Decoding the Ghanaian Coat of Arms: A Semiotic Analysis of Its History, Language, Ideology, Denotation, and Connotation

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ABSTRACT

The impact of colonialism on the economic development, education, language, and religious systems of Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Ghana, is a critical area of study. This semiotic analysis of the Ghanaian Coat of Arms aims to decode the symbols and signs to shed light on how colonial legacy shapes modern Ghana and other African nations. The Coat of Arms, found on official government documents and currency, is often overlooked in terms of its symbolic significance in post-colonial and contemporary Ghanaian history. Guided by the research questions, the study explores how the semiotic concepts of denotation and connotation apply to the symbols and elements of the Ghanaian Coat of Arms, revealing insights into Ghanaian history and culture. Furthermore, it examines how the use of color in the Coat of Arms, as well as historical flags, functions as a semiotic tool to convey messages about Ghana's wealth, political authority, and cultural heritage. The research findings indicate that the Coat of Arms encapsulates elements of Western imperialism and the assimilation of European culture by Ghana, evident in the adoption of foreign languages, educational policies, and religious structures. The research findings further demonstrate that Ghana's Coat of Arms integrates historical and ideological aspects, representing both its colonial history and its journey toward independence. Additionally, the study highlights that many African nations, including Ghana, continue to experience elements of colonization in the post-colonial era, as evidenced by the persistent use of colonial symbols and signs. This study enhances the understanding of how national symbols, such as the Coat of Arms, convey broader socio-political and historical narratives. It includes a comparative analysis of the Coats of Arms of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, exploring their similarities and differences to provide a more comprehensive perspective on how these symbols reflect and negotiate the complexities of colonial and post-colonial identities across the region.

1. Introduction

What impact has colonialism had on the economic development, education, language, and religious systems of Sub-Saharan Africa, specifically Ghana, and colonized countries in general? This is the question that the semiotics analysis of the Ghanaian Coat of Arms attempts to address by decoding the meaning behind the signs for readers to comprehend the current situation of Ghana, and for that matter most African countries in the modern world. Ghanaians can find the Coat of Arms on all government official letter heads in the country and other official documents, including the currency. Notwithstanding, most people do not know its symbolic significance from post-colonial background to our contemporary Ghanaian history, making a semiotics analysis of this special national symbol a better way of understanding communicational studies. Thus, the design of the coat of arms helps readers understand the situation of some African countries and their links to most Western countries. Such a situation may include the Western imperialism and assimilation of European culture by some African states. For example, one may look at how most African countries have adopted the western language as their official language rather than their native languages; how the educational and religious systems of Ghana seek to follow the Western ways of teaching and structuring their curriculum; and Ghana's economic policies in terms of agriculture and development of other sectors. Given that, doing a semiotics analysis will uncover some important topics that can be related to the current state of most African nations. According to a book titled *Ghana a Country Study* written by the Federal Research Division (1994), Ghana falls among the leading producers of cocoa in the world, and its economy rely heavily on the production and export of cocoa, minerals, notably gold, and timber. In recent years, Ghanaians' wealth has declined in so many ways that they cannot boast of producing enough cocoa and other mineral salts for other parts of the world. Ghana has also adopted some foreign languages, foreign educational policies, and religious structures, which can be decoded in the coat of arms. One may conclude that this is as a result of colonization while others believe that is as a result of modernization. Thus, there have been a lot of cultural values and practices that most Ghanaians have neglected in our contemporary Ghanaian society. Given that many academicians ascribe this to colonialism and others to industrialization. Modernization as it relates to the development and upgrading of a country's culture and values to accommodate contemporary elements. As a result, Heldring & Robinson (2012) go on to say that without such a systematic approach, ideology has a lot more room for scholars to pick and choose facts that match their worldview. The assertion of Heldring and Robinson (2012) also confirms the ideology that some African societies have when it comes to the issue of colonization and modernization. Despite this dilemma in the minds of most Africans, the impact of colonization remains a question of the day, and individuals occasionally fantasize about how Africa might be if it had not been colonized. This study seeks to address this complex issue through a semiotic analysis of the Ghanaian Coat of Arms, which serves as a national symbol found on government letterheads, official documents, and currency. Despite its ubiquity, the symbolic significance of the Coat of Arms, especially in terms of its post-colonial and contemporary historical relevance, is not widely understood among Ghanaians. The primary goal of the study, as guided by the research questions, is to decode the symbols, signs, and colors embedded in the Ghanaian Coat of Arms using semiotic concepts like denotation and connotation. The study aims to uncover the deeper meanings these elements reveal about Ghana's history, culture, wealth, political authority, and cultural heritage, particularly in the context of the legacy of colonialism. The analysis is guided by the following key research questions:

1. How do the semiotic concepts of denotation and connotation apply to the symbols and elements of the Ghanaian Coat of Arms, and what deeper meanings do they reveal about Ghanaian history and culture?

2. How does the use of color in the Ghanaian Coat of Arms and historical flags serve as a semiotic tool to convey messages about Ghana's wealth, political authority, and cultural heritage?

Through this analysis, the study aims to reveal how the design of the Coat of Arms not only represents Ghana's history but also serves as a lens through which the complex relationship between colonialism and modernization can be understood.

2. History of Semiotics

2.1. The Ancient World and Augustine

According to Idris (2020), Augustine was the first to propose that the *signum* functions as a tool or medium used to facilitate different types and levels of communication. This perspective was considered unusual at the time because, in the philosophical traditions of ancient Greece and Rome, there was no singular concept of a sign similar to our current understanding. While the term "seme" originates from Greek, Greek philosophy itself distinguishes between *Semeion* (pertaining to nature) and *Symbol* (relating to culture). In general, as a concept that derives its name from the Greek word *semeiotikos*, meaning "study of signs", semiotics focuses as signs and their roles as the vehicles that allow human beings to share and represent their worldviews, present information, and influence their society. According to Eco (1976), mankind has relied on the notion of semiotics to deceive and obfuscate others as they intend to send the meanings of messages across. Both Plato in *Cratylus* (circa 385 BC) and Aristotle in his works, including *Perihermenias* (around 330 BC: 16-20a; cf. Eco et al. 1986: 66-68), as well as Boethius (notably between 511-513 AD), supported Augustine's idea of the unity of signs, referred to as *doctrina signorum* (Idris, 2020).

2.2. The Latin World

William of Ockham (circa 1317-1328), within his critique of logicians, accepted Augustine's definition of signs as vehicles to something immaterial, representing concepts that cannot be sensed directly. This view, as Idris (2020) notes, was a departure from the prevailing perspective of his time, which often conflated external signs, such as words and symbols, with internal modes of understanding, like images and ideas. During Ockham's time in Paris, the established notion of the disconnect between signs and their perceived meanings was prevalent. This period also introduced the concept of signum naturale (natural signs). Petrus d'Ailly (circa 1372) distinguished between internal signs (signa formalia) and external signs (signa instrumentalia), highlighting the shared nature of knowledge and sensory experience within society. As Idris (2020) highlights, the semiotic controversy that began in the 17th century debated whether signs were limited to what could be physically felt. Ockham's emphasis, however, was on integrating thoughts and language within the doctrine of signs, suggesting that the study of signs should consider both abstract concepts and their practical manifestations.

