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**An Examination of Banner Communication in the US Military as Compared to the
Korean Army**

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Abstract

A military banner is designed to present many pieces of information on the unit that it represents. It should basically indicate the name of the unit, its size (or echelon), and its function including its branch. It also shows the tradition of the unit and the values and aims the unit cherishes. These things are represented by means of various signs including shapes, figures, colors, icons, linguistic expressions, etc.

The purpose of this study is to examine what and how a military banner communicates to its viewers. From the point of view of communication, it is to specify how a message is decoded by a receiver. Among many theories proposed to explicate the relation between the signifier of a sign and what it signifies, this study adopts Peircean Theory of Semiotics as the frame of reference. More specifically, it examines the banners of the ROK Army and the US Army to investigate the linking mechanism of a signifier (or representamen in Peircean terminology) to its signifier (or object in Peircean sense), subcategorizing the mechanism into (1) linking by convention, (2) chains established by severed links, and (3) linking by metaphor.

Introduction

This research aims to examine how messages are expressed by military banners¹ in the framework of Peircean Semiotics.

A banner is a system of signs which associate their signifiers to their signified in a broad sense. However, since the nomenclature of the signifier and the signified varies greatly in the realm of semiotic studies, for this research to proceed in a comprehensible way, there is a need to draw a lucid margin delineating the concepts of the terms. Following the general definition of a sign, "something that stands for something else," a sign can be divided into "that which stands for something" and "that which is stood for (by something)." "That which is stood for" can be further sub-divided into "object" and "concept" or into "referent" and "sense" in research. <Table 1> lists the terms that have been used in the semiotic research.

Table 1 Nomenclature of Signs

Stoics	semainon	semainomenon	tygchanon
Augustine	verbum vocis	verbum mentis	res
Ockam	terminus	conceptus	res
Locke	name	nominal essence	thing
Frege	Zeichen	Sinn	Bedeutung
Peirce	Sign (representamen)	immediate object	dynamic object
Carnap	sign	intensional object	extension (designated object)
Ogden and Richards	symbol	reference	referent
Morris	Sign vehicle	significatum	denotatum
Saussure	signifiant	signifie	(outside language)
Hjelmslev	expression	content	matter (content continuum)

(Sebeok (1986), p.936)

However, this kind of definition excludes an important element, the user of a sign. In addition to sense and reference in Frege's terminology, a sign is also linked to affective meanings when a user uses it. That is, when the user of a sign perceives or interprets a sign, he usually associates his feelings or attitudes toward it. In this research, the meaning of a sign is extended to include associative meanings which are decided by interactions between the sign and the user of it, and for this very purpose, the Peircean theory of sign has been selected as the theoretical framework of this research.

Peirce understands a "sign" as a tri-partite structure consisting of sign(or representamen), object, and interpretant. As stated in Table 1, "object" in the Peircean sense includes the sense (=immediate object) and the reference (=dynamic object) of

¹ 1) English words for military banners are 'color,' 'standard,' 'ensign,' 'guidon' etc. The word 'banner' is used as a cover term. According Yang(1988), 'color' generally represents the banner of an infantry unit under a senior commander or a general, The word 'standard' conveys the meaning similar to 'color' but it is often used for the banner of a cavalry, armored, or a mechanized unit. 'Ensign' is a military flag used in a naval vessel and 'guidon' is a flag which is used by a company-sized unit.

Frege. "Interpretant" can be understood, in a vague sense, as feelings, changes in attitude or in behavior as caused by a sign (to the recipient of a sign) and such. Peirce states interpretant as "the proper significant outcome of a sign," and subcategorizes "proper significant outcome" into feelings² caused by symbol, an exertion or effort which may be either physical or mental,³ readiness to act in a certain way under given circumstances and when actuated by a given motive,⁴ etc. Sign or representamen is stated as something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity.⁵

In this research, the Peircean theory of signs will be used as a background to see what mechanism is used to connect signs or representamens used in banners, in particular those used in the banners of US and Korean military forces, with their objects. The mechanism used to connect a representamen with its interpretant will be looked into in the next research project.

The Mechanism Used to Connect Representamen with Object

A military banner contains many pieces of information. First of all, a banner expresses the name of the unit, its size, and its main function such as its branch. Also the unit's tradition, its objective, and the values the unit cherishes and so forth are contained in a banner. These pieces of information are expressed through a sign or in combination of signs such as figures like a triangle, colors, letters, numbers, icons, words, phrases, sentences etc. The matter is what mechanism is used to connect a representamen with its object. From a communicative perspective, this question is analogous to how a message from a sender is delivered to the recipient. Thus, in the following, by comparing banners of the US and Korean forces, we will examine the mechanism⁶ that connects a representamen used in a banner with its object by dividing it into three categories: (1) connection by convention, (2) connection through chains established by severed links, and (3) connection through metaphor.

