



## Unveiling Epitaphic Discourse in GORA Cemetery Rawalpindi, Pakistan: An Archaeo-Semiotic Appraisal

**Dr. Zafar Ullah**

Instructor in English Department; Virtual University, Islamabad, Pakistan,

**Dr. Muhammad Farooq Alam**

Assistant professor in English Department, NUML, Rawalpindi

**Hamas Shahid**

M.Phil Scholar, NUML, Islamabad

### Abstract

This study aims to analyse the archaeo-semiotic discourse inscribed on the gravestones of the soldiers of World War I and World War II buried in Gora Qabristan Christian Cemetery, Rawalpindi. Epitaphic discourse is assessed through the triangulation of the semiotic theory of Roland Barthes, and Paul Wason's theory of archaeology of rank. The prime objective of the study is to decode the symbols incised on the epitaphs. Epitaphs of soldiers of the British Army are replete with information about the history, culture, archaeology, religious, political and national identities of the deceased ones. The patriotism of soldiers is emphasized through the inscription on military epitaphs. Connotative meanings shed light on religious, historical and cultural aspects. Mortuary facility has been investigated to explore the location of epitaphs and construction material of gravestones by analysing semiotic signs, shapes and sizes of gravestones. Major findings reveal that soldiers' epitaphs manifest military, social and cultural and historical discourse.

**Keywords:** theology, discourse, epitaphs, regiment, inscription, symbols

### 1. Introduction

The archaeo-semiotic analysis is a procedure to evaluate communication taking place through symbols, verbal, pictorial or textual data. Archaeologists are of opinion that comprehending meaning is the main purpose (Binford, 1983; Hodder, 1986). Archaeo-semiotic analysis helps to draw all possible meanings existing in a discourse. Discourse is any spoken, written, verbal or non-verbal communication. Discourse is the totality of codified language used in a given field of intellectual enquiry and social practice, such as legal discourse, medical discourse, religious discourse etc (Cruse, 2006). Discourse analysis deals with assessing language based on the context of its use. The word epitaph is derived from Greek, epitaphios "a funeral oration" from epi "at, over" and taphos "tomb" is a short text honouring a deceased person. Strictly speaking, it refers to text that is inscribed on a tombstone or plaque, but it may also be used in a figurative sense.



The wide-ranging public must be aware of archaeology as this study deals with the assessment of gravestones and inscriptions upon them. The scientific study of historic or prehistoric peoples and their cultures by analysis of their artefacts, inscriptions, monuments, and other such remains, especially those that have been excavated. This research focuses on analysing the inscriptions of epitaphs and probing their meanings. This research deals with semiotics as well, which is defined by one of its founders, the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, as the study of signs and symbols existing in any society (Cruse, 2006).

The basis of this research is archaeo-semiotic discourse analysis. In this research, archaeological signs carved on the gravestones have been analysed in the light of the semiotic theory which proposes to expose the hidden meaning of signs. Barthes (1977) posited denotative and connotative meanings and also coded iconic messages and non-coded iconic messages. In addition to this theory, another theory of archaeology of rank (Wason, 1994) has been applied from an archaeological perspective. Both theories have been triangulated to get the desired goals and to respond to research questions.

Most people are unable to decode the semiotic and linguistic features of epitaphs erected in *Gora Cemetery* Rawalpindi. It is the least explored area. There are several types of the cross (Christian symbols), regiment names, monograms of their respective battalions and regiments, their slogans, Biblical quotes and types of stones. Moreover, many people are ignorant of the historical perspective highlighted in the epitaphs. On a whole, there is a dire need to decipher linguistic, semiotic, historic, and archaeological aspects from the epitaphs.

The current study endeavours to accomplish the following objectives:

- i. To decode semiotic and linguistic features of epitaphs.
- ii. To shed light upon the verbal discourse carved on gravestones.
- iii. To explore coded iconic and non-coded iconic messages on the epitaphs.
- iv. To analyse the structure of tombstones and raw material used for construction.

This study addresses the following research question:



i. How do epitaphs of world war martyrs from *Gora Qabristan* Rawalpindi portray archaeo-semiotic features?