2.3. Development of Semiotics as a Discipline

The development of semiotics can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century and spanned throughout the twentieth century, during which several prominent scholars made significant contributions to its evolution. These scholars expanded the discipline from its foundational concepts, shaping it into what it is today, including its definition, functions, and key branches. Over time, semiotics has grown into a comprehensive field of study, analyzing how signs and symbols operate in communication and meaning-making across various disciplines, including

linguistics, philosophy, media studies, and cultural analysis. On this, Nöth (1990) observes that these figures who made key contributions to the development of semiotics as a major discipline included Peirce (who propounded the philosophy and classification of signs), Saussure (whose work in semiotics led to the evolution of the concepts of semiology and linguistics), Morris (who developed the scope of semiotic theories), Hjelmslev (who propounded the theory of *glossematics*) and Jakobson (whose semiotic engagements helped ground semiotics in poetics and linguistics). Prominent amongst these scholars are the works of Charles Sanders Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure, whose extensive work in the understanding of the messages of signs led to the recognition of both the philosophical and linguistic essence of semiotics. For instance, Ferdinand de Saussure who was widely acclaimed as the "father" of modern linguistics also became recognized as the founder of semiology (semiotics) and, was thus a pre-eminent figure in the interpretation of signs that evolved the development of semiotic theory in this century.

2.4. The Contributions of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce

Although interest in the study of signs and their communicative power stretches back to medieval times—having attracted the attention of figures like John Locke and other philosophers—the foundations of modern semiotic analysis can be attributed to two key pioneers. Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) and American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) are often regarded as the fathers of semiotics, each contributing significantly to the way we understand the relationship between signs, meaning, and communication.

It must be noted that Saussure's (1916) work significantly elaborated his concept of the sign to the extent required to explore the nature of the linguistic sign, and the many following the Saussurean semiological tradition transferred his ideas to non-linguistic signs (Nöth, 1990). According to Nöth (1990), two linguistic schools sprung up to this effect — the Prague School of the 1930's and 1940's, and the Paris School of the 1960's and 1970's. Saussure's concepts of semiotic notion focused on the two-fold notion of the *sign*, which is defined as an entity consisting of the *signifier* and *signified* (1966:67). According to Danesi (1993), Saussure's notion of the *signifier* covers the material vehicle, or the "physical part of the sign, the actual substance of which it is composed (sound waves, alphabet characters)" (24). The *signified* however is defined as the meaning or mental notions to which the *signifier* refers. This Saussurean dichotomy of signs is in contrasted Peirce's triadic concept of the *representamen*, *object* and *interpretant* as the key notions of understanding the meanings of signs. According to Pierce (cited in Nöth 1990) the *representamen* is the sign, whereas the *object* refers to that to which the representamen refers, and the *interpretant* is the individual's comprehension of, and reaction to, the representamen or object association (42). The representamen is synonymous with Saussure's signifier, identifying the material or present part of the sign, while the object and interpretant are Saussure's signified in two parts.

Table 1.
Three Aspects of Signs

Aspect	Icon	Index	Symbol
Signify by	Resemblance	Causal Connection	Convention
Examples	Pictures, Status	Fiire/smoke	Flags
Process	Can see	Can Figure Out	Must learn

In semiotics, the study of signs and symbols as a significant part of communication, signs are typically categorized into three aspects: Icon, Index, and Symbol. These three aspects reflect different ways in which signs convey meaning:

1**. Icon**: Icons signify through resemblance. This means that the sign looks like or imitates the thing it represents. Examples include pictures or statues. For instance, a picture of a tree resembles an actual tree, allowing viewers to easily recognize and interpret the meaning of the icon. The process here is intuitive—one can see the resemblance.

2. **Index**: Indexical signs work through a causal connection between the sign and the object. This means there is a direct or factual relationship, such as fire and smoke. Smoke is an index of fire because its presence indicates the existence of fire. This is a more inferential process—one must figure out the connection, but it is still relatively direct.

3. **Symbol**: Symbols, on the other hand, signify through convention or agreement within a particular culture. For example, flags are symbolic representations of countries. There is no inherent connection between the colors or shapes of a flag and the nation it represents, but culturally, we learn this association over time. The process of understanding symbols requires learning and familiarity with the established conventions.

In semiotics, these elements work together to help us interpret various forms of communication. **Icons** offer direct resemblance, **indexes** require inferential thought based on causality, and **symbols** rely on learned conventions. This framework helps explain how different types of signs convey meaning in visual communication, language, and even in everyday life, where understanding signs is crucial to interpreting information effectively.
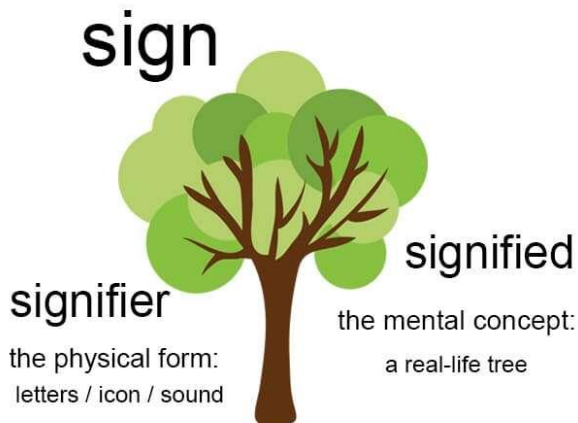
2.5. Key Concepts of Semiotics

Figure 1
https://media-studies.com/saussure/

2.5.1. Signifier

The signifier refers to the physical form of the sign—what we see, hear, or perceive (Saussure, 1916). It can be a word, image, sound, or any tangible representation that conveys meaning. For instance, when we see the word "tree" or a picture of a tree, these are the signifiers. They stand in for something else and are used in communication to reference an object, concept, or idea (Saussure,1916). On the other hand, Saussure (1916) emphasized that signifiers are arbitrary. There is no inherent, natural connection between the word "tree" and the physical object it refers to. According to Saussure (1916), the relationship between the signifier and what it signifies is established through social convention. This arbitrariness is key to understanding semiotic systems because it shows that signs derive their meaning from the cultural context in which they are used (Saussure, 1916).

2.5.2. Signified

The signified refers to the conceptual dimension of a sign, representing the mental image or idea evoked when we encounter a signifier (Saussure, 1916). For example, when we hear or see the word "tree," the signified is the concept of a tree—the mental image of a tall plant with branches and leaves that we envision. Thus, the signified is the meaning or content that the signifier directs us to. Barthes extends this discussion by introducing the idea that abstract concepts, such as baseness, can also function as signified in certain contexts.

2.5.3. Relationship Between Signifier and Signified

Together, the signifier and the signified form a sign. The relationship between the two is what creates meaning in language and communication. According to Saussure, signs function as a part of a larger system of meanings within a language or culture. This system allows for communication because individuals understand the conventions that connect signifiers to their corresponding signifieds. The relationship between the signifier and signified—and this is crucial—is arbitrary, unmotivated, unnatural (Saussure, 1916). Saussure (1916) further highlights that there is no logical connection between a word and a concept or a signifier and signified, a point that makes finding meaning in texts interesting and problematic.

