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‘This trip is very meaningful to me, so I want to remember it forever’: Pilgrim Tattoos in Santiago de Compostela

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In Santiago de Compostela, the destination of all the Ways of St. James, pilgrim tattoos are becoming more fashionable as a way of helping pilgrims remember and commemorate their journey to the site. Because of the rising popularity of pilgrim tattoos, more and more tattoo studios and parlours have opened, and pilgrims who receive these tattoos are increasingly posting them on social media networks as some sort of status symbol. The purpose of this paper is to present the results of a survey of pilgrims who had a tattoo engraved on their bodies after their pilgrimage (N=256). The findings of this survey show that certain symbols as tattoos are more popular than others, and that these tattoos are imprinted more so on certain body parts than others. The practice of pilgrim tattoos also depends strongly on age, nationality, and whether a pilgrim previously had tattoos on his or her body. The central features of the pilgrimage itself, though, only have a weak influence on the tattooing practice. The increasing popularity of pilgrim tattoos may therefore be seen as a sign of a more general renaissance of tattoos (Rees, 2016). Nevertheless, pilgrim tattoos do fulfil an identity-forming function and should be seen in the context of the high biographical relevance of late modern pilgrimages.

Key Words: tattoo, pilgrimage, Way of St. James, identity, survey

Introduction

In Santiago de Compostela, the convergence point of all the Ways of St. James, there has been a growth in the number of tattoo studios and parlours in recent years.^[1] In 2009, there was only one tattoo studio; in 2019, the number of tattoo studios has increased to 16. The main clientele of these studios and parlours is composed of pilgrims who get tattooed after their arrival at Santiago de Compostela. In the shop windows of these studios, as well as on their websites, popular designs related to the Way of St. James are advertised in the form of stylised tattoo drawings. In the cafés and restaurants of the old town, especially in the summer months, many pilgrims can be seen displaying their newly engraved pilgrim tattoos on visible body parts. Social networks such as Facebook and Instagram are also inundated with photographs of pilgrim tattoos. These observations prompted us to ask which symbols pilgrims in Santiago de Compostela get tattooed on which parts of their bodies and what

meaning these symbols have for them. After examining the history of pilgrim tattoos, the results of the survey are presented, which show that pilgrim tattoos fulfil an identity-forming function and should therefore be seen in the context of the high biographical relevance of late modern pilgrimages.

(Pilgrim) Tattoos

The practice of pilgrims receiving tattoos to commemorate their travels stretches as far back as the 14th century, where pilgrims travelling to Santiago de Compostela at times opted for a tattoo rather than the typical scallop shell (Lewis, 2013). Pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem in the 16th century also received tattoos as a part of their pilgrimage (see paper by Diktaş elsewhere in this volume). In the case of Jerusalem, these tattoos served to both identify the wearer as a pilgrim on their dangerous journey through various countries and a proof that they had reached the ‘burial place’ of Jesus (Douge-Roth, 2020:171). Pilgrim tattoos were mostly placed on the pilgrim’s forearm and often showed the course of the pilgrim’s path. Such tattoos were designed with the viewer’s

1. We thank Cameron How from the College of William & Mary for sharing this observation with us.

perspective in mind, so that returning pilgrims could roll up their sleeves and tell stories about their pilgrimage (Schaller, 2019:72).

However, the cultural history of tattooing goes back much further. From a cultural-historical point of view, tattoos are to be understood as a continuation of body painting, which is considered one of the oldest forms of cultural communication (Finke, 1996:10) and can be found as early as five thousand years ago (Gröning, 2001:16). Tattoos are intentional body modifications that are permanently engraved into the skin. They often express a person's affiliation to a social group, which is, through tattoos, made visible to others. The etymological origin of the word 'tattoo' comes from the Polynesian term *tatau* and the Tahitian term *tattoo*, which referred to the marking or drawing on one's skin (Addatto, Halachmi & Lapidoth 2011). These terms were co-opted by British and French sailors who encountered Polynesian cultural groups during their expeditions to the South Seas, referring to these skin adornments as 'tattoos' (Steusloff, 1985:181).

During the 19th century, Europe experienced what Engelhardt (1972:85) refers to as a 'tattoo enthusiastic time'. This period marked the appearance of the first professional tattooists, and an estimated 20% of the European population was tattooed during this time (Oettermann, 1979:59). Over time however, tattoos came to be considered a mark of criminality. This view of tattoos as anti-social came about from murder investigations and the question of whether tattoos fade or disappear over time. One controversial jurisprudential study by Lombroso (1887) attempted to establish a direct connection between delinquency and tattoos, and since then much of the criminological research literature has attempted to establish a direct connection between tattoos and personality disorders (Finke, 1996:58). To some extent, this assumption can still be found in criminological, psychological, and medical studies (e.g., Kasten, 2006; Lozano *et al.*, 2011).

While the cultural history of tattooing has only been carried out since the 1970s (e.g., Kunter, 1971; Oettermann, 1979), this research has contributed to the increasing social reputation of tattoos within modern society, with a shift from tattoos being seen as a mark of deviance towards acceptance. While tattoos previously were associated with social outsiders and understood as characteristics of deviant subcultures, the spectrum of tattooed people has diversified. The increasing visibility of tattoos in various publics and cultures has contributed to their social acceptance. This

acceptance of tattooed bodies corresponds to the contemporary trend in Western societies to use the body for identity construction. In addition to a new colour spectrum beyond black and further advances in tattooing needles and technologies, which today enable highly detailed markings, tattooists themselves are considered artists in their own right, usually having some sort of artistic education or background, and their tattoos are considered as art objects (Sanders, 1989). For example, this can be seen in part by the rise of several reality TV shows, such as *Miami Ink*, *Ink Master*, and *Tattoo Rescue*, that show the behind the scenes of tattooing at its best and worst.

