



**HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS**

**Hugvísindasvið**

# **Perception of Tattoos: Now and Then**

***Japan vs. The Western World***

**Ritgerð til BA-prófs í japönsku máli og menningu**

**Alexander Ankirskiy**

**Janúar 2014**

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Japanskt mál og menning

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## Abstract

The main purpose of the essay is to determine the tendencies in perception of tattooing by general population in Japan as opposed to the West, an umbrella term used to denote Europe, Polynesia (New Zealand, Samoa and Hawaii) and North America. The choice of regions for comparison is not arbitrary, as modern Western tattoo tradition has its roots in Polynesian tattooing, brought back to the Old, and then the New World, by Captain James Cook.

In this essay a general introduction is given to the history of tattooing Japan, divided into three subchapters for three major periods in Japanese history. After that the history of tattooing in the Western world is outlined, starting with the short description of European tattoo, which leads to Polynesian and North American, much like Captain Cook, an Englishman, sailed to Polynesia and not long afterwards the tattooing, on the bodies of sailors came to North America. Finally, in the last chapter the problem of modern-day perception of tattooing is discussed.

As well as written research, an online survey was conducted and shared with residents of Japan and the Western countries, where they were asked about their attitudes towards tattooing in general and to tattooed individuals in particular, as well as statistical information about age, gender and nationality. Several informal interviews with residents of said countries were also conducted and taken into consideration.

The author hopes that the subject of perception of tattoos will receive much needed attention, as the problem of perception of tattoo as a negative stereotype is acute in Japan as well as in the West.

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## INTRODUCTION

First of all, what is a tattoo? Where did they originate? Why do people employ such a type of body mutilation, or rather, as it is called today, body modification?

The word “tattoo” derives from the Tahitian word “*tatau*”, first brought to Europe by Captain James Cook in 1769 (DeMello, 2000). The word signifies the insertion of pigment into the skin by a sharp instrument dipped in the ink in order to produce a pattern or a design. After Cook and his crew returned to Europe, some of the crew already tattooed, the history of modern tattooing began: with tattooed British sailors the art spread to other parts of Europe and to North America (Levy, 2008).

Historically tattoos served many purposes, such as identification (to show that the wearer belonged to a certain tribe or a social group), punishment (branding a criminal decrying the crime), adornment for aesthetical purposes, and, more recently, a hobby.

In this paper two major branches of tattooing will be discussed: the Japanese tattooing, known for its bright colors and intricate designs, and the Western type tattooing, focusing primarily on decorative tattoos. By the term “Western style tattooing” used in this paper the author means the tattooing common to Europe and North America; Due to the fact that modern Western tattooing has deep roots in the Polynesian designs, the Polynesian tattoos in this paper are also referred to as “Western”.

The popularity of tattoos in the Western world has never been higher. These days, not only the marginal elements adorn their bodies with ink; no more are the tattoos characteristic of only bikers, sailors, convicts, gang and mafia members. Schoolteachers, doctors, architects, housewives, college students – these are the new clients for tattooists. Every year, tattoo conventions are organized, attended by more and more people (e.g. International London Tattoo Convention of 2005 gathered approximately 150 000 people) (Associated Press, 2005), and increasingly tattoos are being sported by random people on the streets. Many celebrities have tattoos, and they

receive attention and admiration despite the fact that previously it was unimaginable for a public person to have a tattoo, as it was primarily associated with lower classes.

In Japan, however, tattooing is still viewed as characteristic of individuals connected with organized crime. Despite the common portrayal of Yakuza in popular culture as misunderstood heroes and their quiet participation in the activities directed to the common good, such as disaster relief during the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Disaster (Jones, 2011), the majority of the population still sees tattoos as an indication of a dangerous person. A tattooed individual would generally not be allowed into *onsen* (hot pots), public bath, gym or a beach in Japan (Westlake, 2012); it is almost impossible for them to find a higher-paying job; some politicians have even gone so far as to make public servants submit information about body art, and if present, urge those who have tattoos to resign from public service (Munakata, 2012).

This paper aims to find out the current trends in perception of tattoos and tattooed individuals by general population in Japan as opposed to the Western World, represented by Europe, North America and several island nations of Polynesia, such as New Zealand, Samoa and, though technically part of the United States, Hawaii.

The paper consists of three chapters. The first two chapters briefly outline the history of tattooing in the discussed regions: the first chapter examines the history of tattooing in Japan, while the second deals with the Western traditions of tattooing, in particular the European, the Polynesian and the North American tattooing. In the third chapter the outcomes of conducted research are discussed, as well as the perception of tattoos by the general population in said regions, generalized.

For the purposes of this research two online surveys were conducted in 2013 among the users of Facebook and VK social networks. Participants were nationals of 13 countries (Iceland, Russia, France, Germany, Switzerland, Norway, United States, Canada, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Sweden and the Netherlands) aged 18 to 64. The two surveys were conducted in English and Russian, respectively. The number of valid samples recorded is 107. The data is represented as charts and graphs in Appendix A.

Based on the known historical perspective of tattooing in Japan and in the West, and changes in perception of tattooing across the years in both examined regions, what are the directions that perception of tattooing by the public is going to move in? In this paper the author tries to answer this question.

# HISTORY OF TATTOOING IN JAPAN

## Pre-Edo (Tokugawa) period tattoos

There is very little evidence of tattooing in Japan before the Edo period (1603 to 1867). Neolithic era, or Jōmon, has not left definitive support to the claim that tattoos were present at the time, similar to some other cultures and civilization of the time. The evidence that suggests the possibility of existence of tattooing before the year 300 B.C.E. is mostly archaeological, i.e. the ceramic production of the hunter-gatherer tribes of Jōmon-era Japan (Schirokauer, 2013).

Of the two categories of Jōmon-era archaeological evidence – the pottery vessels and the dogū – it is the latter that concerns this particular paper. The dogū are small clay figurines, the exact use of which is unknown (Kidder, 1966). These figurines are the primary source of suggested evidence of existence of tattooing.

The documented history of tattooing in Japan begins in the Yayoi period (300 B.C.E.-300 C.E.). During this time several Chinese dynastic historians mentioned the land of Wa (contemporary name for Japan) and the barbarians that adorn their bodies with designs on their skin. Such mentions are mostly quite condescending and highly critical, as Chinese considered tattooing to be unworthy of civilized people. Art historian Donald F. McCallum (McCallum, 1995) provides examples from three major references to tattooing in Yayoi Japan. The first two are contained in the Book of Wei, part of the Records of the Three Kingdoms (三國志 Sanguozhi), compiled by Chen Shou in 297 C.E.. The Book of Wei tells the story of the Kingdom of Wei, situated in the Northeast of China. The first reference to tattoos in Japan contained in this text, states that

*“Men, young and old, all tattoo their faces and decorate their bodies with designs”(Goodrich, 1951).*

This text is followed by a more detailed description:

*“A son of the ruler of Shao-k’ang of Hsia ... cut his hair and decorated his body with designs in order to avoid the attack of serpents and dragons. The Wa, who are fond of diving into water to get fish and shells, also decorated their bodies in order to keep away large fish and waterfowl.*



*Later, however, the designs became merely ornamental. Designs on the body differ in the various countries ... their position and size vary according to the rank of the individual” (Goodrich, 1951)*

The important part of this passage is that the “Designs differ in the various countries”, meaning, of course, different regions of the islands, and that the “designs became merely ornamental”, which suggests that the tattooing took place at the time (McCallum, 1995).

