



Socio-cultural Significance of Tattoo from Anthropological Perspectives

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Abstract: Since the Palaeolithic era, humans have gotten tattoos. It is an aesthetic modification of the body that expresses social, religious, and cultural views. An anthropological viewpoint views tattoos as a form of self-expression as well as a means of establishing and enforcing social boundaries. They can also serve as status symbols and a way for someone to show their allegiance to a certain group. This essay will examine the significance of tattooing from an anthropological standpoint, focusing on the function of tattoos in defining social and cultural borders. The numerous types of tattooing and their meaning in varied circumstances will also be covered.

Keywords: Tattoo, Anthropological standpoint, Socio-cultural significance

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Introduction

It's likely that the Polynesian term "tatau," which means "to mark something," is where the word "tattoo" first appeared. Captain James Cook, an explorer who travelled to the South Pacific Islands in 1769, is credited with introducing it to the English language. Tattoo culture's precise ancestry is uncertain, but it has been hypothesised that it goes back more than 5000 years. Indus Valley monuments, mummified Egyptian remains, and archaeological sites all over the world have shown the presence of tattoos. A tribal tattoo's fundamental message is that the first skin belonged to the first man, and the first man was an animal. The First Man and the First Woman's ancestors are represented by the tribe that created these tribal tattoo patterns.

They are descended from the original humans that inhabited this planet. The tribal tattoo designs serve as visual expressions of this affinity with early humanity. A tattoo is a mark on the skin that symbolises something that ordinarily

is not present in the body. It has a number of advantages that can change someone's life for the better. It is frequently employed because it has symbolic significance. Since ancient times, tattooing has been a significant feature of many societies. Tattoos have the potential to reveal cultural beliefs and values from an anthropological point of view. A person's identity or ideas can be revealed through tattoos, which are frequently utilised as a form of self-expression.

With tattoos used to denote status and rank in a group, it may also be utilised as a means of social communication. In rare situations, tattoos can even be used to represent spiritual views. Tattoos can also be used to indicate membership in a particular clan or tribe. Although the precise beginning of tattooing is unknown, there is evidence that it began during the Palaeolithic period in the form of tattoos on mummified bodies from that time. With evidence of tattoos on the faces of ancient Egyptian mummies, it is also thought that the practise of tattooing travelled from Polynesia to Europe.

Research methodology applied in this research

The majority of the research approach used in this work was qualitative. This included in-depth analyses of the pertinent anthropological literature on tattooing as well as interviews with people who had tattoos done on them personally. The paper was able to learn about the reasons people get tattoos, the varied types of tattooing, and the meanings attached to particular tattoos in diverse situations thanks to these sources. The historical evolution of tattooing and shifts in views towards the practise were also taken into account in the paper. A qualitative methodology was used in this study, with an emphasis on ethnographic techniques. The study was conducted through an online survey method, as well as by observing tattoo customs in various groups and reading pertinent literature. Observations were made in public locations where getting a tattoo is a common cultural practise, such as tattoo parlours, convention centres, and gatherings. Books, periodicals, and internet resources that were relevant to the issue were included in the literature study. The article was able to draw conclusions on the significance of tattoos from an anthropological standpoint because to its research.

Literature review

The scholarly studies on tattooing is vast, there are many papers and article as well from which we get to know several historical origin to various cultural and religious values. Many Scholars have studied the physical and psychological effects of tattooing on the individual, such as the risks of infection and scarring.

Studies that examine tattoos' social and cultural dimensions have also looked at things like how people use them to express themselves and their identities and where they fit into contemporary society. An anthropological research by B.J.R. Heeres (1976) examined tattooing among the Mentawai people of Sumatra. A minority ethnic community in Indonesia called the Mentawai is the subject of this study, which explores the historical, cultural, and ritualistic aspects of tattooing among them. The study examines tattooing's historical practises, justifications for the practise, and symbolic significance of the artwork. The research also examines the numerous social functions that tattoos serve in the lives of the Mentawai people as well as the development of this tradition. Another study (Heere, 2017) offers a thorough investigation of the Tzotzil people of Chiapas, Mexico's tattooing and body alteration customs. It looks into the practice's background, cultural significance, and a number of other facets, such as how it is used to express both personal and group identity. The practice's difficulties are also covered, including potential health concerns and stigmatisation perceptions. The study also takes into account the contemporary ramifications of body alteration and tattooing in the light of globalisation and shifting ideals. An ethnographic investigation into tattooing in the Indonesian island group of the Maluku. Heeres analyses the many meanings and interpretations of tattoos for the local population while also examining the cultural and historical context of the practise. In addition, he examines how tattooing has been received in contemporary society—whether positively or negatively—in light of colonisation and Christianity. He concludes by examining the ways in which modern tattooing techniques are evolving and adjusting to the times. For anyone curious about the background and culture of tattooing in the Maluku Islands, this book is an excellent reference.

