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Inked Expressions: An appreciation of selected contemporary tattoo art among Ghanaians in Kumasi and Accra metropolises

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Abstract

Tattooing has been practiced for several years across the world. It is considered an art form that transmits cultural expressions and reflects the differences between groups of people globally. In Ghana, the popularity of contemporary tattooing has soared for various reasons. However, there is little scholarly research on tattoo culture in Ghana. Therefore, the study attempts to appreciate the aesthetic elements of selected contemporary tattoos in Kumasi and Accra metropolitan areas to reveal their social, philosophical, and other underpinnings. Qualitative ethnographic approach was employed in which a total of twenty-two (22) tattooed respondents were obtained for data collection using homogenous purposive and exponential discriminative snowball sampling techniques. Unstructured-Interviews and naturalistic observations constituted the data collection instruments. The study found that contemporary tattoo designs in Kumasi and Accra metropolises diversely included minimalist designs, religious symbols, portraits, decorative designs, philosophical symbols, among others, which aesthetically convey the religious identity, philosophy of life, and self-expression of tattoo wearers. While the study concludes that contemporary tattoo art in Ghana (Kumasi & Accra) is an embodiment of a dynamic and evolving art form that symbolically resonates with the persona, philosophy of life, sociocultural and religious expressions of tattoo wearers, it is recommended that further research should be conducted

Keywords

Aesthetics,
Appreciation,
Contemporary tattoo
art,
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on the side effect of tattoo art on the health of tattoo wearers in Ghana. This will help determine whether or not tattoo art should be formalised as an acceptable academic field of study as well as be promoted by art institutions, galleries and museums in Ghana.

1. Introduction

The Tattoo art has been practiced for many years. According to Stevenson (2008), tattooing has been practiced for at least 10,000 years, where Otzi the Iceman, whose mummified tattooed remains were discovered in the Alps between Austria and Italy in 1991 is said to be the earliest reported tattoo. Additionally, evidence of women from ancient Egypt were identified with tattoos on various parts of their bodies in tomb scenes around 1200 B.C.E and on figurines around 1300 B.C.E with small bronze implements identified as tattooing tools (Anderson, 2023). The word tattoo originated from the Tahitian word *tau-tau*, which means to mark, and was originally used by the French navigator Bougainville to describe the Tahitian islanders' body ornamentation in his Voyage '*Autour Du Monde*' in 1766-69, published in Paris in 1771 (DeMello, 2000; Fedorenko et al., 1999).

From a global perspective, tattooing is perceived as an art form that transmits a wide range of cultural expressions and social dichotomies within spaces where they exist (Hambly, 2009). It cuts across a range of purposes which are for religious beliefs and magic, and social and anti-social purposes. It is also argued that tattooing is one of the commonest mechanisms for personal identification and enhancing one's beauty (Bell, 2019; Avruch, 2018). Studies also corroborate that the art of tattooing integrates contemporary methods and trends to produce unique artworks on the skin that expresses the personality, interests, and individuality of the person, as opposed to traditional tattooing, which depended on simple designs and limited colour palettes (Andrews, 2019; Atkinson, 2003; DeMello, 2000). Contemporary tattoo artists use high-powered and quality equipment such as specialised machines and high-quality ink, to create seamless, intricate designs that are tailored to the client's exact wants and tastes (Atkinson, 2004; Rosenkilde, 2015; Park, 2023). In addition, minimalist designs, brilliant colours, art nouveau-inspired works, geometric shapes, and realistic portraiture are some examples of contemporary tattooing (Hardin, 1999). According to DeMello (2000), studies have explored the cultural and symbolic meaning of tattoos in various societies and how tattoos have been produced and used to express identity, commemorate events or people, and convey cultural values and beliefs.

