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Beyond Spoken Linguistic Landscape: Semiotic Ideologisation of Regimented Practices in the Nigerian Army

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the dimensions of military ideologies that are tactically communicated through the semiotic mechanisms of the Nigerian Army's regimented practices. Data were sourced through participant observation and semi-structured interview in a fourteen-month fieldwork involving 22 staff members of the Nigerian Army. Drawing on insights from the concept of semiotic ideology to account for the underlying interpretations of semiotic practices in the social context of the Nigerian Army, the findings show various military ideologies nuanced in the agency's semiotic-mediated activities and communication. Through the semiotic resources and significations embedded in the service uniforms, military funerals, hoisting and lowering of flags, military weddings and their salute system, the Nigerian Army is to be seen to have maintained regimented performances of core military ideologies. Such practices constantly resonate ideologies of patriotism, courage, ruggedness, regimentation, comportment, subordinate-superior relationship, professionalism, perseverance and suppressive mien for victory in military battles. These beliefs present Nigerian Army's personnel and their operating environment as regimented sites that consistently reproduce semiotic impulses that portray the agency as the totalistic organisation it propagates. Such performances through their unspoken actions help to rebuild and stabilise the psychology of the officers

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and men, enhance unwavering social bonding of soldiers, foster communication of professional identity and sustain the resilience of the troops as they work towards strengthening the workforce for the protection of the sovereignty of Nigeria.

Keywords: Semiotic Ideology; Regimented Practices; Military Ideologies; Strategic Communication; Nigerian Army

1. Introduction

The Nigerian Army is a productive site for the semiotic performance of regimented ideologies transmitted as aspects of institutional practices that exist within its rules of engagement in protecting the sovereignty of Nigeria by suppressing any internal insurgency and external invasion. By this, the Nigerian Army occupies a prominent place in Nigeria's security framework as they perform critical roles through internal structuring of coded communication strategies and traditional ideological practices that situate them as a regimented security organisation. Beyond the verbal specialised intragroup interactional norms, militaries across the world maintain traditions that rehearse semiotic ideologies through the use of intragroup signs, signals and actions^[1]. Semiotics is viewed as a form of enquiry into how humans conceive knowledge-based categories through the use of forms that stand for the categories relied on for the explication of situated meaning of signs, symbols, images, gestures and actions derived from consistent social practices^[2]. The internal nature of organisations therefore provides rules that generate the use of ingroup reoccurring interpretable signs in communicative intercourse to facilitate intragroup integration and exclusion of nonmembers^[3]. The military (where the Army is a major component) is a disciplined agency that propagates organised and regimented practices. Practices, according to MacIntyre^[4], are "any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity that is bound by rules." They form the repeated actions performed to transmit institutional norms and values as constitutive momentum for the construction of ideologies that are intelligible within the communication system of a given profession. This suggests that "particular practices differ from each other, since practices create their own internal framework for interpretation"^[5]. Some of the practices are aspects of semiotic ideologies that are construed through participation that situate experience that is required for the reproduction of competence by members of a social or professional group. It is the training, participation and experience in the activities of certain groups that reinforce

membership, belonging and identity.

Membership of militaries across the world requires a training period for effective physical, linguistic and psychological socialisation that offers the development of overall skills for full acculturation into the practices in military institutions and the bearing of military identities^[6]. The knowledge of such coded practices "provide access to an insider's status within the military community"^[7]. This type of knowledge is therefore "essential for admission into full membership within the group" from where acculturation is gained across time^[8]. Acculturation in this context demands for the knowledge of specialised military practices, lexicons, semiotic system and brevity of codes that encapsulate military worldview and traditions^[7, 9]. In the nonverbal component of military practices, the worldview is also described through military's semiotic ideologies that manifest in their dress code, courtesies, physical exercises and drills, emblemised significations and other military events, and the performance of ceremonies and rituals that integrate members. Pillen^[10] also argues that proper integration in the military institution demands the knowledge of its signaling and communication system that is outside the realm of ordinary language. The 'language' in this description is often a unique intragroup code that occurs and used beyond the spoken medium. On this, Pike^[11] maintains that the military has unique customs, courtesies, traditions, practices, beliefs system and values that differentiate them from other institutions. In terms of functions, Picard^[1] argues that military traditions that manifest semiotic ideologies are meant to "inspire comradeship, pride, love, courage and discipline." These manifestations are among the core values that strengthen regimentation and comportment in the military.