During Kofun period (C.E. 300 – C.E. 600) the evidence of tattooing is documented in the oldest extant chronicles of the Japanese civilization, Kojiki (712 C.E.) and Nihon Shoki (720 C.E.). These early texts trace the history of Japan from the legendary times to the end of seventh century. Nihon Shoki, however, is more realistic than Kojiki, as the latter places more emphasis on the myths and legends rather than on the historical facts.

The first reference in question is an event that occurred during the 27<sup>th</sup> year of Emperor Keiko (C.E. 71-130). This year is roughly equivalent to C.E. 97, although it may be referring to some event that happened during the middle of the Kofun period:

*“27th year, Spring, 2nd month, 12th day. Takechi no Sukune returned from the East Country and informed the Emperor, saying: --"In the Eastern wilds there is a country called Hitakami.<sup>3</sup> The people of this country, both men and women, tie up their hair in the form of a mallet, and tattoo their bodies. They are of a fierce temper, and their general name is Yemishi. Moreover, their land is wide and fertile. We should attack them and take it."* (Sakamoto, 1967)

By the time of compilation of Nihon Shoki, the Chinese attitudes were prevalent amongst the elite of the central region (Kansai, the heartland of the Japanese civilization) (McCallum, 1995), and thus ascribing tattooing to barbarians should be viewed as an indication of the latter group’s savagery.

Another mentioning of tattooing strengthens the negative outlook on tattooing. It occurs in the section devoted to the Emperor Richū, who reigned in C.E. 400-425, which is roughly equivalent to C.E. 400:

*„1st year, Summer, 4th month, 17th day. The Emperor summoned before him Hamako, Muraji of Azumi, and commanded him, saying:--"Thou didst plot rebellion with the Imperial Prince Nakatsu in order to overturn the State, and thy offence is deserving death. I will, however, exercise great bounty, and remitting the penalty of death, sentence thee to be tattooed."2 The same day he was tattooed near the eye. Accordingly the men of that time spoke of the "Azumi eye." (Sakamoto, 1967)*

The last entry that has to do with the subject, also refers to tattooing as punishment. The following is the passage under the eleventh year of emperor Yuryaku, theoretically equivalent to 467 C.E.

*„Winter, 10th month. A bird of the Bird-department was bitten by a dog belonging to a man of Uda and died. The emperor was angry, and tattooing him on the face, made him one of the Bird-keepers guild (be)“ (Sakamoto, 1967; van Gulik, 1982).*

This account is also very important as it shows another instance of punitive tattooing, when for a relatively minor offence such as negligence, the person was tattooed and demoted to a position of a very low standing, such as a bird keeper.

The second early text that shows evidence of tattooing in that particular era of Japanese history is the Kojiki, which, as was mentioned earlier, was compiled in the year 712 C.E. In this chronicle, tattooing is mentioned in two passages. The first one tells the story of emperor Jimmu marrying the princess Isuke-yori. As it begins, one of the lords accompanying the emperor, named O-kune-no-mikoto, sees a group of women walking on a plain and asks Jimmu which of them he would like to marry. Jimmu replies that he wishes to marry the princess Isuke-yori and sends O-kune-no-mikoto to see the princess and talk to her. The following is the excerpt that contains the reference:

*“Then, when O-kune-no-mikoto announced the emperor’s will to Isuke-yori-hime, she saw the tattooing around the eyes of O-kune-no-mikoto; thinking it strange, she sang:  
 „Ame-tutu  
 Tidori masi toto -  
 Why the tattooed eyes?“  
 Then O-kune-no-mikoto sang in reply:  
 „The better to meet  
 Maidens face to face  
 Are my tattooed eyes“ (Philippi, 1969)*

According to McCallum, the Emperor Jimmu is thought of as the true founder of the Japanese state, as he was the one who led his people from Kyushu through the Inland Sea to Yamato (present-day Kansai). The lord O-kune-no-mikoto, who was accompanying him, is a person of historical significance, but nonetheless the princess who subsequently became empress is surprised by his tattoo, which suggests that the compiler of the Kojiki had some difficulties in dealing with this fact (McCallum, 1995).

The last passage from Kojiki that mentions tattoos takes place during the reign of Emperor Ankou (453-456 C.E.):

*“When they arrived at Kariha-i in Yamashiro, as they were eating their provisions, an old man with a tattooed face came along and seized their provisions”* (Philippi, 1969)

As later in the story the old man was executed for theft, it is safe to assume that he had originally received his tattoo as a punishment for a crime.

The five passages in question show contrast in perception of tattoos across the years: while in the first two passages there is no mention of any connection to criminal activity, although the practice itself is considered barbaric or strange, as in the first excerpt from the Kojiki. The later accounts, however, are definitely connected with crime, and the use of tattooing is clearly punitive, to mark the criminal for life: the passage from Nihon Shoki refers to treason, and the fragment of Kojiki deals with a common criminal who has been charged with some sort of crime and tattooed for it, and after a repeated violation of the law brought to death penalty. Finally, the third fragment, again from Nihon Shoki, deals with common negligence which is punished by tattooing and demotion.

Little is known about tattooing in Japan during the period from ca. 600 to 1600. References to tattooing in general are rare, as in about 645, after the introduction of Buddhist and Confucian concepts from China and Korea, punitive tattooing fell into disuse, although there is a reference to tattooing the face as punishment in Jōei Shikimoku (Jōei Code) of 1232 (Poysden, 2006). McCallum suggests that as tattooing continued to serve the purposes of punishment for crime, there might have been an „undercurrent of voluntary tattooing“ (McCallum, 1995). However even if that is the

case, such practices probably existed in the lower classes of society and thus went unrecorded, so there is no way to support this claim.

However not only the Yamato people practiced tattooing: the earliest observers of the Ainu people, the indigenous inhabitants of Hokkaido, noted that Ainu women bear tattoos on their mouths (McCallum, 1995). Ainu tattooing had mythological origins, according to which it was “brought to the earth by the “ancestral mother” of the Ainu, who was the younger sister of the creator god Okikurumi (Krutak, 2008). Hence, being an ancestral custom, tattooing was passed in matrilineal lines for centuries and was retained until 1998, when the last fully tattooed Ainu woman passed away.

The tattoos were believed to repel evil spirits from entering the body and causing sickness; they also indicated that a woman had reached maturity and was ready for marriage. Finally, lip tattoos guaranteed the woman life after death among her deceased ancestors (Hitchcock, 1891). The Ainu tattooing motives bear resemblance to that of certain Native American and Polynesian tribes, examined further on.

Most of the historically recorded information about the development of tattooing belongs to the Edo, or Tokugawa period of Japanese history.

### **Edo (Tokugawa) period tattoos (1603-1867)**

Punitive tattoos were called *irezumi*; *ire*, or *ireru* means “to insert” (meaning the insertion of the pigment) and *zumi* means the ink (墨 *sumi*) itself. During the Edo period tattooing as punishment, along with amputation of noses and ears, occurred between the eras of Kanbun (1661-1673) and Tenna (1681-1684). By 1720 punitive tattoos had replaced the amputation as part of the Kyōhō Reforms (1716-1736) (Poysden, 2006). These reforms, among other things, disassociated the tattooing from death penalty, instead imposing it as punishment for minor offenses. Second offenders were sentenced to death penalty, as well as thieves and murderers. By the end of the seventeenth century a complex system of punitive tattoos had appeared. As an example, refer to the fig. 1 in Appendix B.

Mark Poysden reports that in Chikuzen Province (Northern Kyushu) first offenders had their foreheads tattooed with a horizontal line; an arc was added if convicted for a second time, and if there was a third breach and they were caught, a

third line was added, creating the character for *inu* (犬), “dog”. Other criminal tattoos employed various styles of lines and characters (Poysden, 2006).