The significance of this study is that it analyses the information of the deceased persons. Along with it, it tells briefly about semantics, history, culture and Biblical aspects. The researcher conducts an in-depth analysis of the epitaphs of soldiers' graves. Ranks, beliefs and other important traits of the martyrs have been analysed in detail.

As the delimitation of theory is concerned, the study in hand refers to only 10 epitaphs of martyrs of World War 1 and World War 2 from *Gora Qabristan* Rawalpindi. The semiotic theory of Roland Barthes (1977) has been applied to assess the inscription on the gravestones.

## 2. Literature Review

Epitaph defined religious, societal and personal traits of the late. The date and cause of death are inscribed on the tombstones and they can be attractive, decorated and mocking. The last powerful toss of the human mind at the time of fronting death is represented by an epitaph (Ward, 1957, p. 34). The epitaph serves as the last reminder of a person (Lattimore, 1962). Present research illustrates that epitaphs have great symbolic significance along with being attractive and pessimistic.

The political and economic position of the late was shown by Romans through inscriptions on gravestones. There was variation in the gravestones based on the social class of the departed person (Meyer, 1990). Etchings depicted the selfhood of the gone built by the world in olden times. The current research also discusses the distinct personalities of soldiers.

Inscriptions on the gravestones were a means to preserve tales and the aggregate of past events (Vita, 1999). The study in hand informs about the history of British forces in the sub-continent and the diversity present in their ranks. (Rainville, 1999) conducted research on mortuary diversity in New Hampshire in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The assumption that the socioeconomic status of a person was accurately indicated by funerary practices and gravestones was tested by the researcher. Possible correlations between different variables of gravestones and the opinions of the residents of



Hanover Township about death, the identity of an individual, organisation of family, and societal structure were investigated in this article. With the help of data collected from a time period of one hundred and fifty years, the researcher distinguished between temporal trends of community in the selection of gravestones and the depiction of individual family choices. The researcher found out that the form, material, and style of tombstones were dictated by beliefs regarding demise rather than social status (Rainville, 1999, p. 541).

In 2003, research was carried out about the history of behaviour of the citizens of Sydney towards the human remains of Europe. Four case studies of graveyards were presented that were changed drastically. The behaviour towards the dead and graveyards was depicted through changes undergone by these burial sites. They showed the fluctuation of times gone by, tradition, innovativeness and religiousness from 1840 to 2000. In this way, people working in these zones got a detailed view of history and culture (Karskens, 2003, p. 42).

Different types of symbols were engraved on gravestones like doves, crosses, angels, bibles and gates of heaven. Flowers were a symbol of life and death, and friendship as well. Their meaning had changed over time as flowers were a symbol of love and reward (Ritter, 2012).

Natali (2008) explored the importance of new burial practices in her paper. It focused on the perception that Tamil people considered those Tigers' cemeteries to be holy places. They called those combatants gods and worship them. Tamil people used the word "seed bodies" instead of dead bodies and a stone was erected in the commemoration of the Maaveerar which in Tamil meant mighty champions. The change in funerary performance from cremation to burial indicated the importance of the Tamil Tigers in the nation building process.

Americans used to arrange for proper interment rehearses for the deceased even in the time of civil war when there were abundant bodies of departed souls. So, this is not a novel notion of entombing the late. The research was carried out in 2008 in which the cultural history of historic burial places of New Jersey was depicted from the seventeenth century to the twenty-first century. The research not only provided a guide to unusual and



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interesting burial places but also showed how inscriptions on gravestones reflected the diverse history and varied cultures. We got a glimpse of the past through inscriptions on tombstones and the epitaphic language carved on them. We also got to know about the material those gravestones were made from, and the different designs inscribed on them. Both the authors of this book physically examined the cemeteries of New Jersey. Over nine hundred burial grounds in New Jersey were covered in the field research. Same sites were visited from different viewpoints in order to complete the study. The researchers took photographs and signatures of the carvers to record them (Veit, 2008, pp. 1-2).