In contemporary sub-Saharan Africa, the art of tattooing is also well-practiced by using contemporary techniques, tools, and materials as against the traditional technique carried out by the Holi, Somba, Fulani, and the Fon people across the Sahel (Andrews, 2019). Just as tattooing is pervasive in Africa, research on body modifications among various ethnic groups in Africa such as Sudan, Nigeria, Benin, and Ghana, has concentrated on traditional body markings (Ebeheakey & Kquofi, 2018) with little concentration on tattoo art. Meanwhile, in Ghana, the popularity of contemporary tattooing has really soared for various reasons (Tetteh et al., 2022). Therefore, with such little scholarly research on tattooing in Ghana, those who choose to make

tattoos on their bodies mostly risk being stereotyped (Kohlberg, 2014). This presents a knowledge gap, which requires scholarly attention. Therefore, the study attempts to appreciate the aesthetic elements of selected contemporary tattoos in Kumasi and Accra metropolitan areas to reveal their cultural, social, philosophical, and other underpinnings.

2 Review of Related Literature

2.1 Aesthetics of Body Modification

Scholars have established that body modification has aesthetic values aside from its basic socio-cultural symbolism. The first major attribute of body adornment is the enhancement of the natural body which includes but not limited to hair (colour, cut, ornaments, removal, and style), clothing, footwear, and jewelleryes (Friede, 2001; as cited in Maykut, 2009). According to Sanders and Vail (2008), body modification has been shown to turn individuals into unique and aesthetically attractive works of art thereby enhancing personal meaning and value as seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1: The Body Modified as Art (Source: Kierstein & Kjelskau,2015).

Additionally, body adornment is seen as any alteration or enhancement to the natural appearance of the human body, including one or a combination of body decoration, body modification, and body painting, along a continuum (Maykut, 2009), ranging from minimal to very invasive activities. In his study of African traditional body art and contemporary realities, Bianchi (1988, pp,21-28) comments that there exist dynamically “beautiful patterns of body decorations” among Africans. Lane (2017) also holds a similar view by establishing that the main reason for conducting body modifications like nose piercings, tattooing, and others is due to aesthetic reasons like enhancement of beauty, attractiveness, and ritualistic purposes of an individual.

Additionally, it is observed that the enhancement of physical beauty through body modification is widespread among many cultures (Brain, 1979). Furthermore, body modification, such as the temporal use of ink on the body, tattoos, and piercings, is a common way for people to express their identity and enhance their physical appearance (Ezeibekwe et al., 2016).

2.2 Appreciation of Tattoo Art

Tattooing is a socially charged practice that is over 10, 000 years. “As is commonly known, tattooing is part of a sequence of body modification practices carried out by various social groupings in societies on all seven continents” (Walzer & Sanjurjo 2016, p.69). Tattooed Egyptian mummies somewhere between 3351 BC and 3017 BC attest to the practice’s origins, as does the invention of the concept of society (Dawson, 2020). According to Makiko (2005), the aesthetic qualities of tattooing must be understood in relation to the moral and social views of the observer. Moreover, it is also assumed that people who see tattooing as a way to challenge societal norms are also the ones who occasionally allow fashion trends, driven by consumer culture, to influence the world of tattoos (Thessander, 1997).

Since the 1990s, tattoos have acquired acceptance and appeal in Western societies (Wohlrab et al., 2007). The authors explained that one of the most popular reasons for body art is to improve one’s appearance. However, Dean (2010) argues that the older generation has a more negative impression of tattooed people in general. According to Weiler and Jacobsen (2021), in a Harris poll conducted in 2015, American Millennials (born in 1980 or later) are the most tattooed generation in history. Finally, though there are diverse opinions, tattoos are still found to be aesthetically pleasing (Weiler & Jacobsen, 2021).

2.3 Criticisms in Tattoo Art

Tattoos are an increasingly popular form of self-expression (Braverman, 2012; Dickson et al., 2015), and people get tattoos for a variety of reasons. For religious expression (Firmin et al., 2008) and or a form of personal narrative are some of the documented explanations of why people tattoo their bodies (Wohlrab, et al., 2007). Tattoos can be used to commemorate a loss or to memorialise a difficult time in one’s life that has been conquered. Tattoos are nevertheless socially seen negatively, despite the strong internal motivators like self-expression and other personal narratives. Also, they are considered a *business faux pas* by the general public (Foltz, 2014). Additionally, Foltz (2014) found that when placed in a hypothetical hiring situation, even tattooed participants viewed tattoos as a reason to not hire a potential employee. This misunderstanding between tattooed people originates from the breadth of material and the variety of motives for getting a tattoo. According to Williams, Thomas and Christensen (2014), this is a high-priority issue that social workers should address straight on because tattoos can “turn off your clients, co-workers, and administration” (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2014, p.32).