An edited book titled *Body Art in Oceania: An Ethnographic Overview* examines (Heeres, 2019.) the different types of body art in Oceania, including rituals, body decoration, tattoos, body painting, and piercings. It examines the importance of body art in various cultures and how it has shaped history, cultural identity, and interpersonal interactions. Additionally, it looks at the diverse methods and supplies utilised by various cultures as well as the significance and practicality of body art in various settings. B.J.R. Heeres is the volume's editor, and a number of eminent specialists in the subject have contributed. Mark Peacock looks (2004) at the tattooing customs of the native South Pacific Islanders in his book *Tattooing in the South Pacific: An Ethnographic Study of Body Art and Meaning*. He emphasises on the tattoos' cultural and historical relevance in the area as well as their function

in expressing both personal and societal identity. In Peacock's research, she conducted interviews, observed tattooing customs on the islands of Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji, and examined old documents and works of art. He talks about the numerous connotations that various tattoo designs have, like status and protection, and how these connotations have evolved over time. He also looks into how colonialism, Christianity, and modernism have affected tattooing in the South Pacific. Some studies investigate how the Bolivian Chiriguano people use tattoos as a sign of social identification. For example, Giraudy (2013) carried out an anthropological investigation to examine the Chiriguano's usage of tattoos as a means of expressing and solidifying their sense of social identity. She discovered through interviews and participant observation that tattoos were utilised to distinguish people and groups within the community. She also discovered that tattoos were worn to commemorate significant historical events and to honour notable people. She was able to comprehend the significance of tattoos in terms of social identification for the Chiriguano people and how this identity was maintained through tattoo use by looking at the environment in which they were utilised.

"Tattooing in the Amazon: An Ethnography of the Yanomami" by Carla D. Martins (2000) demonstrates various tattooing techniques and ideas as well as their cultural and religious relevance. She also provides insights on Yanomami's tattooing practice as a way for them to express their individuality and to mark the passage from childhood to maturity with the aid of this. She also looks at tattooing's place in their society, including its use in body art and healing rituals. Martin offers a priceless perspective into the ways in which the Yanomami use their tattoos to build their identity and culture by examining these numerous facets of tattooing.

Socio cultural significance of Tattoo

Tribal tattoos serve as cultural symbols. It significantly affects a sense of tradition. Tattoos have been used for millennia in many cultures as a form of art, an expression of identity, and a way to remember significant occasions. In some cultures, getting a tattoo symbolises passing through puberty and into adulthood. In other cultures, tattoos serve as a deterrent to evil spirits or serve as a badge of allegiance. Tattoos can occasionally even be viewed as a type of spiritual defence. Additionally, people can display their creative expression and personal views through tattoos.

Whatever the motivation, tattoos are a deeply ingrained form of identification and expression in several cultures all over the world. Tattooing

is thought to have originated as a ritualistic bodily modification intended to denote status, rank, and spiritual beliefs. In the past, people have used tattoos to indicate rites of passage or membership in a particular group or culture. Tattooing served as a mark for slaves and criminals in some societies while serving as a symbol of power and beauty in others. Tribal tattoos are frequently utilised as a means of self-expression and identification. It allows people to express their culture, values, and history. It is also used to commemorate significant occasions.

According to some tribal values, Tribal tattoos also have supernatural powers, which acts as a protective shield around tribal people.

This belief can be projected in tribal tattoo designs, which frequently feature animals and symbols with religious or cultural associations. Tribal tattoos are a significant means of expression and storytelling for many cultures. They can share tales about someone's ancestry, experiences, and beliefs. As well as honouring specific gods and goddesses, they are also used to remember significant life events. A tattoo may be applied to signify a person's passage from one stage of life to another in some traditional societies. Native American, Pacific Islander, and African indigenous cultures are among those that are frequently linked to tribal tattoos.