Connection by Convention

In this study, the expression, a sign is "conventional," is used in the sense that a sign represents its object according to the rules of a given society.⁷ According to Peirce, if a sign is not motivated (that is, if there is no causal relation between a representamen and its object), then it is conventional. That is, the term "conventional" is used to express that a sign is connected with its object by rules of the society.

Rules are tacitly approved by members of a society or are clearly stated in a written form. Law and regulations are the prime examples of written rules. In the case of the US Army, most signs used in banners are connected to their objects by written rules. For example, the size of a unit is represented by combination of signs, and the method of

² emotional interpretant (Peirce 1931-66: 5.475)

³ energetic interpretant (Peirce 1931-66: 5.473); In Peirce' explanation, putting the butt plate of a rifle to the ground upon hearing "order arms" is an example of "energetic interpretant."

⁴ logical interpretant (Peirce 1931-66: 5.480)

⁵ Peirce states the relationship of these three factors of a sign in his letter to Mrs. Welby, as "anything which is so determined by something else, called its Object, and so determines an effect on a person, which effect I call its Interpretant, that the latter is thereby mediatedly determined by the former. He says that to make the idea of Interpretant, which is more evading idea than object, clearer, Sign or Representamen creates another Sign in the interpreter's mind. The Sign which has been created is Interpretant." As Mrs. Welby announced in her letter, Interpretant is all that the Sign conveys.

⁶ In the Peircean way of speaking, "method of determining a representamen by object."

⁷ In the Peircean theory of sign, the term "conventional" is used in three different ways (cf, Sebeok, general editor, (1986), pp942-943).

combination is specifically prescribed by law. Division Banners of the US Army are, for example, precisely prescribed in the US Army Regulations 840-10 as stated below:

Divisions and divisions (training or exercise)

The flag consists of two horizontal stripes of equal width. In the center is the shoulder sleeve insignia of the applicable division in proper colors 15 inches high. The fringe is yellow. The upper stripe is red for all divisions. The lower stripe for armored and cavalry division is yellow. The lower stripe for infantry, airborne, and training or exercise divisions is national flag blue. White piping is sewn around the shoulder sleeve insignia design on infantry, airborne, and training divisions unless the border of the insignia is white or yellow. The shoulder sleeve insignia on armored or cavalry division flags will be piped with yellow on the red stripe and red on the yellow stripe. (AR 840-10, p22)⁸

Figure 1 US Army Division Banner



The branch of a unit is represented by color. A US Army Regulation prescribes the primary and secondary colors that represent respective branches as follows:

Table 2 Branch Colors

Branch	Primary	Secondary
Adjutant General	Dark blue	Scarlet
Armor	Yellow	Green
Army Medical Department	Maroon	White
Artillery	Scarlet	Yellow
Cavalry	Yellow	Green
Chemical	Cobalt blue	Golden yellow
Civil Affairs	Purple	White
Engineer	Scarlet	White

⁸ The US. Army regulations AR 840-10 states other conventions about the usage of various colors. For example, a banner's background color, boundary color, the color of letters and numbers. the color of scroll to write sentences on, etc. are specifically mentioned.

Finance	Silver gray	Golden yellow
Infantry	National flag blue	White
Judge Advocate General	Dark blue	White
Maintenance	Crimson	Light blue
Military Intelligence	Oriental blue	Silver gray
Military Police	Green	Yellow
Ordnance	Crimson	Yellow
Quartermaster	Buff	Light blue
Signal	Orange	White
Special Forces	Jungle green	Silver gray
Supply and Service	Buff	Yellow
Support	Buff	Scarlet
Transportation	Brick red	Golden yellow

(The US. Army Regulations AR 840-10, pp32-33)

Using a certain color to represent a certain branch is conventional because a certain color is chosen for a certain branch not because the color has similar or identical properties to those of the unit, but it is simply decided by the rules of the US Army. Therefore, in this case, a sign is not motivated by its object. This is quite different from the use of colors in the military banners of the Korean Army units.