Some studies, however, show the veracity of preconceptions against tattooed people to some extent. Studies concur that tattooed people have higher alcoholic tendencies (Guéguen, 2012a), earlier initiation of sexual activity (Nowosielski et al., 2012; Guéguen, 2012b), and higher extraversion and experience-seeking qualities (Swami et al., 2012). Research Further

reveals an increase in deviant behaviour among tattooed adolescents (Roberts & Ryan, 2002), which persists until college, even though there is no link between tattoos and academic performance (Martin & Dula, 2010). According to Kristin and Helen (2018), individuals living with tattoos are most often tagged with acts of rebellion, and unprofessionalism, just to mention a few. Hence, these stereotypical acts go a step further and are fueled by public perceptions (Goffman, 1963).

2.4 Contemporary Tattoo Culture

Contemporary tattooing, according to Khunt (2021), is more of a practice that emerged in the 70's with most of the youth at the time wearing it as a statement against law-abiding, middle-class beliefs. Also, when it all began, new tattoo artists with varied levels of training started to emerge about the same period (Medium, 2019). Contemporary tattooing practice has gone through a lot of global transitions from either being considered a mark of deviance or rebellion and most often associated with criminality (Adams, 2009) to a much more acceptable form of self-expression, fashion, identity, and others due to cultural diffusion. In Western and some Asian cultural contexts, contemporary tattooing has been on the rise mainly due to cross-cultural activities and a bit of economic capital speculated to be one of the reasons for someone to deliberately tattoo their body as a form of beautification ritual (Shilling, 1993; Sweetman, 1999).

According to DeMello (2000), Tattooing from the 1980s has seen the emergence of a widely acceptable cultural, artistic, and social form. Other scholars (Rapp, 2010; Connolly, 2024) refer to contemporary tattoo culture as the body art forms and trends that evolved in the 1970s and beyond. Tattooing today is inspired by a variety of training methods, aesthetic movements, cultural symbols, personal preferences, and social connotations. Minimalist designs, brilliant colours, art nouveau-inspired works, geometric shapes, and realistic portraiture are some examples of current tattooing (Hardin, 1999). Considering the wide range of perspectives held by other academics, in order for a tattoo to be classified as contemporary, there are a few universal elements that influence it. These factors range from realism, new-school tattoos and subjects on mass media, and pop culture among others as desired by wearers (Ink Match Team, 2023; Celebrity Ink, 2021). Another major highlight, though arguable, is the technological evolution that has taken place and has somewhat affected or improved the finest of designs being executed on the body and the production process of tattooing in general (Blau, n.d.). To add to that, the technological advancement in tattoos has its starting point from the birth of a pen for autographic press known as the electric pen (Boo, 2010). Additionally, according to an article by the Spark Museum of Electrical Invention (n.d.), Thomas Edison birthed the idea of the electric automated pen in 1875. However, in 1891 Samuel O'Reilly with inspiration from Edison's invention created the tattoo machine (Smithsonian, 2020). O'Reilly's device could perforate the skin at an incredible 50 times per second. In addition, Rotary tattoo machines are an alternative to "coiled" tattoo machines and are driven by controlled motors rather than electromagnetic coils. In relation to the contemporary tattoo practice, mass media has greatly played a major role, which has to do with the advancement of all forms of artistic practices globally (Cordeiro & Parreira, 2023). In an attempt to find a perfect concluding explanation that fits the term contemporary tattoo culture, there are certain major factors of influence, these

are mainly its dynamic blend of materials, approaches, ideas, and topics that push the borders of conventional art forms and reflects existing social and cultural challenges (Belting, 2012).