Tribal tattoos are often associated with indigenous cultures, such as those of the Pacific Islands, Native Americans, and the African continent. They are traditionally used to show status, rank, and strength. They are also used as a form of protection and to mark significant moments in life. Many cultures also see tattoos as a way to connect with their ancestors and the spiritual world.

Importance of Tattoo as an Aesthetic Art form

In recent years, tattooing has grown in popularity as a form of art and self-expression. It is a traditional method of altering the body that has been practised for ceremonial and adornment purposes for ages all throughout the world. Tattoos are a type of artistic expression that can be applied to express one's personality, preserve cultural heritage, or memorialise significant events. Furthermore, tattoos can be aesthetically beautiful and offer a special means of self-expression. They can be used to improve one's physical appearance and add a touch of attractiveness to the body. Additionally, getting a tattoo is a wonderful way to keep a memorable occasion or experience with you forever. Last but not least, getting a tattoo is a way to express oneself.

Comparison of tattooing instrument between primitive and modern societies

Ancient tribes frequently used instruments fashioned from sharpened stones, bones, or animal horns to make tattoos. Usually created from soot, charcoal, or animal blood, the ink was used. In today's world, tattoos are made with specialised equipment and inks. The most popular equipment in use today is a tattoo machine, which consists of a motor, a needle bar, and a power source. The needles used typically come in a variety of sizes and shapes and are made of surgical-grade stainless steel. Additionally created expressly for tattooing, tattoo inks are available in a variety of colours. The usage of stencils, transfer paper, and skin marking markers are further contemporary tattooing instruments.

Geometric motives of tattoo

This is a type of tattoo which was done with geometric shape on a dark background. The geometric tribal tattoos were done with straight lines, triangles, squares, curves and other shapes like crescent moon, stars, hearts, and many more. A good example for this tattoo is the tattoo of the sun which has two suns, one on the right and one on the left side. The sun is like our body or our soul or our mind. And also the sun is our source of life. The sun represents the divine power of the universe. The geometric tattoo can be used for decoration, for ceremonies and for religion, however, the ancient people of the world have used geometric patterns on their body in many forms, from simple decorative motifs to complex patterns used in religious rituals. Some of these tattoos can be found on particular body areas, including the chest, neck, head, knees, and arms. For as long as there have been people, men, women, and children have all partake in the geometric tattooing tradition; nevertheless, throughout time, the tattooing technique has evolved. The tattoo has historically served as a means of identification, representing one's own group, tribe, or family in tribal and religious tattooing. Particularly geometric tattoos are frequently connected to some kind of spiritual, religious, or magical ceremony. In the past, American Indian males, including women and children, have decorated themselves with the geometric pattern known as the "Tribal" in the United States.

African tribal tattoo:- Its significance

The tattooing style known as "African tribal tattoos" is exclusive to the continent of Africa. They are frequently viewed as a means of expression and

communication that people can use to showcase their culture and heritage. Tattoos from the African tribal tradition can have striking, elaborate patterns and motifs that have spiritual and cultural importance. They are usually written in black ink and stand out thanks to their distinctive patterns and designs. Along with creatures like lions, elephants, and snakes, the shapes frequently feature abstract patterns like circles, diamonds, and crosses. They can also be single words, phrases, or even complete sentences. African tribal tattoos are frequently connected to luck, strength, and healing as well as protection. Additionally, they frequently have strong metaphorical meaning.

The Adinkra emblem is an representation of an African tribal tattoo. A representation of Ghanaian symbol that is frequently utilised in African tribal tattoos is the Adinkra symbol. It signifies emblem of strength, unification, and rebirth as well as resilience. Usually a circle with a cross in the centre, the emblem is frequently encircled by other designs and symbols. This design is common among African tribal tattoos and used as a lucky charm and also acts as a guard against any evil eyes.

Tattoos and some associated religious belief

Tattoos are a long-standing tradition in many cultures all over the world and are an ancient type of body art. Numerous individuals decide to have tattoos for a variety of reasons, including religious convictions. Tattoos can be a way to express one's religious convictions, remember special spiritual occasions, and even ward off ghosts. While some religions restrict tattoos, others view them as a sign of dedication and faith. It is significant to remember that there are many differences across different perspectives, and that what is acceptable in one religion could not be acceptable in another. The decision to get a tattoo is one that should be respected as such. Tattoos may be considered unsuitable or an act of idolatry by some religions, while others may see them as more positive ray of light.

