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## TATTOOS OF POLITICIANS AND PUBLIC FIGURES IN IMAGE CREATION: A VISUAL-ANALYTICAL ASPECT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL PORTRAIT. PART 1.

### ТАТУЮВАННЯ ПОЛІТИКІВ І ПУБЛІЧНИХ ОСІБ У ФОРМУВАННІ ІМІДЖУ: ВІЗУАЛЬНО-АНАЛІТИЧНИЙ АСПЕКТ ПСИХОЛОГІЧНОГО ПОРТРЕТУВАННЯ. ЧАСТИНА 1.

#### Yuriy Romanenko

Doctor of Sciences (Soc.), Professor, Professor of the Department of International Communications and Communicative Technologies, Educational and Scientific Institute of International Relations, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv,

e-mail: [romanenko.jura@gmail.com](mailto:romanenko.jura@gmail.com)

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9739-0894>

#### Юрій Романенко

доктор соціологічних наук, професор, професор кафедри міжнародних медіакомунікацій та комунікативних технологій Навчально-наукового інституту міжнародних відносин Київського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка,

e-mail: [romanenko.jura@gmail.com](mailto:romanenko.jura@gmail.com)

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9739-0894>

***Abstract.** The purpose of this article is to construct a conceptual framework for applying key theories on the origins of tattoos as a component of nonverbal communication to politicians. This section serves as the first and introductory part of the article. It will present key theories on the origin and application of tattoos, along with selected demonstrative cases of public figures. The second part of this article will be devoted to the study of tattoos on specific Ukrainian and American politicians.*

*A number of research areas relevant to tattoos as a subject of independent study have emerged in the scientific literature. Among these, the author considers it necessary to highlight the (bio)evolutionary (cultural-anthropological), psychoanalytic (clinical-psychological and psychiatric), and cultural-sociological (art history) approaches. Each of these approaches offers its own explanatory framework for the origins of tattoos, the motivations for their use/application, and the psychological and sociocultural functions of tattooing both in the lives of individuals and in different social groups. Public figures, including politicians, more often than members of other social groups use tattoos to consciously manage impressions. This does not exclude the possibility of a politician having various tattoos applied at an earlier stage. However, inclusion in the public sphere and the acquisition of recognizable status predisposes one to edit one's personal image and alter the symbolic components of the body.*

*Politicians' constant contact with the media prioritizes the performative function of tattoos, as working with political advertising, propaganda, and PR technologies involves constructing not so much realistic images as simulacra that influence the perceptions of a particular target audience. This is because politics for the media is an art form primarily concerned with constructing appearances.*

***Key words:** tattoos, visual analytics, image, image formation, (bio)evolutionary (cultural-anthropological) understanding of tattoos, psychoanalytic understanding of tattoos, cultural-sociological (art history) understanding of tattoos.*

***Анотація.** Метою статті є побудова концептуальної схеми застосування ключових груп теорій походження татуювань як компонента невербальної комунікації щодо політиків. Ця частина статті виступає першою та вступною. У ній будуть представлені ключові теорії походження та нанесення татуювань з окремими умовно-демонстраційними кейсами громадських особистостей. Друга частина цієї статті буде присвячена дослідженню татуювань конкретних українських та американських політиків.*

*У науковій літературі сформувалася низка напрямів, релевантних татуюванням як*

предмету самостійного дослідження. Серед таких напрямів автор статті вважає за потрібне виділити (біо)еволюціоністське (культурно-антропологічне), психоаналітичне (клініко-психологічне та психіатричне) та культурально-соціологічне (мистецтвознавче). Кожен із напрямків пропонує свою пояснювальну схему походження татуювань, мотивації їх застосування/нанесення, психічні та соціокультурні функції татуювання як у житті особистості, так і різних соціальних груп.

Громадські особистості, включаючи політиків, частіше за представників інших соціальних спільностей інших використовують татуювання для усвідомленого управління враженнями. Останнє не виключає обставини присутності на тілі політика різного татуювання, завданого в ранній період. Тим не менш, включеність в публічний простір і набуття статусу впізнаваного схиляє до редактури особистісного образу та зміни символічних складових тіла.