In the military banners of the Korean Army, a specific color is not designated for a certain branch. In many cases, the colors that are used in the Korean military banners are related to the feelings that are brought upon the viewer by the color. For example, to most of Koreans, the color red is believed to represent passion and strength, and blue is believed to stand for freedom, green for hope, etc. In the case of the Capital Defense Mechanized Infantry Division, which is known as the "Tiger" unit, the red tongue of the roaring tiger which is used as the unit's symbol, means firepower; the green background represents hope; and the white frame represents justice. The colors of the banners of the Korean Army are not connected to their objects according to written regulations and rules, but rather are related to the feeling (that is, an interpretant of the color) that is brought upon the interpreter by the color itself.

Figure 2 ROKA Capital Defense Mechanized Infantry Division Insignia



Connection through Chains Established by Severed Links

As aforementioned in section three, the American Army banners portray their respective units' size and functions through a certain frame. However, the information characteristic to this unit is shown through the distinctive (or shoulder sleeve) unit insignia which is located in the center of its banner.

The distinctive unit insignia represents the tradition and special functions of the unit, and other characteristic information. The distinctive unit insignia of the First US Army, for example, consists of a capital letter A with three stars on its upper end, five stars in the middle, and a fleur-de-lis with an arrow extending to the bottom.

Figure 3 First US Army Insignia



The homepage of the First US Army describes the information the distinctive unit insignia conveys, as follows.

.... The interlaced fleur-de-lis represent wartime service in France and alludes to the initial organization of the Headquarters Company as the Headquarters Troop, First Army at La Ferte-Sous-Jouarre, France, 10 August 1918. The three stars at the top of the letter "A" are for Lorraine 1918, St. Mihiel, and Meuse-Argonne campaigns in which the First Army participated in World War I. The five stars on the center cross bar are for the Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace and Central Europe campaigns in which the First Army participated in World War II, with the red arrowhead referring to the assault landing on the Normandy beaches. The motto "First In Deed" is based on the numerical designation, purpose and achievements of the First United States Army.

In short, the distinctive unit insignia of the First United States Army represents the unit designation (First Army), the branch of Services to which the unit belongs (Army), and the history and tradition of the unit (its services in World Wars I and II) which serve to enhance the pride and honor of the members of the unit. In this section, we will examine the mechanism through which the signs and emblems are related to the objects or values which they intend to represent.

In association with the US Army units' traditions, military banners usually include the information about the place where the unit was originally established, major battles in which the unit participated, notable citations and commendations that the unit has received, etc. The distinctive unit mark of the 24th Infantry Division depicts a taro leaf which represents that the unit was established in Hawaii, while the distinctive unit insignia of the 53rd Infantry Brigade portrays an alligator, which is the symbol of Florida. The Fleur-de-lis appears on the banners of the units which served in France or elsewhere in the European theater of war during World Wars I and II. Units that participated in the Indian Wars display arrows tied up with rattlesnake skins on their banners, while sea

lions and sunlight are inscribed on the banners of units which fought in the Philippines or received a Unit Citation from the President of the Philippines.⁹⁹

Figure 4

24th US Infantry Division



53rd US Infantry Brigade



Sometimes symbols are derived from the misconception of the banner designer. To commemorate the Presidential Unit Citation of the Korean President, the 40th Infantry Division portrays torii, a traditional gate found at Japanese shrines, in its distinctive unit insignia. However, torii is an icon that represents Japan but not Korea. The presence of torii on the distinctive unit insignia is explained as follows; “the torii gate, a symbol of the Far East, refers to the awarded Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation.” Certainly, this symbol is not an appropriate representation of the actual award. However, since the designer viewed Japan as the representative country of the Far East, using torii to symbolize Korea, a part of the Far East, seems to be naturally accepted to him. This demonstrates that the creation of symbols and signs are decided by the belief, personal knowledge, or ideas commonly accepted in the speech community to which the designer belongs, etc., rather than by actual facts.

Figure 5 40th US ID Insign



Fleur-de-lis Pattern



Now we will investigate the mechanisms through which a specific sign is related to a specific object by considering the fleur-de-lis, one of the most frequently used signs in the US Army banners. The fleur-de-lis, a design depicting an iris or a lily which is now used solely for decorative or symbolic use, was used for coats of arms in oriental nations such as Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Persia, as well as in Greece and other European

⁹ Sometimes historic figures are used as symbols of a unit's tradition. The banner of the 29th Infantry Division Artillery uses a stone wall, which alludes the famous Confederate General "Stonewall" Jackson, as the background. General Jackson had served as a professor at the Virginia Military Institute located in Glen Allen, where the unit was originally established.

nations. It was also used in the royal coats of arms of France, United Kingdom, Italy, and Spain, and is currently the official emblem of the Spanish Royal Family, Florence (Italy), and Bosnia. The sign is deeply related to France, but it has never been used as the official emblem of the Republic of France. In North America, the fleur-de-lis was first used as the symbol of regions originally colonized by France. Canadian provinces closely related to France such as Quebec and Nova Scotia, and many cities in Louisiana like New Orleans and Lafayette also use this sign in their flags.

