The Art behind Appropriation: Japanese-style Tattoos or *Irezumi* during the Modern Japanese Period (1868- present)

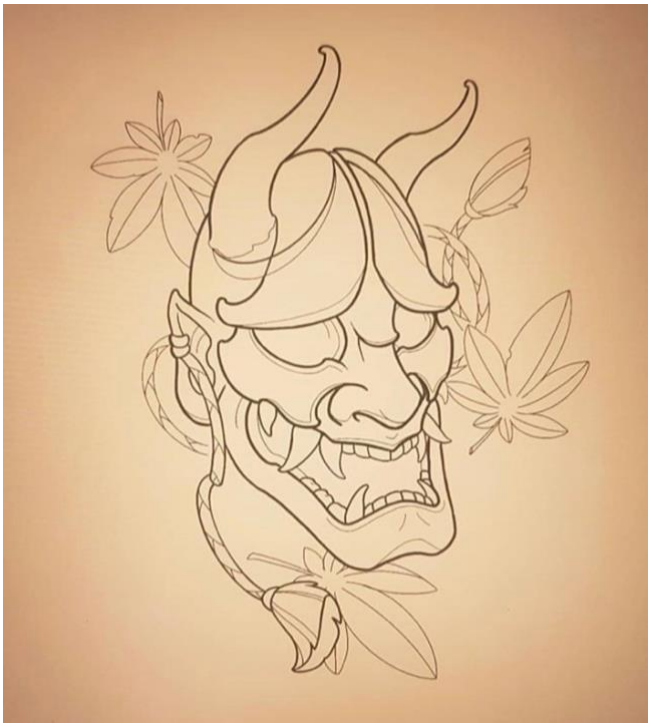

Figure 1: Thank you to Lisa Chihiro for her sketch dedicated to this thesis cover

An image often understood as frightening, yet in reality describes a picturesque image

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Figure 2: Utagawa Kuniyoshi depicts Senkaji Cho (1847-48) in an Ukiyo-e Woodblock Print. Shows a tattooed Japanese Ferryman successfully and ruthlessly avenging his brother. Senkaji carries the head of his brother's murderer.

Abstract

A negative and controversial stigma shrouds the notion of tattoos globally. As of recently, societies globally have increasingly become more tolerant to the exposure of tattoos in public and in particular, professional environments or workplaces. This increased tolerance can predominantly be found in Western society. Often times, this increased tolerance is perceived to be applicable globally, credited largely to Western-dominated mainstream media. However, the negative stigma associated with tattoos persists in many East Asian societies and is largely regarded as taboo. These notions of taboo are largely attributed to associations with gangs, violence and criminal activities represented through different mediums like movies, newspapers, and word of mouth (see Figure 2).[1] Despite this, East Asian societies

[1] Utagawa Kuniyoshi, Senkaji Cho O 舩火兒張横, 1848, woodblock, 24.50 x 18.20, 108 Heroes of the Popular Water Margin, Accessed May 2020, *https://research.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=3278016&page=3&partId=1&searchText=japanese%20sword.*

like that of Japan's, still possess dedicated tattoo artist that practice tattooing, whether this is in "Japanese-style" tattooing or numerous other styles. The idea of Japanese tattoos is a largely sought-after style of tattooing not only within Japan but also in numerous Western societies, such as the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK). It would not be in the wrong to presume that in fact, Japanese-style tattoos are in greater demand outside of Japan than within and are seen in less-controversial limelight than that of Japan, which leads us to a possible inquiry and the investigation of this thesis, how can there be such a difference of perspective of tattoos between Japan and Western nations like the US and UK in Japan-style tattoos? I use aspects of Edward Said's notion of Orientalism (1978) and Primitivism as the theoretical framework into three distinct periods: Meiji era (1868-1912) and the Contemporary era (1945-2020), and implement Richard Rogers' theory of cultural appropriation (2006) as a methodology to dissect *ukiyo-e* art, diaries from royal "western" figures, interviews and documentaries that depict experiences with Japanese tattooing practices. In the postwar era (1945-) Japan underwent tremendous political, cultural, and economic change under the Allied powers as a result of World War II. It is for this reason that the contemporary era is framed from 1945-2020 to portray the approach Japan took when it came to Japanese-style tattoos. As well as how Western society, in particular the United States, exported Japanese-style tattoos to audiences globally, due to American tattoo artists coming in contact with Japanese tattoo artists first. The overall aim of the investigation will shed light on how the previous mediums have historically engaged with cultural appropriation and orientalism in Japan, to create what we know of today as Japanese-style tattoos.

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Introduction and Rationale

In a recent poll conducted by Japan's Tourism Agency (JTA), out of 518 hotels interviewed in Japan, 56% of hotels prohibit individuals with tattoos to enter their bathing facilities.[2] In Japan, perception of tattoo is predominantly still viewed as being 'taboo'. This notion has historical traces seen in the Meiji era of the late 19th century, whereby tattoos faced constant law enforcement beginning with the misdemeanor law (1872) that banned the display and practicing of tattoos.[3] Keep in mind, the Japanese archipelago had opened its borders for the first time to "the black ships" of Commodore Perry which resulted in a drastic increase in Japan's culture, social practices among other factors to become exposed to scrutiny by the Western powers.[4] The reason for the emergence of tattooing practices representing traits of barbarism grew out of fear that working-class individuals in Japan, who regularly worked in tumultuous conditions thus displaying their naked bodies, would diminish the modernizing image of Japan in the eyes of the West.[5] Satsuki Kawano coined this process wherein "ordinary people's bodies became the objects of intense sartorial surveillance as new rules for displaying bodies, in and out of clothing, came into effect."[6] Under the lingering influence of the Meiji government policy, the Japanese form of tattooing called *irezumi* continues to have a constant association with taboos in the eyes of contemporary Japanese society, vastly due to attempts by the government to legitimize and institutionalize the taboo in *irezumi.* The Misdemeanor law (1872) was punishable by indefinite imprisonment and was enforced

2 Japan Today, "56% of hotels in Japan bar visitors with tattoos from bathing facilities," JapanToday.com, https://japantoday.com/category/national/56-of-hotels-in-japan-bar-visitors-with-tattoos-from-bathing-facilities, (Accessed November 25, 2019).
3 John Skutlin, "Fashioning Tattooed Bodies: An Exploration of Japan's Tattoo Stigma, *" Asia Pacific Perspectives* 16, no. 1 (2019): 11.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Satsuki Kawano, "Japanese Bodies and Western Ways of Seeing the Late 19th Century," in *Dirt, Undress, and Difference: Critical Perspective on the Body's surface,* ed. Adline Masquelier (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005): 150.

through the use of police forces surveilling working-class neighborhoods in particular.[7] Additionally, the Meiji government and its policies increasingly shut down the businesses of tattoo artists by destroying and halting the circulation of their equipment.[8] Presently, the stigmatization of tattoos is still dominant in Japan, as many hot springs and hotels forbid individuals with tattoos to enter their facilities.[9] Moreover, the crackdown of tattoo artists has increased due to the misusage by police to require tattoo artists to be licensed doctors due to their equipment "piercing the skin," all of which make it impossible financially to maintain their jobs as tattoo artists.[10]

Despite attempts made by the Meiji government to 'protect' a modern Japanese image through controlling Japanese *irezumi,* an ironical counter interest emerged as more and more foreigners took a great interest in full-body *irezumi* during the modern Japanese period (1868-).[11] In particular, the Czar of Russia, Nicholas II, as well as Queen Olga of Greece, were some notable royal figures that received full "Japanese dragon tattoos" on their bodies by tattoo artist Horichio in Kobe.[12] An open panel discussion at Temple University hypothesized that due to the more Westerners getting Japanese tattoos, *irezumi* was increasingly claimed by underground tattoo artists to represent true Japanese culture and folklore, and used as a way to continue its practices locally in Japan and abroad.[13] This shows that contending narratives surrounding *irezumi* emerge, with the west having an increasing appeal to *irezumi,* while domestically in Japan, there is dominant disassociation with *irezumi,* which hints at a possible political undercurrent that explains why such varying narratives

7 Ibid, 12.
8 Ibid.
9 Jenni Marsh, Junko Ogura, and Chie Kobayashi, "Did Japan just ban tattoo artists?," CNN.com, https://edition.cnn.com/2017/10/18/asia/tattoos-japan/index.html, (Accessed June 10, 2020).
10 Ibid.
11 Margom Demello, *Encyclopedia of Body Adornment,* Greenwood Press: Westport (2007): 169-170.
12 Stephen Mansfield, "The Indelible Art of the Tattoo," *Japan Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (1999): 37.
13 Temple University, Japan Campus, "Public Lecture Video (12.03.2019) Irezumi vs. Tattoos," Youtube.com, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xv-YNGHji1A, (Accessed January 29, 2020).

exist in the first place. Over time, these factors of political motives attempted to present *irezumi* as taboo domestically in Japan. It is important to remain critical to the historical processes that created the current societal perceptions on issues like *irezumi* and taboo.

This thesis argues that the increased visibility of *irezumi* outside of Japan aided in exporting its survivability abroad, yet this survivability is dependent and enforced through hints of orientalist sentiments. This increased visibility will be explored through primary experiences from the perspectives of "Western" actors like American Sailors and Royal Figures like Czar Nicolas II in the Meiji era, Allied power soldiers in the Post-World War II (WWII) era, and finally, contemporary Japanese tattoo artists. Ultimately, this thesis' argument will portray that *irezumi* is not merely a physical/tangible portrayal of Japanese tattooing practices, but above all an abstract notion that reflects the historical contention between a political narrative and reality. To unravel the complexities of taboo and tattooing practices, a historical approach into primary sources, such as firsthand diaries of notable figures like Prince George V of Wales, published in *Britain and Japan: Biographical Portraits, Volume 6* and current tattoo artists living in Europe are essential to construct the perception of what constitutes *irezumi*.[14] In addition, sailors are widely known to have accelerated the popularity of Japanese tattoos globally, this will be explored through documentaries like Hori Smoku Sailor Jerry and memoirs like George Burchett's *Memoirs of a Tattooist.* By analyzing the portrayal of *irezumi* internationally, a chronological perception of how irezumi was viewed internationally and evolved since the Meiji period will outline what aspects of *irezumi* created this likeability abroad and how a void persists today between international attractiveness vs. local attractiveness to *irezumi*. In particular, this likeability circled the notion that the appeal of Japanese tattooing can be grouped under two large domains. Firstly, the experience itself, as noted by King George V about the peculiar practice

[14] Hugh Cortazzi, *Britain, and Japan: Biographical Portraits, Volume 6*, The Japan Society: Kent (2007): 77.

and were intrigued by the process of ink and instruments used.[15] Secondly, the symbolism Japanese tattoo represented, with what travelers perceived as Japanese culture and folklore, such as, the dragon and koi, blossoms and maple leaves, among others.[16]

The scope of this thesis will primarily deal with sources in English related to Japanese experiences of tattoo in the Meiji period, then look at contemporary Japanese societies' outlook on tattoos through a mix of quantitative and qualitative data. Due to the limitations and lack of research conducted on this topic, certain historical examples of art and film may not be addressed, despite helping to deconstruct Japanese experiences of taboo. The reason for this is because of the chronological approach this thesis will adopt to deconstruct the taboo associated with tattoos. To be precise, this thesis hopes to lay out the groundwork for further research on deconstructing the 'traditional' Japanese proponents given to tattooing practices.