Given the above background, the motivation for this study is anchored on the premise that the semiotic aspects of Nigerian military's (Nigerian Army, Nigerian Navy and Nigerian Air Force) practices that resonate the core ideologies of the agencies are not scholarly examined. The current study is focused on the Nigerian Army and aims to examine the ideological embellishments instantiated through the semiotic

resources in Army's entrenched institutional practices. The study is significant because it deepens understanding of the psychological and emotional attachment of the personnel to the practices and thrives to interrogate the appropriate circumstances where the rehearsal of such semiotic sites re-enact military values which soldiers work to sustain professionally.

Studies on Military Practices as Semiotic Ideologies

Apart from spoken interactions, the military employs signs and signals in their practices to complement the verbal aspects of its strategic communication system to enact its regimented ideologies. Studies have emerged arising from investigations across militaries to demonstrate the rehearsal of institutional ideologies, and that ideological tools in the Armed Forces are framed through what they practice to establish their social dynamics. Agha's^[12] study claims that such processes and practices are carried out by means of "performable signs belonging to distinct, differentially valorised semiotic registers" used for the ideological enactment of the group. In the U.S. military for instances, the rituals of shaving one's head before combat deployment, the ceremony of the order of sword, crossing the line ceremony, drinking from the grog bowl and getting pinned are all conventional practices and semiotic sites that construct ideological strands of the regimented institution. Also, Karapetyan's^[13] study on the different enlistment advertorials for recruitment into the Armenian, U.S., Russian and Israeli Army show that the text-image resources depict military core ideologies of mastery, sacrifice, patriotism, impudence, speed, alertness, superiority and purposefulness. According to the author, the U.S. Army recruitment advert construes symbolic professionalism, heroic status, superiority and patriotism, the Israeli's depicts accepting and confronting challenges with the spirit of patriotism, the Armenian shows readiness to take battles to the enemy side while the Russian's demonstrates capabilities to conquer – chase the enemy, reach him, surpass him, become better than him and return victorious. Also in Japan, Reed^[14] posits that the Army's tradition of marching through glistening silver swords during non-commissioned officers' induction ceremony exposes soldiers to the tradition of transitioning from a soldier to a leader-commander roles. This category of transition involves a psychological process of migration to a higher call for duty which is en-

acted and conveyed through the manipulation of semiotic resources. Again, the martyr's memorial site in Jordan is a spatial semiotic narrative and manifold of semiotic resources that form a coherent semiotic discourse that communicate meanings and ideologies reproduced along social, religious, martial and historical backgrounds to evoke the roles of the Jordan Armed Forces^[15]. The site is seen as a constellation of nationhood, patriotism and honour of dead servicemen and women for their heroic deeds and service to the nation.

In Africa, Fourie^[16] claims that South African military traditions where the semiotic components of its ideologies are re-enacted include retreat ceremonies, colours parade, military funerals, military weddings, etiquette and mess traditions. Amankwa-Manu^[17] also demonstrates that the semiotic signification in Ghanaian military strategic communication system is meant to stimulate efficient, reliable and timely communication to the entire command framework of the Ghanaian Armed Forces for actions within their rules of engagement. In another study, Sow^[18] maintains that the Independence Day's colourful military parade in Mali has become a symbolic and strategic site for a negotiation and strengthening of the ideology of military-civil relations. This is because military parades are meaningful scenes that resonate semiotic significations for military-civil engagements to consolidate the social contract between the Army and the public upon the collapse of military regimes in Mali. In Uganda, Bell's^[19] study argues that during the wars in northern Uganda in the 1980s, the National Resistance Army demonstrated professional military culture and organisational norms that influenced their behaviour and effecting restraint in dealing with civilian populations. The various actions towards the achievement of the goals of the military are semiotic mediations that communicate the intended message(s) to the target audiences.

In Nigeria, the various internal security operations by the military indicate the deployment of personnel and military weaponry as military tools meant to convey messages to the target audience^[20, 21]. Also, Bamigbola's^[22] study presents Nigerian Army's parade as a symbolic site where semiotic cues and strategies are converged to re-vibrate troop's psychological consciousness on military actions. Uwen and Ekpe's^[23] study rather examines Nigerian Army as interethnolinguistic and multicultural workforce that enforces intra-group regimentation to define members' identity, solidarity

and professional belonging. What is closely related to semiotic components of Nigerian Army's practices is Oladipo and Akinmunyi's^[24] study on Nigerian military logos. In the study, the authors assert that Nigerian military logos are symbolic and "serve as crucial visual elements that communicate not only the agency's identity but also its values, mission and societal roles." Logos are therefore powerful semiotic representations that convey multiple ideologies of the Nigerian military that differentiate them from other government institutions. Despite the strengths of the above studies, it is evident that scholars are yet to investigate the semiotic resources in the various Nigeria Army's traditions that instantiate their core ideologies. This study thrives to fill this gap in nuancing how such conventional practices communicate ideologies propagated by the Nigerian Army that boost soldiers' morale for effective performance of Army's critical roles in the security of the nation.

2. Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework relevant for this study is the concept of semiotic ideology proposed by Keane^[25]. The concept examines "underlying assumptions about what signs are, what functions signs serve, and what consequences they might produce, and provides for the fact that these assumptions vary in social, historical, cultural and institutional contexts"^[25]. Deacon^[26] and Kohn^[27] add that semiotic ideology is confined to semiotic capacities of humans who possess the cognitive knowledge for the interpretation of signs, signals and actions in situated context. This presents semiotic ideology as a concept that explicates beyond the ordinary 'language' usage to interact and interpret sign vehicles and other sensory modalities including the socio-cognitive interpreting prowess for sound, smell, touch, muscular movement and other somatic phenomena^[12, 25]. Ideologies perform functions in situated circumstances where the differences in semiotic ideologies are used to interpret different worldviews. The concept links ways people make sense of their lived experiences that are fundamental to their environment and also draws attention to the ways social groups' conceptualisation of signs and signals contribute to how people use and interpret them as linked phenomenon with language ideology. Keane^[25] argues that semiotic ideology centres on "the dynamic interconnection among different modes of

signification at play within a particular historical and social formation." The concept is a fundamental epistemological mode of social life that functions in the context of representational materials and actions within institutional practices that are dominant and effective in certain social contexts^[28, 29]. This conveys the ideological patterning, how they are performed and interpreted in different professional groups.

According to Gahmberg^[30], ideology refers to "that aspect of culture which is actively concerned with the establishment and defense of patterns of beliefs and values." In this context, ideology structures situations, behaviours, attitudes and the motivations for commitment and actions that provide legitimation to the social practices and system of signification within an organisation. The system of signification used by professional groups reinforces their self-identity in relation with other social groups by its system's own distinction, codes and meanings that resonate the legitimation of social power in institutions^[31]. It is the legitimation that regulates the construction, negotiation and communication of social power through professionally appropriated signals^[32]. Schooten^[5] further maintains that some professional groups have power to impose their own interpretation through the application of institutional pragmatic and semiotic strategies to provide clues in certain discursive and signal-mediated events. For instance, McIntosh^[9] corroborates that the Army sometimes use enemy's corpse (killed soldier from the opponent side) to engage in nonverbal semiotic communication to signal the defeated personhood of the dead to index the killer's total dominance of the battle. On this, Nordstrom^[33] asserts that such scene becomes a symbolic signal of suppression and "the message is powerfully articulated" in the enemy camp. The 'dead' becomes a metaphoric sign that instantiates military ideology of warfare and suppression. Noth^[34] has maintained that signs in this description are semiotic tools with imbued ideology, and ideological meaning in such circumstance is derived from the semiotic nature of the sign activity itself. Semiotic tools are therefore necessary to be deployed in the analysis of ideological discourse derived from the semiotic value in signs, symbols, signals, norms and practices. Semiotic study of ideology is anchored on any semiotic system with meaning codification within the social practice that connects ideology with semiotic discourse. Such analysis is significant in the interpretation of semiotic resources and mechanisms that index meaningful

exchanges in particular social structure and context^[35]. The concept of semiotic ideology is relevant to this study because Nigerian Army's practices as aspects of its crystalised traditions, are performed through signs and signaling system, body language, gestures, facial expressions and voice pitch that are interpretable as deliberate re-enactment of Army's core ideologies. In such sites, the sociocultural and cognitive knowledge of soldiers function for the appropriateness of actions that enforce the institutional ideologies.

3. Materials and Methods

The study adopts a qualitative research approach in a fourteen-month fieldwork involving 22 out of 41 personnel of the Nigerian Army consulted for the exercise. The 22 of the recruited personnel represents a population of a purposive sample of the Nigerian Army at the 43 Battalion at Eburu and 13 Brigade at Akim both in Calabar in Cross River State, South-south Nigeria. The personnel who willingly consented to participate were recruited and properly briefed on the essence and focus of the study. The criteria for participation were participant's years of experience (a minimum of five years), participation in military traditions such as weddings, funerals, guard duties, among others, having deepened knowledge of the relevance of such events and the connection of such traditions with military ideologies. On gender distribution of participants, 17 were males while five were females consisting of 19 soldiers (non-commissioned officers) and two commissioned officers. The use of personnel of both gender was to elicit perceptions on the semiotic component of military ideologies across gender while the numerical difference reflects the higher number of male soldiers against the females as it is the current situation in the Nigerian Army. In terms of the ranks, the selection covers the two major cadres of soldiers and officers. The age bracket of the participants ranged between 27 and 55. This was to accommodate the recruitment age of soldiers pegged at 22 which will be 27 after five years of experience while 55 is to include those who had spent 30 years or so in the job. The educational qualifications of the participants ranged from Senior School Certificate to University degrees. This information impact the proficiency in the spoken English language of the participants. It is on this basis that some of the responses of the interviewed participants were rather

translated. The research followed specified standards set by the University of Calabar Ethical Committee.

