

The subject of tattooing and its inception into American/Western culture is one that has been discussed by a multitude of scholars. One of the earliest works that approach the subject is Cesare Lombroso's *Criminal Man*, published in 1911. Lombroso was a scholar during a major boom in the field of anthropology and the academic study of "other" cultures and is credited with founding the field of criminology. Although *Criminal Man* specifically seeks to present the major characteristics of criminals, Lombroso also presents a foundational discourse about tattooing and its link to criminality among Western Europeans. For Lombroso, tattooing was an act of "primitive man;" a subset of human beings that had not evolved yet to the level of "civilized" westerners. His theory relies on the idea that some peoples were biologically unevolved and unable to conform to society, and it is from these groups that criminals are most commonly found. Lombroso's argument follows that criminals tattooed themselves because they shared characteristics with biologically unevolved "savages." Lombroso does not attempt to discuss why tattooing became associated with criminals, but his work is a foundational piece of scholarship that draws this connection.

Following the work of Lombroso, historian Wilfred Hambly published a book on tattooing in 1925 entitled *The History of Tattooing*. This book, unlike Lombroso's, focuses directly on tattooing and its specific history. Hambly discusses the history of tattooing and its importance among Polynesian peoples as a religious rite, arguing that earlier anthropologists may have misunderstood the meaning of tattooing because they were outsiders, and, thus, the true meaning and practice of tattooing would not have been divulged to them by their Native counterparts. Though still relying on racist language of the time that is expressed overtly in Lombroso's work, Hambly attempts to present a more objective account of tattooing and its inception in Western culture. For Hambly, the earliest examples of Western Europeans tattooing themselves was sailors who participated in an act of appropriation of Polynesian culture as a way to gain favor among native islanders, but later became an act that served as a souvenir of their travels. Hambly, like Lombroso, also notes rebelliousness and atavism as a factor with regard to the reasons that white Europeans would obtain tattoos, thus building upon the idea that tattooing was an act undertaken by the uncivilized.

The history of tattooing has been approached by myriad scholars, but the subject of why it was associated with deplorable members of society was first approached in 1933 by historian Albert Parry in his book *Secrets of the Strange Art*. Parry's work builds upon previous scholarship regarding the history of tattooing as he accepted the common theory that sailors would obtain tattoos as a form of assimilation and souvenirs, however, Parry was influenced by Freudian theory and applied this theory to the subject of why tattooing was viewed negatively by society. For Parry, the popularity of tattooing among some segments of Western European and American societies was due to the psychological attributes of the act of tattooing. In Parry's view, tattooing was a sexual act as the individual being tattooed was being penetrated, and this act resonated with certain, unsavory, segments of society. For Parry, this underlying psycho-sexual implication of the tattoo was what made it so appealing as a public performance, and it also explained why tattooing appealed to certain "uncivilized" western peoples.

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My study examines the importance of the time period in which tattooing was “introduced” to the American public. During the mid-nineteenth century the American theater was developing into a common activity for working class Americans, and captivity narratives were at the height of their popularity as a literary genre. When tattooing was introduced to New York audiences, it was on the theatrical stage while telling a story of captivity and torture at the hands of “savages.” As tattooed man, and later tattooed lady, sideshows became more popular over time, so did references in American newspapers to tattooing as a “savage, torturous” practice. While previous scholarship has presented the popularization of tattooing as a result of travel and cross-cultural interaction, my study places the subject in reference to popular cultural forms in America. THIS DOESN'T BELONG!