Постійний контакт політиків зі ЗМІ ставить як пріоритетну перформативну функцію татуювання, оскільки робота з технологіями політичної реклами, пропаганди, PR передбачає конструювання не так реалістичних образів, як симулякрів, які працюють на сприйняття тієї чи іншої цільової аудиторії. Це з тим, що політика ЗМІ є сферу мистецтва, що займається, переважно, конструюванням видимостей.

**Ключові слова:** татуювання, візуальна аналітика, імідж, формування іміджу, (біо)еволюціоністське (культурно-антропологічне) розуміння татуювань, психоаналітичне розуміння татуювань, культурально-соціологічне (мистецтвознавче) розуміння татуювань.

**Introduction.** The study of tattooing as a subject of scientific research requires an initial exploration of cultural history. The primary meanings of tattoos are linked to social hierarchies and the construction of inequality within tribal communities. Tattoos can signal the wearer's status niche, express their identity, warn of possible behavioral patterns, manage impressions, and express personal history.

In all of these aspects, tattoos perform an important signifying function, providing preemptive information at a subconscious level. At the same time, the use of tattoos for aesthetic purposes (when a tattoo becomes a kind of decorative canvas) does not preclude all of the aforementioned influences of tattoo symbolic compositions, both consciously and subconsciously. For any public figure, tattoos are a crucial component of nonverbal communication, complementing all other elements of visual existence: body and facial features, gestures, facial expressions and pantomime, clothing styles, accessories and jewelry, visual symbols of personal space, and so on.

**The purpose of this article** is to construct a conceptual framework for applying key groups of theories on the origins of tattoos as a component of nonverbal communication to politicians. This section is the first and introductory part of the article. It will present key theories on the origin and application of tattoos, along with selected case studies of public figures. The second section will examine the tattoos of specific Ukrainian and American politicians.

**Literature review.** A number of areas relevant to tattoos as a subject of independent research have emerged in the scientific literature. Among these approaches, the author of the article considers it necessary to highlight the (bio)evolutionary (cultural-anthropological), psychoanalytic (clinical-psychological and psychiatric), and cultural-sociological (art-historical) approaches. Each approach offers its own explanatory framework for the origins of tattoos, the motivations for their use/application, and the psychological and sociocultural functions of tattooing both in the lives of individuals and different social groups.

Among the authors representing the first approach are Yu. Amurova, R. Artyukhina, R. Carmen, and S. Wohlrab (*Амурова, 2019, pp. 10-16; Carmen et al., 2012, pp. 134-143; Wohlrab, Fink, Kappeler, Brewer, 2009, pp. 202-206*). The authors' primary explanations for tattoos center on utilitarian and pragmatic rationales, explaining the biological and economic benefits of tattooing. The researchers' consensus is that tattooing allowed for, firstly, intimidation and other psychological effects, and thus, more effective resistance to members of other tribal groups in the face of a brutal struggle for survival.

Secondly, it provided a comprehensive phenotype for viewing, thereby advantageously emphasizing the symbolic differences between one group and another, which created and continues

to create the necessary cultural advantages in the exploration of space.

Thirdly, tattoos, according to evolutionary logic, provided tattooed males with evolutionary demographic advantages due to their intuitively ascribed higher masculinity.

Among the authors representing this second approach are M. Atkinson, A. Armstrong de Almeida, G. Grumet, W. Karacaoglan, and D. Maxwell (*Atkinson, 2003; Armstrong de Almeida, 2005; Grumet, 1983, pp. 482–492; Karacaoglan, 2012, pp. 5–28; Maxwell, 2017*).

The main explanations for the essence of tattoos among the authors presented are their use as a tool for processing un verbalized traumatic experiences and archetypal projections. In both cases, tattoos allow for the expression of personal and group affects that are intolerable or difficult to bear due to the painful component, high torturality, and/or abusiveness.

Among the authors representing the third direction are S. Alter-Muri, G. Forbes, L. Kirstein and K. Kjelskau, K. Doss and A. Ebesu Hubbard (*Alter-Muri, 2020, pp. 139–146; Forbes, 2001, pp. 774–786; Kirstein, Kjelskau, 2015, pp. 37–40; Doss, Ebesu Hubbard, 2009, pp. 62–74*).

The main explanations for the essence of tattoos among the authors presented are their presentational and aesthetic functions and background visual fascination. This is both about constructing a positive image and various forms of impression management.