2.5 Contemporary Tattooing with Africa in Focus

The art of tattooing in Africa is constantly changing and is based on varied forms of expression that have been impacted by multiple factors including cultural traditions, globalisation, and modernisation. African societies have utilised tattoos for many centuries to convey a variety of messages, ranging from religious and spiritual beliefs to social standing and personal identity (Makafui, 2022). Additionally, a rising trend in Africa is the combination of traditional African motifs with modern tattooing techniques, known as contemporary tattooing. Also, popular styles in African tattooing include minimalist designs, geometric lines, and watercolour designs (Shuaib, 2020; Bloom, 2023). Contemporary African tattoos often integrate traditional symbols, patterns, and motifs into designs, serving as a way to reconnect with cultural roots while expressing individuality (Bloom, 2023).

Africa can be considered as a patchwork of various cultures, each having their distinct tattoo customs. These range from the tribal markings of the Dinka community in South Sudan to the geometric patterns of the Berbers in North Africa and the Yoruba tribal tattoos of Nigeria (Bloom, 2023). Tattoos in Africa represent a diverse range of identities, rituals, and narratives. Although traditional techniques continue to be practiced, modern African artists are also exploring new boundaries with their creative tattoo designs (Vimoksha, 2023).

3. Methodology

The study adopted qualitative research approach situated within the ethnographic design. Qualitative research involves the collection of non-numerical data through observations and interviews and occurs at the natural setting of the participants (Cleland, 2017; Mogalakwe, 2006). The ethnographic design is said to deal with the study of the culture of a group (Mohajan, 2018; Creswell, 2013; Kusi, 2012). The research focused on appreciating the aesthetic elements of contemporary tattoo art of Ghanaians living in the Kumasi and Accra metropolitan areas. Kumasi and Accra metropolises were selected because the researchers considered two major metropolises in Ghana with rapid growth rate of their urban population of 61.1% for Kumasi and 91.7% for Accra (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). With such rapid population growth, Kumasi and Accra tend to have tattoo wearers with vast repertoire of knowledge on contemporary tattoo art in Ghana. A sample size of twenty-two (22) participants who had tattoos, comprising ten (10) males and twelve (12) females in both Kumasi and Accra metropolises, were selected using the homogenous purposive sampling approach because all the participants shared similar characteristics (Nikolopoulou, 2022) in terms of the case that all of them had tattoos and with knowledge and experience in tattoo culture. Also, their tattoos were commonly made of contemporary tattoo machines and tattoo inks.

Additionally, the exponential discriminative technique of snowball sampling (Nikolopoulou, 2022) was utilised to locate potential participants. This enabled the researchers to sample only participants whose tattoos were made using a tattoo machine (coil or rotary tattoo machines). With the exponential discriminative technique of snowball sampling, one known tattoo

participant in turn referred other known people with tattoos to the researchers for consideration. The researchers adopted a naturalistic observation approach to observe participants in their natural environments (George, 2023), which provided in-depth field data for the study. Additionally, an unstructured interview approach was adopted (George, 2023) because it gave the participants the free flow to express themselves and explain in details their tattoos in an in-depth face-to-face naturally occurring manner of conversations (Frechette et al., 2020; Sharma, 2017; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The data was analysed using the narrative, and visual analysis methods, which are best suited for analysing naturally occurring conversations, written texts, and accompanying photographic data (Caulfield, 2023). Written informed consent was obtained from the participants and their views were safeguarded by ensuring participants anonymity, and confidentiality (Bowling, 2004). The study areas, Kumasi and Accra metropolises, are mapped as Figures 2 and 3, respectively.