By that time (the end of the seventeenth century) tattooing as adornment was already well known. It is generally believed (McCallum, 1995; Poysden, 2006; Richie, 1980) that because of the punitive use of tattooing there has been a resurgence in decorative tattooing, as criminals tried to cover their marks with something more pleasing to the eye, let alone covering up their criminal past. By leaving the inner arm (the place where punitive tattoos in Edo were usually placed) bare, the wearer could prove that he was not hiding any criminal marks. As this practice became more and more widespread, tattoo as punishment lost its initial purpose and fell into disuse. It was abolished in 1870.

The Japanese tattoo in the state that we know it today has its roots in the Edo period. At this time, tattooing became prominent among certain levels of society, the sorts of people that would frequent pleasure and entertainment districts, such as Yoshiwara and Asakusa in Edo (present-day Tokyo), Shinmachi in Osaka and Shimabara in Kyoto. These districts gave a powerful boost to a phenomenon known as *Ukiyo* (浮世, ‘floating world’), a world of „brothels, teahouses and public baths“ (Poysden, 2006).

A type of tattooing developed in this culture is called *irebokuro*, or “love dots”. The term is made of two words, *ire*, or *ireru*, which means “to insert”, and *bokuro* or *hokuro*, “a beauty spot, a mole”. This type of tattooing is referred to in a late seventeenth-century book “*Shikidō ōkagami*” (Great Mirror of the Art of Love). This book was a study of the life and customs of Edo-period pleasure quarters, written by Fujimoto Kizan (1626-1693). The book includes a description of contemporary love pledges made by courtesans. To prove their devotion to their lover the courtesans would cut (or tear off, as reported by Poysden) their fingernails, snip off locks of hair, sign written oaths in blood or tattoo themselves (Fujimoto & Takanashi, 1928; McCallum, 1995; Poysden, 2006).

Another example of a “love dot” is contained in a work by a seventeenth-century author Ihara Saikaku, called “The Life of an Amorous Man”. The episode that provides

the reference to tattooing tells a story of a homosexual relationship between two men, one of whom is a Buddhist priest. The priest's lover showed his devotion by tattooing the characters of his (priest's) name (McCallum, 1995).

The tattooed "love dots" were exchanged between lovers and represented loyalty and devotion. This practice originated in the pleasure quarters of Osaka and Kyoto and soon spread to Edo. According to Poysden and McCallum, small mole-like dots were tattooed halfway between the base of the thumb and the wrist so that when lovers held hands the tips of their thumbs would be adjacent to the dots. A variant of irebokuro that included written characters was called kishoubori (vow or pledge tattoo).

At the time there were no professional tattooists and the love dots were applied by the individuals themselves or by friends; courtesans preferred to have the man with whom they were involved to apply the tattoo (McCallum, 1995; Poysden, 2006).

The tattoos sometimes bore reference to the lasting of the pledge, i.e. extended final stroke of the tattooed character emphasized the strength and the duration of the vow. Courtesans also tattooed themselves by having their love write his name on their arm, scoring it with a knife and inking the incisions. For some courtesans the tattoos signified secret affairs or personal desires; others applied *irebokuro* to please and keep their customers. However the main reason for tattooing among prostitutes remained the hope that the client would ransom them from the brothel.

There are several other types of tattooing during Edo period, the information about which is insufficient in tattoo literature due to the fact that references to these particular types are extremely rare. Among them are samurai tattoos and religious oath tattoos.

Samurai tattoos were more an exception than the rule: the official position of the authorities was similar to that of China, where if a warrior was to tattoo pledge to cause greater than himself, he would be beyond rebuke. According to authors Poysden and Bratt, the sixteenth-century samurai were sometimes tattooed with the crest of their clan on their upper arms to identify them if they were killed in battle. The reason for that was that scavenging was quite common, and thieves stripped corpses of armor and other means of identification. The tattoos sometimes included the date of the battle from

which the warrior did not expect to return, and if he was not killed, he took his own life in order to keep the promise he had made to himself. Those who knew that they would not return from the battle or that they will commit seppuku (ritual suicide) if defeated, showed their devotion to Buddha and thus ensured their entry to heaven by tattooing themselves with their “posthumous spiritual names” (*kaimyō*), which they bought from Buddhist temples before departing.

Religious oaths, on the other hand, were probably applied to protect their wearer. There are occasional references in Japanese sources to fourteenth-century Buddhist priests tattooing themselves with religious texts or characters. During the Edo period this sort of religious pledge became popular. Pious phrases or prayers inscribed on the skin were fairly common (in the Western tattoo culture this is mostly paralleled by Christian religious tattoos) (Poysden, 2006, p. 125; Richie, 1980).

During the Edo period the traditional dwellings in Japan were made of wood, bamboo, straw and paper constructions. In an overpopulated Edo houses were standing so close together that they were especially vulnerable to fire. Aided by earthquakes or typhoons, fires were very frequent: the city suffered more than 90 major fires between 1603 and 1868 (Ozawa, 2007). Firemen (*tobi no mono* or *hikeshi*) were thus the heroes of the city, embodying raw courage and panache. The prestige they enjoyed as popular heroes remains undiminished.

The firemen were among the first to wear full-body tattoos, leaving only their hands, feet and head unadorned. The first firefighters were largely unemployed ruffians or simply gangs, hired by the *bakufu* (military government) to fight single fires. Only after the Great Meireki Fire in 1657 did the city councilor Ōoka Tadasuke (1677-1751) create the first organized fire companies (*kumi*) (Aafjes, 1982). Although tattooing was prohibited at the time, by the end of the Edo period there was estimated to be around ten thousand tattooed fire fighters. Different groups, or companies of fire fighters tattooed themselves with different designs, depending on a variety of factors, not least of which was superstitions: firemen believed that images of dragons or other water creatures engraved on their skins protected them from the flames they were battling (compare with the Kofun-period quote from the Records of the Three Kingdoms).

It has been suggested that the development of tattooing in Japan is closely connected to a specific work of Chinese literature, the *Shui-bu Chuan*, or *Suikoden* in Japanese. It is a novel that deals with the activities of Sung Chiang and his rebel companions, 108 men in all, during the years 1117-1121 at the chaotic end of the Northern Sung Dynasty (McCallum, 1995, p. 121). While this band was outside the confines of normal society, they were a virtuous group, aiding the poor and downtrodden against a corrupt government. The publication of the Japanese translation, immensely popular at the time, with multicolored woodblock prints of the tattooed warriors with full-body tattoos is widely acknowledged to have started the phenomenon of a full-body tattoo (McCallum, 1995, p. 121).

The firemen were specifically impressed by *Suikoden* story, and, identifying with some of the protagonists, favored the large tattoos adorning the heroes in the woodblock prints executed by a famed artist of the time, Utagawa Kinyoshi (see fig.2-4 in Appendix B).

Poysden reports that it has been suggested that full body tattoos prevented firemen from appearing naked as they battled fires, wearing only loincloths (*fundoshi*), but considering Japanese attitudes towards nudity at the time, this seems implausible. After all, other laborers, palanquin bearers and carpenters worked only clothed in their *fundoshi* without any criticism from the *bakufu* or the public. A more persuasive argument is that the lowest-ranking firemen working with the most rudimentary equipment were the first to tattoo themselves with protective symbols or designs. It is also likely that the firefighters decorated their bodies with tattoos to demonstrate masculinity and camaraderie.

Heavily tattooed firefighters and construction workers are still commonplace in Japan (Fellman, 1986, p. 15), but they usually patronize different tattoo artists to those used by the *yakuza* (the Japanese criminal organizations), and their tattoos feature more black ink and less color (McCallum, 1995; Poysden, 2006; Richie, 1980). The *yakuza* tattoo phenomenon will be discussed further.