The traditional characteristics given to the Japanese perception of tattooing perspectives are a modern phenomenon. During the Edo period, tattooing practices were seen to be "stylish as 'the flower of Edo'," and quickly emerged to represent barbarism during the Meiji period through the codification of taboo in policies and laws.[17] Today, 60.5% percent of 100 Japanese male and 100 Japanese female participants agree that restrictions on tattooed individuals should not be loosened.[18] What does this bode for the future of tattooed individuals in Japan? Tattooed individuals are often associated with gangsters, and concerns over how Japanese youth will be affected have come into question too. Snap judgments are a

[15] Sarah Finley, "The royal with the dragon tattoo! Diaries detailing how the Queen's grandfather King George V had inking's during a visit to Japan are part of a new Buckingham palace exhibition," dailymail.co.uk, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-7677639/Diaries-King-George-V-dragon-tattoo-visit-Japan.html, (Accessed March 23, 2020).
[16] Mansfield, “The Indelible Art of the Tattoo,” 37-38.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Brian Ashcroft, “Poll: Tattoo Are Still Taboo in Japan at Hot Springs,” kotaku.com, https://kotaku.com/poll-tattoos-are-still-taboo-in-japan-at-hot-springs-1730014721, (Accessed November 25, 2019).

normal occurrence towards tattooed individuals, by deconstructing the strong traditional outlook on tattooing practices in Japan, a certain degree of understanding towards tattoos can be met. Above all, by identifying how the international perception of *irezumi* has evolved since 1868, this thesis can create a foundation to critically analyze sites of political narrative and taboo. It is important to keep in mind that taboo associated with tattoos did not suddenly emerge during the Meiji era. A large part of why the stigmatization of *irezumi* is still present today is because of its close association with gangs or the yakuza in Japan. During the Edo period, these gang members saw the permanent and painful aspects of *irezumi* as a symbol of courage, hence why a large number of gang members have *irezumi* on them. At the commencement of the Meiji era, the tremendous number of gang members with *irezumi* was a golden opportunity for officials to propel the narrative of taboo and *irezumi* with violent and uncivil individuals that served to prove everything "un-Japanese."[19] The Meiji era operated in a series of codification and legitimization processes that showcased Japan's modern identity on the global platform, and the Meiji era served as a key proponent to contemporary Japanese societies' view on tattoos.

This thesis does not aim to determine true Japanese art, nor does it claim that cases of Japanese art today are not true Japanese art. Instead, this thesis aims to critically analyze the framework by which we understand representations of traditional Japanese art, as many institutes globally adhere to specific conditions and a framework that is largely influenced by a Western approach originating from Orientalist hubris. Additionally, this framework is not separate from political intent but is largely a result of politically driven actors. All of this will present the hypothesis that the international perception of Japanese tattoo today, is based on

19 Rhae Donna, "Having Tattoos In Japan," tokyocreative.com, https://www.tokyocreative.com/articles/19153-having-tattoos-in-japan, (Accessed June 11, 2020).

Eurocentric hubris that ensured the survivability of *irezumi* which in turn reinforces local negative stigmas in Japan on *irezumi.*

Chapter I: A process to deconstruct the cultural appropriation surrounding Japanese-style tattoos

Methodology

To address the aim of this research which is to deconstruct contemporary notions of Japanese-style tattoos, a mix between quantitative methods and qualitative methods used. In terms of quantitative methods: polls on contemporary Japanese perception serves as a key insight into samples of individuals in Japan and their outlook on tattoos through websites and news outlet like *Kotaku*. Moreover, qualitative methods vary between primary and secondary sources. The primary sources used will be a one-on-one interview with one Japanese tattoo artist in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, and Instagram interviews available online regarding the practice of Japanese-style tattooing. Second, an analysis of *ukiyo-e* art and its similarities to tattooing practices. Thirdly, the usage of journals of royal travelers that exported the prominence of Japanese tattoos abroad. Fourthly the implementation of laws and policies by the Meiji government towards forms of barbarism. Finally, a documentary produced by a US sailor on Japanese tattooing practices. The secondary sources that will be used will predominantly deal with books, articles, panel discussions, and conference papers. This research will adopt a chronological perspective into evolving perceptions of what it meant to have a "Japanese tattoo" engraved on oneself from the perspectives of foreign travelers. This is because foreigners, according to Mansfield, exported the survivability of Japanese tattoos globally.[20] In particular, this thesis will address the Meiji period (1868-1912) as the predominant focus of this thesis due to the impact Meiji policies and narratives have in shaping the reality of *irezumi,* then briefly address postwar era portrayal of the American experience with *irezumi* (1945-2020). These time frames will be utilized because they serve

[20] Mansfield, “The Indelible Art of the Tattoo,” 37-38.

as significant milestones in Japan's history, the opening up of Japan, the American occupation of Japan, and finally, the results of those contingent historical factors on contemporary societies' views on Japanese tattoos respectively.

Cultural Appropriation

Richard Rogers' theory of "Cultural Appropriation" attempts to dissect active integration between two different "cultures" rather than mere exposure and will be used as the methodology to this thesis.[21] I argue that contact zones between Japan and the United States, as well as Britain, helped to not only export "Japanese tattoos" abroad and assure its survivability, but also create an orientalist view on what exactly Japanese tattoos represented through the process of cultural appropriation. The use of the United States and Britain will be used interchangeably because of their significant presence in Japan in part due to expanding global markets, as well as their influence because of maritime technology globally.[22] In this sense, Rogers' theory will be applied in general to this thesis' investigation, demonstrating how aspects of Japanese culture are appropriated into reoccurring themes present in contemporary perception of Japanese-style tattoos and its practices. These themes include taboo about Japanese tattooing within Japan, the symbol of the dragon in Japanese tattoos, and the Japanese tattooing experience itself. Within Rogers' theory of appropriation four main domains exist that demonstrate stages of cultural appropriation.

- First, **Cultural Exchange:** This states that reciprocal exchange of symbols, artifacts, rituals, and technologies/instruments must be in place between two powers. An

21 R.A. Rogers, "From cultural exchange to transculturation: A review and reconceptualization of cultural appropriation," *Communication Theory* 16, (2006): 478-491.
22 Mansfield, "The Indelible Art of the Tattoo," 37-38.

example is the present influence of Japanese media companies in American culture equal to the influence of American media companies on Japanese culture.[23]

- Second, **Cultural Dominance:** Elements of the dominant culture have been enacted into the subordinated culture, this can range from name changes to clothing as well as dependence on language and technologies from the subordinated culture towards the dominant culture. An example can be the adoption of stigmatizing nude bodies in Japan through Misdemeanor law (1872) and demanding individuals be clothed at all times.
- Third, **Cultural Exploitation:** The appropriation of factors existing in the subordinated culture by the dominant culture without consent, permission, and reciprocity. This usually manifests itself in claiming what Japanese art is and using this in global exhibitions without much resistance or input from Japanese counterparts. For instance, many sailors that traveled to Japan during the Meiji were limited by the number of ports they could visit, as such the tattoos they got in Japan were souvenirs that generalized Japanese culture when they returned home.
- Fourth, **Transculturation:** This occurs when originating certain cultural practices of culture becomes problematic due to cultural appropriations as a result of globalization and transnational capitalism. In this sense, the result of multiple layers of exchanges and appropriation such as labeling what "Japanese tattoos" represent.[24] An example of transculturation is the image of a dragon in *irezumi,* in America, they are often portrayed with a menacing face to perhaps show a creature that is to be feared. Oppositely, in Japan, the imagery of the dragon is that it is benevolent. The differing

[23] Rogers, "From cultural exchange to transculturation: A review and reconceptualization of cultural appropriation," 478-491.
[24] Ibid.

understandings claim to represent Japanese-style tattoos or *irezumi* and hint at appropriation.

The general use of Rogers' theory will demonstrate historical examples wherein cultural appropriation takes place in Japan with *irezumi*. By looking at mediums such as documentaries, diaries, and *ukiyo-e* prints, specific instances of cultural appropriation can be identified. However, Roger's theory proclaims that the first domain, cultural exchange, is very rarely present due to the "power imbalances" that exist between contact zones of Orientalist experiences.[25] There are some "Pure" cases of cultural exchange, whereby the actual exchange of cultural artifacts occur, such as the aforementioned point on media companies. The significance of cultural exchange is that it serves as a basis or grounds to identify instances of cultural exploitation and dominance.

Furthermore, the last domain, transculturation, is the byproduct by which cultural exploitation and dominance become entrenched in multiple cultures' perspectives on a single culture.[26] For instance, through complex networks like capitalism and post-colonialism, the concept of Japanese art has been blurred to represent figments of an idealized image of "the East." They become a paradigm by which Western society can better comprehend and grasp the unknown "East." By framing what Japanese art is perceived to represent, instances of cultural exploitation and dominance take place. Over time, when these networks further entrench the already skewed notion of Japanese art, it becomes the naturalized reality of the concept of Japanese art in the contemporary era. Transculturation becomes the byproduct of an asymmetrical power relation, that exploits one culture for cultural colonialization. For this thesis, transculturation will be addressed throughout Chapters II and III using theories like Orientalism and Primitivism historical cases that complexified Japanese art. Finally, cultural

[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.

appropriation is largely focused on cultural exploitation and dominance as they unlock the possibility of transculturation to occur. This means that as instances of cultural exploitation and dominance increases, the power imbalances and multiple contact zones occurring determine how complex and naturalized the perception of the respective concept is. This thesis will explore how this is the case with Japanese-style tattoos or *irezumi*, as particular cases of dominance and exploitation are singled out to naturalized *irezumi.*

Theoretical Framework

The investigation into how the homogenization of contemporary understanding of Japanese-style tattoos persists will be supported by Said's approach on Orientalism (1978) and Primitivism. Both serve as the foundational understanding into Meiji understanding of modernity and Western influence permitted the stigmatization on *irezumi* to arise and persist today.