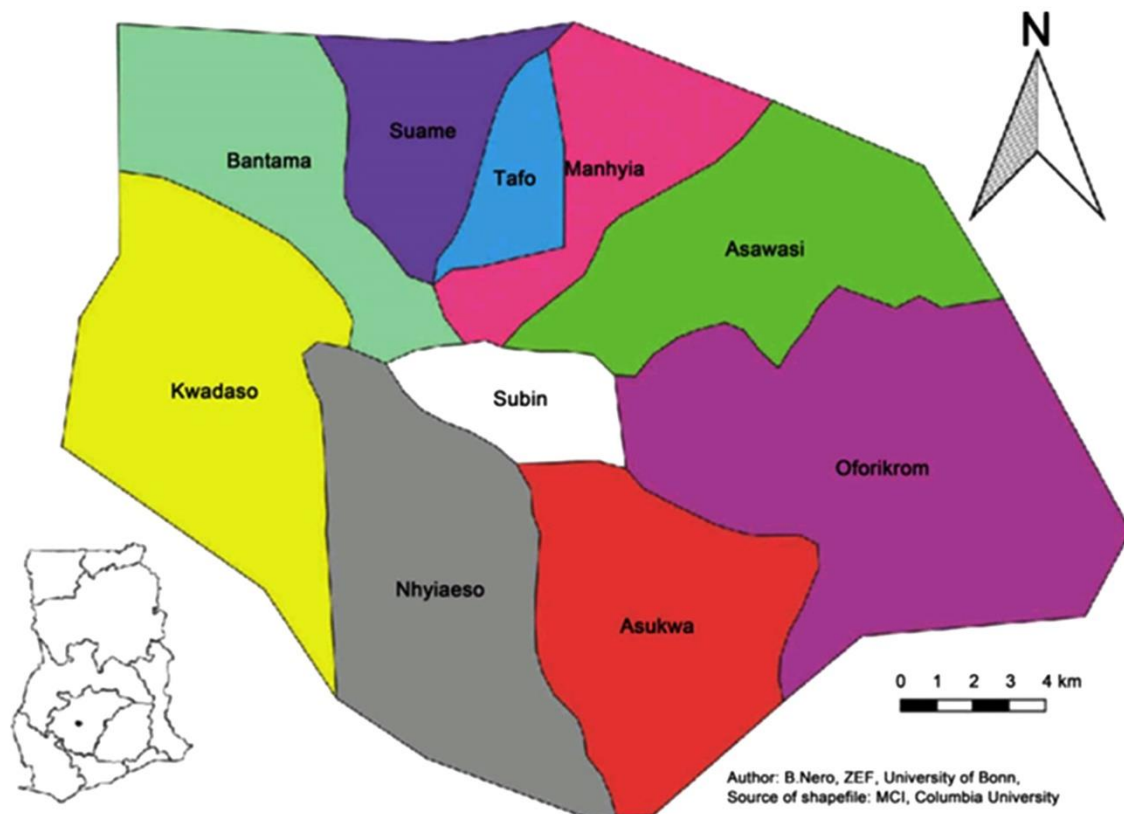


Figure 2: Map of Kumasi Metropolis
(Source: Otoo et al., 2019).