The Fleur-de-lis was linked to Christianity when the French Royal Family first adopted the sign as the royal emblem. A legend says that Clovis I, the first king of the Franks to unite the Franks under one ruler, received a lily as a gift of blessing from the Virgin Mary during his baptismal ceremony in 493. During the Middle Ages, the fleur-de-lis came to have an overlapping religious meaning with the lily which symbolizes purity.¹⁰ The characteristic property of the lily (namely, purity) links the sign to the Virgin Mary, while the Virgin Mary is in turn related to Christianity. By selecting this sign as the coat of arms, the French monarchs such as Clovis I associated themselves with Christianity and thus gain divine authority to rule. The French Crown is metonymically linked to the French Kingdom. In this way, the French Crown, Christianity, and the fleur-de-lis are related through the discourse that Clovis I received lily directly from the Virgin Mary.

Despite the fact that this sign represents many European countries and regions, the fleur-de-lis stands exclusively for France when it is used in the US Army banners. This seems to be due to the conventional character of the sign as shaped by its historic nature within the United States. In other words, the continuous use of fleur-de-lis in the North American regions colonized by France gave the sign a concrete and exclusive link with France, as opposed to other European countries that use the sign as their emblem such as Spain and Italy.

Such a complex relationship between a sign and its object represents the dynamic nature of semiotics discussed by Peirce, forming a chain of signs in which the object of sign A becomes the representamen of sign B, and the object of the sign B becomes the representamen of sign C, and so forth. Table 3 demonstrates this relationship:

Table 3 The Chain of Signs for the Fleur-de-lis

Sign	Representamen	Object	Representamen-Object Relation
S1	fleur-de-lis	lily	icon
S2	lily	purity	conventional linking
S3	purity	Virgin Mary	metonymic transfer
S4	Virgin Mary	Clovis I	causal relationship formed through discourse ¹⁰⁾

¹⁰ The three petals of the fleur-de-lis came to be believed to represent the three virtues of faith, wisdom, and chivalry. In the 14th century France, the fleur-de-lis was also connected with the Trinity.

S5	fleur-de-lis	Clovis I	causal relationship formed through discourse ¹¹
S6	Clovis I	French kings	inheritance of the causality
S7	French kings	French Kingdom	metonymic transfer
S8	French Kingdom	France	metonymic transfer
S9	France	Events related to France	
S10	Events related to France	Battles participated by the US Army troops in France	

The chain of the signs discussed above is completed only inside the discourse system that includes the legend about Clovis I. The causal relationship would be cut off or vanish altogether outside this discourse, and the relationship between the signs would become conventional. In other words, to an individual outside the aforementioned discourse, the fleur-de-lis would simply be a symbol representing the fact that a particular US military unit participated in the battles in France, without ever being related to a lily (and, in turn, never being linked to Virgin Mary, Clovis I, France, etc.).

The severance of the chain of signs starting from the fleur-de-lis, and the resulting conventionalization of the signs, will differ in accordance with the amount of knowledge that the user of the sign possesses. For some, the symbolic meaning of the fleur-de-lis will stand without assuming the deductive relationship between all or a part of the various signs as shown in Table 4. Others will be able to form a deductive relationship between some or all of the signs, depending on their depths of knowledge.¹²

Table 4 The Object of the Fleur-de-lis with a Severed Symbolic Link

Symbol	Representamen	Object
S1	fleur-de-lis	lily
S2	fleur-de-lis	purity
S3	fleur-de-lis	Virgin Mary
S4	fleur-de-lis	Clovis I
S5	fleur-de-lis	French monarch
S6	fleur-de-lis	French Kingdom
S7	fleur-de-lis	France
S8	fleur-de-lis	North American regions related to France
S9	fleur-de-lis	activities and events related to France

¹¹ The legend stating that the Virgin Mary gave the fleur-de-lis to Clovis I through an angel became a discursal fact as time passed, forming the causal relationship between the Virgin Mary, Clovis I, and the fleur-de-lis.

¹² This relation can be considered simply as a conventional relation. The relationship between the fleur-de-lis and Clovis I was randomly established when Clovis I chose this sign as his emblem, which then gained conventionality after being accepted by the members of a speech community. But it can also be considered that this relationship gained causality by the above mentioned legend and was further strengthened through discourse. Thus the causality of the relationship was acknowledged in the discourse.