**Main results of the study. (Bio)evolutionary (cultural-anthropological) approach.** In the first approach, researchers focus on the question of what pragmatic components of tattooing provided its wearers with biological, and later, socio-hierarchical advantages. Thus, Ya. Amourova, summarizing a number of research studies, within the evolutionary paradigm, notes a connection between tattooing and primitive (imitative) magic, a kind of self-programming hard recording associated primarily with hunting and self-defense (*Амурова, 2019, pp. 10-12*).

By incorporating the image of a particular animal into their bodies, primitive hunters hoped to acquire the characteristics of that animal (plant, bird) and/or use it as a means of defense. According to this magical "logic," a hunter who tattooed the image of a tiger on his body "acquired" tiger-like qualities, namely ferocity, unbridled courage, terrifying strength, and so on.

*Illustrative case 1. A politician has the following tattoo on his right arm: a tiger grasping a doe by the throat, writhing in agony. The tattoo may serve an imitative-magical function due to its display to others. This is because the tattoo itself, on a latent, unconscious level, informs recipients of their likeness to a predator (rather than a prey), which may correspond to liberal-evolutionist identities and philosophies such as "woe to the weak and vanquished" and "the vanquished are the cause of their own misfortune." The individual who has inflicted such a tattoo has created a permanent inscription, which, through the work of the imagination (i.e., magically), is intended to maintain the zoomorphic identity of the tiger in the tattooed subject's psyche. At the same time, the politician communicates his ideological identity in a way that makes his message clear.*

A similar utilitarian logic in understanding the essence of tattooing is also shared by English-language authors representing the evolutionary school. Thus, R. Carmen, A. Guittar, and H. Dillon, within the framework of their evolutionary view of tattoos, put forward two hypotheses regarding their origins (*Carmen et al., 2012, pp. 134-143*). The first hypothesis, which the authors call the "human canvas hypothesis," describes tattoos in their marking role in relation to the individual or community. In this understanding, a tattoo is a complementary phenotypic representation of identity. At the same time, the symbols presented in tattoos emphasize, first of all, the differences of an individual or community from other individuals and communities, but not their similarities.

The second hypothesis, which the authors dubbed the "raising the stakes hypothesis," suggests a connection between tattoos and perceived levels of resilience, endurance, and resistance to foreign substances, including viruses and infections. This hypothesis relies heavily on common sense notions that individuals who can afford tattoos enjoy significant health, i.e., biological and genetic advantages for reproduction.

In primitive conditions, tattooing itself was a risky act, as it was performed without any precautions for the body. At the same time, in primitive societies, genetic and biological superiority coincide with social dominance, since a tattooed individual is inherently capable (given good health) of coping with threatening environmental factors (both animal and human). Wohlrab et al. (*2009, pp. 202-206*) were able to empirically confirm the evolutionary hypotheses described above in their study of intuitive health assessments of exhibited subjects. Respondents of both sexes were asked to rate

the health of tattooed men and tattooed women. Women generally rated tattooed men as healthier than non-tattooed men. Conversely, male respondents rated tattooed women as less healthy than female respondents rated men as less healthy.

N. Artyukhina, in her study of youth tattoos, partially adheres to evolutionary logic, viewing tattoos as a symbolic tool for emancipation and the ability of young people to challenge society. Such defiant behavior, a marker of psychopathicity (sociopathicity), is explained, in no small part, by the young person's general excitability and aggression, their ability to assert themselves at the expense of others, not so much by adapting to the environment as by breaking habitual adaptations and creating new ones. These characteristics relate not so much to the psyche as to the body and organism, and are more biological and organismic than sociocultural (Артыюхіна, 2016, pp. 17-22).