The “Floating World” of Edo-period Japan saw a huge rise in popularity of tattooing and after 1750 the interest in tattooing was so widespread that it gradually created the distinctive Japanese style tattoo.

The centuries-old strict Confucian ethics was gradually rejected and replaced by themes based on duty, *ninjō* (human experiences and feeling), fashion and comedy, the *chōnin* (townspeople) of Edo began enjoying novels, kabuki and puppet theatre, culture expressions that quickly adapted to the mindset of the common people as exemplified in part by the firefighters (Fellman, 1986). Tattoos became a popular fashion statement among working class city dwellers during the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries despite repeated bans. Tattoos were mostly associated with firefighters, as was discussed above. Artisans and laborers copied the designs of firemen’s tattoos and it was later on reflected in *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints. Palanquin bearers and *jinrikisha* (rickshaw) boys with tattooed backs were more likely to attract clients. Prostitutes in the pleasure quarters tattooed themselves to attract customers. Many artisans worked wearing only a loincloth or short trousers, and thus some of them chose to tattoo their bodies as a substitute for clothes. (McCallum, 1995; Poysden, 2006; Richie, 1980)

The *bakufu* habitually suppressed any expression of individuality among the masses as subversive activity, and tattooing was banned in 1789, 1811, 1840 and 1872 (Poysden, 2006), which indicates that the edicts did not enjoy popularity and were systematically disobeyed.

### **Modern tattoos in Japan (1900-2013)**

The Edo period can be called a “golden age” for Japanese tattoo. Even despite numerous prohibitions by the military government, the industry, or rather the art form developed and blossomed. However when *bakufu* saw their end in what is known as the Meiji restoration, things drastically changed. The new central government regarded tattooing as a barbaric practice and believed it would dampen the image of Japan in the eyes of the West, and thus tattooing was once again banned (Sekai Daihyakka Jiten, 1981). However at that time it was mostly the foreigners that were most interested in getting a tattoo. A very good example is the fact that both Prince George, later King George V of England, and Tsarevich Nicholas, later Nicholas II of Russia, got tattooed during their visits to Japan in 1890s (Keene, 2005; Rose, 2000). At the same time,

western sailors of various ranks got tattooed by craftsmen in the ports of Yokohama and Kobe (Thayer, 1983). Japanese citizens theoretically were not allowed to get tattoos, but in practice the craft was still seen on the periphery of the society (McCallum, 1995, p. 124).

After the defeat in the war in 1945, tattooing became legal in Japan: in 1948 an official in the occupation administration of General McArthur visited the Tokyo studio of Horiyoshi II (Kuronuma Tamotsu, 1914-1991?) and was so impressed that the ban on tattooing was revoked; however it still was illegal to tattoo people under 18 years old (Poysden, 2006, p. 147). However the decriminalization of tattooing did not lead to renaissance of the art, as many of the traditional artists had died, not having left any disciples to carry on the craft (McCallum, 1995, p. 124). The government did not give tattoo artists, or *horishi*, the status of “Living National Treasures”, as was done with distinguished masters of other traditional crafts, such as papermaking or sword forging. Nonetheless, the craft survived, probably because of the dedication of the artists and the enthusiasm of their clients.

Perhaps the most common category of people associated with Japanese tattooing is the *yakuza*: an ordinary Japanese citizen, if asked about the kind of people who have themselves tattooed, will invariably answer “*Yakuza!*” (McCallum, 1995, p. 128). *Yakuza* are the organized criminal element of modern Japan, similar to the Cosa Nostra, or Italian Mafia, in the West. Their activities include racketeering, gambling, prostitution, narcotics and extortion (Kaplan, 2003).

Tattoos and *yubitsume* (ritual cutting of a part of a finger as an act of repentance) are the most widely known aspects of the *yakuza* among the non-Japanese (Hill, 2003, p. 86). According to the data of the National Research Institute of Police Science, acquired in the 1970s, just over 70% of *yakuza* members had tattoos (Hoshino, 1971, pp. 137-139).

It has been suggested that tattoos serve several purposes for *yakuza*. The first would be identification: an ostentatious, full-body tattoo is widely recognized as a *yakuza* brand, and as a consequence is stigmatized by the mainstream society (Fellman,

1986, p. 15; Hill, 2003, p. 86; Westlake, 2012). The second reason for having a tattoo, stated by the *kumiin* (gang members) is intimidation (Hoshino, 1971).

*Yakuza* tattoos also convey hidden, symbolic messages: they signify the ability of a member to withstand pain, which makes him worthy of being in the organization. A large-scale tattoo also displays perseverance, an “irreversible commitment to the group and a rejection of mainstream society” (Poysden, 2006, p. 153). A traditional Japanese tattoo is very expensive and painful to make; it also takes a very long time to finish. It can also be quite bad for health: there is little free skin left for “breathing”, or perspiring (Fellman, 1986), and this can lead to liver failure in later life (Hill, 2003).

The opinions on the future of *yakuza* tattoos differ: some, like the sociologist Peter Hill, while discussing the numbers of the *yakuza* members who have not been tattooed, suggest that the members simply do not have sufficient commitment to make use of this trademark. Others, like authors Mark Poysden and Marco Bratt, observe that the *yakuza* members start to avoid getting tattooed because of the fact that such marks, along with severed fingers, attract police attention and prevent the person from finding a legitimate employment. This seems more plausible, and can be supported by the fact that such a committed *yakuza* member as fourth-generation boss of Yamaguchi-gumi syndicate Takenaka Masahisa (1933-1985) did not bear tattoos (Poysden, 2006).

Despite the dampening of its reputation by association with *yakuza* by general population, it appears that this stigmatic connection is slowly fading. The younger generation of the Japanese are not as horrified by the tattoos as their elders, and some, especially women, are starting to have themselves tattooed. The designs, however, are not the traditional ones applied by the working class and the *yakuza*; the new tattoo favored by the Japanese youth is called “*wan-pointo*”, as instead of covering all body or a large portion of it, the tattoo would be applied to one point on the body (Burton, 2001). The motifs are usually small “*kawaii*” (cute) images like ice cream cones, toucans and manga-style pandas, as well as the western style skulls, roses and cartoon characters (Burton, 2001; Fellman, 1986).

Although some groups of Japanese youth feel more relaxed towards the tattooing, the majority of the general population still regard tattooed people as being dangerous

and do not welcome tattooing, considering it a trait characteristic of criminals (Westlake, 2012). This will be discussed further in chapter 3, where the history of tattooing in Europe, Polynesia and North America will be examined.

## HISTORY OF TATTOOING IN THE WEST

### European tattoos

European tattooing, unlike that of Japan, does not have a single origin. It is unclear where it originally came from; Ancient civilizations of Rome and Greece used tattoos for punitive purposes, the practice they might have acquired from Persians, Egyptians and Syrians (Dye, 1989). However it is possible that the craft, and later the art of tattooing was introduced by the Gypsies. The term “gypsy” usually refers to Romani people, which originated in India and Midwest Asia at least a thousand years ago and migrated to Europe in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and to America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Kenrick, 2007). American lawyer and gypsy research enthusiast Albert Thomas Sinclair ("Albert Thomas Sinclair papers ca. 1882-ca. 1908," 2014) wrote in his article for the American Anthropologist in 1908 of the Oriental Gypsies, by which he meant the Nawar people of the Middle East.

*“Many years ago while investigating Oriental Gypsies I found that tattooing was one of their principal and characteristic occupations and that nearly all of the common people in Syria, Mesopotamia, Arabia, Egypt and at least parts of Persia were tattooed, ... The most of this tattooing is done by the Gypsies. They are the experts.”*  
(Sinclair, 1908)

Given the fact that migration of the Gypsy people to Europe occurred from the Middle East and North Africa (Kenrick, 2007), it is logical to assume that their tattooing skills also moved, at least to the areas immediately adjacent to the said regions, such as Italy, Greece and Mediterranean Islands.