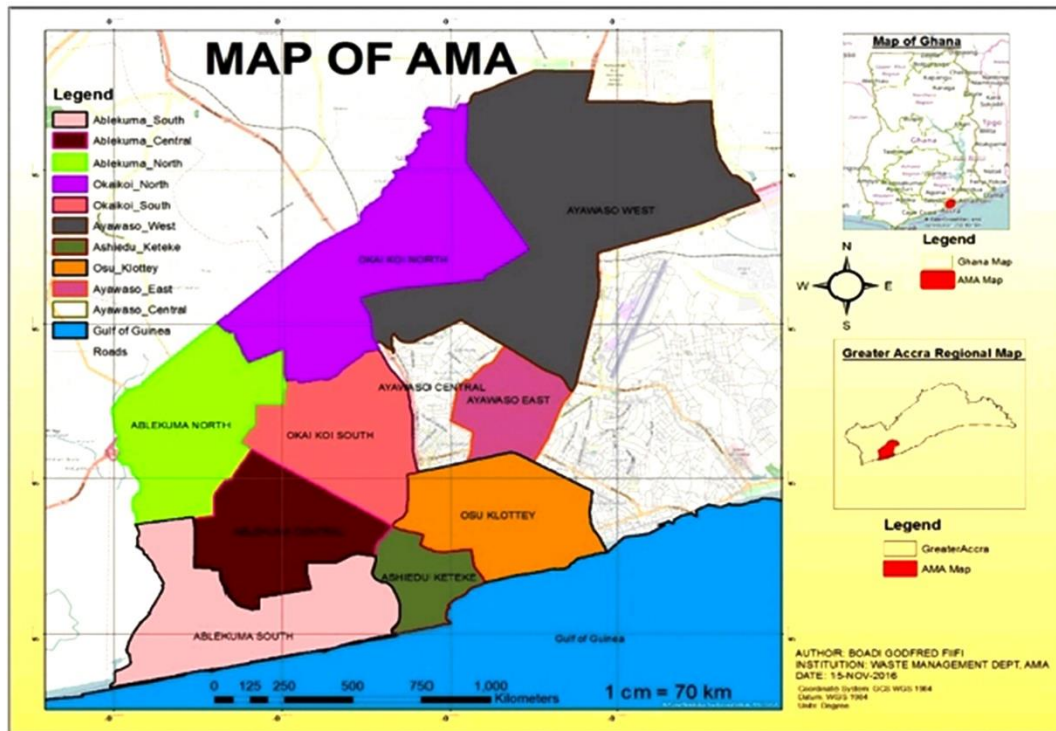


Figure 3: Map of Accra Metropolis
(Source: Oduro-Appiah et al., 2019).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Appreciative Analysis of Contemporary Tattoo Art in Kumasi and Accra Metropolises

Based on the findings, tattooing has seen a remarkable increase in popularity in Kumasi and Accra metropolitan areas. The contemporary tattoo forms in Kumasi and Accra, including their patterns, styles, and cultural importance have all contributed to the kind of designs that adorn the body of their wearers.

Figure 4 presents a tattoo situated on the upper thigh of a female medical practitioner. She revealed that her tattoo art is a driving force in her journey through life. The tattoo, which reads, *Faith, Hope, Love*, is dominated by both symbols and a collection of English alphabets that are stylishly arranged to convey a meaningful message. At the top is the arrangement of the symbols which are the 'Christian religious cross, pulse rate or heartbeat, and the *Akoma*, a Ghanaian *adinkra* symbol of *heart*. According to the tattoo wearer (Tattoo Wearer 1, personal communication, August 11, 2023), her tattoo is a constant reminder of her journey through life and thus this continuous reminder keeps her on track. In her assertion, the tattoos (*Faith, Hope, Love*) represent deep human ideals and feelings. She further stated that these three concepts are inextricably linked in one's life. This is because once these permanent manifestations of faith are on one's body, they serve as inspiration for a sustained, salient, active faith, and to her, they are the three most motivating words in any language that brings her joy and calm in her life.



Figure 4: Display of the upper thigh area of a Female Tattoo wearer
(Source: Fieldwork, 2023).

In addition, she further specifically explained the three important virtues represented in her tattoo design as:

Faith: This is symbolised by the Christian Religious cross. To her, it is a display of having a strong belief in something greater than her, which is God Almighty, thus serving as a guiding force in her life.

Hope: Symbolically represented by the *pulse rate or heartbeat*, according to the tattoo wearer, is a positive mindset that anticipates good outcomes in the future. It represents resilience, optimism, and the determination to overcome challenges. The term hope is a powerful reminder to remain positive and have confidence in a brighter tomorrow as interpreted by her.

For love, it is symbolically represented by the *Akoma*, (heart) symbol. The respondent explained that *Akoma* is more of a universal Ghanaian symbol, which simply means feelings of affection, compassion, and a strong bond with others. “In this world, everyone needs love” as opined by the respondent (Tattoo Wearer 1, personal communication, August 11, 2023).

The interpretation herein offered by the tattoo wearer that her tattoo (Figure 4) represents her philosophy of life and religious thoughts, resonates with the general assertion that African

tattoo art conveys a variety of messages, ranging from religious and spiritual beliefs to social standing and personal identity (Makafui, 2022).