*Illustrative case 2. An Instagram blogger has several complex tattoos on the front of his torso. On the neck are fragments of barbed wire or wire-like thorns. In the center of the chest are two Dobermans, one breaking free from its chain, while the other remains frozen in a motionless pose. On the lower torso, on the right, is a writhing snake, while on the left, an angelic creature with wings and a spear. On the front of the shoulder muscles, a mirror is visible on the right (diagonally from the Doberman breaking free from its chain), and on the left (diagonally from the Doberman frozen in a motionless pose), a scale.*

*The tattoo simultaneously demonstrates both convention and rebellion against it. The upper part of the tattoo composition reflects the experience of pain and suffering as a censorship structure. Considering the cross symbol located on the left temple, there is reason to assume that this is a painful and suffering (even tortural) experience of Christianization. The central psychopathic conflict is presented as a confrontation between two Dobermans: the psychopathic torturality itself is determined by the high intensity of the affect of anger/hatred/rage/pain and the need to maintain external equanimity and coldness.*

*Hypothetically, the Christianizer(s) employed bullying tactics (moral and/or physical), which corresponds to narcissistically demonstrated aggression and unhinged emotionality (the Doberman on the right, under the mirror), combined with rational-volitional inhibitions and a show of equanimity. At the level of empirical consciousness, close to the unconscious (in the composition, this corresponds to tattoos located closer to the two internal oblique muscles), this corresponds to the basic psychopathic conflict between angelic "holiness" and demonic infernality, i.e., the dual manifestations of the angel within and the demon without.*

In closed pre-industrial societies, the connection between the individual and the community is rigid, as community discourages social mobility (both horizontal and vertical). This circumstance is reflected in the creation of mechanisms for attaching the individual to the group and the creation of conditions where the loss of group membership and affiliation becomes tantamount to the biological death of the individual. It is in this context that social ties can be equated with biological ones, and the origin of tattoos can be supplemented by yet another evolutionary explanation.

The purpose of tattoos, as follows from this explanation, is linked to the ascriptive status of closed societies. The latter, as is well known, are intended to socially immobilize the individual and anchor them to a social group during their lifetime. Ascriptive statuses typically derive from biological characteristics, such as race, gender, age, region of origin, family kinship, and so on. Evolutionary essentialism helps explain certain subcultural tattooing practices, such as criminal tattoos. In penitentiary settings, regardless of the type of society, ascriptive status is reproduced due to the very harshness of these institutions.

Criminal society is built, at its lowest ebb, on biological hierarchies, and subcultural (criminal) tattoos record evolutionary advantages or involutory defects, marked by certain signs (symbols). As T. Uplisashvili notes, in prisons in Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, and Moldova, real power lies with informal groups that create a semblance of a caste order. Moreover, the prison administration itself is swayed by the latter, profiting from the shadow penitentiary economy that exists within such informal caste hierarchies (*The Shadow Code*, 2025).

Tattoos document evolutionary and biological differences between the top caste of thieves-in-law, the overseers, and the "posledentsi," who represent the former, the muzhiks, the goats, and the downtrodden (lowered), reflected in both individual symbols and symbolic compositions. Thus, thieves-in-law may tattoo themselves with eight-pointed stars or military epaulets, as well as various

symbols of monarchical power. Tattoos in the criminal world ascribe not only an individual's place in the informal biological hierarchy but also their "suit," that is, the characteristics of the criminal group, which are fixed, like innate (biological) traits, on certain sectors of the body (thieves, rapists, murderers, robbers, etc.).

**Illustrative Case 3.** *A thief-in-law has a complex tattoo on the front of his torso. On his shoulders are distinctive epaulettes with ligature, and beneath them, in the upper pectoral area (right and left), are eight-pointed stars. Under the right epaulette are two St. George's crosses, and in the center of his torso is an image of the Madonna and Child. The tattoo signifies the evolutionary and biological advantages of its bearer as a traditionalist monarchist in opposition to the Soviet system. A thief-in-law and anti-Soviet figure must represent a more powerful biological and organic formation than the average thief-in-law who does not oppose the system.*

**Psychoanalytic (clinical-psychological, psychodiagnostic) approaches** link tattoos to unconscious contents and/or various types of character organization, both within the conditionally normal (neurotic) and pathological (borderline or psychotic) continuums. A common thread running through all these explanations of tattoos is the connection between tattoo symbols and ways of processing intolerable emotions.

In their studies of psychodynamic psychiatry, Grumet and Karakoglan document the correlation between tattoos and masochistic affective complexes (anger/hatred under control). In this conceptual framework, the masochistic type of character organization visualizes the acting out of anger and hatred that are repressed. Thus, with the help of a tattoo, a person illustrates not only their ability to survive the pain of sadistic abuse (primarily from parents, but also from other significant parental figures), but also to cope with it (Grumet, 1983, pp. 482–492; Karacaoglan, 2012, pp. 5–28).