Newstok (2009) discussed the poetics of epitaphs in early modern England. Her research represented epitaphs as a portion of the literary category. It told us how people dealt with death and the memory of the dead at different times. It shed light on the recitation of epitaphs in early modern England in Elizabethan genres such as dissertations on poetics and rhetoric, chronicles of history and verses related to elegies. Epitaphs served to strengthen the reality of accounts of history. They not only provided evidence in histories but also served as proof in case of new dissertations on poetry. Epitaphs had the power to arrest the bodily movement of readers and move them emotionally because of their motivating power, epitaphs were admired in the fifteenth-through eighteenth centuries.

Ripley (2011) conducted research on gravestone analysis which manifested that a demographic analysis could help to analyse trends in the size of the population, death rate and birth rate. From an archaeological perspective, an appraisal of the epitaphs and structure of tombstones and their embellishment could highlight essential information about the life of dwellers of Greene County. Also, variations in their style of living could be discerned.

For understanding funerary practices and tombstone assessment, the style of ornamentation played a crucial role (Ripley, 2011). Meghan E. Ripley further focused on the pattern with respect to the size of the tombstone and the age of the person at the time of death. Small monuments were limited to young people whereas large headstones were used for old people. Medium sized tombstones were used for persons of changing ages.



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The attitude of people in choosing the stone for the grave is also very significant. Previously whatever stone was acceptable for graves but in the 19th-century marble was widely used which was later replaced by granite stones. Information was inscribed by hand on the stones but later laser was used to etch the grave markings (Ritter, 2012).

Ritter (2012) applied a symbolic-interactionist approach to comprehend the narrative of the self of the departed people. According to Ritter, a gravestone was a way to commemorate a deceased person. Data were collected from 350 graves in 15 rural and urban cemeteries. It compared the changes in gravestones that occurred with the passage of time.

The influence of socio-cultural and socio-economic rank on tombstones was described by Callis (2013). According to her, differences in gender were depicted through epitaphs. The data were analysed with the aid of data sheets and field examinations. Five divisions were made to analyse data i.e. connection or relationship, the occurrence of the epitaph, doings in a lifetime, comments regarding religion, and poetry or prose. Archaeology and designs of epitaphs were not discussed by her.

Morgan (2015) investigated the epitaphs and tombstones in the graveyards at Albury, New South Wales. The purpose of this research was to know about changes in the memorialisation traditions of Australia starting from the middle of the nineteenth century. The study showed how grief was reflected through epitaphs and memorial trends. The secularisation process and World War I were the reasons for the public mourning to come to an end. After World War II death was moved out of its outdated place due to bureaucracy and medicine, and so, death was styled as designed country parks in graveyards. Public celebration and remembering the deceased were made culturally acceptable at the end of the twentieth century because of the role played by psychiatrists in promoting the notion to accept the grief. This way of remembering, favoured more customised and individual tombstones and gravestones than grand funerals. However, there was no permanent memorial for those who were cremated.

The current study assessed military and religious discourse inscribed on the epitaphs of *Gora Qabristan*, Rawalpindi. Connotative and denotative meanings were



explored and coded iconic and non-coded iconic messages were probed as well. The belief of a dead person in the life after death played its part in funerary practices. The presence of a Christian Cross indicated the religious belief of the deceased.

### 3. Research Methodology

The study in hand followed mixed methods to assess the epitaphs of gravestones. Triangulation of theories was done to conduct this research. Triangulation is the use of multiple theories to deduce the outcomes of research (Denzin, 1978). In this research, two theories were triangulated to achieve the goals of the research. The Semiotic theory of Roland Barthes (1977) was triangulated with the theory of archaeology of rank (Wason, 1994). From an archaeological point of view, Wason's theory of archaeology of rank was applied, whereas Roland Barthes' semiotic theory was applied to explore semiotic insight. The semiotic theory helped to analyse and interpret the coded iconic messages, non-coded iconic messages, literal and figurative meanings of inscriptions and the theory of archaeology of rank assisted in analysing the interment facility. The theory of archaeology of rank also scrutinized the structure of gravestones. Also, through the theory of archaeology of rank, the researcher evaluated the location of the burials whether they were away from the community or within the community.