Figure 5: Male Tattoo Wearer with his tattoo Art on the Right Upper body
(Source: Fieldwork, 2023).

Figure 5 is a tattoo interpreted by the wearer as *Jesus Christ* wearing a crown of thorns. The tattoo also has an inscription *Grace* in calligraphic writing. According to the male tattoo wearer of Accra Metropolis of Ghana, his tattoo is a living manifestation of a deep spiritual significance, serving as a daily reminder of the death of Jesus Christ and his redeeming message of *Grace*. “As a deviant young man, my tattoo symbolises suffering and sacrifice and depicts heavenly favour and kindness. To me, my tattoo is a bestowal of mercy and redemption of the saving grace of Jesus Christ on my life” (Tattoo Wearer 2, personal communication, October 1, 2023). The tattoo wearer further explained that the symbolic combination of Jesus Christ with a crown of thorns and the word *Grace* in the tattoo (Figure 5), is laced with a deeper and personal

meaning serving as a constant reminder in his life. According to the respondent, the crown of thorns symbolises suffering and sacrifice, while the word *Grace* depicts heavenly favour and mercy on his life. This suggests that the tattoo wearer opted to express the sufferings and sacrifices of his life and his Christian religious believe in Jesus Christ as the heavenly favour and redeemer of his life situations. Since such personal and religious narratives of the tattoo wearer were symbolically communicated through his tattoo, it goes to reiterate the affirmation that tattoo art is appropriate for personal expressions including the spiritual beliefs, the social standing and personal identity of the wearer (Makafui, 2022; Dickson et al., 2015; Braverman, 2012).



Figure 6: Upper Arm Tattoo Art Known as Money getter
(Source: Fieldwork, 2023).

The upper arm tattoo art titled *Money Getter* (Figure 6) by the tattoo wearer captures a collection of games and a bundle of United States dollar currency notes rolled and kept in that form with a rubber band. Closely arranged in a still form are four playing cards, two game dice, an 8-ball pool, and a hundred-dollar (\$100) note design.

The tattoo indicates an interest in taking risks and relying on luck. The careful composition of playing cards and dice is my fascination with the uncertainty and potential rewards of chance in life. Additionally, the combination of playing cards and an 8-ball pool is a representation of my love for games. The inclusion of a rolled \$100 bill is also a connection to wealth and the desire to prosper. (Tattoo Wearer 3, personal communication, 7th June, 2023)

In totality, the tattoo wearer concluded that his tattoo (Figure 6) symbolises the delicate balance between risk and reward in life and represents the two-sided nature of luck, encompassing both victories and defeats and acts as a prompt to take risks in life, as results are not always certain. This means that the two-sided (luck & defeat) life philosophy of the tattoo wearer was conveyed through tattooing, which further affirms the general assertion that tattoo art is a form of self-expression (Dickson et al., 2015).



Figure 7: Upper Chest Tattoo Art “Holy Cross with wings”
(Source: Fieldwork, 2023).

The upper chest area tattoo as seen in Figure 7 displays the Christians Holy Cross but with Wings. The tattoo is a permanent artistic design that combines a Christian cross, which is a

representation of the wearer's faith and spirituality, with a set of wings, associated with heaven.

My tattoo carries several layers of symbolic expressions like the cross, which is associated with Christianity''. It was deliberately placed on my upper chest area as a visible symbol of my religious convictions and individual relationship with God. The wings were also deliberately added to the cross to transform it from a symbol of the earth to a symbol of the heavens. (Tattoo Wearer 4, personal communication, 5th September, 2023).

The tattoo wearer further clarified that the wings on his tattoo are associated with the guardian angels of God who provide assistance and safeguard people during difficult times. This connotes that the tattoo (Figure 7) is a form of religious expression, which is in tandem with the assertion that African societies have utilised tattoos to convey their religious and spiritual beliefs (Makafui, 2022).



Figure 8: Tattoo of a Hummingbird
(Source: Fieldwork, 2023).