Morgan (1978) classifies the concept of "meaning" into two categories: "natural meaning" and "conventional meaning." Natural meaning is a meaning that is conveyed, or at least can be conveyed, via inferences about intentions behind communicative acts, as in the case of conversational implicature. Conventional meaning is understood through the convention between members of a same speech community. The chain of relationship between the aforementioned signs shows that the initial sign is connected to the object of the later symbols through inference. In other words, if the fleur-de-lis is connected to the "battles in France" through inference in accordance to the aforementioned chain of signs, "battles in France" becomes the natural meaning of the fleur-de-lis. But to an individual without the historical and cultural knowledge of the fleur-de-lis, the sign has only the conventional meaning of "battles in France."

Morgan also explains the process in which a natural meaning is conventionally understood by introducing the concept of "short-circuited implicature." Let us look at how the farewell acknowledgement "God be with you" is understood through the Morgan's system. The person who utters this sentence would:

1. Wish that the God will grant His blessings when they part by saying "God be with you,"
2. Express the concern of oneself when they part by saying "God be with you,"
3. Just say "God be with you" as a greeting when they part, or
4. Just say "Goodbye" instead of "God be with you" when they part.

Once the person listens "God be with you" in an everyday conversation, he will not call forth and interpret this as 1 or 2, but he will directly interpret and understand as 3. In other words, he will instead simplify the reasoning process and directly find the meaning of 3.

In case of the fleur-de-lis pattern, a part or the whole of the chain of signs is severed, causing the understanding between the representamen and the object more and more conventional. In other words, as the connection between the fleur-de-lis pattern and its object gets gradually less motivated, the fleur-de-lis pattern becomes more and more conventional. The severance of the fleur-de-lis pattern chain of sign and the resulting conventional effect is commonly seen in the interpretation of a sign used in a military unit banner.

Connection through Metaphor

The relationship of the representamen of a sign to its object is also decided through the metaphorical projection. Many of the signs which appear in the Korean military banners get their objects in this way. This aspect acts as a characteristic property which distinguishes Korean military banners from those of the United States military.

Even though it is not a usual case for the United States military banners, certain animals are used to represent a unit's characteristics. For example, a dragon for the 18th Airborne Corps; an eagle for the 77th Aviation Brigade; the skeleton of a bull for the 34th Infantry Division; and a rattlesnake for the 116th Cavalry Brigade.

Figure 6 18th Airborne 77th Aviation 34th ID 116 Cavalry



These animals and their respective units are metaphorically linked, mapping the properties of these animals to the units. The metaphorical connection between the 18th Airborne Corps and the dragon enables us to interpret "the 18th Airborne Corps as a dragon." Then, the attributes which a dragon is believed to have are projected onto the 18th Airborne Corps. Now, we can understand the unit's explanation of its banner: "... the dragon represents the unit's mobility, endurance, sudden attack, and fierceness." In the same way, the 34th Infantry Division is linked to the properties associated with bull's skeleton: energy, courage and force.

As mentioned above, this method is widely used in the Korean military banners. Colors, figures, animals and others are often used for this purpose. Let's take a look at the banner of the 35th Regiment, 5th Division of the Korean Army. This banner has a blue background and in the center is the division's mark surrounded by a laurel wreath and under the mark lies the phrase "35th Infantry Regiment" in white. The 5th Division's mark is a key in a red circle surrounded by a white circle. These representaments are linked to their objects as stated in this regiment's internet homepage: the blue background represents the desire for the unification of the nation; the laurel wreath represents peace and victory; the outer circle of the division's mark represents unity and perfection; and the color red expresses passion and honor. The key, the division insignia, represents the division's desire to play a key role in the unification of the Korean Peninsula.

Figure 6 Banner of ROKA 35th Regiment, 5th ID



Conclusion

A military banner is designed to present many pieces of information on the unit that it represents. It should basically indicate the name of the unit, its size (or echelon),

and its function including its branch. It also shows the traditions of the unit and the values and aims the unit cherishes. These things are represented by means of various signs including shapes, figures, colors, icons, linguistic expressions, etc.

In this research, we examined what and how a military banner communicates to its viewers, by adopting Peircean Theory of Semiotics as the frame of reference among many theories proposed to explicate the relation between the signifier of a sign and what it signifies. More specifically, we examined the banners of the Korean Army and the US Army in order to investigate the linking mechanism of a signifier (or representamen in Peircean terminology) to its signified (or object in Peircean sense), subcategorizing the mechanism into (1) connection by convention, (2) connection through chains established by severed links, and (3) connection through metaphor.

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