For example, the word "dog" as a signifier brings to mind the signified concept of a domestic animal with four legs, fur, and a bark. The relationship between the signifier (the word "dog") and the signified (the mental image or concept of a dog) is constructed and understood within the specific linguistic and cultural context in which it is used (See Figure, 2).

2.5.4. Denotation

According to Barthes (1967), semiology, as propounded by Saussure (1916), is therefore the science of analyzing ideas-in-form since the focus is on significations rather than content. Barthes (1977) who keenly followed Saussure's semiotic concepts considered images as direct analogue conveyers of meaning, and this led him to set up two orders of *signification*, which he referred to as *denotation* and *connotation*. This concept of Barthes (1977) was drawn directly from Saussure's dyadic concept of the sign – signifier-signified – and from a "greatly simplified version of the glossematic sign model" developed by Hjelmslev (Nöth 1990:310). They refer to the first and second levels or systems of meaning in a sign. According to Barthes (1977), denotation refers to the literal or informational meaning of a sign, in terms of what can be objectively observed and at the same time can be easily recognised and identified. For example, an image of a wolf denotes a dog, or type of dog.

2.5.5. Connotation

Connotation, on the other hand, involves meanings which are of symbolic level and at the same time dependent on the denotative level (Nöth 1990). In this regard, signs are interpreted based on viewers' or readers' perceptions connotatively when the interpretation goes beyond the ordinary interpretation through the activation of context-dependent conventions or codes (Barthes, 1977). An image of a canon, depending on the context, can connote a football team – Arsenal FC, a restriction or the need to be careful or protected (as in advising people that the place is out of bounds), or military superiority (as in many slave, colonial or political narratives). According to Barthes (1977), an explanation of these concepts points to the fact that "the first system becomes the plane of expression or signifier of the second system…the signifiers of connotation…are made up of signs of the denoted system" (p. 91). Thus, conceivers of signs can make sense of and can integrate the two levels of meaning-making only by making reference to their background knowledge of the culturally-based systems or images

with their various associative meanings. This means that the system of *connotation* is dependent on the background knowledge of symbols for its conception and sustenance. In his discussion of the semiotics of publicity images on the levels of meanings in advertising images, Barthes (1977) further concurs that the *denotative* level of meaning is to be regarded as the non-coded iconic message, while the *connotative* level is to be regarded coded iconic, or symbolic message which is foregrounded on underlying pragmatic, cultural, political, historic or aesthetic foreknowledge.

2.5.6. Comparison between Connotation and Denotation

Table 2

Connotation	Denotation	Explanation
Figurative	Literal	**Connotation** refers to the implied or figurative meaning of a word, encompassing the emotions, ideas, or cultural significance it carries beyond its straightforward definition. In contrast, **Denotation** is the word's direct, literal meaning, free from any added emotional or cultural associations.
Signified	Signifier (s)	In semiotics, **Connotation** is tied to the signified, which refers to the abstract, conceptual meaning or the idea that the sign represents. **Denotation** is tied to the signifier, which is the actual form, such as a word or image, that refers to that concept.
Inferred	Obvious	**Connotation** often involves meanings that are inferred or implied, requiring some interpretation. **Denotation** is usually more straightforward, presenting an obvious, universally understood meaning.
Suggest meanings	Describes	**Connotation** suggests multiple layers of meaning or associations that might not be explicitly stated. **Denotation** simply describes something in a clear, factual manner, without implying anything beyond the surface.
Realm of Myth	Realm of existence	**Connotation** often belongs to the "realm of myth," in the sense that it can evoke cultural, social, or symbolic ideas (like emotions, myths, or cultural meanings). **Denotation** operates in the "realm of existence," as it is concerned with the actual, physical, or observable description of things as they are.

Example:

Denotation of "rose": A type of flower with petals, thorns, and a specific biological structure.

Connotation of "rose": Love, romance, beauty and passion.

2.6. Using Semiotics in Visual Analysis

In Table 1, the writer explores the concepts of icon, index, and symbol, highlighting how these elements aid in the visual analysis of an object. This process involves examining how resemblance, such as in icons, helps convey meaning and how viewers interpret that likeness. Curtin (2009) explained that in visual analysis, recognizing indexes means identifying elements within an image that suggest other ideas, actions, or conditions—like how shadows in a photograph indicate the direction of light. Similarly, analyzing symbols requires understanding how they draw upon the viewer's cultural knowledge to communicate specific ideas. Peirce's classification of signs, including icon, index, and symbol, is particularly useful for studies in

visual and material culture, though he proposed other classifications as well (Curtin, 2009). According to Peice (1931) an icon, simply defined, is a sign that is connected to its signifier through visual similarity. Examples include portraits or abstract paintings where, for instance, the color black appears; the painting both features and refers to the color black, leaving room for varied interpretations.

Roland Barthes (1915-1980) was a pioneer in applying semiotic theory, originally developed in linguistics, to the analysis of visual images such as food advertisements, photography, and films. His work provides valuable insights into the key aspects of semiotics, emphasizing that the meanings we assign to images are not "natural" or self-evident. Barthes argued that our understanding of visual elements is shaped by cultural associations rather than being universally understood. For instance, without a caption or additional context, it is often difficult to accurately interpret the meaning of a photograph, as our interpretations rely on external references. This concept can be illustrated through the ***Ghanaian coat of arms***, which, like any visual symbol, carries specific meanings that are deeply rooted in cultural and national contexts. The coat of arms includes several elements that convey significant messages through a combination of icons, indexes, and symbols. For example, the black star at the top symbolizes African freedom and unity, while the two eagles holding the shield are icons representing strength and resilience. Crossed swords are an index of authority and government power. Without understanding the cultural and historical context of Ghana, these symbols may not fully convey their intended meaning to an external observer. The black star, for example, might simply be seen as a design element by someone unfamiliar with its connection to Pan-Africanism. This reinforces Barthes' idea that the meanings we attribute to images are culturally constructed and not inherently universal. At the same time, while culture plays a significant role in shaping interpretation, Barthes also noted that it does not entirely determine our response, leaving room for individual or diverse perspectives when analyzing such symbols.

2.7. Semiotics and Visual Representation in Arts

Given the root of 'representation' in notions of resemblance and imitation, among other factors, visual images have often been thought of as more direct and straightforward in their meaning than language itself, which varies from culture to culture (Curtin, 2009). In this context, it can be helpful to consider visual images as similar to text; however, it is important not to allow linguistic models to overly influence our understanding of visual representation (Curtin,2009). Moreover, the relationship between images and their meanings is not as straightforward as the way a dictionary connects words with their definitions. While images, such as allegories or the Ghana Coat of Arms, are associated with specific meanings, they do not require a distinct or fixed visual language. Additionally, the meanings of images can often be expressed through words, allowing for various visual interpretations, none of which hold an inherent meaning (Potts, 1996). This concept can be connected to the ***Coat of Arms of Ghana***, a national symbol that contains a variety of visual elements, each of which carries specific meanings tied to the nation's identity and values. The Coat of Arms features symbols like the black star (symbolizing African freedom), the eagle (representing strength), and the castle (depicting government). While each element carries a distinct significance, the interpretation of their meaning is not intrinsic to the image itself but rather tied to cultural, historical, and social contexts, much like how allegorical images function in visual art. Visual analysis comes into play because the Coat of Arms, like the biblical scenes of the Temptation of Saint Anthony, can be analyzed in multiple ways. One must consider the broader historical and cultural contexts that inform its interpretation, as well as the specific choices made in the visual design (Bal,1998). Just as different artists can visualize the same story differently, the symbols in Ghana's Coat of Arms are imbued with meaning through the nation's shared understanding

and collective memory, rather than through any intrinsic visual language. This demonstrates how visual analysis requires us to consider both the form and the broader context to uncover layered meanings within images, recognizing that the relationship between an image and its meaning is shaped by factors beyond the image itself (Curtin, 2009).