Figure 8 is a tattoo consisting of a hummingbird perching on a flowering branch with a pointed beak, a piercing gaze, and stretched-out wings. The Kumasi-based tattoo wearer argued that hummingbirds embody freedom and adaptability with their agility and ability to fly in any

direction. “For my tattoo, it’s a symbol of endurance and the ability to overcome challenges. Additionally, hummingbirds also represent resilience and determination, which serves as a fuel that keeps me going in life” (Tattoo Wearer 5, personal communication, April 8, 2023). This implies that the tattoo art of Figure 8 conveys the life philosophy of the tattoo wearer, thereby corroborating the assertion that tattooing is a form of personal expression (Makafui, 2022; Dickson et al., 2015; Braverman, 2012).



Figure 9: Portrait Tattoo Art (Source: Fieldwork, 2023).

The tattoo art in Figure 9 is virtually a full-back portrait of a manly figure. The portrait is more in a profile pose, a well-defined jawline, and sharply defined features. According to the tattoo wearer, the tattoo (Figure 9) is a symbol of strength, fortitude, manliness, uniqueness, and a link to an inner being and knowledge as a man and the responsibility the world places in the hands of men. This explains the life philosophy of the tattoo wearer. Therefore, the tattoo (Figure 9) is a form of self-expression, which is notable of tattoo art (Makafui, 2022; Dickson et al., 2015; Braverman, 2012).



Figure 10: Lower Arm Tattoo Art (Rose)
(Source: Fieldwork, 2023).

Also, Figure 10 is a Floral tattoo art. The red rose is depicted with vibrant shades of red and dark outlines, which gives a gentle gradient that adds depth and dimension. The petals are delicately shaded to give them a realistic look. The rose is fully bloomed, proudly displaying its layers of velvety petals. According to the tattoo wearer, red roses are frequently connected with love and profound fondness, thus as someone in love it was a perfect option to convey her romantic emotions. “Roses are seen as representations of beauty and sophistication, and a red rose tattoo is a tribute to both internal and external beauty” (Tattoo Wearer 7, personal communication, February 5, 2023).

The decorative ambiance of the tattoo (Figure 10) fits well with the assertion that tattooing is one of the commonest mechanisms of enhancing one’s beauty (Bell, 2019; Avruch, 2018; Maykut, 2009).



Figure 11: Lower Arm Tattoo Art (Dear Mama)
(Source: Fieldwork, 2023).

Figure 11 presents a tattoo that features a portrait of the mother of the tattoo wearer, capturing her unique facial details with precision. The artist pays close attention to shading and texture. According to the tattoo wearer, his tattoo evokes a cherished memory of his mother and their blood-related relationship. The tattoo “serves as a constant reminder of the love and special moments shared between a mother and her son. Constantly looking at the tattoo brings about a strong feeling of closeness and love, keeping my mother’s memory alive in my heart” (Tattoo Wearer 8, personal communication, January 13, 2023).

The tattoo (Figure 11) is, therefore, a form of personal narrative reflecting the cherished relationship between the tattoo wearer and the mother, which is in tandem with the views expressed by Wohlrab, et al. (2007) about tattoo art.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper appreciated selected contemporary tattoo culture in the Kumasi and Accra metropolitan areas to decode their symbolic meanings. It was found that the contemporary tattoo art of the respondents within Kumasi and Accra metropolitan areas featured minimalist designs, portraits, decorative, philosophical, and religious symbols, which reflect the identity, religious belonging, philosophy, and self-expression of the tattoo wearer-respondents. The study therefore concludes that contemporary tattoo art of the tattoo wearer-respondents in Kumasi and Accra metropolitan areas is an embodiment of a dynamic and evolving art form that resonates with their identity, sociocultural, and religious expressions. In view of that, the study recommends the conduct of further research on the side effects of tattoo art on the health of tattoo wearers in Ghana. This will help determine whether, or not tattoo art should be formalised as an acceptable academic field of study as well as promoted by art institutions, galleries, and museums and should constitute a key element of public art exhibitions in Ghana.

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