To conduct this research, mixed methods were used. Mixed methods encompass both qualitative and quantitative data as an approach to inquiry (Creswell, 2017). The study at hand was exploratory analytical research. This research was done with the help of both qualitative and quantitative data. The number of graves and other classifications were quantitative while their interpretation was qualitative. The semiotic theory of Roland Barthes (1977) and the theory of archaeology of rank by Wason (1994) were triangulated to interpret the inscriptions and analyse the mortuary facility. The signs of gravestones were investigated according to the semiotic theory of Barthes and Wason's theory of archaeology of rank which was helpful in the analysis of the structure of gravestones with respect to their sizes, location and other features. Data were explained and interpreted with the help of digitized images of epitaphs. It also facilitated the interpretation of key findings

regarding epitaphs and tombstones. The researcher had visited *Gora Qabristan* Rawalpindi to get the photographs of epitaphs.

The data of this study was qualitative and quantitative. The number of graves and other classifications were quantitative whereas their interpretation was qualitative. The data were analysed and interpreted through images of the epitaphs. The researcher visited *Gora Cemetery* Rawalpindi once to get the photographs of the epitaphs.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

This section presents images of epitaphs and their archaeological as well as semiotic features.



*Figure 1 Epitaph of A.T. Rowe*

This gravestone belongs to A. T. Rowe who departed during World War II. The gravestone is made up of white marble. Marble of white colour has denotative as well as connotative meaning. Marble slab has been carved because of its durability and reliability. The use of white marble depicts that soldiers are given great respect. Religious affiliation is shown through white colour. The sacrifice and sincerity of soldiers is regarded by the white marble.

The soldier's age is inscribed on the gravestone which shows that he died very young. He belonged to the 'Royal Engineers' as it is carved on the tombstone which is the



coded iconic message. The non-coded iconic message is that this was one of the corps of the British Army in the subcontinent. British Chivalric Order of Garter uses the French maxim ‘Honi soit qui mal y pense’ as their motto. It means "May he be shamed who thinks badly of it”. The badge of Royal Engineers is non-voided and metallic having the Royal Cypher of King George IV inside the crowned garter encircled by a garland. ‘Royal Engineers’ is inscribed on the lower side of the badge. Eternity is symbolised by a wreath. At the top of the badge, a crown is placed through which power and control are represented. The rule of the British Empire can be also seen through this crown. The Crown also shows the association of soldiers with the British Empire. In this way, a soldier is given respect and honour. Patriotism present within soldiers is also depicted through the crown. The rank of a soldier is ‘Serjeant’ which means the soldier was a non-commissioned officer in the British army. The big carving of the cross shows the religious belief of the deceased. A large sized shows the great importance of religion in the life of the departed. Below the cross, a Christian quotation is carved, “We cannot Lord thy purpose see but all is well that is done by thee.” It shows his staunch belief in life after death.



*Figure 2 Epitaph of Winifred Lucy Rose*

Figure 2 epitaph belongs to a senior commander who died during World War II. Commanders were the officers in the army during the second world war. The logo ‘WAC INDIA’ stands for ‘Women’s Auxillary Corps’ in order to support the warfare struggle. It had the purpose of giving special training to the women of the nation for national defence. This logo is carved inside a wreath encircling it. The wreath demonstrates perpetuity. Pride in their identity and profession is evident through the carving of the badge. Religious identity is depicted through the cross. The religious aspect is highlighted through the big size of the cross. Below the cross best wishes are etched in the form of supplication. ‘God’s greatest gift remembrance’ shows her friends and relatives miss her. ‘Grant her eternal rest o Lord’ displays their finest desires for her afterlife. Epitaphs show the national as well as religious eminence of the dead.

The stone used for graves is white marble that is used for graves of soldiers on a large scale. Marble of white colour is used to give honour to the soldiers who gave a marvellous performance in world war II. White is the indication of honesty and security.