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative semiotic analysis to examine the Ghanaian Coat of Arms. Semiotic analysis, as described by Barthes (1967), involves interpreting the multiple layers of meaning embedded within cultural symbols. This approach necessitates a detailed examination of both denotative and connotative meanings to uncover the full significance of symbols, ideologies, and cultural values (Chandler, 2007).

3.1. Data Collection

Data collection involved a comprehensive visual analysis of the Ghanaian Coat of Arms. This analysis was complemented by a comparative review of the British Gold Coast Colony flag and the current Ghanaian national flag. Additionally, the study conducted a comparative analysis of the coat of arms of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, examining both their similarities and differences. The primary sources for the study included:

Visual Analysis of the Ghanaian Coat of Arms: The analysis documented the symbols, colors, and text present in the Coat of Arms. Special attention was given to the emblematic elements, such as the symbol of the eagle, the palm tree, and the ribbon with the national motto. Each of these components was examined for their literal (denotative) meanings and their broader cultural and emotional associations (connotative meanings).

Comparative Analysis of Flags: The British Gold Coast Colony flag and the Ghanaian national flag were analyzed to understand their historical and symbolic context. This comparative approach provided insights into the evolution of national symbols and their significance over time.

3.2. Semiotic Analytical Approach

Denotative Analysis: This approach focused on the literal, straightforward meanings of the symbols and text in the Coat of Arms and flags. It involved identifying and describing the elements without interpretation, such as the specific colors, shapes, and inscriptions used.

Connotative Analysis: This method explored the cultural and emotional associations of the symbols and colors. It involved examining how these elements convey broader cultural ideologies and values. For example, the colors and symbols in the Coat of Arms were analyzed for their historical significance and the cultural narratives they represent.

3.3. Application of Semiotic Concepts

Signifier and Signified: The study identified the signifiers (the physical components of the Coat of Arms and flags) and explored their signified meanings (the concepts and values they represent). For instance, the eagle was analyzed as a signifier representing strength and freedom, and its signified meaning was explored in the context of Ghanaian nationalism.

Denotation and Connotation: By distinguishing between the literal meanings (denotation) and the cultural associations (connotation) of the symbols, the study provided a comprehensive understanding of how the Coat of Arms and flags communicate national identity and heritage.

Mythology and Ideology: Barthes' concept of mythology was employed to examine how the Coat of Arms and flags reflect and perpetuate national ideologies and cultural myths. This involved analyzing how these symbols contribute to the construction of national narratives and collective identity.

In applying semiotic concepts, the signifier-signified framework is utilized to interpret the symbols present on the Ghanaian Coat of Arms. For example, the eagle, as a signifier, visually embodies strength and represents the nation's vigilance in preserving its sovereignty (the signified meaning). Similarly, the black star serves as a signifier for African unity, with its signified meaning linked to the freedom gained post-independence. This approach reveals both the explicit meanings and the deeper cultural significance of these symbols, playing a crucial role in shaping Ghana's national identity and ideology. Examples one and two provide an in-depth analysis of how these symbols are dissected through the semiotic process, highlighting the specific components of the Coat of Arms and their contributions to the nation's symbolic language. This examination not only illuminates the historical and ideological layers embedded in the Coat of Arms but also illustrates how such symbols continue to influence contemporary Ghanaian identity and values

3.3.1. Example 1

Signifier and Signified: The Eagle

- **Signifier**: The eagle, prominently positioned at the top of the Coat of Arms.

- **Signified**: In semiotic terms, the eagle acts as a signifier, representing qualities such as strength, freedom, and authority. The choice of the eagle as a national symbol connects to these concepts on a denotative level—literally depicting a powerful bird of prey. On a **connotative** level, the eagle conveys broader cultural meanings, signifying the resilience and autonomy of the Ghanaian people following independence. It serves as a mythological symbol of the nation's aspirations for strength and self-governance, which was especially significant after gaining independence from colonial rule.

By applying Barthes' **mythology** concept, the eagle can be interpreted as embodying the Ghanaian national myth of sovereignty and the collective identity that draws from historical struggles for freedom.

3.3.2. Example 2

Denotation and Connotation: The Gold Lion

- **Denotative Meaning**: The lion on the Coat of Arms, placed within the shield, is a direct representation of the British colonial legacy. Denotatively, it is a symbol of the British Crown, used across many former British colonies to reflect the influence of British governance.

- **Connotative Meaning**: However, the **connotative** layer is richer, reflecting the complex relationship between Ghana and its colonial past. While the lion represents power and royalty, its presence in the Coat of Arms suggests an acknowledgment of the historical ties with Britain, while simultaneously signifying Ghana's departure from colonial rule and its own newfound authority. Culturally, the lion also evokes ideas of leadership and strength, reinforcing the nation's leadership role in Africa's post-colonial independence movements.

The Ghanaian Coat of Arms is examined through the semiotic concepts of signifier-signified and denotation-connotation to uncover both surface-level and deeper cultural meanings of its

symbols. This approach highlights how these national symbols contribute to shaping Ghana's identity and ideology in the post-independence era. The following sections offer a detailed exploration of how these semiotic concepts reveal the cultural significance embedded in the Coat of Arms. By applying the concepts of signifier-signified and denotation-connotation, the study investigates symbols such as the eagle and the lion, revealing their profound meanings and their connections to national identity. Examples one and two illustrate this analytical approach, showing how these concepts uncover the rich and multifaceted significance of the Coat of Arms. Additionally, the analysis provides insights into how these symbols continue to influence contemporary Ghanaian values and national consciousness, reflecting the enduring impact of historical and ideological narratives.

4. Historical Materialism and its Relation to the Ghanaian History

Ghana was known as the Gold Coast before it gained independence on March 6, 1957. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to set foot on the land in the 15th century (Gocking, 2005). According to de-Vries (2008), the year of 1874 saw the purchase of Dutch settlements by the British settlers, which were joined to other settlements along the coast to form the joint settlements named Gold Coast Colony. In 1901, Britain expanded its authority in Gold Coast by annexing the Ashanti Kingdom and in the same year, territories north of the Ashanti Kingdom known as the Northern Territories became a British protectorate (de-Vries, 2008). Later on, part of the former German colony of Togoland was mandated to Britain by the League of Nations and administered as part of the Gold Coast colony. The state of Ghana, comprising the Gold Coast and British Togoland, obtained independence on 6th of March 1957 becoming the first subSaharan African colony to attain such feat. The period leading to the independence of the then Gold Coast was marked with series of nationalistic struggles, one that significantly informed the choice of a new name, Ghana, after independence to mark the beginning of a new state. According to Boahen (1996), "Ghana" was the reference the Soninke people gave to their king, which meant "Warrior King". Between the 13th and 17th centuries, three separate empires arose, including Mali, Songhai, and Ghana. Each empire's destruction led to the establishment of another. At this period in time, a group of people known as the Susu rebelled against Ghana, forcing the people to flee for a new home (Boahen,1996). According to Bathily (1975), the empire of Ancient Ghana had no geographical or cultural ties to the present African country, even though the name was used in place of Gold Coast to Ghana after independence, by its first president was Kwame Nkrumah (Boahen, 1996). Though the ancient Ghana empire is not the same as the modern country Ghana, the meaning of the term Ghana as "Warlord" may be traced back to the ancient empire's meaning of the word "Ghana". Due to Ghana's strength of resistance to obtain independence on the 6th of March 1957, their conflicts with the British, and consequently the multiple ethnic wars that occurred amongst the states in the Gold Coast, Kwame Nkrumah chose the new name for Gold Coast as reflection of the strengths possessed by the ancient Ghana empire. Along with the new name, Ghana, came other state symbols, notably the Ghana Coat of Arms.