The methods of data collection were participant observation and semi-structured interview while field notes and audiotape recorders were used to document observations and record the opinions of the interviewees. The somewhat inaccessibility to military sites provided some restraints. However, the lead author was a member of the uniformed services, a position that afforded him access to relate directly with the personnel in joint security events and other invitations to Nigerian Army's programmes. The positionality of the lead author in such events was that of a participant observer and researcher which also offered him the opportunity to recruit the participants, conducted and recorded interviews and took notes on events that were relevant to the study. Such events afforded opportunities for unsolicited involvement of personnel in the performance of Army's traditions where signs, signals and actions were used to enact the beliefs system of the profession. In such events the authors observed and documented scenes that were relevant to the study. The semi-structured interviews were organised to elicit information on the connection between military ideologies and the traditions of the Army. The questions asked were meant to generate answers for the types of military traditions performed by the Nigerian Army, the signs, signals and actions involved and the symbolic meanings within the Army's community of practice. Other questions sought answers for when, why and how such practices are carried out and how they communicate the core ideologies of the military. Twenty of the participants were interviewed, but only 11 of the responses were used to compliment information generated from observations and field notes. This is to avoid overlapping of opinions in the analysis section. Some of the responses that were in poor English due to the low education of the participant(s) were translated while retaining the content and intended meanings. The interviews were conducted among personnel using a purposive random sampling method and guided by their lead author. The data were identified in the course of the research and were transcribed and coded based on the relevance to the study. The data are analysed using the qualitative approach to describe them within the ideological frames in the social context of the Nigerian Army to complement the opinions of the personnel and observations made by the authors.

4. Results and Discussion

The Nigerian Army is a demanding site with series of activities that reflect the core practices and traditions that are combined to reproduce the semiotic ideologisation of the regimented force. The practices that convey the ideologies of the Nigerian Army that instantiate their institutional orientations and frame of meanings are discussed in the subheadings below.

4.1. Symbolic Use of Swords in Military Weddings

Cultures across Nigeria prioritise marriage, family life, relationships and human happiness. Thomas, Liu and Umberson^[36] argue that relationship ties arising from peaceful marriages often result in family happiness and wellbeing of the persons involved in such unions. Personnel of the Nigerian Army are drawn from the complex sociocultural milieu of the nation which places value on the family institution formed by a husband and wife (wives). Solemnisation of matrimony varies according to cultures and religious denominations, and this underscores the relevance of marriage whether it traditionally, religiously or legally performed.

Swords across cultures convey series of ethnosemiotic relevance among the users in different events that constitute the social life of the people. The sword is an ancient weapon of aggression and war and not commonly used because of the symbolic significance attached to it across many cultures of the world. In militaries across the world, Arch of sabars (the use of swords in military wedding) is a common tradition. A sword “is a metal with a thin blade with two cutting edges, often balanced by a midrib, which can be more or less marked”^[37]. It is a sacred noble weapon that demonstrates personal courage and has symbolic significance in military traditions. The symbolic use of swords in military weddings is one of the core tradition of the Nigerian Armed Forces and practised consistently by the Nigerian Army. On the procedure of such weddings, a 42-year old male Sergeant related that there are many coherent semiotic scenes that are sequentially combined in the performance of military wedding where if exhaustively explained could be a long narration. Specifically on the use of swords, the participant narrated that “the Army officers usually line up from each other in pairs to create a passing tunnel by crossing the un-

sheathed swords while the couple pass through the sword tunnel as they exit the wedding ceremony venue which symbolically ushers the couple into married life under the shelter of the military institution.” Continuing, another participant, a 28-old female Corporal reported that as the couple walks up to the last pair of sabars, the sword bearers will immediately drop their swords to halt the couple for symbolic kiss before returning the sabars to upright position. The participant added that before the cake is cut there is a fanfare during the receiving of sword by the groom. According to the soldier, this is done by an officer who presents the ceremonial sabar of honour to the groom to be used to slice the wedding cake while the couple stand before the cake and place their hands on the sword to slice it into the confection together. The authors also observed that aspects of the use of the swords are merged with several conventional procedures involved in the conduct of military weddings that re-enact the ideologies of the Nigerian Army.