Atkinson, Anderson, Almeida, and Maxwell also come to similar conclusions. All of the authors listed examined the connection between tattoos and masochism, abusive dissociation (primarily in victims of sexual violence), as well as grief, separation, and depression. The authors believe that a common factor in explaining the reasons for tattooing is the achievement of a state of control over a particular affect through experiencing laboratory pain during tattooing (Atkinson, 2003; Armstrong de Almeida, 2005; Maxwell, 2017).

This achieves a partial catharsis, which, while not a substitute for verbal insights, is nonetheless a better alternative to total alexithymia. The tattoo thus serves as a tool for visually symbolic verbalization of affect, thereby providing a semblance of therapeutic (self-)help. Maxwell points to the potential for tattoos to be used as symbols of transformation and healing in his article. This applies, in particular, to tattoos in the form of Buddhist mandalas, which, according to the author, induce an altered (meditative) state of consciousness in which post-traumatic transformations become possible.

Further conceptualization of tattoos within the framework of Carl Jung's analytical psychology allows them to be interpreted as visually symbolic projections of archetypes. Understanding archetypes as structures of group (societal) apperception that structure individual perception, the author of this article has reason to believe that archetypes can be visualized as symbols or symbolic compositions, with tattoos themselves becoming their unconscious symbolic projections.

**Illustrative Case 4.** *Case 4 features a complex tattoo of a thief in law and an anti-Soviet activist. The centerpiece of the tattoo composition is the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary holding a baby. In a Jungian sense, this symbol represents the archetypal projection of the Great Mother, under whose protection (both in one's own imagination and through induced fantasies) the tattoo wearer "is." The archetypal motif of "mother and child" itself is simultaneously hypnotic and somnambulistic, i.e., describes both the altered state of consciousness of the owner and his unconscious intention to introduce others into such a state, i.e. to induce the work of their imagination in the direction of his infantile identity and dependence on women.*

**Illustrative Case 5.** *Justin Trudeau's left shoulder features a composite tattoo depicting a combination of Hyde the Raven and the planet Earth within his torso. The image itself is a projection of the Trickster archetype, which represents the identity of the Creator of the world and the cunning rogue. The archetypal motif is that cunning/flexibility rules the world, and those who identify with the Trickster image exhibit similar qualities. The manifestation of wisdom as cunning can border on creative qualities, but the semantics of this image extend beyond creativity. The Trickster image itself is also a shapeshifter, since when Hyde is turned 180 degrees, he transforms into a shaman disguised*

as a raven. The politician apparently ascribes similar qualities of a shaman (influencing a group of people to induce them into altered states of consciousness) to himself.

**Sociocultural (cultural and sociological) and art studies.**

In cultural and sociological understandings, tattoos become tools for presenting identity and self-decoration. To capture group affiliation, tattoos must fulfill certain functions within group memory, as indicated by numerous researchers (*Alter-Muri, 2020, pp. 139–146; Forbes, 2001, pp. 774–786; Kierstein, Kjelskau, 2015, pp. 37–40; Doss, Ebesu Hubbard, 2009, pp. 62–74*). If a tattoo is part of group memory, then it naturally becomes a kind of "memory knot"—a symbol and/or symbolic composition that reminds the individual of their membership in a particular subculture (counterculture) or social community.

However, it's worth noting that individuals are more likely to inflict such commemorative knots on their own bodies when they experience incomplete internalization of their identity. Incomplete internalization of identity reflects a state of life in which certain meanings remain incompletely understood or accepted, and therefore more conditional and dubious than real. The very act of symbolically emphasizing group affiliation through tattoos reflects the transitory nature of identity and/or the search for value-based references that could become personal meanings.

The memorial function of tattoos in relation to significant others (for example, idols or deceased relatives), as well as memorable events and/or memorable places, is also linked to the presentation of identity. This connection stems from the identitarian nature of memory, the very purpose of which, in the individual or societal psyche, is to imprint factuality. What has become factual usually acquires a fatal cultural or social heaviness. Facts are usually pressing events or actions whose consequences are characterized by irreversibility. Tattoos capture this irreversibility and become its visual-symbolic narrative and performative.