The history of the Ghana Coat of Arms can be traced back to the badge of the Gold Coast Colony which was introduced after 1874 as shown in Figure 4 below. According to de Vries (2008), the badge was circular and showed, like the badges of the other West-African colonies, an elephant on a plain with mountains in the distance and a palm-tree on the background. However, for the Gold Coast Colony, the letters G.C. were added in base (de Vries, 2008).

After the Second World War, to meet the unrest in the colony, a Joint Provincial Council was set up in 1947 by the British, which, however was manned with people sympathizing with British rule. After fierce political struggle, self-government was achieved in 1951 under the

leadership of Kwame Nkrumah. The Provincial Council was maintained but other people took the places of the former members. According de Vries (2008), to show the authority of the Joint Provincial.

Council, an emblem was used to symbolize the essence of this council. The Council's consisted an image of the Ashanti head-stool on which were laid three ceremonial swords, which were symbols of power. At the front of this symbolic stool lies a chain of three links (de Vries, 2008).

Figure 2. Emblem of the Joint Provincial Council
Courtesy: Hubert de Vries (2008)

As the British Gold Coast colony geared towards its independence, the need to represent the new emerging nation led to the creation of new symbols to represent its emerging power and sovereignty. Thus, the Ghanaian artist, Nii Amon Kotei was contracted to design current Coat of Arms of Ghana, which was gazatted and commissioned for official usage in pre-independence Ghana on March 4th, 1957, three days before Ghana attained its independent on March 6th 1957.

Below is the Flag of Gold Coast Ghana, thus when the British were colonizing Ghana. This helps readers to understand the Coat of Arms and its meaning, one may look at the various types of flags that existed and have transitioned into the current flag of Ghana, influencing some elements of the Coat of arms.

5. Illustration to Support the Findings and Analysis of the Study

Figure 3. The Flag of British Gold Coast Colony
Courtesy: Wikipedia.com

Figure 4. Badge of British Gold Coast Colony
Courtesy: Hubert de Vries (2008)

Figure 5. The Ghana National Flag
Courtesy: Ghana High Commission, Australia

Figure 6. Coat of Arms of Ghana Courtesy: Hubert de Vries (2008)

The above images – **Figures 3 and Figure 4** – illustrate the first flags used by the British colonial masters during their era of control over the Gold Coast and other colonial territories of the British empire (**Figure 3**), while the image of **Figure 4** was the badge of the Gold Coast, which was merged into the British flag to symbolize British supremacy and authority over the possessions of Gold Coast, clearly indicated with the initials *G.C.* written under it.

As earlier noted, image of Figure 4 was symbol used to represent the British control of its West African colonies, of which Gold Coast was part, noted with the inscription *G.C.* under the badge. The above symbol (sign) contains semiotic components such as color, text, and design. Descriptively, the image of **Figure 4** features an elephant, a mountain, a forest, a coconut tree, and yellow ground. In the paragraph below, the researcher has demonstrated the semiotic essence of the image using the concept of the signifier and signified form a sign.

6. Identifying Some Semiotic Elements of the Gold Coast Coat of Arms - Badge (Figure 4)

Color: Yellow and Green (**Figure 4**). Yellow is used to represent the richness of the Gold Coast (Ghana). By its name, Gold Coast is rich in minerals, particularly gold, which accounts for the golden tint. ***The color yellow is the signifier in the image of Figure 4, and the signified is riches or prosperity***.

Also, ***the color green is the signifier in the above image (Figure 4) represents the rich vegetational resources of the British occupied land which is seen in its forest and farmland resourcefulness***. As a result, the green color of the Gold Coast (now Ghana) badge is signified in the sense of its large forest reserves that generates timber and a productive agriculture system for the colonial authorities.

Text: The initials – *G.C.* – as seen under **Figure 4** is a signifier and it is signified as Gold Coast, which is under the British authority.

Object: The object in **Figure 4** takes the shape of a design, which is a drawing of an elephant, which serves as a signifier of British colonial and imperialist powers. As a result, the elephant's strength reflected the strength of the British empire in pre-colonial and colonial days. The initials **G.C.** which literally stands for Gold Coast, can be interpreted as the language used by the British for social interaction and the introduction of the English language to the Gold Coast. As may be seen in the above British flag of **Figure 3**, the British blended their flag with the Gold Coast badge to show their dominance of the acquired territory. This flag was flown throughout the colonial periods, and Ghanaians contributed to the rise of the authority in the British flag and the British hegemony.

It is important to note that the image of **Figure 3**, which combines the British colors with those of the Gold Coast, aids in decoding the British colonial ideology behind their taking over the administration of African colonies. In the illustrating the essence of the Union Flag found within the colonial flag as seen in **Figure 3**, it is worth noting that the white denotes peace and honesty, red represents bravery, strength, and valor, and blue also denotes vigilance, justice, loyalty, and perseverance. Looking at **Figure 3** with the British Flag and the Gold Coast Badge, one can see that the British had a different motive of being peaceful and fostering harmony, and thereby connotatively using the symbol of a merged symbols to suggest the idea of merchandising in terms of trading to foster a harmonious relationship between the two territories.

Next, as indicated in the literature review, the image of **Figure 5** represents the current flag of Ghana. This section will use the preceding concepts of denotation and connotation to illustrate the ideology behind the Ghanaian flag. In 1957, a flag with a modern design was adopted for

the first time. This new step was initiated to make the breakdown of the Union, as Ghana gained independence from British Colonialism, and resulted in the adoption of the current Ghanaian flag, which was designed by Theodosia Okoh (Pobee, 2009). Ghana's flag consists of three colors and a black star. When examining the denotation of the Ghanaian flag, one may have a literal understanding of the flag as opposed to its implications, resulting in its relationship to other nations. The Ghanaian flag has *red, yellow, and green colors, with a black star* positioned at the centre of the second color – yellow. Connotatively, the first color of the flag, which is the red color is a color associated to meanings such as passionate love, seduction, violence, danger, rage, and adventure. However, in the Ghanaian flag, the red color symbolizes the blood shed by patriotic Ghanaians in the light of the struggle for freedom, independence or self-rule. This is owing to the conventional meaning of the colors, which is recognized by all. As a result, there may be some conflict between the denotation and connotation meanings. For example, a Ghanaian or African may continue to decode or resent the red in the Ghanaian flag due to its association to bloodshed. On the other hand, an American may see red as a symbolic representation of love or passion that exists among Ghanaians based on his or her cultural background. One may look at the Yellow (Gold) hue in the Ghanaian flag (**Figure 5**), which could represent the mineral riches, happiness, positivism, loyalty, and joy in Ghanaian society. The color yellow may also connote cowardice and deception on the part of European superpowers, as historians think most Europeans did not bring the Bible to African countries and instead used religion as a means to subjugate and exploit their mineral wealth. Green also indicates prosperity, growth, and youth, and its implication in an African environment is the country's forest and natural wealth. The star in the flag (**Figure 5**) represents any of the heavenly bodies like the moon. However, within the Ghanaian Flag, the black star connotes the shining examples Ghana sets for other African countries to follow, as it is the first African nation south of the Sahara to attain independence and self-rule status from Britain. Thus, the symbol holds to represents Ghana as the gateway to African emancipation, Pan Africanism, and anti-colonialism from an African perspective.