*Figure 3 Epitaph of T. Shields*



This epitaph belongs to a soldier who departed during world war II. The soldier belonged to ‘Army Educational Corps’ which was supposed to train the troops in the field of education. The normal task of the educational corps was totally changed during the Second World War. There was an increase in the workload of education centres of the army because mentally and physically proficient troops were required. As a result, Army Educational Corps had to serve throughout the war in many different localities and theatres. Training time was doubled with people being taught in jails, clinics and camps for displaced people. The Collar badge of the Army Educational Corps is engraved on the tombstone consisting of a book that is coded iconic message, while the non-coded iconic message is that it is a symbol of imparting education and enlightenment. Two flags are etched that showing patriotism. Conquest is symbolised through flags as well. It can be interpreted that the two flags show the rule of the British Empire. Flags also demonstrate the identity of their respective organisations. It can be inferred that because of military association flags show the agenda of the British government. The etching of a huge cross shows the spiritual affiliation of the late. A pair of crossed rifles is engraved as well that is carried by army persons from Lance Corporal to Master Sergeant. Martial nature is depicted through these crossed rifles. It can be inferred that it refers to the troops being mentally equipped. As this logo is related to the Army Educational Corps, it can be associated with the physical and mental strength of soldiers. The rank of a soldier is engraved as ‘SERJEANT’ which was a rank for non-commissioned officers in the British army during World War II.

Ritter (2012) said that marble was eminently used in the 19th century. The analysis of epitaphs shows that marble in white colour was used mostly for entombing in the late twentieth century. Peacetime is symbolised by white colour which can mean that soldiers fought to bring peace to the world. It can also mean that they are resting in peace now as they have served humanity as far as they could. Countless reverence is given to troops by the use of expensive white marble.



*Figure 4 Epitaph of A.W. Davis*

The soldier died in 1944 and had the rank of ‘Corporal’ which tells that the late was a junior non-commissioned officer in the Royal Air Force. The Royal Air Force (RAF) is the British aerial force for warfare. It was formed near the end of World War I. It played a key role especially in defending the United Kingdom from the attacks of Nazi Germany’s Air Force during the second World War. Its purpose was to provide an active air force in order to secure and defend the United Kingdom as well as promote peace and harmony in all areas of the world. Their purpose was to make an impact on the behaviour of people by exercising their power. A circlet is formed on their logo and on that circle motto of the Royal Air Force is etched in Latin in a circular form that is, ‘Per ardua ad astra’ which denotatively means “through adversity to stars”. Its connotative meaning is that hard work leads to success. The troops of this force were highly trained and ready to serve anytime. In Christianity, a circle shows an existence that is never going to end. The circle represents no start and no expiration. In other words, it is the symbol of eternity. Inside the circle, an eagle is inscribed. Eagle is the symbol of power, vigour, high spirit and perpetuity. In Christianity, resurrection is symbolised by the eagle. So, connotatively, the eagle

demonstrates the power, agility and enthusiasm of the Royal Air Force. The circlet is surmounted by the crown. Legitimacy, victory, control and honour are symbolised by the crown. It can be deduced how powerful British Empire was as it was said that British Empire never witnesses sunset. The information about the societal and economic belonging of the dead is contained in epitaphs (Meyer, 1990). Occupation, nationwide and political identity of the late is depicted by epitaphs. Political ideology and the highest order of the British Empire is evident through the carving of the crown at the top. The religious belief of soldiers is evident from the etching of a huge cross. The crucifix is symbolised by the cross. All different types of Christian crosses generally represent Christianity.

White coloured marble is used to pay homage to the troops who sacrificed their lives to bring peace to the world. Marble is an expensive stone which is best deserved by the martyrs and people who served humanity.



*Figure 5 Epitaph of MCP Ritchie*

The inscription shows that the soldier died in World War II. The rank of the soldier was Second Lieutenant which was a rank for commissioned officers in British Army. British Indian Army had the Ist Punjab Regiment from 1922 to 1947. Ist Punjab Regiment was taken by Pakistan Army on Pakistan's Independence in 1947. In 1956, Punjab