The Early Christians tattooed themselves with religious symbols, and despite the formal prohibition of the practice by the Church, the practice never died out (Sinclair, 1908). The Church must have been referring to the Bible to justify the ban:

*“Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the Lord.”* ("Lev. 19:28 New International Version,")

However even though tattooing was officially banned by the Church, many Crusaders and pilgrims on their visits to Jerusalem bought tattoos, apparently in order to prove that they had been there (Dye, 1989, p. 521).

Tattooing had apparently been practiced in Europe by seafarers up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century; for example, there is much evidence of British sailors bearing tattoos: Sinclair mentions a book managed by a British consul, where a description of all sailors who visit the office must be written down. In this book, apart from the usual physical appearance data, all tattoo marks were described (Sinclair, 1908).

The tradition of sailors and soldiers being tattooed was not restricted to Great Britain, it was also present in other European countries: at the end of 1890s and the beginning of 1900s, Greek sailors were generally tattooed, as were occasionally soldiers in the Greek army. Sinclair also points out that prisoners often tattoo one another in jails. Ordinary population, however, had little to do with tattooing and only a small percentage was, in fact, tattooed. The same tradition was observed at the time in Italy, where sailors, porters, etc. were generally tattooed (Sinclair, 1908).

Returning to the Gypsy tattooing, advocated by Sinclair had apparently spread as far North as Sweden, where it coexisted with traditional tattooing that was noticed by a 10<sup>th</sup> century Arab traveler Ahmad Ibn Fadlan:

*“§ 81. Each man has an axe, a sword, and a knife and keeps each by him at all times. The swords are broad and grooved, of Frankish sort. Every man is tattooed from finger nails to neck with dark green (or green or blue-black) trees, figures, etc.”* (Montgomery, 2000)

Ibn Fadlan described the Norse inhabitants of a state that is called Rus' Khaganate by modern historians (Christian, 1999).

According to personal communication conducted by the author, as well as to academic sources, Scandinavian sailors (it is not clear if all sailors are meant, or only those in international shipping) have a “very ancient” (Sinclair, 1908) tradition of getting tattooed, with cited numbers as high as 90%. Currently the younger generation of Scandinavians, nonetheless, tends to consider this a stereotype and say that the custom is dying out (according to the results of the online survey conducted by the

author in 2013; “Scandinavians” in this contexts refers to nationals of Iceland, Norway and Sweden). Still, in the 1990s there were mentions of modern tattoos in comparison with old sailor tattoos in the mass media (Haukur Snorrason, 1994), and recent personal communication by the author showed that still the seamen are likely to get tattoos as souvenirs during the shore leave, just as it was the case in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Along with Scandinavian sailor tattoos, Russian tattooing is worth mentioning. Little or no information on the history of tattooing in Russia is available, as the overwhelming majority of tattoo-related sites on the Internet only have information about criminal, or prison tattoos. The earliest written record of tattooing on the territory of contemporary Russia is the account of Rus’ Khaganate by Ibn Fadlan, discussed above.

The infamous Russian prison tattoos emerged in the 1920s in the Soviet labor camps (Varese, 1998). This subculture is called “vo’r v zako’ne”, or “thief in law”. At the same time the “thieves” did not necessarily have to steal, their crime would often be that they were not. The “thieves” developed their own code of ethics, hierarchy and even a secret language (Schwartz, 2008). Trademarks of the labor camp inmates were the tattoos, which signified the position of the tattooee in the prison hierarchy, showed what he or she was incarcerated for. Sometimes the prisoners would tattoo their own kind, but lower in the hierarchy, such as passive homosexuals, rapists, pedophiles, etc. (Lozovsky). A simple example of a Russian prison tattoo would be an eight-ray star, usually applied to an inmate’s knees, meaning, “I will never kneel before anyone”. Another example would be the five dots, similar to the dots on the playing dice. The meaning is usually “one in the four walls” or “four guard towers and an inmate”. It is usually applied to a hand, between the thumb and an index finger on the outer side. (Lozovsky).

European tattooing today, it appears, has largely derived from American and Polynesian tattooing, which will be discussed further. Field observations made by the author in various countries like Iceland, France, Russia and Spain, provide evidence that tattooing is becoming a mainstream, a part of the Tattoo Renaissance which happened after the Second World War, when the post-war prosperity combined with an increase

of interest in Asian Cultures, many of which, as the Japanese, examined earlier, include tattooing (Hewitt, 1997).

### Polynesian tattoos

Tattoos in Polynesia can be traced to at least the second millennium B.C.E. and have been found throughout all the Islands (Gathercole, 1988). The first accounts of Polynesian tattooing were given by Captain James Cook, when he discovered Tahiti and Hawaii in 1769 and 1778, accordingly (DeMello, 2000, p. 45). At the time of Cook's visit, the tattoos had a genealogical function, as well as a protective one (Kaepler, 1995).

An interesting view of the function of tattooing has been suggested by linguist G.B. Milner, who examined a Samoan myth of a pair of deities, originally Siamese twins, who introduced tattooing to Samoa. They swam to Fiji, where they were instructed by two artists and given a formula, which they were to memorize and take back home (Rubin, 1995b). According to Milner, the function of tattooing is to

*“...restore balance between sexes, ... the institution of tattooing lies between nature and culture, man and women, pleasure and pain, life and death, and is typified by a monster in the shape of two Siamese twins, ... whose function is to give pain to man and joy to woman which is notionally equivalent to the pain that childbirth gives to woman and to the joy that childbirth gives to man.” (Milner, 1969)*

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century Western visitors to Polynesia started noticing that the tattoo designs on locals included, in addition to previously used motifs like animals and plants, cannons and rifles. These designs were most likely introduced by Cook's crew (DeMello, 2000). After the Hawaiians adopted Western weapons, their designs became purely decorative, as they did not need protection anymore (Kaepler, 1995).

European contacts have to a certain extent influenced the designs of the Polynesian tattoo. Just as Hawaiian and Tahitian tattoo, the Maori designs also changed: Originally the Maori would literally carve a pattern on the skin, as is usually done with wood, and then rub ink into the open wounds: after the introduction of the natives to metal by the European sailors, they started to apply the ink by puncturing, i.e. the way it



was done in other parts of Polynesia (DeMello, 2000). Tattooing in other parts of Polynesia was also influenced by Europeans, for example on Marquesan Islands before the contact the tattoo style implemented finely detailed lines, whereas after the arrival of the Europeans the designs moved toward creating heavy, broad blackened areas, similar to the Maori style (Allen, 1991).

Currently of the Polynesian tattoo traditions the following are active both locally and internationally: Maori Ta Moko in New Zealand ("Ta moko - significance of Maori tattoos,"), Marquesan tattoo, Samoan pe'a (Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand, 1995) and Hawaiian Kakau (Omori, 2003a).

As today tattooing is recognized as a legitimate art form, a sort of cultural exchange is happening, with Polynesian designs traveling around the planet and Euro American designs finding their place in the traditional Polynesian tattooing (Omori, 2003b).

### **North American tattoos**

Tattooing in North America dates back to pre-Columbian time, when the Indians were using tattooing for identification purposes and for adornment (Levy, 2008). Ronald P. Koch reports that tattooing was quite common among the Plains Indians; tribes such the Assiniboiné, Caddo, Mandan, Hidatsa, Osage, and Crow (Koch, 1977). Apparently there is evidence of tattooing among such an important tribe as Iroquois (Lemmon, 2013).