Equally important, this section will catapult readers to the crux of this subject by decoding the history, language, ideology, denotation, and connotation underlying Ghana's Coat of arms, as discussed in the previous part the study. Mr. Nii Amon Kotei, a professional surveyor and artist who was born on May 24, 1915, in La, near Accra, drew Ghana's Coat of arms (Kotei, 1999). According to Voloshinov (1997), there can be no ideology without a system of social meaning through which it can manifest itself, hence there was an ideology behind the formation of the Coat of arms, which speaks to the world about Africa's past. Vygotsky (1997) asserts that language discloses critical features of difference, shifts, and flux and that without language, there would be no history to speak of. Decoding Ghana's Coat of arms demonstrates that studying ideology and social consciousness necessitates an engagement with language use in the context of Africans' real-life struggles and conflicts. The hardships of ordinary Africans, conflicts, and imperialism are shown in Ghana's Coat of arms, which serves as a sign system for researcher to decipher essence of such topics.

7. Decoding the Coat of Arms of Ghana into Various Semiotics Components (Figure 6)

1. The first quarter on the upper left shows a sword used by chiefs and staff, used by the linguist, known as an Okyeame in Akan.

The signifiers: Sword, Yellow, linguist staff, Gold

Signified: Respect for the traditional authority of the various traditional systems in Ghana

Denotative level: it is a symbol of the traditional authority of Ghana. As a result, this discusses Ghana's traditional system, which is comprised of Chiefs and skin heads of the various ethnic and tribal groups that make up the people of Ghana such as the Asante, Ewe, Ga, and Fante.

Connotative level: these symbols represent the power, protection, authority, strength, and courage. On the other hand, one may state that this is linked to the influence of the English Monarchical system and its influence on Ghanaian society.

2. The second quarter shows a representation of Osu Castle, the presidential palace, which is situated on the Gulf of Guinea.

The signifiers: Sea, white, yellow, building

Signified: Castle   **Denotative level**: battlements

Connotative level: the castle represents the national government of Ghana. During the pre-colonial era, the British used the castles as prison spots where slaves were confined. Thus, connotatively, the castle serves to remind the people of Ghana of its participation in Trans-Atlantic slave trade and the preservation of the memories of the captives who were sent to the new worlds across the Atlantic Ocean.

During the colonial time, the castles become the administrative seats of the colonial master, from where his authorities were outstretched to other parts of the colony. Another connotative dimension of the castle is safety, as the resident colonial powers which the castles held represented the assistance and protection that everyone requires or the above can take a connotation level as British imperialism, dominance and hegemony. The castles also provided safety for its occupants against external forces that could lunch attacks from the sea or naval positions.

3. The third quarter shows Cocoa.

The signifiers: Yellow, Green, round

Signified: Cocoa Tree **Denotative level**: Tree

Connotative level: Agriculture wealth of Ghana, beautification of the environment, Chocolate and in the Greek society it was the food of the gods. Ghana is the secondlargest producer of cocoa in Africa and gets a lot from cocoa production. The growth of the cocoa plant also signifies the rich nature of the Ghanaian vegetation which supports good plant growth and effective agricultural activities.

4. The fourth quarter of the shield shows a mine.

The signifiers: Yellow, mine shaft, red

Signified: Wealth

Denotative level: Mineral resources

Connotative level: this part of the symbolic coat of arms represents the richness of industrial minerals and natural resources in Ghana. Ghana can boast of mineral wealth like gold, diamonds, manganese, bauxite, salt, limestone, sand, and clay, all which add value to the society and can be used for the upward progression of Ghanaians and also be used to improve standards of living within the country.

5. A gold lion centered on a green St. George's cross with gold fimbriation of the field of blue.

The signifiers: lion, green, yellow

Signified: Bravery of a Colony

Denotative level: A brave and courageous animal

Connotative level: British imperialism or colonization. This refers to Ghana's ongoing relationship with the Commonwealth of Nations. Thus, Ghana could also be referred to as a fearless nation.

6. The Black Star of Africa with gold outline, upon a torse in the national colors

The signifiers: Star, black **Signified**: Crest

Denotative level: A natural luminous body

Connotative level: This connotes Ghana's contribution toward the African emancipation from slavery and foreign imperial domination, as the country becomes a shining symbol for other countries to follow in the fight for freedom. This may also connote the luck that resides with Ghanaian society in coming out fortunate in everything its people do. In another instance, the black star also connotes Pan Africanism, and the bright future of Ghana and other African countries**.**

7. Supporting the shield are two golden tawny eagles, with the order of the star of Ghana suspended from their necks.

The signifiers: Support, black

Signified: Eagle

Denotative level: A brave and highly protective/territorial bird

Connotative level: the two eagles supporting the star the crest connotes bravery with which Ghanaians would exhibit in the protection of the laws, minerals, constitution, agricultural wealth and traditions of Ghana and its people.

8. The compartment upon which the supporters stand is composed of a grassy field, under which a scroll bears the national motto of Ghana.

The signifiers: Words (English Language), Yellow

Signified: Rule of Law, Education

Denotation level: Liberation

Connotative level: This connotes that Ghana is no longer under any foreign rule and that the people who find themselves in the Ghanaian society have the right to enjoy life, liberty, and the opportunity to pursue happiness as they chose and within the laws of Ghana.

Material semiotics is deduced from the aforementioned analysis in this essay. From the foregoing analysis and discussion, it is clear that semiotics is about more than just signs and symbols. Thus, the history, ideology, and language are all factors that contribute to the material world.

8. Comparative Analysis between the Ghanaian Coat of Arms and that of Côte d'Ivoire

The following is the coat of arms of Côte d'Ivoire, which will be compared to the Ghanaian coat of arms to highlight the differences and similarities between these two nations. This comparison provides readers with an overview of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, including its historical ties to its colonial rulers. Côte d'Ivoire was chosen for this research because it is one of Ghana's neighboring countries and a French-speaking nation, while Ghana, colonized by the British, is English-speaking. This distinction in colonial history has significantly influenced the cultural and linguistic development of both countries, making them an interesting case

study for comparison. The analysis will explore how these colonial legacies are reflected in the symbols and values represented in their respective coats of arms.