**Illustrative case 6.** *The tattoo's owner (an American politician) has a portrait of J.F. Kennedy framed by laurel branches inked on his right shoulder. Above Kennedy's head is a rising sun and a dove with an olive branch in its beak. In this case, the tattoo's owner not only presents his left-liberal ideological identity but also a narrative of personal peace and commitment to Judeo-Christian values regarding the permanence of the post-flood world.*

*The combination of the image of Kennedy the peacemaker (known for his resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis) with the Old Testament symbol of a dove with an olive branch in its beak is no coincidence. According to the Old Testament, the first world was destroyed by God in a global flood. This was an image of God's first judgment. According to the Book of Revelation, the Second World is destined for God's judgment in the form of burning by fire. The "analogue" of such a "judgment" (no longer in the sacred, but in the secular sense) could have been a nuclear catastrophe, which was averted thanks to the common sense of politicians. Therefore, the Old Testament allusion in the tattoo is no coincidence.*

K. Doss and E. Hubbard (*Doss, Ebesu Hubbard, 2009, p. 70*) conducted their own empirical study and a secondary analysis of empirical research by other authors, which revealed a number of interesting patterns in tattooing within the framework of I. Goffman's impression management theory.

The first pattern concerns the public display of tattoos as an important impression management tool. Politicians, for example, may get tattoos based on how others perceive them, that is, by reading their mirror self and the reactions of others to it. Thus, tattoos can become part of a useful image necessary for attunement to a group environment. For example, a politician from a left-wing party might tattoo a gear (cogwheel) on the back of his hand in an attempt to build a favorable image among members of the industrial elite. The second pattern is that the use of tattoos as impression management tools will depend on the value (or devaluation) of the social identity. The higher the value of the corresponding social identity, the higher the likelihood that tattoos will be used as impression management tools, i.e., consciously.

This also follows the converse: the lower the value of the corresponding social identity, the lower the likelihood that tattoos will be used as impression management tools. If the value of the social identity is insignificant, then tattooing usually occurs as an impulsive, unconscious expression. The individual is little concerned with the meanings conveyed by their tattoo or the unconscious mental reactions it evokes in their cultural and social environment.

Doss and Hubbard support this conclusion by stating that "tattoos are widely considered to be

communicative to some extent and that many people actually use their tattoos to convey messages to others" (*Doss, Ebesu Hubbard, 2009, p. 70*). There can be little doubt about this, as communication between people is inevitable (indeed, it occurs in any case), regardless of whether it is verbal or nonverbal. In both cases, tattoos are communicative (regardless of respondents' opinions on this matter).

Even if tattoos are not intended for public display and visible exposure to the external environment (for example, they are hidden under clothing), these messages are nevertheless conveyed to another part of the social environment – the internal microenvironment (parents, spouses, friends and acquaintances, etc.), not to mention the fact that the individual conveys the tattoo's symbolic narratives to themselves, thereby engaging in a kind of NLP.

This suggests some modification of the authors' conclusion that "from an impression management perspective, for people who do not consider their visible tattoos to have communicative value, this may simply be an example of poor impression management." Here, it's probably worth discussing not so much that such people may be examples of poor impression management, but rather that they are unconsciously predisposed to different reference groups whose impressions they hope to manage. Overall, the authors correctly conclude that "tattoos can be communicative regardless of whether the person with the tattoo perceives them as such. Individuals less aware of the communicative value of tattoos may unintentionally send messages about themselves to others" (*Doss, Ebesu Hubbard, 2009, p. 70*).

**Conclusions.** In a society of caste and class inequality, tattooing serves important stratification functions, distinguishing between the dominant and the dominated. Moreover, tattooing is often carried out under coercive circumstances. Caste- or class-based societies entrench property rights over people and treat some people as objects. This dehumanization corresponds to the right of dominants to brand members of subordinate groups, marking them with signs of their personal ownership, use, and control.

Tattooing in this context expresses a certain fatally coercive identity, with the inability of the wearer to shed their material status. In caste and class-based societies, tattoos are applied to the bodies of slaves, as well as to livestock, utensils, and other objects. In such cases, they represent a kind of personal brand for the owner.