Tattooing among Native Americans usually connected with ethnic and social identity or status (Rubin, 1995a). For example, in Western North America, women tattooed lines on their chins to indicated group membership and/or marital status (Taylor, 1947). Visitors to Virginia and Carolina, as well as Ontario reported more elaborate and extensive tattoos for women representing their high status (Rubin, 1995a). Men's tattoos typically had martial associations: in Louisiana, killing an enemy or other war honors entitled a warrior to have a tomahawk or a war-club tattooed on his shoulder above a symbol identifying the nation, against which he was fighting. The Chickasaw distinguished their warriors by their tattoos; men who applied tattoos they did not deserved were publicly humiliated and had to suffer the tattoo removal 3.

Despite the existence of tattooing on the North American soil well before its discovery by Europeans, the modern North American tattoo has little to do with the original designs employed by the Native Americans. North American tattoo takes its roots in Polynesia, from where, engraved on sailors of Captain James Cook, it came, first to Europe, and then, on other sailors, to America (DeMello, 2000).

During the War of 1812, a conflict between the United States of America and Great Britain, American Sailors, to avoid impressment by the British Navy, carried protection papers, which were supposed to be the identification documents establishing their citizenship. However the description provided in these papers were so general that the British Navy officers did not pay attention to them (Dixon, 1992). In order to make the documents more precise and effective, the clerks issuing the Seamen's Protection Certificate Applications started including the information about tattoos and scars. However nowhere in these applications the word tattoo was used. Researcher Ira Dye suggests that the reason for this is that the word was for a number of years considered as indecent and offensive and thus was slow to receive wide usage (Dye, 1989).

The clerks, who took down the sailors' descriptions, sometimes sketched the tattoos upon request. The tattoos applied by seafarers were of various types: hearts, crosses, crucifixes, dates, separate words like LOVE and HIBERNIA etc. (Dye, 1989; McNeur, 2011).

Sailor tattoos inspired modern tattoo artists, like Sailor Jerry (born Norman Keith Collins in 1911, d.1973). Since his teen years Sailor Jerry was interested in tattooing, applying many of his own tattoos by hand. At age 19 he enlisted in the Great Lakes Naval Academy and became a professional sailor, which he remained until the end of his days. During his service in the Navy Jerry visited the China seas, and the other remote areas of the Far East, where he developed a life-long obsession with Asian imagery ("Sailor Jerry Bio," 2012).

Sailor Jerry was the first Western tattoo artist, who established a direct contact with Japanese *horishi*, which led to an exchange of designs and ideas: Sailor Jerry was the first Westerner to have included Japanese motifs, such as dragons and waves, to

tattoos; he was also promoting Western style tattooing in Japan, the results of which are seen today in a resurgence of American style tattoo (Poysden, 2006, p. 150).

Any description of North American tattoo would be incomplete without mentioning gang tattoos, in particular those of Chicano origin, and prison tattoos.

Chicano is a term denoting Mexican Americans, or, more accurately, Mexicans who grew up in the United States (de León, 2014). In the urban *barrios*, or neighborhoods, of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California, tattooing is widespread. It is a complex phenomenon among the Chicanos, and it is influenced by many factors, be they social, economical, or political. Chicano tattoos vary from religious (Christian symbols like crosses and images of the Virgin of Guadalupe) to political (emblems of “La Aguila” (the United Farmworkers logo)) and gang symbols, such as crosses, initials etc. (Govenar, 1995).

Many Chicano tattoos are made in prison, with a machine crafted from a cassette recorder motor, a guitar string and a Bic pen (Govenar, 1995, personal communication with Lawrence Honrada). As opposed to the prison technique, tattooing in the barrios is done by hand, using a sewing needle. The prison designs are thus more detailed, as the motor allows achieving finer lines and detailed shading.

Chicano prison tattoos utilize a variety of themes, mostly Christian, however sometimes the designs include motifs of the Lowrider subculture (a subculture revolving around automobiles modified so that the ground clearance is less than specified by the manufacturer)(Gradante, 1982) and imagery associated with Mexican mural. Mexican murals, or Chicano murals, have become popular in Los Angeles in the 1970s, influenced by such prominent Mexican artists as Rivera, Orozco etc. (Gonzalez, 1982)

Those Chicanos that are upwardly mobile, tattooing is considered to be low class and is discouraged at home, at school and in church; hence, Chicano tattooing remains in the domain of the gangs (Govenar, 1995). It appears that gang tattooing is still fairly common, expressing both Christian devotion, political consciousness and community solidarity, at the same time showing a certain amount of deviance in imagery, taking

into account the fact that some of the motifs include sexually explicit, violent or individualistic themes (Govenar, 1995).

The two kinds of tattoo that seem to provoke contempt among the general population are teardrop tattoo, usually applied beneath a person's eye and denoting that he or she had killed someone or spent some time in prison or was raped in prison (Smith, 2008), and a lower-back tattoo, known as the "tramp stamp" (Seibert, 2007). The "tramp stamp" is worn predominantly by young women since the 1990s. It has been popularized by celebrities such as pop music singer Britney Spears and actress Pamela Anderson (Fong, 2002). This style of tattooing has been perceived by showing promiscuity, probably because of media portrayal of lower back tattoos as characteristic of promiscuous women (Hall, 2007) and thus is frowned upon.

Currently the tattooing in North America is enjoying immense popularity, combining designs from all over the world, as evidence suggests (online tattoo parlor catalogues, google image search etc.). In the next chapter the public acceptance or rejection of tattoos will be discussed.

## PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF TATTOOING TODAY

### Japan

Despite the rich history of tattooing in Japan, the attitudes of the general population do not seem to be loosening up towards traditional tattooing, despite the efforts made by the government to crack down on yakuza: in the last two years the Japanese law enforcement has been making a lot of progress in shutting down the yakuza operation, from cutting the funding from high-ranking Japanese banks (Kawamoto, 2013) to introducing anti-gang laws (Schreiber, 2012). However even though the gangs are diminishing in size and ex-gang members try to blend in with the general populace (for example, by trying to remove tattoos or use prosthetic pinkie fingers instead of the real ones cut off during *yubitsume*), the general population, especially the older generation doesn't seem to be taking a more relaxed stance towards tattooing (Tokyo Times, 2013). The Western-style tattoos get more popular, and it might be dangerous to the traditional art, as it might get gradually replaced.

The conducted surveys show that survey the Japanese respondents are mostly not bearing any tattoos and do not have a wish to acquire tattoos: only one respondent expressed the wish to have one. The attitude to tattooing and tattooed individuals is neutral or cautiously positive, depending on the type of the tattoo. If a foreigner bears the tattoo, the younger generation of the Japanese tends to have a more relaxed attitude, as the foreigners in their opinion are not associated with Japanese criminal organizations. However if a Japanese person is showing a tattoo, the general population tends to immediately equate them to *yakuza* or criminals, hence avoiding him or her.

The respondents were to answer five multiple-choice questions and one essay question. Of the 8 respondents who identified themselves as Japanese, the answers are as follows: of the 8 respondents, five were females, three were males; they belong to the age groups of 18-24 and 25-34 years old. None of the respondents answered affirmatively to the question "Do you have tattoos?". Only one of eight answered affirmatively to the question "Would you consider getting a tattoo?". The analysis of the essay question entries showed that even among the younger generation the attitude towards tattoos remains generally cautious, depending on the tattoo and nationality of the wearer:

*“I will avoid the heavily tattooed person if he or she is Japanese. But I don't mind heavily tattoo of foreign person because I think it is culture of other countries. In Japan, tattoo has bad image. However I cannot decide foreign heavily tattooed person only Japanese common sense.”*  
(Respondent #41, Survey 1, 2013)<sup>1</sup>

## Western World

Concluding from the results of conducted research, it is evident that the attitude and the view of tattoos and tattooed people in the Western world has improved dramatically, as opposed to twenty to thirty years ago, when the tattoos have been primarily seen as a trademark of the working class (construction workers, sailors, soldiers, etc.) individuals or the criminal elements (DeMello, 2000).