Orientalism

A plethora of research exists when analyzing the historical circumstances between Western empires and colonized states, and Said's Orientalism is a central pillar of this discussion. Orientalism, according to Said (1978), attempts to situate two opposites, notably, the superior and rational West, and the underdeveloped entities from the near east (Morocco) to the far east (Japan).[27] This underdeveloped society is constructed to mystify and idealize the "other" for European conquest. By framing the "other," European empires inevitably shift the power control in favor of those promulgating the image of the “other.” In this case, European empires used education to not only teach Europeans about the underdeveloped “other,” but

27 Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Routledge, and Kegan Paul: London (1978).

also teach the “other” about themselves, thus, entrenching the complexified image of the “other,” on the orient.[28] Moreover, the East became a career by which many prominent institutes in western societies claimed to understand the east through limited texts created by colonial oppressors, as well as indicating that the east can be studied and manipulated in a reductive manner rather than the lived experience of humans.[29] Importantly, terms such as 'Muslim' or 'West' ceases to encapsulate the multiplicity of contact each part of the world had with one another, and these exclusive terms fuel prejudiced attitudes far from the realities and lived experiences of humans in parts of the world.[30] Signs of orientalism can be traced back to contact zones between the Japanese empire and Western Empires during the Meiji era. I argue that Japanese tattooing is a direct result of complex interactions that occurred between the Japanese and Western Empires that led to the perception of what Japanese-style tattoos represent today.

Moreover, what further complexified the image of cultural artifacts like Japanese-style tattoos that were imported from Japan-abroad were the creations of ethnographic museums in the 19th century. According to Chao (2006), these museums showcased the Orient (Africa, Asia, and South Pacific), adopted a Eurocentric hubris, and labeled these discoveries as primitive.[31] In the process of exporting the image of the “orient” to the West and imagining the “other,” Western modernism was ensured as a contrast to the primitives. The creation of Western modernism and primitivism was also reiterated in the countries of the “orient.” This shows that Japanese-style tattoos attraction abroad was firstly a result of curiosity with the mystified and primitive "orient". Simultaneously, what was occurring as a result of the thesis ethnographic museums and process of orientalism, was the creation of an

[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] P. S. Chao, Tattoo and piercing, In *Rhetorics of Display*, Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press (2006).

internalized discourse surrounding what represented primitive society. In nations like Japan, that were the subject of these primitive showcases in Western empires, the discourse of primitivism and modernism resulted in a process to distance what the West had labeled as primitive, thus, cultural artifacts like Japanese-style tattoos became the subject of interest abroad, but aversion in Japan.

Chapter II: Meiji Era (1868- 1912): The presence of tattooing within Japan

How did the process of aversion with tattoos occur within Japan? How has its narrative persisted today? To dissect contemporary societies' perspective on Japanese tattoos, it is crucial to understand the historical occurrences of how Japanese-style tattoo underwent a process of taboo, yet still rose to prominence globally, in particular from the Meiji era (1868). Rogers' theory of cultural appropriation will be implemented that highlight Orientalist processes in Japan's journey to modernism. It is critical to understand what and how tattooing drastically became unappealing within Japan. In a nation that opened its borders for the first time in the mid-late 19th century, a wave of cultural, social, economic, and political interactions with rapid modernizing western empires exposed the Japanese identity globally. This notion of self and identity took center stage in Japan's quest for modernization similar to that of those western empires. First what will be discussed is the Orientalist framework present at the start of the Meiji era to re-invent a modern Japanese identity. Second, this thesis will address *ukiyo-e* art and Japanese-style tattoos or *irezumi* to demonstrate how similar the two art forms are, but how different their realities are which is linked to changing perceptions on identity and the body. Third, Tanizaki's short novel *The Tattooist* (1910) will be analyzed to depict the internalization of "non-Japanese" art, and as a result, reinforcing what constituted true Japanese art driven by Eurocentric hubris that will be addressed first. Finally, I will discuss how the suffocating environment in Japan for *irezumi* paved a path of survivability that relied on foreign royal figures. All of this will show the evolution of how Japanese-style tattoos became taboo during the modern era and will adopt Rogers' general theory on cultural appropriation.

Defining the Meiji Period

In this part, I highlight the selective process that undergoes the Meiji era modernism, as art in the period is meticulously accepted or rejected depending on Eurocentric frameworks. Certain cultural artifacts that existed before the Meiji era had to be carefully selected to present to the world with the emergence of ethnographic museums and exhibitions during the modern Meiji period. All in all, what occurs is a necessity to clearly define true Japanese art.

Rogers' theory of cultural appropriation highlights four domains. Two domains are evident in the examples that will follow. Yet, one domain: cultural exchange, is difficult to pinpoint because of the necessity for an equal platform to exist. While this is a limitation, the absence of cultural exchange also points out that cultural appropriation is still possible but is created by an already present unequal footing. This unequal footing is highlighted by a Eurocentric hubris that greatly determines the modern Japanese identity. In a lecture conducted by Smits (2019) the unique process of modernism taken by Japan during the Meiji period was one of "re-invention."[32] Japanese art, in particular, was curated by Ernest Fenollosa, a Western figure who praised "East Asian Art," and who was employed by the Meiji government as "the Imperial Commissioner of Fine Arts in the Ministry of Culture."[33] According to Park, Fenollosa was tasked with collecting Eastern artifacts for these objects to represent a modern Japanese identity globally, and it was Fenollosa who truly invented art in Japan in exchange for unprecedented power to define this art culture,[34] which was rescued by Fenollosa from an "ill-equipped" inferior other and exported Japanese art globally through an orientalist framework.[35] This orientalist framework hints at signs of cultural dominance from Western counterparts towards defining an "unrefined" art culture that can only be heightened

[32] Ivo Smits, "Lecture 6: Script and Culture: Empires and Nations (and Post-Empire Nations)," Class Lecture, Introduction to Asian Studies at Leiden University, Leiden, Netherlands, September 27, 2019.
[33] Josephine Park, *Apparitions of Asia: Modernist Form and Asian American Poetics,* Oxford University Press: Oxford (2014).
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.

by the dominant figure, in this case, Fenollosa. In light of Roger's theory, cultural dominance is present as the Meiji government relies on gatekeepers like Fenollosa to export a modern Japanese identity globally.

Gatekeepers like Fenollosa set the standard for what was acceptably modern, and thus presentable on the world stage. Explorations of sacred shrines and sites were a common occurrence as they serve to reinforce the traditional and mysterious “East” narrative. Fenollosa himself documents such a process with an ancient Buddhist statue in Horiuji. While there was local resistance Fenollosa and his companions trespassed on the sacred shrine of Horiuji and successfully displayed their discoveries in museums worldwide.[36] Moreover, what we see is a standard set by Eurocentric hubris in the Meiji government's quest to demonstrate modern qualities to the world. Smits (2019) argues that overtime these cultural artifacts infused with a Eurocentric hubris become true "Japanese" art and are complex to unravel.[37] Despite support from the Meiji government, this exploitation of the sacred shrine is an example of cultural exploitation by which the dominant culture, in this case, Fenollosa, has unrestricted access to sacred sites deemed by Fenollosa to bear attractive "Eastern" features to "Western" audiences. Finally, what emerges is an inability to truly decipher what we understand today as Japanese art because of the multi-layered Eurocentric framework it was built upon by gatekeepers like Fenollosa. Through the employment of Fenollosa and the emergence of global ethnographic museums, the Meiji government employed a tactic of re-invention. The process of re-invention displayed selected art that was truly "Japanese" on the global stage, Japanese art that was traditional and mystifying, but in essence, a modern invention that was made globally comprehensible. What constituted "Japanese" art in this scenario was built atop western foundations. During the Meiji era, this

[36] Sarah J. Horton, *Living Buddhist Statues in Early Medieval and Modern Japan,* Palgrave Macmillan: New York (2007): 159-161.
[37] Smits, “Lecture 6,” Leiden University.

criterion became the reality of what constituted Japanese, but in reality, reflected the political discussion behind the art's proximity to modernity and was justified by criteria set forth by Fenollosa and Meiji officials at the time.

Divergent paths between *ukiyo-e* art and *irezumi*

The invention of true Japanese art was driven by political intent. This political intent can be seen when understanding the similarities of *ukiyo-e* and *irezumi*, as well as its eventual differences. *Ukiyo-e* roughly translates to "pictures of the floating world," and was popularized as a genre of Japanese art during the 17th century till the 19th century.[38] This type of art is expressed through woodblock printings and paintings that depict historical scenes that deal with folktales, landscapes, and erotica.[39] What is notable to mention is that the difference in perspectives on *ukiyo-e* and *irezumi* is political, and is shrouded in Eurocentric hubris. While similarities exist, the historical paths of both forms of arts contradict one another as *ukiyo-e* art is considered as prestigious today; a part of Japan's history, compared to the aversion towards *irezumi* still strongly present. The end of the Edo period serves as the turning point and crossroad that separates the realities of these two forms of art. This section will firstly demonstrate the relation between *ukiyo-e* art and Japanese-style tattooing practices which are often overlooked, this will not adopt Roger's theory, but simply highlight the historical basis for *irezumi's* affiliation with *ukiyo-e.* Then secondly, explain how different perceptions exist between the two forms of Japanese art using Rogers' methodology of cultural appropriation.

38 Google Arts & Culture, "The Ukiyo-e Artists You Need To Know," Google.com, https://artsandculture.google.com/story/the-ukiyo-e-artists-you-need-to-know/BQKC6o0k2oBRLA, (Accessed June 10, 2020).
39 Ibid.