Regiment was formed by its combination with the 14th, 15th and 16th Punjab regiments. Ist Punjab Regiment is inscribed on the cap badge. The shape of the badge is irregular. An elephant, superimposed on the sun, is standing on the slab on which ‘ASSAYE’ is engraved. ‘IST PUNJAB REGIMENT’ is carved in an arc on the upper side of the elephant. A Chinese dragon is etched below the slab. On the top of the cap badge is the crown. The Crown is the emblem of British rule. The wreath is associated with eternal life. In various mythologies and religious traditions, elephants are considered a symbol of power, protection and insight. The first and tenth battalion of Ist Punjab Regiment got the ‘ASSAYE’ tablet as a battle honour for taking part in the Battle of Assaye. The first and second battalions won the ‘China Dragon’ as a battle honour. Traditionally China's dragon symbolises power, especially power over water, rainfall, floods etc (Overmyer, 2009, p. 129). In East-Asian culture, the dragon symbolises supremacy, authority and a good lot of people who deserve it. The Chinese dragon symbolises imperial power which reinforces the idea of the supremacy of the British Empire. Sun is the symbol of power, vigour, and life, especially eternal life is depicted by the brightly shining sun. It can be the representative of the authority of the Empire of Britain as it was expected that British rule would be everlasting. Also, it can represent the eternity gained by those martyrs who sacrificed their lives for mankind. It can also symbolise the strength of the Ist Punjab Regiment which was praised by the British government for its valour and zeal.

Belief in Christianity is represented through the cross. Below the cross lovely words from family members are etched. “Beloved husband of Evelyn and father of Gordon thy will be done”, shows affection and adoration from family to the deceased. These carvings show that the late was a nice person who was sadly missed. Again the usage of white marble is to pay homage to soldiers. Peace and a sense of security are imparted through white colour. The researcher has visited that part of *Gora Qabristan* Rawalpindi where epitaphs are of the same size, colour and shape.



*Figure 6 Epitaph of A. H. Claridge*

The epitaph shows that the soldier died during First World War and he had the rank of ‘PRIVATE’, which was the lowest rank in the army of Britain. This term has been derived from “Private Soldiers” which was used in medieval times to indicate those people who were privately hired. The gigantic cross clearly puts emphasis on the holy aspect. The soldier belonged to Somerset Light Infantry (13th Foot Prince Albert’s). This infantry played a key role in the first and second World Wars. In its logo, there is an arc above the crown on which Jellalabad is inscribed that was the garrison of infantry. 13th Regiment Foot was formed to overcome the great lack of men for public service. The Crown is the harbinger of British reign in the world as it denotes command and control. Below the crown, two ropes are combined to form a cross with petals which denotes resurrection. The lower petal is not visible because of the carving of the knot of ropes, making the upper and side petals visible which can be related to the concept of trinity. The knot ties the two ropes together and the two ropes are further fastened below to an Alpine horn trumpet on both sides which can be understood in the sense of determination, steadfastness and strength. Musical instruments play a great role in military services. Trumpets were used in the army to summon the soldiers or to make an announcement. They were also used in the funerary practices of soldiers apart from wartime. Romans used to play the trumpets on victory

processions (Meucci, 1989, pp. 85-97). ‘XIII’ is carved above the trumpet and below the knot of ropes which shows the 13th Foot.

White dyed costly marble is a tribute to soldiers who served humanity with uprightness and fearlessness. White colour is the harbinger of tranquillity and hence, it is the indicator of the ceasefire. It can also be taken that the soldier is in his grave where he is residing in peace. The coffin is also white in colour which means the person travels away from this world of hustle and bustle to a world where there is peace waiting for him. White also symbolises purity which can be taken as the purity and sincerity of soldiers.



*Figure 7 Epitaph of H. Clarkson*

The soldier died during World War I while serving in Yorkshire Regiment. The rank of the soldier was ‘PRIVATE’ which shows he was serving on the lowest rank in British Army. ‘Alexandra, The Princess of Wales’s Own Yorkshire Regiment’ was the title of this regiment in World War I. Twenty Four battalions of the Yorkshire Regiment were raised in World War I. The number of men serving in these battalions was 65,000 out of which 24,000 were injured and 9,000 people died. The cap badge is etched inside a big cross carved on the gravestone indicating the holy significance. The shape of cap badge is irregular. There is a crown at the top signifying the British reign. The placement of the crown at the top shows the splendour and grandeur of the British Empire. Two vertical



small rods converge at a point beneath the crown, and an arc joins both the rods from the middle making it almost look like the letter A, consisting across in it reinforcing the holy aspect of Christianity. In Christianity, Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross for preaching Christianity. Here a parallel can be drawn that soldiers sacrificed their lives for mankind which was the way of Jesus Christ. ‘ALEXANDRA, THE PRINCESS OF WALES’S OWN YORKSHIRE REGT’ is imprinted on the cap badge which was the title of Yorkshire Regiment. At the bottom of the cap badge, a flower is imprinted that can be taken as the love and passion of soldiers for humanity and God as flowers are associated with love and warmth.