Nevertheless, Western tattooing today is not just pretty designs, as diverse as they may be; gang tattoos, prison tattoos and various criminal and extremist tattoos also exist and blossom among certain groups of people (Anti-Defamation League, 2005). Despite the wide popularity of tattooing in the Western World, there are prohibitions on these kinds of tattoo designs, instituted mainly by government organizations such as the United States Army (United States Army, 2012), United States Navy (United States Navy, 2014), and the French Foreign Legion (French Foreign Legion Information, 2014).

In the countries where criminal tattoos are present, like the United States and Russia, people tend to be aware of possible danger coming from heavily tattooed people or people with tattoo on their faces (Survey 1 and 2, 2013, see Appendix A). In New Zealand, according to author's interviews with the residents, tattoos are generally accepted, and Pacific/Maori tattoo has become a very popular choice of design in the world (Thomas de Vere, personal communication, 2013). However there still are instances when tattooing is frowned upon, such as the incident when a woman was dismissed from an interview for a hostess position at Air New Zealand because she had a tattoo with a Maori motif on her forearm (APNZ, 2013). The airline motivated their decision by the fact that the “airline carried more than five million customers

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<sup>1</sup> Original spelling and punctuation

internationally each year and it was important that they felt as comfortable as possible”. Another interview revealed that traditional *Ta Moko* tattoo is a “soft spot” in New Zealand, as it is closely connected with sacred Maori heritage and outsiders getting the sacred designs done obviously insult the indigenous population (Fergus Mason, personal communication, 2013).

In the United States the tattooing seems to be blossoming, and it is backed by media and social media: tattooing groups and pages on Facebook have hundreds of thousands of subscribers, for example the page for tattoo.com website has 1.7 million “likes”, and the page called “Tattoos by myttoos.com” has as many as 4.7 million “likes” (as of 14.01.14). 14 percent of Americans have at least one tattoo, which is approximately 45 million. As of 2013 there were 21000 tattoo parlors in the United States (Statistic Brain Research Institute, 2013).

The surveys conducted revealed that the younger generation, which is the primary audience for social networks like Facebook and VK, by majority has strictly positive, generally positive or neutral attitude towards tattoos, depending on the design in question: of 107 recorded samples, 50 respondents’ answers indicate the strictly positive or generally positive attitude, 40 answers display strictly neutral and generally neutral attitude, while only 6 respondents showed strictly negative attitude. When answering questions regarding having or wanting a tattoo, 61 respondent expressed a wish to get a tattoo, while 46 said they didn’t want to get any; 78 respondents claimed that they do not have a tattoo while only 29 said that they do.

While comparing the results of the surveys by country, it should be noted that the individuals that identified themselves as Russians or were answering in Russian, mostly were neutral towards the phenomenon and did not themselves have or want any tattoos, while other Europeans and residents of North America were generally positive and have already had tattoos or expressed a wish to have one done.

At the same time tattooing still seems to be greatly stereotyped in the West, particularly because of their association with lower social classes and criminals<sup>2</sup>, although not to the extent it is happening in Japan.

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<sup>2</sup> Based on an online discussion found at <http://www.debate.org/opinions/are-tattoos-negatively-stereotyped-in-the-united-states>



## CONCLUSION

Tattoo as a process has a very long and interesting history. In Japan, it existed since at least 300 B.C.E., and was tightly woven into the land's history ever since, first serving as a punishment, means of protection and social identification, then as means of adornment and finally now as an art.

The situation in Japan is somewhat different from what is happening in the field in Europe and North America; despite the rich history of the art tattoos are still frowned upon on the government level, even though they are not banned altogether. Tattooed people are still discriminated, and this attitude even spreads onto tattooed foreigners.

Nevertheless, the younger generation seems to be more lenient: with the advent of Western tattooing young people started to apply small cute tattoos for adornment, and even though they are still scared of traditional tattooing, they tend to dismiss these stereotypes when it comes to foreigners.

The obtained data shows that tattooing is starting to enjoy popularity in the Western cultures, in particular among young people. Perhaps in several years, when current young generation will age, the tattoos will not be as stigmatized as they are nowadays. Teardrop tattoos, "tramp stamps" and various badly made tattoos tend to make people generalize that every person with a tattoo either a criminal, or doesn't have enough of either intelligence or taste.

Tattoo has come through a huge international cultural exchange, starting with traditions of tattooing in major ancient civilizations, through middle ages, where it survived as both tribal means of identification in some areas and punitive means in more civilized regions such as Europe and Japan, and finally on the bodies of seafarers the tattoo when it began its international journey, which continues until this day. Although the attitudes towards it vary, based on stereotypes, religious or traditional complications, the young people take the lead and help tattooing survive, maybe not anymore as means of identification, or protection, but as an art, created in order to be appreciated

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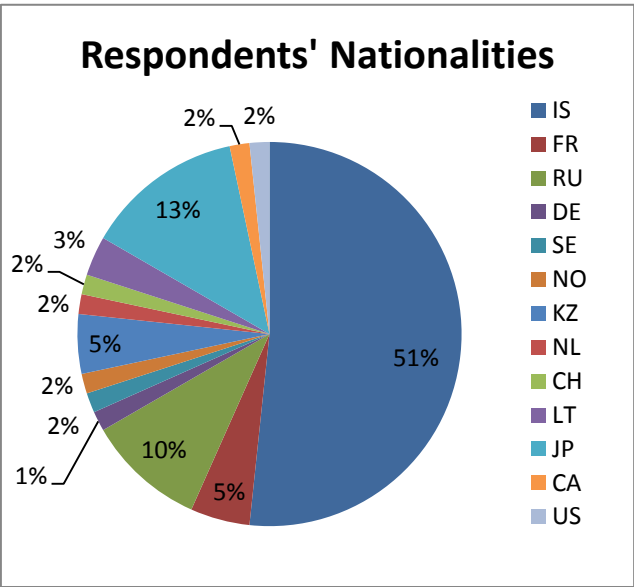
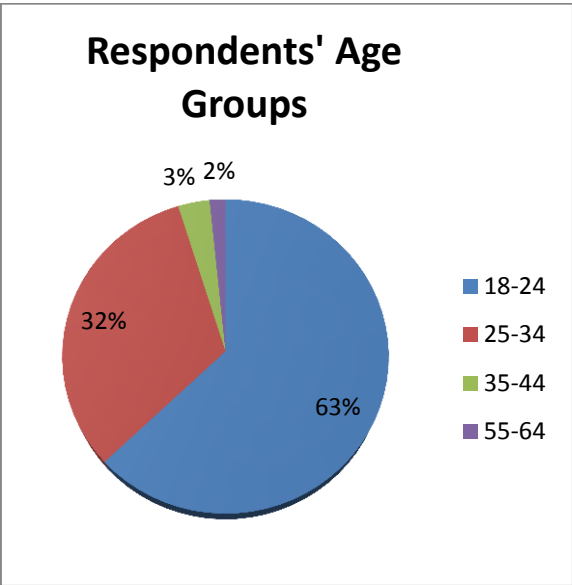
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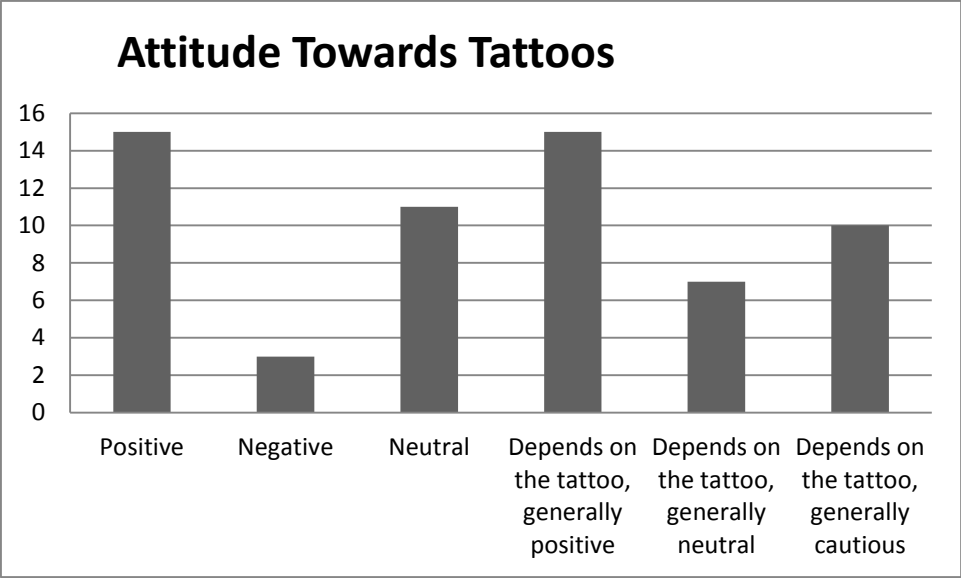
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# APPENDIX A: SURVEYS