The large appreciation and acceptance of Japanese-style tattoos during the Edo-period can largely be credited to its connections with *ukiyo-e* woodblocks. Many of the motifs present in Japanese-style tattoos stem from *ukiyo-e* art and imagining "pictures of the floating world."[40] One such motif present in *ukiyo-e* and Japanese-style tattoos is the image of the "unbuttoned vest" or *munawari,* inspired by "full-body" (see Figure 3) [41] suits pictured in many *ukiyo-e* prints (Figure 3).[42] But was it only the motifs that connected *ukiyo-e* and Japanese-style tattoos or *irezumi*? In essence, the wood engravers that practiced *ukiyo-e* were called *Horishi,* some of these wood engravers would eventually also become tattoo artists specializing in full-body suits, these tattooists were also known as *Horishi.*[43] This shows that *ukiyo-e* art and *irezumi* are inevitably linked through similar aspirations of folktales like *ukiyo-e*, yet differ in the canvas. *Irezumi's* rise to prominence in the Edo period is closely linked with the concept of the floating world as *Horishi's* would interchangeably practice *ukiyo-e* and *irezumi.*

Figure 3

The reality however is that perceptions towards both art forms differ. Why does such a disparity exist between these two forms of Edo period art if they share the similar art motifs originating from prestigious *ukiyo-e* practitioners? At the basic level, this disparity was accelerated and promulgated through different mediums like film, and literature which will be explored later in the following sections and Chapter III. In the case of Japanese-style tattooing, The Misdemeanor law (1872) simply formalized the framework to understand what

[40] Skutlin, "Fashioning Tattooed Bodies," 9.
[41] Chazz LaBeouf, [Munawari Tattoo], n.d. accessed May 2020, *https://steemit.com/art/@allaboutarts/irezumi-traditional-japanese-tattoo-art.*
[42] Yamada, "Westernization and cultural resistance in tattooing practices in contemporary Japan," 321.
[43] Skutlin, "Fashioning Tattooed Bodies," 10-11.

was not acceptable and cemented the affiliation of tattoos to ostracized individuals like those in the Yakuza and Geisha.[44] The Misdemeanor Law was enacted by the Meiji government to prohibit individuals from working naked or even semi-naked.[45] More importantly, the body became a vessel that needed to be constantly under surveillance by local Japanese authorities to appease and not look backward to foreign visitors/partners. This idea prioritizes Western notions of the 'clean body' as a characteristic of the modern individual.

The consequential fall of the everyday Japanese individuals' appreciation towards Japanese-style tattoos was a political campaign by the Meiji officials to reposition Japanese modern identity alongside Western counterparts. The reason for the fall of Japanese-style tattooing was a repercussion on changing the perception of the human body. Nudity, in Western society, was negatively judged as a "culturally and morally inappropriate state of undress."[46] Using this historic and cultural understanding of undress, many Western visitors that voyaged into Japan for the first time would judge Japanese society on Western standards.[47] These Western standards became a way of modesty and civility that at the time was promulgated to be inherent of a modern nation towards the Meiji government. The Misdemeanor law of 1872 became the tangible product of a legal system that enforced measures against those who remained in ‘the old ways’ and were undressed in public.[48] The central government established clear-cut lines of what the modern Japanese individual would resemble by imposing Western clothing unto the upper-class first and foremost, then the rest of society.[49] Regional governments became the main actors in enforcing this initiative by the central Meiji government, by introducing measures to dress individuals in Western ways in military,

[44] Mansfield, “The Indelible Art of the Tattoo,” 37-38.
[45] Skutlin, “Fashioning Tattooed Bodies,” 10-11.
[46] Kawano, “Japanese Bodies and Western Ways of Seeing the Late 19th Century,” 149-151.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.

schools, and factories.[50] More importantly, the aggressive restructuring in compulsory education, general public health practices, and military drafting centralized the actions of the central government to complement their beliefs on the modern Japanese identity.[51] What we see occurring, is the homogenization of society and simultaneously the production of the modern Japanese individual. When moving forward, those who stepped out of line would be punished, imprisoned, and fined by local police forces.[52] More profoundly, it is the selective degree by how the central government would impose this transition into Western-style dressing and modernity. The central focus point of these initiatives was primarily gauged towards urban centers and middle-upper class individuals who more likely be exposed to Western visitors. This is done so in a way to ensure the efficient effectiveness of such initiatives amid a growing number of Western travelers.[53] Japanese-tattooing practices became a consequent artifact that was eliminated in the eyes of Meiji officials to represent backward traits.[54] Albeit, we cannot assume that due to these impositions and tactics employed by the Meiji state, that all individuals followed obediently. I would argue that the particular division between the urban and rural imposition of the Misdemeanor Law resulted in a greater negative stigma when it came to Japanese-style tattooing as they forced *Horishi's* and their tattooing practices to associate with lower classmen and consequently submerge itself in sub-culture or move abroad to survive. This is in large part due to a growing middle class and migration into central pockets across the Japanese nation as a result of urbanization and modernization.

Mechanisms like film became a tool to solidify the change in perception of the body and linking the stigmatization to societal outcasts, namely, *Bakuto's. Bakuto's* are best

[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.

understood as itinerant gamblers, who were ruthless and filled with raw emotions that fall out of the line of societal values and are argued to be the origins of Yakuza members.[55] Skutlin argues that ever since the silent era of film (late 19th century), *Bakuto's* and Yakuza members are depicted in negative limelight through the highly accessible medium of film.[56] Over time, the depiction of Yakuza became more violent, highly realistic, and detailed, whereby the imagined identity of gang members became reality for much middle class Japanese. This imagination can be argued to demonstrate internal othering similar to Said's orientalism present in many "east" nations. This distancing of the modern Japanese identity with the Yakuza inevitably led to more violent imagined identity and stigmatization of tattooed individuals. Regardless of what tattoos depicted, the idea of Japanese-style tattoos became a target for Meiji officials to accelerate the adoption of the Western 'clean body'. So why were Western royals and even sailors still considered clean-bodied if they too had tattoos? It is exactly for this reason that we can identify that the issue does not lie with tattoos itself, but more with the concept of the naked body, which would contradict the Japanese campaign towards modernization in the eyes of Western visitors. These Western visitors were imagined by the Meiji officials to be judges and gatekeepers to what was acceptable as modern. As a result, the Misdemeanor Law became an aggressive act to implement the 'clean body' as central to Japanese identity moving forward.

Identity through the body and nudity is one of the many consequences of cultural exchange between Japan and European Empires. Through re-imagining the image of what the modern individual represented, European empires constructed a new Japanese identity in the name of modernity. More importantly, this discourse was internalized by Meiji officials to ensure Japanese modernity. As early as 1871, when Judeo-Christian traditions were introduced by

[55] Ibid, 12-14.
[56] Ibid.

Western travelers, perceptions of the body and self were reformatted, and instead promulgated an image of a clean and clothed individual as the norm in a modernized society.[57] In exchange for the introduction of practices that were characteristic of the modern identity, foreign practitioners were given influence and access in Japan to further amplify the image of the modern Japanese.[58] In Yamada's article (2009), before this period of modernization and well before the beginning of the Meiji era (1868), individuals that showed their nude bodies and consequently their tattoos represented "courage and pride," and were a daily occurrence in the Japanese lifestyle.[59] This would often be the case in *hadaka matsuri* or naked festivals, where male participants would only wear loincloths, and "tattooed men would carry *omikoshi* – portable *Shinto* shrines…through the streets on festival days," to demonstrate pride of self to Japanese individuals watching.[60] What can be deduced here is that through Rogers' theory, the Japanese identity associated with nudity and pride gradually transitioned to one that prioritized a clothed and clean individual, as dictated by Western travelers. The sudden acceleration and contradictory modification on narratives surrounding the body and nudity hint at a political incentive to alter Japanese identity coupled with the change in government officials (Meiji era). An incentive that tries to achieve modernity. This highlights that identity is an exogenous, modern construction that is imagined by those in power and gatekeepers that ensure the direction by which this identity is directed towards. They became the product of complex interactions occurring around them. It bears the idea, that perhaps, the domestic negative stigma associated with Japanese-style tattoos is not so disconnected from modern Japanese identity re-invention, but a result of external factors influencing its path.

[57] Yamada, "Westernization and cultural resistance in tattooing practices in contemporary Japan," 322-323.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.

When delving further into this, the divide between *ukiyo-e* and *irezumi* is greatly influenced by concepts such as orientalism and primitivism, that establish the guideposts for what should comprise of modern Japanese art. These concepts are evident in Fenollosa's bid to make *ukiyo-e* art's attraction more comprehensible globally. The disassociation of Japanese modern identity with *irezumi* is highly driven by the notion of the 'clean body' and heavily influenced the criteria's by which Fenollosa decided to pick Japanese art that would simultaneously interest the Western fetish with the unknown, but also comply with the demands by Meiji officials to present a modern identity globally.[61] What was not 'true' about *irezumi*, was that it simply did not present modern identity the way Meiji officials imagined modernity. Fenollosa, with the approval of the Meiji government, *ukiyo-e* art themselves, and their history, were commodified to represent an imagined traditional Japan.

Fenollosa's task was not to simply sell the art pieces themselves but to reimagine and offer a more attractive side of history and narrative that would sell to western customers.[62] One such case can be examined by looking at the *ukiyo-e* artist, Hokusai. Fenollosa's opinion on Hokusai's prints was that they were "vulgar" at best and that Western interest in *ukiyo-e* was misplaced and "insensitive to true art."[63] Regardless, Western audiences, like in London, were fascinated by newfound "mystified Eastern" art.[64] In a bid to bow to popular opinion, Fenollosa's opinion changed as he documented new painting schools and styles to fit *ukiyo-e* artists that were attractive to Western audiences to understand art history in the East. It can be argued that the value of *ukiyo-e* is created through the manipulation of the artist's history as well as the meticulous selection of what would interest the Western fetish with Eastern art more. It is not to say that *ukiyo-e* is not true Japanese art, but the criteria of what constitutes

61 Ibid.
62 Allen Hockley, and Koryūsai Isoda, *The Prints of Isoda Koryūsai: Floating World Culture and Its Consumers in Eighteenth-Century Japan*, University of Washington Press: Seattle (2003): 24-26.
63 M. Anderson, *Japan and the Specter of Imperialism,* Palgrave Macmillan: New York (2009): 83.
64 Hockley, and Isoda, *The Prints of Isoda Koryūsai*, 24-26.

'true' is fundamentally flawed and politically driven to adhere to the Western imagination of the East as a mystic, and spiritual shown by *ukiyo-e's* depiction of a floating world. It would be better to say that the selected *ukiyo-e* manifested Western imagination on Eastern art into reality, a reality that acts as a façade to political motives of modernization present in Japan.