Figure 7. Coat of Arms of Côte d'Ivoire (1997-2001 Variant)   *Figure 8.* Ghana Coat of Arms and its Meaning

9. Coat of Arms of Côte d'Ivoire (Figure 7)

- **Elephant**

Denotation: Represents the largest animal in Côte d'Ivoire and is directly linked to the nation's name derived from the ivory trade.

Connotation: Symbolizes strength, power, and endurance. Reflects leadership, wisdom, and resilience, important to the nation's identity and historical connection to the ivory trade.

- **Rising Sun**

Denotation: Depicts the sun emerging on the horizon, symbolizing the beginning of a new day.

Connotation: Represents renewal, hope, and the dawn of a new era, reflecting Côte d'Ivoire's aspirations for growth and progress following independence.

- **Palm Trees**

Denotation: Botanical symbols flanking the shield, representing local flora.

Connotation: Signify peace, prosperity, and resilience. Highlight Côte d'Ivoire's agricultural wealth and resources, including palm oil production.

- **Banner**

Denotation: Displays the official French name "République de Côte d'Ivoire."

Connotation: Reflects Côte d'Ivoire's colonial history and ongoing cultural ties to France. Reinforces national identity and sovereignty.

- **Colors**

Green: Represents hope, lush vegetation, and agricultural wealth.

Orange: Symbolizes the savannah, land, and the fight for independence.

Gold: Reflects the rising sun, symbolizing a new dawn and bright future.

White: Represents the elephant, denoting strength, endurance, and natural wealth.

10. Coat of Arms of Ghana (Figure 8)

- **First Quarter: Sword and Staff**

Denotation: Features a sword and staff, symbols of traditional authority.

Connotation: Represents respect for Ghana's traditional systems and leadership, including the Chiefs and tribal heads. Linked to British monarchical influence on Ghanaian society.

- **Second Quarter: Osu Castle**

Denotation: Shows the Osu Castle, the presidential palace.

Connotation: Symbolizes the national government and historical context of colonialism. Reflects the castle's role in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and its significance in colonial administration.

- **Third Quarter: Cocoa Tree**

Denotation: Depicts a cocoa tree.

Connotation: Represents Ghana's agricultural wealth, particularly cocoa production. Symbolizes prosperity, environmental beauty, and the significance of cocoa in Ghanaian culture.

- **Fourth Quarter: Mine**

Denotation: Shows a mine.

Connotation: Indicates Ghana's mineral wealth, including gold and other resources. Highlights the country's industrial minerals and their role in societal development.

- **Supporters: Tawny Eagles**

Denotation: Golden tawny eagles supporting the shield.

Connotation: Symbolize bravery and protection of national values, laws, and resources.

- **Compartment: Grassy Field and Scroll**

Denotation: Features a grassy field and a scroll with the national motto.

Connotation: Represents the rule of law and the right to liberty and happiness. Reflects Ghana's independence and commitment to democratic principles.

- **Colors**

Green: Symbolizes agriculture and the natural environment.

Gold: Represents wealth and prosperity, linked to mineral resources.

Red: Often associated with strength and sacrifice.

The **Black Star** is a prominent symbol in the coat of arms of Ghana and holds significant meaning: The Black Star is a symbol of Pan-Africanism, representing the unity and solidarity of African nations and peoples. It signifies Ghana's role in the African independence movement and its commitment to the liberation and empowerment of Africa.

11. Comparison

- **Similarities:**

1. **Symbolic Use of Animals:**
Both Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana use significant animals (elephant and eagle) to symbolize strength and national identity.

2. **Representation of Natural Wealth:**
Both coats of arms reflect the countries' natural resources (ivory and palm trees in Côte d'Ivoire; cocoa and minerals in Ghana).

3. **Historical Context:**
Each coat of arms incorporates elements reflecting their colonial past (French for Côte d'Ivoire, British for Ghana).

4. **Colors and Symbols of Hope and Prosperity:**
Both use colors and symbols to convey hope, prosperity, and the promise of a bright future.

- **Differences:**

1. Cultural and Colonial Influence:
Côte d'Ivoire's coat of arms highlights French colonial influence and agricultural symbolism (e.g., palm trees), while Ghana's emphasizes traditional authority and British colonial impact (e.g., Osu Castle, sword and staff).

2. **Symbolic Focus:**
Côte d'Ivoire's coat of arms focuses more on natural symbols and the impact of the ivory trade, whereas Ghana's coat of arms incorporates elements representing both traditional and modern aspects of national wealth and governance.

3. **Visual Representation of Government and Authority:**
Côte d'Ivoire uses a rising sun and palm trees to symbolize renewal and prosperity, whereas Ghana's coat of arms includes the Osu Castle and eagles, reflecting historical governance and national defense.

12. History

The preceding discussion has illuminated Ghanaian society's history by highlighting Ghanaian resources throughout the pre-colonial era and how they drew the attention of the Western world. This influenced Ghana's religion, traditions, political systems, and customs, as well as its values and beliefs. These motifs were used in Ghana's Coat of arms, and this explains the reason why semiotics is so significant; as a result, using the signifiers, signified, denotation, and connotation, the above semiotics study has decoded the history of Ghana society. It is important to note that myth had a part in the history of Ghana, as most European countries invented religious stories to contradict the beliefs and customs of African countries during colonization. Myth in Africa teaches people about the African traditional religion systems, which was the initial religion of the African society, and how it has since faded away, clearing the way for Christianity and Islam in Africa.

13. Ideology and Significant of the Coat of Arms

Ideology is an Enlightenment offspring (Voloshinov, 1997). Voloshinov (1997) makes it clear that without sign, there is no ideology. Concerning the Coat of Arms of Ghana, one may look at it as a sign that describes any artistic symbolic image to which a particular physical object gives rise, thereby creating an ideological product. Ideology has a pejorative ring to it, conjuring up a slew of bad connotations ranging from fanaticism's false consciousness to mystification's mental blocking (Althusser, 1976). Thus, before the arrival of the Europeans in Ghana, Ghanaians practiced African traditional religion and followed a traditional governance system, which goes to prove that deeply rooted in their customs, the Europeans created ideological systems that countered the traditional Ghanaian belief systems to make them feel inferior to the system they constructed. As a result, traditional African religion was labeled as "pagan" and "barbaric", and there was a belief that anyone who followed or joined the British would be provided with comforts such as education and travel opportunities. This mindset caused Ghanaians to consider their government as inferior, as well as their education and language in preference to the Queen's language. Thus, the Coat of Arms is used to denote alliance and property ownership, as it symbolizes government official sanction in maintaining important colonial figures like the castles, the court, and government offices. From this, it can be asserted that the ideology behind the designing of the coat of arm was ownership and supremacy of the British despite its break away from Ghana: ownership in terms of language and institutional structures created during pre-colonial times that still serve useful purposes in the aftermath of independence.