In military culture, the sword, whether it is used in ceremonial parades or weddings, ideologises the semiotic aspects of military identity that communicates their distinct practices. On this, Zlotnick^[38] argues that military wedding (Arch of sabars or Arch of swords) symbolises military’s pledge to honour and protect the newly married couple whose one of the spouse (particularly the groom in many instances) must be a military officer. The sword in this usage is the identity of officers, and the weapon of defense used for the protection of the wife and defense of the nation. These symbolisms carry with them salient military ethical values and demeanours that define the Nigerian Army as an ideological regimented force. On military ethics, Uwen and Mensah^[39] corroborate that the Army officer must consistently be bold, brave and never waiver as he or she confronts the challenges in the line of duty. This show of bravery commands energetic display of gallantry and aggression to take up and surmount challenges even in obviously risky circumstances. Relating this with semiotic ideology, military wedding is viewed as semiotic constellation of military ideologies of honour, pride, protection of lives and nationhood which are distinctly performed through institutional regulations for the use of swords and other display of colours, objects and actions in military weddings that reinforce Army’s regimented tradition.

4.2. Masculinisation of Service Uniforms

Another channel of communicating the masculine ideology in the Army is through the service uniforms which are aspects of general semiotics that interpret the use of signs and their meanings across cultures. For instance, clothing (dress code) is a semiotic component and a major instrument used for the construction of identity and ideology. Across many cultures, there are dress codes that are meant for either males or females that align with the sociocultural beliefs of the people believed to suit the male or female physiology. It is a general conception therefore that dressing evidently constructs the wearer's social and gender identity, and resonates the ideology the wearer professes. Clothing therefore bears semiotic precepts that define a man or woman^[40, 41]. Dressing, in this description, has a semiotic texture (that is the totality of the colours, style, insignias and inscriptions) that communicates various levels of information to the producers and wearers who form the interpretative social group. Such information includes the gender that the clothing constructs and other information that informs others about the social status, position, rank, ethnicity, religion and/or ideology of the wearer. Signs-mediated communication in this category is seen as being pivotal to the functioning of institutions^[42]. In spite of cross cultural and gendered delineation of clothing, it is however observed that the Nigerian Army approves masculinised dress code for use by its personnel for obvious reasons. On this, a male 54-year old Warrant Officer 11 reported that "the dress number 4, 5 and 6 meant for routine duties and military operations are (short-sleeved) jackets worn (or flown) on (combat) trousers." This description does not account for the traditional female dresses (skirts and blouses) that construct femininity in many cultures. The semiotic imports of the approved dresses show pronounced and conventional masculine outfits. Corroborating the specifications for sexist dresses, Arvanitiduo and Gasouka^[41] maintain that the use of trousers is men's traditional form of construction of masculine identity, and its recent use by women is rather a revolt against traditional forms of femininity. Here, it is believed that the style of dressing appears to have some impact on the psychology of the wearer in terms of behaviour and disposition, just like the semiotic coding of clothes can disrupt gender binaries as well as 'define a man or woman'. The coding of the dresses (within the Army's operating environment) into symbolic numbers and specific

days to wear either of them bear institutional relevance. The practice succinctly merges Army's gendered linguistic description of the dress code with the semiotic components communicated through nonverbal language of the Nigerian Army that also depicts masculine ideology. This situation corroborates Agha's^[12] argument that there are practices whereby performable signs (such as the uniforms) of social groups become recognised as distinct semiotic registers that communicate their worldview. As also observed by the authors, the dress codes as perceivable semiotic resources, overtly reshape the psyches of female soldiers and promote the neutralisation of masculine ideology of the Army. On female soldiers' perception of the male dress forms, a 34-year old female Corporal argued that:

I know that skirts and blouses, gowns or sown female *ankara* are some of the traditional female dresses, but I am not in any way bothered about the use of trousers and combat dress in the Army that I willingly enlisted and joined. The dress codes, though masculine in nature, are gradually being conceived as neutral gendered because we do not conceive them as males' dressing any more. And I prefer the trousers because it gives much allowance for the flexibility required in performing the complex military tasks that skirts and blouses will not offer.