This attraction was also tied to the capitalist class division. Skutlin emphasizes that one of the main factors why *ukiyo-e* art and *irezumi* differed so greatly towards the start of the Meiji period, was that *irezumi,* although practiced by the same *Horishi* in *ukiyo-e,* were tied to the lower working class.[65] This relentless affiliation to the lower working class was further complicated by a tumultuous age that sought to portray a modern Japanese identity globally, hence the employment of the prestigious *ukiyo-e* art sold to many high-ranking officials.[66] More importantly, what determined the value of the art itself was the consumers who were interested in and buying the artist's work. Modern Japanese art became the outcome of an orientalist-driven framework that prioritized massive consumer interest over the art itself. This in itself creates a skewed standard that is determined by economic-driven interests. These power imbalances are evident as cultural artifacts from Japan undergo an unequal assessment based on Eurocentric criteria. This process exploits different styles of art imported from Japan and labels them as modern art or traditionally Japanese, based on factors outside of cultural domains alone. In essence, cultural domination occurs through capitalist paradigms enforced on selling the product, rather than portraying the reality in Japan. In line with Rogers' theory, cultural appropriation is present through these two aforementioned cultural domains and highlights the peculiarities behind the portrayal of Japanese art in Western settings. Japanese art was as much about the art itself, as it was about the customers who were buying the product. For the Meiji officials, this depiction of Japanese identity

[65] Skutlin, "Fashioning Tattooed Bodies," 10-11.
[66] Ibid.

imagined by Western counterparts attempted to present a sophisticated and equal Japanese identity to the West. By influencing the medium by which Western society understood Japan, the imagined identity of Japan can be shaped to the liking of the Meiji officials. While abroad, this served the agenda of depicting a modern Japanese identity, in Japan, a greater disparity existed between *ukiyo-e* and *irezumi* that benefitted the campaign of disassociating *irezumi* with Japanese identity moving forward. This disassociation also made it easier for Meiji officials to tie the possession of a tattoo to the violent gang members or yakuza mentioned before because they predominantly came from social outcasts in the lower working classes.

The denotative approach to fear

This local negative stigma in Japan is apparent in many literature pieces circulating the Meiji period in Japan. Printed mediums like literature and newspapers were impactful mediums that served to re-invent the nation of Japan. In particular, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's novels served as effective pieces of literature in the modern Japanese age. These novels and short novels focused profoundly on the shocking world of erotic obsessions and destructive sexuality.

Before commencing an analysis into a specific short novel written by Tanizaki, it is crucial to first understand the relevance of print mediums like novels and newspapers. This thesis argues that in fact, these print mediums served to reinforce the identity of a nation, and in Japan's case, re-inventing itself into a modernizing nation. The rise of modern Japan can best be captured by what Smits (2019) argues is the rise of a print community.[67] This argument falls in line with Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Community* (1983) argument where the community imagines a horizontal-homogenous relation with people who you may

[67] Smits, "Lecture 6," Leiden University.

not know or have never met before.[68] Print-mediums serve as the foundation by which the rise of a nation is solidified through imagined ideas of nationalism, identity, and shared perceptions.

Literature, like Tanizaki's novels, served as an accessible medium for larger audiences in Japan. Beeler (2005) argues that in Japan, much of the understanding of *irezumi* derive from “masculine aesthetic, texts and films,” centered around women and male pleasure.[69] Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's novels were one of the main mediums responsible for a greater understanding of how *irezumi* was portrayed within Japan. In his book *Tokyo A Cultural History,* Stephen Mansfield (2009) refers to the story written by Tanizaki titled *The Tattooer* (1910) that depicts the experiences of a tattoo artist in search of a Geisha.[70] To give a brief overview of Jun'ichirō's story, a tattoo artist is in search of a canvas, a Geisha, to tattoo them to experiment on rumors that an individual can be brought to new heights of beauty with a tattoo. During the Edo Period, tattooed individuals unavoidably became "adorned," for some reason.[71] Importantly, the date of production, 1910, and the period it depicts: Edo Period, are largely far apart and hints at an imaginative and greatly produced fictional story. In a bid to test this theory, the story explores the realm of erotic desires coupled with experimenting on tattooing a Geisha. To reiterate a point mentioned early on in the chapter, the film became an important medium to direct public perception on a given topic. In this case, similar to the depiction of *Bakuto*, the cultural artifact of *irezumi* itself, became imagined to represent an undeniable dangerous pleasure that is not fully understood, hence the use of rumors,

[68] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* Verso: London (1983): 37-41.
[69] Karin Beeler, *Tattoos, Desire, and Violence: Marks of Resistance in Literature, Film and Television,* McFarland: Jefferson (2005): 42.
[70] Stephen Mansfield, *Tokyo A Cultural History,* Oxford University Press: Oxford (2009): 231-232.
[71] Ibid.

experiments, and adornment. The specific use of these terms paints a picture that tattooing is not fully understood and presents a danger to any who encounter it.

At the surface, the story tells of beautifying a naïve and inexperienced Geisha to be more adored by her clients. The tattoo artist in the novel tattoos a spider on the whole back of the Geisha while she is drugged unconscious.[72] The particular use of a spider is unique because as Tanizaki depicts, this adornment is symbolized by how the spiders create victims by "digging their legs" into men "with each shuddering breath…stirred as if they were alive," and inevitably catching their preys.[73] The purpose of this, according to Beeler (2015), is to create an aura of "vulgarity" around the tattoo itself and its experience.[74] In medieval Japan, the spider represented a "malign creature" that appropriately fit the underlying message of fear that the tattoo should trigger.[75] Additionally, Tanizaki explores the realm of erotic desires, as the Geisha is not only a symbol of danger and fear, embodied by the spider but also a symbol of undeniable desire and attractiveness. This is precisely where the danger lies, in that you lack the control to resist the spider once faced with the creature, resulting in your eventual submission. More profoundly, Tanizaki's message of fear is effective because of its indirectness evident by the diction employed. The novel is very vague and leaves room for imagination, Tanizaki merely guides to the reader through the strategic use of the word spider; and the image it triggers, as well as the insatiable desire of men through the realm of erotic. All of which brings us back to the tattoo as a practice that may seem attractive but is dangerous and should be feared above all. This shows the complexities present in entrenching the negative stigma associate with tattooing in Japan. What occurs as a result is the naturalizing proponents given to the negative stigma of *irezumi.* This coupled with the impact

[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Beeler, *Tattoos, Desire, and Violence*, 42.
[75] Ibid.

of print-capitalism, a recurrent message becomes the reality for a homogenizing society in the process of re-inventing itself atop a clean slate.

Overall what Tanizaki creates, is an imagined notion of *irezumi* that is anchored by realistic and highly detailed traits, similar to the *Bakuto* example mentioned earlier. This makes it easier for the audience to comprehend that little is understood about *irezumi and* making it highly uncontrollable. Rather, the lack of understanding of *irezumi* allows the audience to imagine the dangers of *irezumi* aided by images like the spider and diction like adorned. More importantly, in a society that at the time desperately attempted to set societal standards and have its citizens adhere to them for modernization, something that cannot be controlled and understood is incomprehensible to the everyday Japanese. Something that is not controlled and understood manifests itself through mystic and dangerous aura that must be feared, thus making it easier for the everyday Japanese individual to stigmatize the notion of tattoo's although they may never have experienced or come across an *irezumi.* This sense of unknown and affiliation with *irezumi* as being inherent to social outcasts intensifies the fear behind *irezumi.*

Exporting the survivability of *irezumi* abroad

This clean slate of modernization created a vacuum by which the very same foreign audience that the Meiji institutes attempted to distance *irezumi* from modern Japanese identity, were the same actors that exported the survivability of *irezumi* globally. This segment will address the presence of notable royal figures that laid the groundwork for the perception of *irezumi* abroad. This perception of *irezumi* abroad sees Japanese-style tattoos in an orientalist lens, whereby existing notions present at the time of traditional Japanese art were amplified by the work of gatekeepers like Fenollosa.

It would be more precise to argue that *irezumi's* survivability inevitably depended on foreigners to attract consumers outside of Japan. This is not to say that this was the sole possibility for the continued practice of *irezumi,* but a necessary means amidst tumultuous times in the Meiji era. Mansfield (1999) writes in his article on how the taboo of tattoo came to be and credits foreign presence as a pillar to its survivability within Japan, through its appeal outside of Japan. [76] The foreign presence referred to royal figures, notably from Britain, who traveled to Japan after the nation's opening and underwent Japanese tattooing experiences. Cortazzi (2007) argues that "King Edward VII acted as the curtain-raiser to the golden age of tattooing when he acquired his first tattoo design in Jerusalem in 1862," and eventually led to other British royals experiencing new practices elsewhere.[77] This highlights a peculiar surge in foreign interests in exploring nations in the East and "orient." In line with Roger's theory, foreign presence in the orient highlights a power imbalance, wherein the cultural exchange is unilateral between the royal figures and nations they come into contact with. Moreover, this leads the way into realms of cultural exploitation and dominance that are hard to decipher due to the secret nature behind many of the royal's adventures into these oriental lands in the East

To build on what was said, tattoos were still quite closed off from public knowledge in Western societies, especially in Britain. Cortazzi (2007) reiterates this idea by indicating that the specific venture made by King Edward VII into Jerusalem and other tattooing experiences afterward, was kept from public knowledge, probably in fear of harming the reputation of the British royal family.[78] Despite attempts to control news of tattooing experiences in the royal family, diaries from royal figures have been documented that address the tattooing experiences of British royals, especially in Japan. Prince Albert Victor and

[76] Mansfield, "The Indelible Art of the Tattoo," 37-38.
[77] Hugh Cortazzi, *Britain, and Japan: Biographical Portraits, Volume 6,* The Japan Society: Kent (2007): 73.
[78] Ibid, 73-74.

Prince George inscribe a tattooing experience on 27th -28th October 1881, in Enryōkan, the royal palace for foreign guests.

> Oct. 27th …We came back quite hungry for breakfast, after which we were tattooed on the arms. At 9.30 a.m. we got into uniforms, and the Mikado came to call at the En-riô-kwan.[79]

> Oct. 28th … Back to breakfast at 9.30 and then the tattooer finished our arms. He does a large dragon in blue and red writing all down the arm in about three hours.[80]

The tattooing experience is further described by Prince Albert Victor to be beautiful, despite Meiji laws abolishing tattooing practices. The two princes' interest in the Japanese tattooing experiences spread to numerous individuals, notably: sailors and army lieutenants, onboard the *Bacchante* ship that sailed them from Britain to Japan, and other accompanying ships.

> The man who did most of our party was beautifully tattooed over the whole of his body, and the effect of these Japanese drawings in various colors and curves on his glistening skin was like so much embroidered silk. Like so many of their old customs tattooing has been abolished by law, but these two artists were allowed to come to us in our own room here.[81]

The experience of lieutenant Beresford, who was also on the voyage with the two princes, is documented through his journal.

79 Prince Albert Victor et al., *The Cruise of Her Majesty's Ship "Bacchante" 1879-1882, Vol. II*, Macmillan: London (1886): 41.
80 Ibid, 46.
81 Ibid.