The theory of archaeology of rank discusses mortuary facilities. The epitaphs under study have white marble gravestones of rectangular shape. They are medium-sized epitaphs, that is, not too big, not too small. Soldiers are buried within the community and the place where the graves of martyrs of both the World Wars are present, generally it is named a section of *Gora Cemetery*.



*Figure 8 Epitaph of A. Tummon*

This epitaph is of a soldier who served in World War II. The soldier had the rank of Warrant Officer Class I which is a rank for commissioned officers in the British Army. The element of Christian belief is made prominent by the impression of a huge cross.

'R.E.M.E.' is incised on the gravestone below the name of a soldier which is a coded iconic message. Its non-coded iconic message is that it stands for 'Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers'. It was formed in 1942 in order to face the challenges of technology. It produced skilled electricians and mechanics. Before the formation of R.E.M.E. maintenance of engineering machinery, weapons and other types of equipment for communications was done through several different corps. Many flaws were exposed in this system because of the advancement in technology and the complexity of machinery and weapons. In order to meet these sorts of challenges Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers was formed in October 1942. The cap badge of R.E.M.E. is incised on the gravestone which consists of an oval garland which symbolises immortality consisting of the crown on the head. The Crown is the sign of British Imperialism and its grandeur is implied through its positioning on the top. A compass points on the wreath and the letters R.E.M.E have been inscribed on four small shields. A pair of callipers is formed within the oval garland which is a coded iconic message and the non-coded iconic message is that mechanical engineering and metal working makes use of callipers. The usage of white marble shows that soldiers are honoured. The erected epitaph is of the same size and shape as other epitaphs are. The burial site is present within the community and has got road access so, it can be easily reached.



*Figure 9 F.M. Holloway*



The age of the soldier carved on the stone shows that he died during World War II at a very young age. He had the rank of ‘Captain’ which expresses that he was a commissioned officer in the Indian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers corps. The badge of the corps is inscribed on the gravestone which has a five-pointed ‘star of India’ on the top of which there is a crown representing the splendour of the British Empire as the crown symbolises triumph and respect. A thick wreath of laurels surrounds the star with I.E.M.E inscribed on the base of the wreath which depicts perpetuity. The star on the badge, too, can be analysed as stars are always there in the sky as a symbol of eternity and heavenly guidance. They have also acted as guides for travellers in past. In Christianity, a five-pointed star symbolises the five wounds of Jesus Christ. So, the star on the badge represents the divine act of soldiers of saving humanity by sacrificing their irreplaceable lives for a higher motive.

The motto of corps ‘OMNIA FACIMUS’ is inscribed on a circle around the star which is a Latin phrase meaning ‘We can do anything’. I.E.M.E. stands for Indian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. The corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (R.E.M.E.) was formed in 1942 to repair and maintain the types of equipment of the British Army, but an equivalent to R.E.M.E. was needed, so, the corps of Indian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers was formed on 15 October 1943. The word ‘Indian’ was removed from the name ‘Indian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers’ after the independence of India. The presence of the cross highlights the religious identity of the buried. At the bottom of the gravestone, the line ‘At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember is incised which is taken from the poem “For the Fallen” by Laurence Binyon. He wrote this poem for the dead people of war. It is a tribute to the martyrs who showed acts of bravery in wartime. It shows that his close ones miss him and they are proud of his service in the war.

The rectangular shaped white marble gravestone is erected along with other graves of the same shape and size. The use of white coloured marble implies that soldiers were sincerely serving the British Empire. The massive use of white marble denotes the tribute

paid to soldiers. This gravestone is present among other gravestones in a section of *Gora Cemetery Rawalpindi*.