In the participant's argument, the female soldiers have psychologically adapted to the masculinised semioticisation of service uniforms as aspects of the institutionalised military norms and regulations. This agrees with Uwen and Eyang's^[43] position that the Nigerian military is an institutional site primed to reproduce and promote masculine tropes, norms and ideologies. The participant's account shows that the male dresses are preferable in Army sites because they offer the allowances and flexibilities required of a soldier to perform maximally in military operations. On this, Butler's^[44] position also suggests gender as a performative social construct that is influenced by social agents, emotions, expression of intentions and security. This situational psychology informs and affects clothing choices that the Army promotes. The female (and male) soldiers are the wearers and agents who exercise these institutional choices which have psychological impact that moves them into a more gender

neutral space. The traditional male uniforms here, and when sighted, overtly communicate the social identity of the Army within and outside military institutions. The semiotics in the uniforms are viewed as the reproduction of Army's traditions because they bear semiotic resources that are interpretable in the lines of ideological frames. The gendered semioticisation of the Army's dress codes, as observed by the authors, are gradually neutralising the gendered perceptions to become symbols for positive aggression, flexibility, ruggedness and preparedness to confront challenges as well as sufficiently express the ideologies of the regimented agency.

4.3. Ideological Implications in Military Funerals

The funeral of Nigerian Army's dead colleagues is another event that bears semiotic resources that communicate some of the ideologies of the military. Uwen and Eyang^[43] claim that in Nigerian sociocultural context, membership of certain social groups play significant role in burying the dead of its member. The authors argue that the Nigerian Army in particular has institutionalised rituals for the funeral of a member with sequence of activities before the interment. However, in this study, we are concerned with items that are often displayed on the casket and 21-gun salute which are vital semiotic components that situate the military ideological imports of heroic patriot. Sun, Kinsella and Igou^[45] argue that the conception of heroism is conceived in the social, civil and martial perspectives and is interpreted based on individual, schematic and collective discernments of who undertook critical roles through crisis to improve social cohesion and orderliness. Such persons were ones social actors who demonstrated rare courage, bravery, and selflessness in taking risks to save situations for the benefit of mankind. On the use of national flag on the casket of a deceased member, a 49-year old Warrant Officer 1 narrated that:

At the lying in state, the national flag is placed on the coffin with the headdress at the centre close to and over the green portion of the national flag with the peak of the peak cap or the beret's badge pointing to the head of the deceased while the family wreath is kept at the foot. Also, removing the flag from the casket follows a conventional military pattern to

construe its symbolic relevance. It is carefully removed and folded in a number of successive times. This folding ritual symbolises tributes to the deceased, the Nigerian Army, the Armed Forces, the nation, and belief in the fragile nature of humans and eternal life. The folded flag is then presented to the next of kin or appropriate representative of the family to symbolise the ties the Nigerian Army and the family.

As observed by the authors, the Nigerian flag is a national symbol of authority, nationhood and sovereignty which soldiers fight to defend, and sometimes pay the supreme price in the course of doing so. Using the national flag on a casket is restricted to dead members of certain categories of workforce to index the memory of the services they offered to the progress of the Nigerian nation. The other symbolic activity that semiotises some ideologies of the military in the funeral of a dead personnel is the ritual of the 21-gun salute which is an aspect of honour across militaries of the world. Corroborating this, Picard^[1] argues that within the military, the 21-gun salute is "the international convention for the highest national honour." On the ritual and symbolic relevance of 21-gun salute, a 35-year old male Sergeant argued that:

The 21-gun salute involves the appropriate positioning of the rifle bearers and the subsequent firing of 21 rounds of bullets (artillery) into the air in rapid succession. This accompanies the lowering of the casket which signifies the end of visibility of the colleague in the physical world. And because the gun is the consistent and closest companion of the soldier, the sound of it is an obligatory performance that accompanies the deceased in the transition beyond the living. The gun salute symbolises respect, honour and mourning of the deceased colleague for his or her courage, sacrifice, commitment, patriotism and invocation of the power in team work showed by the dead while in active service.

Ozkaptan^[46] corroborates this position while noting that "a soldiers' courage is shaped by Army values and a set of training principles which help to develop his spirit, and his relationship with his comrades." We also observed

that it is the perception in military psychosocial cognition that every soldier is a courageous patriot and that battles are won by team work and re-energisation of team spirit in battlegrounds. The 21-gun salute symbiotically invokes the combined efforts of the deceased and other colleagues that resulted in winning battles, and to show that the deceased patriotic mien is remembered and remains in the memory of the living. Uwen and Eyang^[43] maintain that the context of Nigerian Army's funerals indexes the celebration of heroism, power, sense of belonging and comradeship of a dead colleague who had demonstrated bravery, courage, determination and patriotism in military exploits and operations while he or she lived. Drawing on insights from semiotic ideology, the semiotic activities in military funerals are combined to reconstruct ideologies of heroism, patriotism and nationalism which are central in the beliefs system of the military.