> I was tattooed by the native artificers, to the astonishment of Japanese officials and nobles; for in Japan none save the common people is tattooed. The Japanese artist designs in white upon dark…beautifully illustrated upon my person.[82]

Each journal transcribes a fascination and curiosity with experiences around *irezumi.* An old custom that belongs to a time long gone and was naturally abolished because of modernization. It through this curiosity with the unknown and unreachable past that these foreign visitors' pictures an imagined Japanese past. The art itself is not in itself entirely respected, but more the experience and curiosity of facing a mystified and traditional form of art. This is best captured by Satow's (1897), a member of the British Legation, journal on Prince George's remark:

> Duke of York very affable…talked a good deal about his visit to Japan. He does not seem to have liked Japs. He took off his coat and showed us his tattooing.[83]

The particular diction used by addressing the tattoo artists in Japan and Japanese as “Japs,” and the abrupt hastened display of tattooing, hints at a slight sign of disregard for the tattooists themselves. The main focus of this excerpt is the experience of visiting Japan and the tattoo itself. The abrupt display of the tattoo hints at a need to boast about acquiring a relic of the visit to the mystified East.[84] Moreover, the experience attempts to "claim" the tattooing experience in Japan, as celebrated tattoo artists were patronized by the royal figures and commodified into a *Handbook for Travellers in Japan* advertised as a guidebook for Western travelers in the

[82] Charles Beresford, *The Memoirs of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford, Vol. 1,* Methuen: London (1914): 101.
[83] Cortazzi, *Britain, and Japan: Biographical Portraits, Volume 6*, 76-77.
[84] Ibid.

Arthur & Bond's Fine Art Gallery in Yokohoma.[85] This is an example of firstly, cultural exploitation, and secondly, cultural dominance. Through exploiting the situation in Japan and abolishment on tattooing practices, the royal figures use their royal influence to experience *irezumi* and culturally dominate *irezumi* through capitalist means of releasing a guidebook on Japan. All of which shows a decree to "claim" the imagined Japanese experience and promulgate this message to foreign visitors. A sublime process that adopts an orientalist framework that patronizes the tattoo artists as primitive, but the experience as significant because of its affiliation with western figures. While Western interest in *irezumi* allowed the practice to survive abroad, it was equally responsible for how *irezumi* was stigmatized and negatively viewed within Japan. This large fascination be it in the process of getting *irezumi* or its motifs, all lay on the foundation that it became a bridge to imagine the East as a mystic and different than Western society. Through royal figures mentioned above and Western travelers, *irezumi* has ensured a lifeline abroad, yet, this simultaneously reproduces *irezumi* in a condescending expression shared by Western travelers. The experiences of sailors and royal figures simplified *irezumi* into an easily exchangeable artifact used to appease Western fetishes and curiosity. What we see is a duality that exists, where on one hand, the experience of *irezumi* is thrilling and unique to the Western fetish, but vulgar and increasingly stigmatized in Japan. This stigmatization stems from both sides simplifying and patronizing *irezumi.*

In Japan what occurs around the same time Japanese-style tattooing practices become popular among royal figures, is the centralized actions to ensure the distancing of tattooing away from Japan. The surge of tattoo artists slowly gathering interest abroad, resulted in a greater focus on cracking down *Horishi's* in the late 19th century. To understand this particular process, the notion of 'clean body' becomes essential. Ultimately what is created is the imposition of the Western discourse on modern Japanese identity as the body becomes a frontal

[85] Ibid.

demonstration of a person's social affairs and proximity to modernity. This criterion is flawed as it is based on Western standards and ideas of civility that manipulate concepts about modernity and nation-building.

All in all, there is a need to re-examine the negative stigma associated with Japanese-style tattoos today in Japan and orientalist frameworks, as they are undeniably interconnected, as seen above. This becomes the product of historical contingent factors that occur during the Meiji era. The taboo associated with Japanese-style tattoos is naturalized and constructed to represent a narrative that Japanese-style tattoos are inherently not Japanese. But what makes an art style "Japanese?" There is no clear answer nor does this thesis aim to answer that, instead, a reexamination of determining an artifact as inherently Japanese must be addressed. By firstly, portraying how *irezumi* was understood during the Meiji era, secondly, demonstrating the divergent paths present between *ukiyo-e* and *irezumi,* thirdly, depicting the relation between identity and nudity, fourthly, presenting the importance of print-mediums, and finally providing the importance of foreigners, this thesis provides an understanding as to the contingent factors that helped drive a negative stigma into perceptions on *irezumi*. This wedge is deeply entrenched into modern-day Japanese nation-building and eventually leads to complex layers of conceptions of "Japanese" art or *irezumi.* This is what Roger reiterates as transculturation, that through global networks and capitalism, the experiences of gatekeepers like Fenollosa, and royal figures like Prince George, a multifaceted orientalist foundation considerably upholds the flawed global perception on *irezumi*.

Chapter III: Contemporary Era (1945- present): the persistence of orientalist *irezumi*

The previous chapter delved into the nuances present in the Meiji era that facilitated the negative stigma associated with Japanese-style tattooing in Japan at the time. This chapter will predominantly focus on the postwar era and demonstrate how the different examples from the previous chapter fuel postwar American understanding of Japanese-style tattoos which help reproduce orientalist frameworks and simultaneously reinforce the negative stigma on tattooing in Japan. With this aim, two main themes are reoccurring in the research conducted, namely: the notion of 'souvenirs' and lived experience associated with Japanese-style tattooing, and the imagery associated with Japanese-style tattoos (dragon). This thesis largely provided a historical analysis into *irezumi and* will show a contemporary understanding of *irezumi* exported by American practitioners commencing from 1945 and persist today. This will generally be explored through the Hori smoku documentary on Sailor Jerry, through interviews conducted on Instagram with two notable Japanese-style tattoo artists in America and a one-on-one interview with a European-based Japanese-style tattoo artist. All these themes show a different array of fascination from Western customers that, although not intentionally, build on orientalist foundations. Ultimately what is produced, is a multi-layered system influenced by orientalist narratives commencing from the Meiji era, and continues to persist today.

Tattoo as a lived experience - an orientalist notion

The first theme that will be explored is the notion of souvenirs and how this relates to Japanese-style tattooing. What this section will demonstrate is that in the Horismoku documentary a great deal of postwar American interest in Japanese-style tattoos was more

about what the tattoo signified about the orient than about the tattoo itself. As such, the tattoo became a souvenir of sorts that validated the individuals' voyage into the far east, but more intriguingly, the individual's successful return from returning from the far east.

To best understand the aforementioned idea, a brief explanation of the Horismoku documentary and the pioneer of traditional American-style tattooing is crucial. Sailor Jerry was a renowned American tattoo artist born in 1911, known to many as the father of traditional American-style tattoos, from which much of his collection stemmed from his voyages in the far east.[86] A style known for its unwavering art style with bold colors and lines. Traditional imagery found in American style tattoos often depicted overseas voyages (anchors and ships) and animals (eagles and panthers). Sailor Jerry uniquely incorporated the "Asiatic" art style with traditional American style tattoos, as he was the first to come in the Western tattooing society to come in contact with *Horishi's* and bridged the two worlds together.[87] American style tattoos sprang into prominence following the example of Japanese-style tattooing in the late 19th-century when Europeans exported the practices of *Horishi's* to America, as a result of Japan suddenly opening its borders in the late 19th century.[88] What this shows is that the strict seclusion of Japan before the Meiji era resulted in creating a narrative of the 'unknown' abroad. When Japan opened its borders in the Meiji era, one can argue that the Western fetish in Japan took an unprecedented turn towards a need and desire of sorts to explore the newly opened nation of Japan. It became clear Western visitors would encounter a wave of a new culture, but in Japan, new notions of modernism would shake the foundations of the reinventing nation moving forward. Eventually, this laid the groundwork for a modern identity that would distance concepts that challenged modernism moving ahead, such as Japanese-style tattooing.

[86] Eric Weiss, *Hori Smoku Sailor Jerry Documentary,* directed by Eric Weiss, (2008; New York: Indiepix Studio), Documentary, 3:30-4:04.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid, 7:24-7:55.

Japanese-style tattooing was a consequential cultural artifact that Western travelers indulged in when entering the country. Many Westerners would get Japanese-style tattoos as souvenirs or physical proof of their travels to the far east.[89] At the early stages of the opening of Japan, those who traveled exclusively belonged to prestigious individuals and rich people.[90] It then became a reality in Western society, especially in America, that those who had Japanese-style tattoos on them oftentimes served to represent their status and fortune.[91] The demand for Japanese-style tattoos grew significantly as more and more for this purpose in American cities and their upper classes to import *Horishi's*. This movement galvanized affairs in the military as many units would employ Japanese-style tattoo parlors for their interests in the art of the far east.[92] In the postwar era, this interest carried into the Marines and sailors who were the largest customers when it came to Japanese-style tattoos. This interest is credited in large part due to a shared culture of identity and individuation in the Marines and among sailors.[93] It for this reason, that when one sailor got tattooed, the demand spread like wildfire among sailors to get Japanese-style tattoos ultimately ensuring the survivability of Japanese-style tattooing abroad. Although this notion of Japanese tattoos representing more than the tattoo itself stemmed from the Meiji era, this idea carried unto the postwar era as tattoos became a way to identify the individual.[94] In Japan, what was occurring around the same time was the sudden legalization of tattooing practices under the American occupation (a result of Japan's defeat in World War II) in 1948.[95] Despite this, negative sentiments towards tattooing persisted as the original central government tactics imposed under the Meiji government tactics remained till 1948.[96] In fact, what is interesting to point out is that the law in large part

[89] Ibid, 7:56-8:43
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid, 26:00-27:24.
[95] Margom Demello. *Inked: Tattoos and Body Art around the World (2 Volumes).* ABC-Clio: Santa Barbara (2014), 328.
[96] Ibid.

faced great resistance and disapproval from many Japanese officials and individuals.[97] The law was enacted and imposed in Japan due to rising demand from the American military as "many wanted souvenirs of the Far East,"[98] so lifting the ban on tattooing practices served little to dismantle the efforts of Meiji officials in the prewar period and negative sentiments towards tattooing in Japan remained largely intact.

