Nora, Pierre (1996): *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past,* Lawrence D. Kritzman (ed.), translated by Arthur Goldhammer, New York: Columbia University Press.

circumstance is highly relevant in terms of power strategy. Anyone who has the authority to interpret the past of a community or country can narrate it as a continuous success story, as a struggle against hostile powers or as a series of injustices and crimes.[40] As a result of the story told, the status quo of power politics can be preserved, the population can be mobilized for war or the groundwork can even be laid for a political and economic fresh start. The control of the culture of remembrance thus contributes "to the formation of a collective memory, which is of central importance for the identity of political communities" and which can be used to justify claims to power (see also our discussion of narrative justification in Chapter 2.5)[41].

2.3 POWER FIELDS

Power, as we initially stated, is not only multifarious, but also omnipresent. It manifests in a variety of forms, and it pervades all areas of life, no matter how far apart. In Chapter 2.1 we classified the basic forms of power and brought order into the diversity. In this section, we will now systematize the central social fields in which power occurs: religion, economics and politics. This triad does not exhaust the entire spectrum but represents, nevertheless, the main arenas.[42] Before looking at these three areas of power – with a focus on the field of politics – it is important to clarify what is meant by a power field.

40 Consider, for example, dialectical materialism, the ideology of the Soviet Union and its satellite states, according to which world history is comprehended as a mere series of class struggles. If one accepts this picture of history, one can claim, without major historical dislocations, the gladiator Spartacus as the forefather of the working-class movement, thus constructing a historical continuity of the socialist idea and tracing it back into antiquity.

41 Münkler, Herfried (2009): *Die Deutschen und ihre Mythen*, Berlin: Rowohlt. The historian Benedict Anderson recognized the importance of the targeted control of historical narrative for the creation of national identity; see Anderson, Benedict (1994): *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London / New York: Verso.

42 Cf. Poggi, Gianfranco (2001): *Forms of Power,* Cambridge: Polity Press.; pp. 18f.