14. Mythology and Language, its Relationship to Colonialism in Ghana

Barthes (1994) concurs that there is a relation between language and power. Thus, the language of the British (English) created supremacy in Africa for the British Colonies. According to Vygotsky (1997), language developed from social interaction and it is man's greatest tool or a means to communicate with the outside world, Vygotsky (1997) opines that since language develops from our social interactions, for one to understand how language has evolved or adopted by a particular group of people, it is prudent one looks at their history and their mode of communication which engineered their social interactions. Looking at the history helps one to do a semiotic analysis effectively. Ghana currently has (10) ten regional dialects which include Fante, Akuapem Twi, Asante Twi, Ewe, Dagaare, Dagbani, Dangme, Ga, Gonja, Kasem, and Nzema. For example, if one is to look at why Ghanaians speak English as their formal language despite having ten distinctive languages in the country, one has to simply look at history – a history which encapsulates the class system or social structure that existed in the Ghanaian society. This was as a result of the colonial mythologies that affected the language preference of Gold Coasters since the colonial masters spoke English. The examples made affirms Barthes' (1994) assertion that as long as there is language, there will always be a myth, therefore stating that myth will corrupt human understanding of the world via language. On the other hand, Vygotsky (1997), states that language is particularly important to semiotics since it is a part of the social context that influences people's actions and the way they see thing around them. As a result, one's language and word usage are all tied to history. The Coat of arms' usage of the words *Freedom and Justice* explain why Ghanaians speak English and why some Ghanaian dialects are corrupted. The expression "Freedom and Justice" implies that a country has been emancipated from enslavement or manipulation. Despite this, the majority of Ghanaians in today's globe are controlled by the language of the master they gained "freedom" from. As a result, the Queen of England continues to direct Ghana's English curriculum and methods of instruction. Given this, one may claim that Ghanaians are still colonized indirectly through their linguistic culture, which is influenced by language and the myth created by our

colonial masters before leaving the country. This myth has evolved from one generation to another. A Ghanaian, for example, will label someone unable to communicate in the Queen's language (English) as uneducated or a villager.

15. The Sign of Colonialism in Postcolonialism

Decoding the Coat of Arms in the previous section makes it clear that Ghanaians are still under the wings of British colonialism indirectly. This is a sign of Colonialism in postcolonialism. It is clear from the Coat of Arms of Ghana still has a bond with the commonwealth, which is controlled by the British government. Thus, the lion in the Ghanaian Coat of Arms symbolizes British and Ghanaian connections: a connection which serves as a tool the former master uses to keep the new nation under its control in terms of taking loans from the British Government and soliciting ideas for policymaking. Recently, Ghanaians were requested to accept the LGBT bill from the European superpowers controlling Ghana. This led to various demonstrations by Ghanaians kicking against the bill not to be passed, since they believed it is not part of their culture. The above example can be linked to what Barthes (1994) tries to explains that laws can also be seen as a system of significance interacting with other systems of significance. According to Rodney (2009), colonialism went much further than trade. Thus, Rodney (2009) explains that Africans ceased to set indigenous cultural goals and standards, and lost full command of training young members of the society due to colonialism. Those were undoubtedly major steps backward. Rodney (2009) believes that Africa's position vis-à-vis its colonizers became more disadvantageous in the political, economic, and military spheres. Rodney (2009) further explains his assertion by stating that when one society finds itself forced to relinquish power entirely to another society, that in itself is a form of underdevelopment. From the statement of Rodney (2009), one may understand why some African countries are underdeveloped since most of the countries are forced to accept what is not familiar to their culture, political administration, and economy. For instance, Ghanaian lawyers still wear the White wigs in courts; a practice which was introduced by the British government, therefore informing one that the Ghanaians are still assimilating to the British culture even after colonization. Even the Ghanaian parliamentary proceedings are conducted in the British way. According to Professor Lumumba (2018), African must first decolonize their minds to free themselves from such situations. Lumumba (2018) asserts that "We (Africans) behave instinctively as if we are children of a lesser god, and this needs to come to a stop if freedom is to be a reality in Africa''. (Lumumba, 2018). The above discussions explain how the Coat of Arms of Ghana has brought to the fore the reality in Africa, even after colonization.

16. Conclusion

The findings of this study offer significant implications for understanding national symbols, postcolonial identity, and the role of semiotics in cultural analysis. By examining Ghana's Coat of Arms through the lenses of semiotics—particularly denotation, connotation, and ideology— it becomes clear that national symbols are not mere decorative elements but powerful carriers of historical narratives and cultural values. In the case of Ghana, the retention of colonial symbols such as the castle, St. George's Cross, and the golden lion highlights the persistent influence of colonialism on national identity, even after formal independence. These symbols suggest that despite breaking political ties, Ghana and other postcolonial nations remain bound to their former colonial powers in subtle yet significant ways, often through cultural and ideological remnants embedded in national emblems. The broader implications of this study extend beyond Ghana to other postcolonial nations, where national symbols similarly embody both pre-colonial heritage and colonial legacies. Semiotic analysis can be applied to other postcolonial contexts to reveal how symbols are used to negotiate identity, history, and power.

For instance, analyzing the national symbols of countries like Nigeria, Kenya, or South Africa could uncover the ongoing struggles between indigenous cultural expression and the imposition of colonial ideologies. By recognizing these symbols as living, evolving artifacts of history, scholars and policymakers can better understand how they shape national identity and influence societal values, including governance and policy.

Furthermore, the study highlights the utility of semiotic analysis in uncovering the deeper meanings behind national symbols, which often go unnoticed in everyday interactions. This approach can be applied to other cultural contexts beyond postcolonial nations, such as in the analysis of flags, crests, and monuments in former empires or countries experiencing cultural shifts. Semiotics offers a methodological framework that can reveal how symbols serve as battlegrounds for ideological contestation, cultural negotiation, and identity formation. This is especially pertinent in a globalized world where symbols are not static but continuously reinterpreted in the light of shifting political, social, and economic realities. In a broader sense, the semiotic approach can be extended to analyze digital media representations of national symbols, where visual and textual content circulates widely across national boundaries. Digital platforms enable new interpretations and discussions of national symbols, making it vital to consider how these symbols are recontextualized in the digital age. This opens new avenues for research on how national identity is constructed, contested, and communicated in online spaces, where symbols can be used to either reinforce or challenge existing ideologies. Ultimately, this study enriches our understanding of Ghana's national identity by demonstrating how its Coat of Arms reflects both the nation's postcolonial struggles and its ongoing engagement with historical legacies. Semiotics serves as a vital tool for deconstructing national symbols and exploring their multifaceted meanings, offering insights not only for academics but also for educators, policymakers, and anyone engaged in the critical interpretation of cultural heritage. Future research could expand this approach by comparing symbols across different nations, historical periods, or cultural movements, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of how symbols function as powerful vehicles for both cultural continuity and change. For example: The comparative approach between the Ghanaian Coat of Arms and that of Côte d'Ivoire reveals both similarities and differences, further illustrating how the concept of semiotics can be applied across different cultural settings. Both symbols reflect their nations' postcolonial identities while maintaining distinct elements that speak to their unique histories, values, and ideologies. For example, the use of natural symbols like the elephant in Côte d'Ivoire's Coat of Arms and the eagle in Ghana's signify strength, unity, and protection, yet they stem from different cultural narratives. While Ghana retains colonial motifs like the castle and St. George's Cross, Côte d'Ivoire's symbol is more centered on its natural and agricultural wealth, particularly the elephant, which is an iconic representation of the country's rich fauna. These similarities and differences highlight how national symbols serve as tools for articulating identity and political history, with each country choosing symbols that resonate with its own journey through colonization and independence.

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