Moreover, tattoos as a medium served to expand the lifeline of this lived experience from a fleeting instance of voyage and travel to a state of permanence. At the time, voyages and travels were rarely captured and circulated as they were simply retold.[99] Tattoos became a way to express one's story as tattoos captured and overdramatized the person's voyage, which further reinforced the fascination and continuation of tattooing in America and consequently, Japanese-style tattoos.[100] By possessing a Japanese-style tattoo, it was often interpreted that these individuals would express the significance of their voyage through reoccurring imagery like dragons and nude 'Asiatic' women with bold colors.[101] In interviews conducted through Instagram, contemporary tattoo artists Mike Rubendall and Caio Pineiro argue that the simplicity, yet equal complexity of Japanese tattooing, with its dragons and flowers, are the roots of its resilience in today's tattooing world.[102] This was also the case in the aftermath of World War II as Japanese-style tattoos rose to prominence for widening the American understanding of tattooing practices.[103] To refer back to the lived experience reflected in the state of permanence through tattooing, Cann best captures this idea through the exploration of grieving the dead in the 21st century. In her book, she reiterates that as well in death, tattoos serve as "public markers and reminders" on the

97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
99 Weiss, *Hori Smoku Sailor Jerry Documentary*, 10:00-13:55.
100 Ibid, 56:17-58:44.
101 Ibid.
102 See Appendix 1.
103 Ibid.

experiences of the living and their landscape.[104] Along with this line of thought, the tattooed experiences of postwar voyages conducted by American sailors reflect a deeper message than the simple act of remembering a night out in the far east (Figure 4).[105] Rather, a power dynamic is present wherein Rogers' theory on cultural appropriation takes place at different levels. Intentional or not, the lift on the ban on *Horishi's* for the sole reason for the growing demand in the military coupled with the defeat experienced by Japan at the hands of the American forces creates a power imbalance and hints at cultural exploitation. The far east was still seen as a distant and above all different land that not many had visited as a result of historical circumstances and the war at the time. The portrayal of tattoos and its permanence would reflect this power imbalance in which only essential and general ideas of far east culture could be encapsulated to represent "Japanese" tattoos.

Figure 4

While at first glance, the physical attribute of possessing a Japanese-style tattoo represented the voyage of the tattooed individual into the far east, there exists a deeper message. The underlying tone present in possessing a Japanese-style tattoo not only relates to capitalist endeavors of class mobility but also a degree of cultural dominance and exploitation

[104] Candi K. Cann, *Grieving the Dead in the Twenty-First Century: Virtual Afterlives,* University Press of Kentucky: Kentucky (2014): 59-61.
[105] Horismoku Jerry, [Female Japanese figure back tattoo with dragons], n.d. tattoo, accessed June 2020, https://sailorjerry.com/en/blog/post/watch-the-full-length-hori-smoku-sailor-jerry-documentary-streaming-for-free-for-a-limited-time.

over the far east achieved through appropriating what Rogers calls a cultural artifact. This orientalist framework is found in Japanese-style tattoos and is the byproduct of the Western fetish in the unknown East, signified by how Western travelers were able to attain an Eastern artifact, despite the mystic, unknown dangers of the other. This certainly hints at the assumption that these tattooed Western individuals had conquered their travels and trademarked their dominance by branding themselves with Japanese-style tattoos. What occurs in 1948 is the forceful enactment of lifting the ban on Japanese *Horishi's* for the desires of American individuals rather than having any significant difference in Japan itself. This Western fascination in Japanese-style tattooing served little to shake the foundations and lasting effects Meiji era tactics had on Japanese societies' sentiments towards tattoos in general. As ideals centered around the preservation and assurance of the 'clean body' mentioned in the previous chapter remained prominent due to education and central government tactics. All in all, the law was more about American counterparts then about the Japanese individuals or *Horishi's* themselves and hint at an American hubris towards culturally appropriating art in the far east as a 'souvenir'.

The image of the Dragon

This section will take a detailed look into the reoccurring aspects found in Japanese-style tattoos such as dragons to deconstruct general ideas shared on what makes it Japanese. The implementation of one imagery does not insinuate that the dragon is the most Japanese image found in *irezumi*, rather it is simply an image reiterated by Sailor Jerry and the artists interviewed as representing complex interactions like fear, beauty, heroism and what I argue, orientalist sentiments that are present today. By observing reoccurring imagery found in the Hori Smoku documentary supplemented by the interviews, a greater understanding of traits that are inherently 'Japanese' can be observed.

The dragon is a symbol by many tattoo artists revered to be the pinnacle of Japanese tattooing as it possesses both a beautiful and transient aura through the usage of bold colors.[106] Historically, the dragon was always coupled with a heroic figure to elevate the folklore aspects associated with Japanese style tattoos during the Edo period and in the Meiji era.[107] This was also the case for *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints as seen in the *108 series of Suikoden* depicting the before-mentioned figure of *Kuniyoshi* (Figure 5).[108] who was regularly seen in proximity to a dragon in the background of the print or tattooed on his body.[109] When analyzing the diction used in narratives associated with *ukiyo-e,* many understand that dragon to represent an image that captures the ephemeral world we live in today.[110] In Hori Smoku's documentary, many of the *Horishi's* explored, like *Horiyoshi III,* similarly engage in capturing this ephemeral world like *ukiyo-e* prints.[111] While both share the same practitioners and imagery, the continued stigmatization of *irezumi*

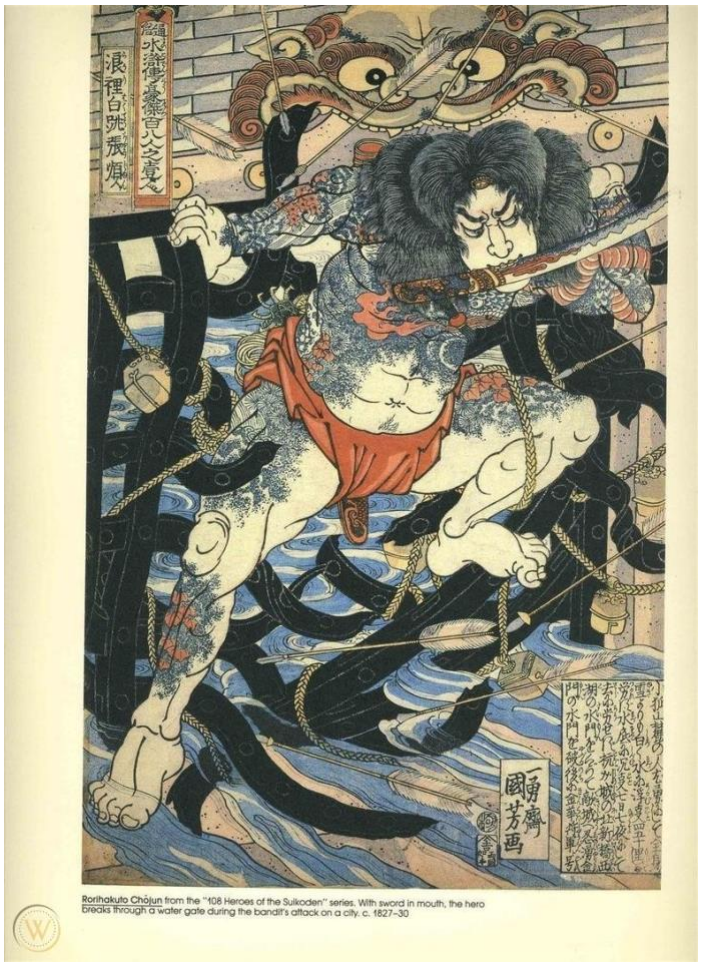

Figure 5

[106] Beeler, *Tattoos, Desire, and Violence: Marks of Resistance in Literature, Film and Television,* 106.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Utagawa Kuniyoshi, Rorihaukuto Chōjun, 1830, print, 9 ¾ x 11 ½, 108 Heroes of the Suikoden Series, accessed June 2020, https://www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/utagawa-kuniyoshi-print-rorihakuto-1839316079.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Mansfield, *Tokyo A Cultural History,* 29.
[111] Weiss, *Hori Smoku Sailor Jerry Documentary,* 56:17-58:44.

hints that external factors influenced the narrative on *irezumi,* namely politics and historical factors. The void in the narrative on what both forms of art represent with Japanese history reflects a deeper message of distancing arts that jeopardize the integrity of the modern Japanese identity. The image of the dragon is not simply one about the tattoo itself, but more about the complex historical factors associated with the tattoo. This is evident when understanding the path of *ukiyo-e* art into a prestigious historical art in Japan, and the ever-present stigmatization on *irezumi* today.

Additionally, when looking at the perspective of American clients the interviewed tattoo artists all reiterate a notion of tradition apparent in Japanese-style tattoos.[112] The dragon signifies a timeless beauty that is truly not attainable in the West.[113] Many customers today understand the dragon as a uniquely Japanese experience different from what can be experienced in Western societies. The usage of folklore, the implementation of bold colors to dramatize the story, and finally the historical seclusion many Westerner individuals observed in Japan from the Meiji era, arguably into the end of World War II all reinforce the ideas of the mystic, the traditional and the unknown associated with Japan in their respective periods. This is the reason why varying degrees of understandings exist when discussing Japanese-style tattoos. For example, the imagery of the dragon according to Hori Smoku represents a destructive and mighty figure that strikes fear in many.[114] Similarly, Skutlin argues that dragons conjure an image of intimidation for Western audiences.[115] Despite this intimidation what is equally created is a fascination and fetish with what many clients today still perceive to be uniquely Japanese.[116] On the opposite side of the spectrum, there exists a different narrative shared by Japanese tattoo artists as dragons represent "wise, gifted and blessed with

[112] See Appendix 1 & 2.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Weiss, *Hori Smoku Sailor Jerry Documentary*, 56:17-58:44.
[115] Skutlin, "Fashioning Tattooed Bodies," 4.
[116] See Appendix 1 & 2.

boundless energy" to any who possess the dragon on their body.[117] It is too simple to assume the historical understandings of the dragon in folklore attribute to the differing ideas narratives. The problem lies in the fact that the Western understanding of dragons has become the framework by which many understand constitutes a Japanese-style dragon tattoo. It reproduces a process of transculturation from Rogers' theory whereby the façade of a Japanese-style tattoo is attributed to a Western understanding of what these tattoos are. To be exact, Japanese tattoos are believed to represent everything, but a narrative shared by Japanese practitioners themselves since it is built on layers and layers of Western understanding on what criteria a dragon must have to be Japanese; bold colors, whole-bodied, intimidating facial expressions. This fascination and commodification of Japanese-style tattoos export not only the Japanese-style tattoos globally but also the studying on the traits of Japanese-style tattoos. It becomes a reality that through figures like Hori Smoku, a general understanding of what Japanese-style tattoos constitute is translated to American tattoo artists.[118] This can be seen by the interviews as the traditional, timeless, and simple yet complex characteristics of Japanese-style tattoos are the reason Japanese-style tattoos persist today. This fascination with Japanese-style tattoos is because of the Western fetish of exploring tradition, a yearning to travel back to the past and experience a mystic journey unseen in the West or America. Perhaps implying that the modern Western identity had lost its sense of tradition and mysticism, yet Japanese society still holds these concepts and has adapted its survivability to modern-day society. This can be seen by This would emulate the deep fascination many Western travelers and postwar American individuals shared when they ventured into Japan and back home to what they perceived as 'modern society'. This in itself creates an orientalist narrative, wherein their fascination lay on a power imbalance that was

[117] Mansfield, *Tokyo A Cultural History*, 239.
[118] See Appendix 1.

imagined between America (the West) and Japan (the far East). The imagery of the dragon thus becomes a byproduct of a greater narrative surrounding orientalist hubris focused on the implementation of power imbalances into the experiences of American travelers into Japan. This would in itself, subconsciously or consciously appropriate cultural artifacts experienced in contact zones with Japan, like *irezumi.* This all brings into question what many perceive as Japanese-style tattoos and what characteristics need to be present to constitute Japanese-style tattoos and even if such criteria exist? Do Japanese-style tattoos exist? Or are they imagined by practitioners and in particular by Western artists like Jerry that yearn to grasp Japanese-style tattoos?