4.4. Significations in the Hoisting and Lowering of Flags

The hoisting and lowering of (national and institutional) flags in Nigerian Army's formations are guided by regulations that enact significations that reproduce ideologies of the military. FGN^[47] provides the regulations for the use and display of the national flag which shall fly side by side with that of any State or institutionally owned flag, or as may be used in connection with the establishment of the Armed Forces of Nigeria. The Armed Forces (where the Nigerian Army is part of) are by these regulations permitted to fly the national flag side by side with the institutional flag. Drawing from the regulations, Umah^[48] cautions that the national flag cannot be flown or displayed on the same staff (pole, pipe, stick, rod or cross bar) or at the same level with the flag of a State, an organization or agency of government. This implies that the national and Nigerian Army flags (though positioned closely) are fastened separately to different poles in a manner that signifies that the national flag is superior to the institutional flag. Martins^[49] posits that "the national flag has three vertical stripes of equal sizes; the left and right stripes are Green while the centre stripe is White, while the flag is a horizontal bi-colour of Green and White." The authors add that the Nigerian national flag is a symbol of national pride and identity, authority and instrument of State power. The green colour represents agriculture, wealth and rich natural

resources, while white signifies unity, peace and love in a diverse nation. This projects the collective national wealth in a peace-loving nation to the world. Describing the Nigerian Army's flag, a 28-year old female Lance Corporal clarified that:

The Nigerian Army's flag bears the Army's logo that has an emblem of an eagle, a six-pointer star and Arabic inscription on the flag that has three vertical stripes (red, black and red). The eagle stands for graceful power that rests with the Nigerian Army and also signifies all-time surveillance of the nation for brutal response to any organised enemy. The two interlaced triangle-like image that takes the shape of six-pointer stars is the symbol of a united and indivisible Nigeria. The red signifies the capabilities and activities of enemy forces, the black symbolises Nigeria's sufficiently equipped troops while the Arabic inscription means 'victory comes from God alone.'

The combined significations of the national and Nigerian Army's flags suggest the values, beliefs and ideologies the Army uphold. Adeyemi^[50] narrates that the hoisting and lowering of flag(s) is a ritual at all military formations carried out every morning at 0600 hrs (6 am) and evening at 1800 hrs (6 pm) through a traditional paralinguistic cues, drill and coded sound of the bugle signifying that the flag(s) should either be hoisted or lowered depending on the time of the day. According to a 27-year old male Corporal, soldiers detailed to perform the assignment at the sentry post are guided by the bugle blower (bearer). The participant added that the sun must not set on the national flag, once the flag is lowered, soldiers may not obligatorily pay compliment to superior officers as service members are assumed to have retired from the day's duties apart from those at security points. We also observed that as the flag is raised or lowered while the bugle bearer plays the appropriate sound, all in-coming and out-going cars come to a stop while all soldiers stand at attention to salute while civilians in the premises stand and place the right hand on their chests (hearts). The practice signifies the beginning and closure of duty for each day and the tradition is performed to recognise servicemen who had served and sacrificed their lives to protect the sovereignty of the nation,

and to remind those in service of their responsibilities to do better as they will also be remembered.

On the location of the sentry post, a 32-year old male Sergeant posited that:

A sentry post is usually at the entrance of a military formation and is strategically positioned at the right hand side. The soldiers on guard are the ones that perform sentry duties. The sentry is usually armed with specified rifle, and operates sometimes with a passcode(word) and is permitted to stand at ease when in the sentry box. It could be a single or double sentry posted to man for a 24-hour duty for a period of two hours at a four-hour interval the soldier could be changed.

On the rules guiding sentry post, another participant, a 50-year Warrant Officer 11 narrated that it is unlawful to sleep, drink, leaves the post or eat while on sentry. The non-commissioned officer stated that the functions of the sentry include to: pay compliments to visiting dignitaries in ceremonial situation, transmit audible signal, challenge suspicious and unauthorised entry of persons, pay appropriate compliment where entry is granted upon recognition, vigilance, observation and can open fire in situations granted within the orders. The entire site maintains series of regulated semiotic actions that connect the sentry with the environment. The concept of semiotic ideology is applied here as the semiotic activities in the hoisting and lowering of flags and other sentry duties sequentially produce Army's values and beliefs in patriotism, timeliness, discipline, alertness, regimentation and readiness to confront challenges.