An analog of this tattooing practice in modern society is the practice of forced tattooing of members of the lower criminal castes in prisons. The semantic context of their application reflects the group contempt of the strong for the weak and the stigmatization of the latter as the humiliated and defeated, with the forced inscription of the history of their humiliation/enslavement on their bodies.

With the emergence of a society of social mobility and class structure, the functions of tattooing increasingly shift toward self-expression, the presentation of identity, and aesthetic individualization. All of these functions, however, are based on a predisposition to the continuous reproduction of traumatic experiences in the present. This experience, from the often unconscious perspective of the tattooing subject, is not simply not to be forgotten. It must be continually retained in the field of perception due to the supreme value of the elusiveness of a particular image or symbolic composition.

That which is continuously focused on usually has the highest value. Such objects are associated with both cultic reverence and an unbearable fear of loss. But both are determined not so much by the tattoo itself as by its content and the area of the body where it is applied. Nevertheless, whatever the symbolic meaning of the tattoo or the area of the body where it is applied, the tattoo itself reflects the central status of a "weak spot" in a particular mental function or group of functions.

This becomes all the more logical and justified because the weakest mental functions (as well as the associated bodily, social, and cultural functions) are usually the object of the greatest care and "guardianship" on the part of the registers of consciousness and/or censorship. Common sense dictates that existing strength does not require constant efforts to confirm it. Nor does this strength require any additional efforts or arrangements to confirm its significance.

Silent calm usually accompanies the image of real strength. Weaknesses, on the other hand, exhibit a peculiar garishness and behave defiantly. The attempt of any provocative weakness to focus and/or capture attention, to become a situational attractor, is usually beyond question. Anything dubious and weak behaves provocatively; anything stable and certain, durable and long-lasting,

behaves rather routinely and monotonously, even, to a significant degree, monotonously and boringly. This logical chain can, with a significant degree of correspondence, be extrapolated to tattoos.

The more vivid, rich, varied, and multi-compositional the tattoos, the greater the glaring discrepancy between the image and reality, the higher the level of expression of the probable need to complement the mental apparatus, bodily functions, and, not least (and perhaps even primarily), cultural and social identities.

Both individual tattoo images and their symbolic compositions are blatant signifiers of weak and/or minority mental and/or bodily functions. Such functions require a continuous attentional tone and constant reproduction in the perceptual field of both the one who applies them and those who perceive them.

In terms of self-perception, of the three self-images, tattoos express (as is already becoming clear) not so much the real self as the mirror and/or ideal self. However, for the first (real) self, any tattoo symbolic image becomes a reinforcing, psycho-shaping visual performative, since the latter's reflection in both the conscious and unconscious minds of the recipients (at least sometimes) initiates questions about the meaning of the tattoos. Such questions are usually followed by storytelling, the importance of which for the psyche is difficult to overestimate.

Storytelling about the meanings of tattoo symbols and symbolic compositions becomes therapeutic narratives for the storytellers themselves, allowing them to build upon existing identities, fulfill a claim or demand for a particular social status or role, both imagine themselves and manage the impressions and/or fantasies of others, and, in an unconscious symbolic-dramatic format, express the personal stories behind particular tattoos.

Public figures, including politicians, more often than representatives of other social groups use tattoos to consciously manage impressions. This does not exclude the presence of various tattoos on a politician's body, applied at an earlier time. Nevertheless, inclusion in public space and the acquisition of recognizable status predisposes one to edit one's personal image and alter the symbolic components of the body.

Politicians' constant contact with the media prioritizes the performative function of tattoos, as working with political advertising, propaganda, and PR technologies involves constructing not so much realistic images as simulacra that influence the perceptions of a particular target audience. This is because politics for the media is an art form primarily concerned with constructing appearances.

The goal of any public figure is to "subvert shadow in favor of light," to imbue their image with features that best manage the positive impressions they create. In their self-construction, politicians also allow themselves to delve into the depths and depths of the worst crimes against humanity. However, both the strategy of emphasizing the positive and the negative is usually chosen consciously. And tattoos play a significant role in such presentations. Political will to power allows and presupposes a wide variety of tattooed representations of identity. Their presentation to newsmakers creates another piece of news about the politician, alongside the public speeches of himself and/or his speechwriter.

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