*Figure 10 Epitaph of N. H. Evans*

The inscription on the epitaph shows that the troop died at a very young age in the second World War. The rank incised on the epitaph is ‘PRIVATE’ which denotatively means ‘personal’ but at that time it was the lowest rank in British Army. He belonged to the Parachute Regiment of the Army Air Corps. The Army Air Corps was formed in 1942 as a new branch of army aviation. Winston Churchill, prime minister of the United Kingdom at that time announced the formation of the Army Air Corps. There were several regiments initially in this corps one of which was the Parachute Regiment which was an aerial infantry battalion of the British Army. On the top of the epitaph cap badge of the Parachute Regiment is carved in a circle. The circle is the symbol of immortality in Christianity when carved on epitaphs as a circle has no end, so, a never-ending life is represented through this circle. The cap badge has an opened parachute in the centre along with wings on both sides that spread horizontally. Above the opened parachute, there is a crown and a lion. The Crown is the representative of nobility and conquest. The lion is generally considered the king of animals because of its strength and bravery. In England, the lion is used as a symbol in a coat of arms and it is a symbol of headship, esteem, reliability, audacity and power that can be linked to the rule of Britain over the world.



According to Bell (1990), the dead are dealt with according to their cultural values and communal dogmas. The political and national and religious view of the dead is highlighted through epitaphs. There is a Christian cross carved at the centre of the epitaph which reflects the religious orientation of the dead person. At the bottom of the epitaph, these words are carved: ‘Years may come and go but memories never die, not forgotten by those who loved him’. These words show how much his close ones loved him. These heart-warming words might be from his friends or family. They truly depict the love and esteem granted to the soldier. The theory of archaeology of rank allows the researcher to investigate interment facilities. White coloured rectangular epitaph is erected to give honour to the deceased. White colour symbolises peace, hence it stands for the effort of soldiers to spread peace around the globe.

### **5. Findings and Conclusion**

This research shows that epitaphs of soldiers are significant reservoirs of military, social and cultural history. When the semiotics theory of Roland Barthes is applied passion, love and devotion of soldiers for their country is evident. Epitaphs not only expose the religious identity of the dead but also show people’s behaviour towards the dead. Denotative meanings are decoded to know their link with connotative meanings. Coded iconic messages have been decoded to know what is symbolised by the signs incised on the gravestones. The non-coded iconic messages show those cultural implications regarding signs, as badges represent the nationalism of soldiers. So, the non-coded iconic message here is patriotism which is implied by the coded iconic message that is carved badge. The wreath symbolises immortality whereas its non-coded iconic message is that soldiers are martyred and they have gained eternity. It can be related to the Islamic view of martyrs where they are not allowed to be called dead because they are alive in heaven and fed by God. The discourse of epitaphs admires the efforts of soldiers for mankind.

When epitaphs were analysed according to Paul Wason’s theory of Archaeology of Rank, the mortuary facility was discussed. It was noted that there were gravestones of white coloured marble of rectangular shape and middle size. The part where soldiers of World War I and II are buried is kept neat and clean. The burial place is within the community



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near the roadside. The burial place is the part of *Gora Cemetery*, that is, it is a section of *Gora Cemetery*.

The research also highlights the great architecture of that time regarding the archaeology of epitaphs. The dates carved on epitaphs take viewers back to that very time of history. The shapes and sizes of gravestones tell us about the architecture. The ranks of soldiers are also depicted through inscriptions. Names of different regiments are carved on the epitaphs which show the structure and management of the British Army. Concludingly, this research talks about the importance of epitaphs of soldiers. Soldiers play a great role in the destiny of a nation. Epitaphs are proofs of their patriotism. Mottos of regiments are encouraging as the phrase ‘OMINA FACIMUS’ inspires the troops to remain determined and fight for their country. This research also evokes religious sentiments in troops which helps them to remain persistent in their struggle for bringing peace to this world.

Epitaphs are a great source of knowledge about history, archaeology, religion, and funerary practices throughout different time periods in past. They are the representatives of the culture of people who are living and also depict the social status of the dead as it usually happens that rich people have expensive epitaphs and poor people don't have lavish looking epitaphs. Denotative meanings have great value symbolically. Culture has been shown through connotative meanings and history can be explored as well. The current research has only discussed the epitaphs of soldiers focusing on the discourse of the army, but there are other sections of the cemetery where there are graves of people of other ages as there are children, women, men and old men of varying ages. Two more Christian Cemeteries are there which can be visited to expand this research.




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