## Survey 1 (International):

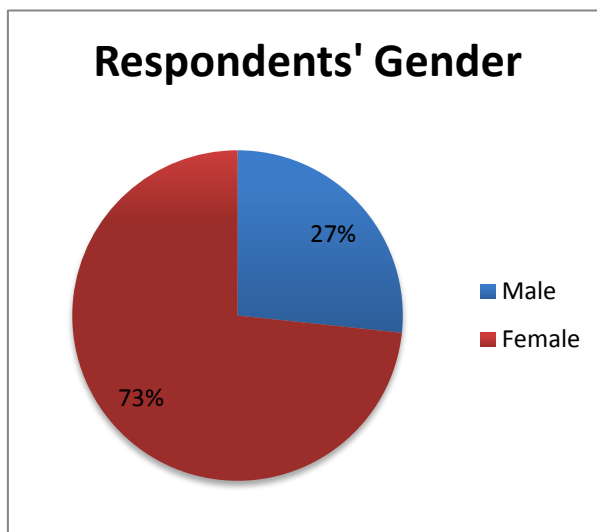
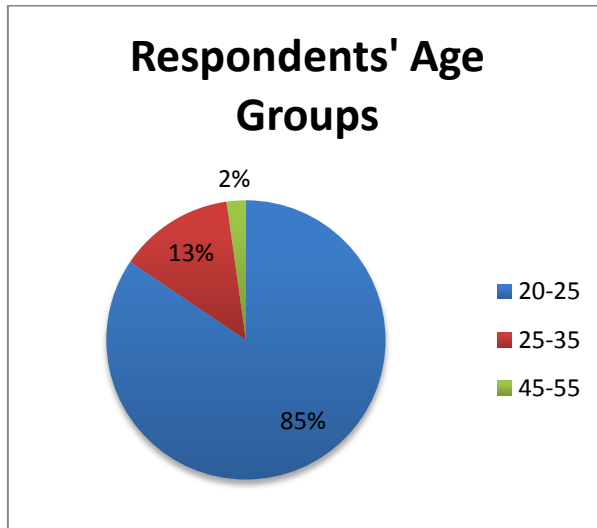
Conducted in 2013 online among the English-speaking people from 13 countries. Respondents' age groups vary from 18 to 64. 5 questions were asked, 4 of them multiple-choice question and 1 essay question. Number of valid samples – 62.



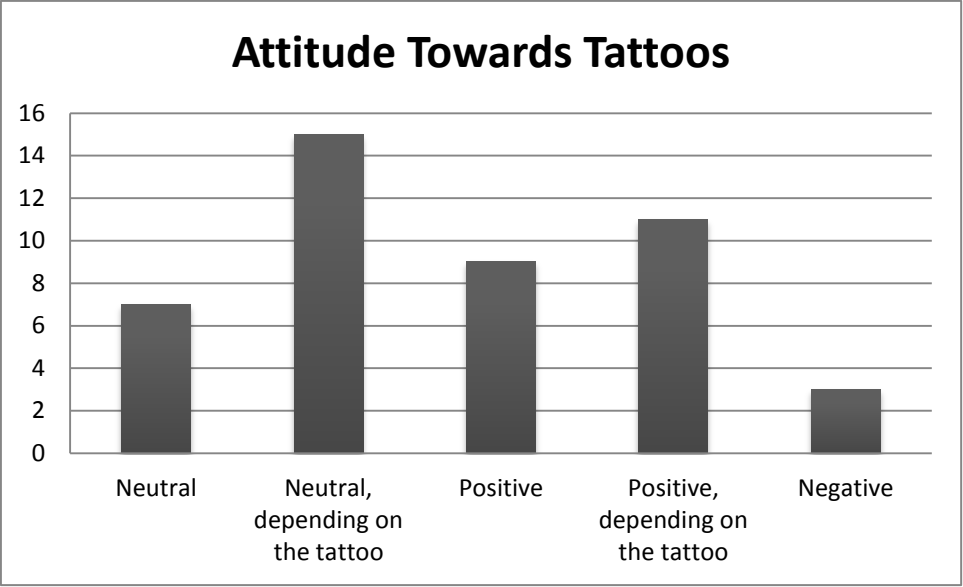


## Survey 2 (Russian):

Conducted in 2013 online among Russian nationals. Respondents' age groups vary from 20 to 55. Four multiple-choice questions were asked, followed by one essay question. Number of valid samples – 45.







## APPENDIX B: IMAGES

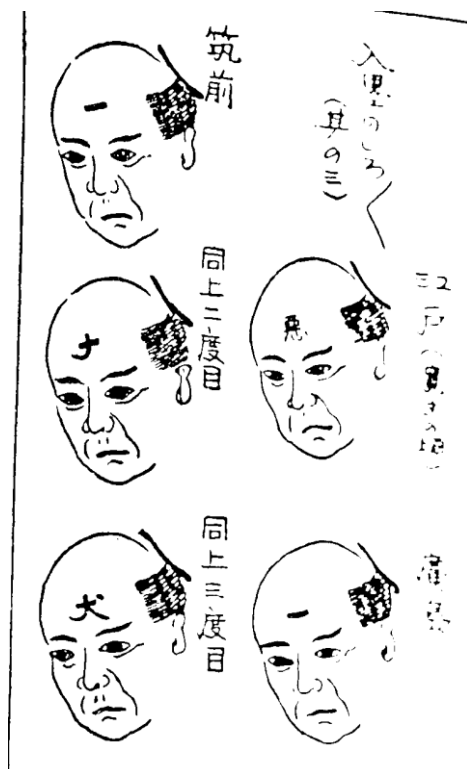


Fig.1 Punitive tattoos



Fig.2 a Suikoden woodblock print by Utagawa Kuniyoshi



Fig.3 a Suikoden woodblock print by Utagawa Kuniyoshi; image retrieved from [www.ukiyo-e.com](http://www.ukiyo-e.com)



Fig.4 a Suikoden woodblock print by Utagawa Kuniyoshi; image retrieved from [www.ukiyo-e.com](http://www.ukiyo-e.com)