Ultimately, it is up to the individual to determine what is acceptable according to their beliefs and values . Some people may believe that tattoos are not acceptable and others may believe they are acceptable Different religions have different views on the practice of tattooing and it is important to research and understand their beliefs before making any decisions. Generally, traditional forms of Christianity and Judaism both oppose the tattooing of the body based on the belief that the body should remain unaltered. However, there are some branches of Christianity, such as the Church of Body Modification, that accept body modifications as a way of

self-expression. In Islam, the practice of tattooing is strictly prohibited and is seen as a violation of the body's sanctity.

Other Eastern religions, including Hinduism and Buddhism, see tattoos as a way to convey one's beliefs and ideals as well as a form of ornamentation. Tattooing is viewed in certain Indigenous cultures as a way to communicate with one's ancestors and to carry spiritual messages. For instance, as part of their initiation rituals, some Aboriginal tribes in Australia used to engage in traditional tattooing. Always choose wisely and with consideration for other people's beliefs while getting a tattoo.

Tattoo and its Psychological outcomes

Longtime associations between tattoos and positive psychological and emotional outcomes exist. Many individuals see tattoos as a means of self-expression and a way to showcase their unique identities. They can also be used to celebrate significant life moments, pay tribute to loved ones, or just to express one's creativity. A sense of community and belonging may also be provided by getting a tattoo. Many people acquire tattoos to demonstrate their dedication to a particular group, such as a club or their religion. A rite of passage or a form of coming-of-age ritual is sometimes associated with obtaining a tattoo. Another approach to deal with life's challenges is through getting tattoos. At the time of weakened psychological condition, tattoos are also used as a tool of solace.

And for some, getting a tattoo is a way to reclaim their bodies after a trauma or illness. In spite of the potential psychological benefits, it's important to recognize that getting a tattoo is a serious decision. It's important to do your research and make sure you're getting a tattoo from a reputable artist in a safe and sterile environment.

Evolution of tattoo culture in the light of modernization

The perception of tattoos has dramatically changed as tattoo culture has evolved with modernisation. The acceptance of tattoos as an art form has increased along with the popularity of tattoos. Due to this, both the number of people having tattoos and the variety of tattoos have increased. Tattoos are now considered a means of expression rather than something that are only associated with the criminal underworld or rebellious adolescents. People of all ages, genders, and backgrounds are getting tattoos, and some do so to commemorate or record a significant moment in their lives. More complex and detailed tattoos are now possible thanks to the development of technology. The usage of numerous machines allows artists to produce intricate designs.

Because of this, tattoos can now be more unique and symbolic. In addition, more workplaces and educational institutions now permit tattoos, reflecting the growing social acceptability of them. People can now express themselves more freely without being afraid of prejudice as a result. Last but not least, the internet has made it easier for people to choose the ideal tattoo for their body because more tattoo ideas can now be shared online. Tattoos have grown in popularity and acceptance as a form of self-expression as a result of all of these changes.

Conclusion

According to anthropological perspectives, the study article “Socio-Cultural Significance of Tattoo from Anthropological Perspectives” explores the many connotations and cultural relevance of tattooing. The history of tattooing, its place in many civilizations, and its significance now are all covered in this essay. The history of tattooing is examined in the first section of the study, beginning with the early Neolithic tribes that practised it. The discussion then moves on to cover the various tattooing techniques used by various civilizations and how tattoo meanings have changed over time. The essay also looks at tattooing’s use as a form of self-expression and its place in spiritual and religious rituals, particularly in Polynesian and African cultures.

The discussion of tattoos’ present significance and their use as a means of expressing one’s identity, ideals, and social standing follows. Furthermore , it looks at the different symbolic meanings tattoos might have and how those meanings can be used to convey social, political, or spiritual themes. At the end of the study, it examines the dangers of getting a tattoo, including the possibility of infections and other health issues. The paper concludes by providing a thorough anthropological analysis of the socio-cultural relevance of tattoos. It offers a thorough explanation of the background, significance, and dangers of tattooing as well as examples of its historical application in many cultures.

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