4.5. Ideological Constellation in Military Salute

The final tradition of the military considered in this study is the salute pattern/paying compliment. We observed that the Nigerian Army has various forms of salute such as the hand salute, rifle salute at order or present arms, sword salute, eyes right salute, music, band and 21-gun salute, among others. Since all forms of salutation in the Nigerian Army appear to serve similar purpose, the focus here will be on hand salute. On the selected form of salute, a 31-year old female Sergeant reported that:

The hand salute or paying compliment is one

of the earliest military traditions. It is most commonly expressed by the right hand. It is the obligatory duty of the subordinates to pay compliment to their superiors to show respect, regimentation and discipline, and it is the duty of the RSM to check and punish erring soldiers who do not show respect to seniors. Where they are more than one juniors on sighting a superior officer, the most senior among them pays compliment on behalf of others.

In the structuring of the Army, according to the participant, it is the duty of the Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) to assist the commander in ensuring that the non-commissioned officers adhere strictly to the standards, ethics, discipline and other specifications in the code of conduct maintained in the military institution. This claim reinforces the regimented lifestyle of personnel tailored towards to the propagation of military ideals that demand discipline and compliance among members of the force in and outside the Army formations. On how to pay compliment, a 28-year old male Corporal narrated that:

Paying compliment is a process whereby a subordinate member of the Nigerian Army salutes a superior colleague. This is traditionally done by raising the right hand to the position of angle 45 degree such that the tip of the fingers touch the right ear. This is done in a swift and smart manner and as soon as the subordinate sights the superior especially where the junior is on service uniform.

The soldier stressed that paying compliment is mandatory between reveille and retreat, and when walking outdoor on uniform. The participant noted that while indoors, compliment is only exchanged when reporting to a superior officer, that salute is not exchanged when actively participating in sports, driving a car or during fatigue or drills. Salute, as we observed, is a signification for institutional interaction and indexation of social power and stratification. On this, Ishikawa et al.^[51] recognise this kind of interaction as aspect of power semantics which is essential feature of hierarchisation of social relationships in totalistic organisation. Based on this claim, military salute is viewed as the agency that delineates power, authority and the chain of hierarchy that

instantiates inequality among participants in military institutions. This practice is “used to subdue”^[52], and maintain power dynamics and respect in the Army’s social context. Uwen and Mensah^[39] argue that respect is a fundamental value that strengthens military leadership often exercised by officers to enforce command and control in military sites. Salute or compliment is the reproduction of institutional respect for hierarchy, and respect is an ideology that guides and regulates behaviour before authority and other military values. The authors are of the view that this practice promotes cohesion and it is a source of social stability. The gesture of respect through obligatory salute enhances mutual trust and discipline, delineates hierarchy in the ranking structure and it is a symbolic tool for comradeship in the honorable profession of arms. Salute, where viewed within the conceptual framework for this study, is a semiotic action that ideologises the practice and situates it within the core values of the Nigerian Army.

5. Conclusion

Drawing from the tenets of semiotic ideology, the study has explored on the traditional military practices enacted through signs, signals, gestures and actions to demonstrate the significations they convey within the ideological framings of military institutions. From the semiotic components of Nigerian Army’s weddings, funerals of colleagues, dress codes, hoisting and lowering of flags, sentry post to the salutation patterns, it connotes that in the Nigerian Army’s community of practice, there is shared information and knowledge in the use of non-spoken language as institutional communication codes. Such patterned communication system enhances strategies for cohesion, regimentation and performance among personnel. From the foundations of military traditions, the semiotic activities appeared to have been formed and passed on to personnel for continuity and development, and the patterning do not allow for unnecessary innovations and deviations that could alter the ideological frames they convey in military service. Military practices as observed, are sites for improvement of the morale of officers and soldiers, instantiate professional pride, increase efficiency, narrows social distance between staff members and enhance solidarity, professional pride, social bonding,

sense of belonging and solidarity. They also regulate the behaviour of personnel to strengthen intrarelations and orderliness for effective command and control. The knowledge and participation in these practices help for the continuous strengthening of the defense capabilities of the Nigerian Army to protect the sovereignty of Nigeria against organised enemy from the internal and external fronts. This study is significant because it has expanded on knowledge of semiotics by providing insightful institutional, cultural and social processes for the appraisal of the use and relevance of signs, signals, body language and appropriate actions particularly by soldiers. The semiotic military traditions form regulated mechanisms that define the ethos and ideologies of the Nigerian Army as regimented profession whose core operational mandate revolves around the value of duty, hour and country. It is therefore suggested that studies of this nature should be expanded to examine other military practices, the ideologies they convey and how such practices influence the psychology and performance of troops.

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Ethical review and approval were waived for this study because participants were only interviewed on the military ideologies conveyed in the practices and traditions and not their persons or identities.

Informed Consent Statement

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Data Availability Statement

Data are contained in the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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