Limitations

Overall, three main limitations can be observed when revisiting this thesis, namely the limited presence of qualitative research, and the lack of study into contemporary era/ Firstly, an abundance of qualitative research will have helped in identifying a shared perception within Japanese society on *irezumi*, but also how perceptions may have changed over time and specifically where within Japan. This may lead to further study on how specific areas that had more contact with foreign visitors may have had a different outlook on *irezumi* because of the varying realities they experienced. Secondly, a more concise and localized study on *irezumi's* presence within Japan is necessary to outline the contending narratives present when it comes to *irezumi*. To continue, a detailed focus on the contemporary era is necessary to show firstly, the effects of the Meiji era policies had on contemporary understanding of *irezumi,* but also the exogenous nature of this perception. To be more precise, the perception of *irezumi* within Japan is undergoing an evolutionary process where more and more people are accepting *irezumi.* Is this a result of tourists? Globalization? Or a mix with internal factors? All of this will aid in unraveling a skewed understanding of

present-day *irezumi.* Despite all this, the thesis remains unyielding on its fundamental points into giving the reader a gateway into historical instances and political narratives that led to a misunderstanding on *irezumi* today.

Further research

In terms of further research, this thesis opens the door to many points that need to be addressed. A few ideas come to mind such as the idea of local resistance when it came to the stigmatization of *irezumi.* It is not to say that resistance is not present, but beyond the scope of this thesis, yet deserves mention in further research. Foucault's idea of the Docile Body and Agency can be of interest to this research in understanding the individual experiences of Japanese tattoo artists to identify the realities of those directly affected by the increasing stigmatization on *irezumi*. Finally, a look into a specific contact zone, namely, the historical reality of *irezumi* during the occupation of the supreme commander of the allied power (SCAP) in Japan under MacArthur from 1945-1952 can be of interest in understanding the local impression on *irezumi* and how this may have affected stigmatization of *irezumi.* As well as observing how American culture influenced perception on tattooing in general, and consequently *irezumi.*

Concluding Remarks

Ultimately, this thesis urges a necessity to re-evaluate what we understand as Japanese-style tattoos today. To stray away from criteria of how "Japanese" a tattoo can look and avoiding blatant phrases like "that is more Japanese," and "could you make this more Japanese." Instead, what is important is to avoid overgeneralizing statements and understand that *irezumi* is a result of contingent factors present in Japan and contact zones while incorporating aspects of preceding art styles like *ukiyo-e.* To respect the history of the art separate from orientalist

experiences and western frameworks, but to also be appreciative of its experiences through those frameworks. By incorporating “Japanese” motifs like the koi or dragon into an art style does not make the tattoo more Japanese, instead, indulges in the historical realities that led to the art of *irezumi* evolving through exogenous political, economic and cultural factors. This thesis has analyzed why and how tattoo fell into disrepute during the Meiji era by introducing notions of the 'clean body' from the West and its influence in Japan. Then discussed the importance of print capitalism in entrenching a narrative unto what lens *irezumi* should be seen through. Next, defining Western fascination in *irezumi* as part of a greater quest to explore the “mysterious Far East culture.” Finally, present an overall impression on postwar American sentiment towards *irezumi* through the Hori Smoku Sailor Jerry documentary with supportive evidence from interviews. Ultimately, this thesis has deconstructed the underlying orientalist frameworks present in current understanding of *irezumi* as not merely a physical portrayal of Japanese tattooing practices, but instead a mixing pot between historical contact zones, political narratives, and the reality that are all reflective of the imagined Japanese identity with *irezumi.* Notions of *irezumi* and Japanese-style tattoos are above all produced and reproduced by contemporary contact zones that complexify the multiple layers in understanding what *irezumi* is. Even more so, perhaps there is not an answer to what constitutes *irezumi,* let alone Japanese identity. It is more accurate to actively engage in discussion to understand the history behind the complex political narratives present. What would arise is a true appreciation for what these terms mean as they reflect a larger idea about notions driven by central actors at the time and have somehow persisted today. More profoundly, this discussion becomes a self-reflective investigation into how we understand the human experiences occurring during these periods not simply as unique to experiences during those periods, but persistent multi-layered flawed frameworks that still have a massive impact today.

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7677639/Diaries-King-George-V-dragon-tattoo-visit-Japan.html, (Accessed March 23, 2020).

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Appendix:

Appendix 1:[119]

Questions	Mike Rubendall	Caio Pineiro	Nicklas Westin
Why did you decide to specialize in Japanese-style tattoos?	*Japanese culture has many layers to it and always been very intriguing to me. The mythology behind many of the images we see always kept my interest. Early in my career I remember looking through a book called Horiyoshi's World. It was a huge body of work created by legendary tattooist Horiyoshi II – Kuronuma. Those tattoos are Epic! They're so strong and inspiring I couldn't think of pursuing any other style of tattooing. They had everything needed to be a great tattoo in my opinion. I feel the simplicity of Japanese design has a raw power and beauty that lends itself to tattooing. They're tattoos that will stand the test of time*	*When I saw the work of tattoo master Iván Százi I was impressed by the beauty and mystery in Japanese tattoos. I didn't know such simple imagery could be used in such harmonious and intelligent ways. After my first visit at the legendary Four Elements (Iván's tattoo shop that was just a five-minute walk from my first tattoo shop) I was so deeply impressed by his work that from that point on there was no way back*	*It's difficult to say, it was probably a set of different things. First of all, I liked that it was a fully developed art form with a clear distinction to other styles. I also liked that it had a lot of what I was looking to do in tattooing dynamic lines, simplicity, combined with intricacy in details, wide, airbrush-like fades, and contrast-rich values and colors. It wasn't as much about the plethora of subjects available as it was about the rendering and sizing. I knew I could add to it. I never felt that a traditional approach was my thing, so for me it was more important to experiment with depth and volume. I wanted to see what a black outlines dynamic were really about and what its counterparts could be in real life. Eventually I started to lean more and more towards cleaner, more realistic style, while*

[119] Mike Rubendall, Caio Pineiro, Nicklas Westin, interview by Japanese Ink, *Japanese Ink Interview Series 12, 17, 18,* Instagram, March 16th 2020.

			keeping the specific look to certain elements – such as water or flowers, and the use of gradients, which I came to find as the most important of all technical topics for my individual style. I've worked the most on gradients for both visual depth and technical application
Tattoo styles come and go in fads, but Japanese-style tattoos never seem to lose popularity. Why do you think this is?	*I agree that this is the case, simply because the style is timeless. Although it may look simple it's very sophisticated. It's a style that embraces the 'less is more' theory and can be a difficult thing to execute when there is nothing to hide behind. No bells and whistles. Just straightforward tattooing that never dies.*	*I see the traditional American Japanese, and Tribal tattoos as the roots to a tree, and modern tattoo styles as the fruits the tree gives. The fruits will come and go with the seasons, but the roots will always be there*	*The images of mythical creatures, gods, and samurais in Japanese tattooing are very engrained into collective minds as to what tattoos in a larger scale should look like. Some of these creatures can even be found in cultures throughout the world, like the dragon or phoenix, so people from other parts of the world can connect to certain elements. The subjects are based in history, tradition, and mythology, while other styles and trends that come and go may not be.*
You incorporate a lot of red and black ink in your tattoos. Why do you prefer this color combination over others?		*Because of the influence from Japanese Minimalism and eternal search for simplicity as the highest degree of sophistication. I've been enjoying my latest experiences without red ink (only black ink, as well.*	

Appendix 2:[120]

Questions	Lisa Chihiro
Could you please give a brief introduction about yourself (Name, Occupation, when you started tattooing)?	*I'm Lisa from Germany & japan, 22 years old, I grew up in 10 countries and have started tattooing March 2019*
Why did you decide to specialize in Japanese-style tattoos?	*I decided to specialize in Japanese tattoos because it is a part of my culture. Although I didn't grow up there (Japan), I always found a beauty in how sophisticated the Japanese history is, and how much there is of it. For me especially I find that there is so much inspiration hidden in Japanese mythology, the stories, paintings and beliefs that date back hundreds of years, making it interesting and entertaining. I am very much into colors designs and tattoos, so it is very fitting for me as well*
What is characteristic and/or needed for a tattoo to be considered Japanese style tattooing in your opinion?	*There are so many forms of Japanese tattoos. These days because there are so many styles of tattooing, you can call it Japanese by having a traditional motif within the design. Color or black and gray is irrelevant*
Why do you think Japanese-style tattoos have remained prominent, in particular with people outside of Japan?	*Since the Western world was exposed to Japanese tattoos, it has become a favorite and intriguing subject for many artists around the world. Even within Japan, tattoos are much less popular with locals because they have had such a taboo image of tattoos due to the yakuza. In Japan, it is known as*

[120] Lisa Chihiro interview by Ian IJmkers, Amsterdam, Netherlands June 21st 2020.

	irezumi. Japan has always been known to the outside world as a place that works with such order and respect to one another. Besides that, the 'normal' culture of Japan is seen as alien at times. For foreigners, Japanese tattoos are full of meaning and timeless beauty, which is what I think is the reason it remains popular in the tattoo culture outside of Japan.