While there are a few recent studies regarding the changing social views of tattoos, empirical research related to why people get tattoos on their bodies is relatively sparse. One avenue of research has been on the gendered aspects regarding why people get tattoos (e.g., Kang & Jones, 2007; Botz-Bornstein, 2013; Guéguen, 2013). However, there is much more research on the links between the motivation to get tattoos among different age and socio-economic groups (e.g., Kang & Jones, 2007; Martin & Dula, 2010; Dickson *et al.*, 2015).

The motives for acquiring tattoos are manifold. In addition to aesthetics (Johnson, 2007; Pöhlmann *et al.*, 2011; Braun, 2013), their use in identity formation is an important reason why people get tattoos (Haubl, 2000). This identity formation can be divided into three different dimensions. First, there is a *social dimension* to getting tattoos, in that tattoos are an expression of relationships and group affiliation, such as tattoos that symbolise membership in motorcycle clubs or initials of family members and partners. Second, there is a *psychological dimension*, where tattoos are used as self-symbols to express one's own values or interests, such as the including of important or meaningful sayings in sentence form or pictures relating to significant life events on the skin. Third, there is a *spatio-temporal dimension*, which is comprised of tattoos in the form of autobiographical symbols and objects of memory, such as places a person has visited or which are immortalised in tattoos (Stirn, 2004). The symbolising of one's own life story by means of biographical events written on the body can thus contribute to a stabilisation of the self (Pöhlmann *et al.*, 2011:3). Friedrich (1993) notes that the acquisition of tattoos is often the result of group dynamic processes, because in many instances a person's first tattoo is acquired in the presence of others. Tattoos can also be acquired spontaneously as an expression of a certain life situation and, in many

cases, under the influence of alcohol or drugs. With regards to age differences, a German study notes that approximately 24% of people aged 16 to 29 have tattoos, which is significantly higher than the proportion of over 50-year-olds, of whom only 3% are tattooed (Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, 2014). Bell (1999) distinguishes between ‘people with tattoos’, who have only one to two tattoos, mostly of personal design and placed on the body in a way they can hardly be seen, and ‘tattooed people’, who have several, sometimes blended tattoos which are usually larger, more colourful, and placed so that they can be seen easily by others.

As noted above, in this paper we look more specifically at tattoos in the context of pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela. After seeing a decline in pilgrims from 1200 AD to 1940 AD (Herbers, 1984, 2007, 2016; Abou-El-Haj, 1997, 2015), pilgrimage on the Way of St. James has in recent decades become a very popular practice (Greenia, 2018). In 2019, almost 350,000 pilgrims were registered in Santiago de Compostela, and it is expected that there will be an 8% increase in the number of pilgrims for the next several years. Motivations for performing a pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago de Compostela are numerous (see Haab, 1998; Frey, 2002; Specht, 2009; Gamper & Reuter, 2012; Gamper, 2016). Because of the length of the Camino and the time it takes to walk a ‘true’ pilgrimage, the experience can be quite intense. The intensity of the pilgrimage experience is based on four central characteristics of contemporary pilgrimages on the Way of St. James, including their biographical relevance, the length of the route covered, the communicative exchange with others, and the singularity of the experience. The latter is especially true for those pilgrims who walk the Way of St. James for the first time—those who are not so-called ‘repeaters’. Many pilgrims consider the Camino Francés to be the route for beginners. It starts in the French Pyrenees town of St.-Jean-Pied-de-Port and runs for 800 kilometres to Santiago de Compostela.

For many pilgrims, their journey has a high biographical relevance: they go on pilgrimage to overcome crises or to shape biographical transitions, to reflect on or balance their lives and/or to construct new identities. This takes place under conditions beyond everyday life and in communication with other pilgrims. Five types of pilgrims who walk the Camino can be distinguished (see Heiser & Kurrat, 2015; Kurrat, 2015, 2019). The first type of pilgrim are the ‘*balancers*’, who are typically at an advanced age and

feel confronted with the supposedly imminent end of their lives. They engage in pilgrimage as a means to look back and reflect on their lives. Since they need rest and time for their reflections, balancers usually go on pilgrimage alone and over longer distances. The second type of pilgrim are the ‘*crisis pilgrims*’—people who have had a traumatic life experience that they are trying to cope with, such as the death of a relative or separation from a partner. These pilgrims seek out those along the Camino who have experienced similar situations and who can give consolation and perspective. The third type of pilgrim are the ‘*time-out pilgrims*’, who walk the Camino to get away from the high demands and professional stress in their everyday lives and search for meaning. In order to create as much distance as possible from everyday life, time-out pilgrims usually travel alone and for a long time, during which they rarely have contact with their place of origin. The fourth type of pilgrim are the ‘*new starters*’, who want to start a new life and have therefore initiated a biographical break—have quit their jobs or left their partner—and search for a new life and source of identity through pilgrimage. Often, they also travel long distances, and depend on communication with other pilgrims in recreating their identities. Finally, ‘*transitional pilgrims*’ engage in pilgrimage along the Camino as a part of transitioning from one stage of life to another, such as transitioning from school to university or from work to retirement. For these pilgrims, communication with other pilgrims gives them ideas on how to start the new phases of their lives.

Regardless of the type of pilgrim and their motivations, a pilgrimage—particularly one as long as the Camino—is such a profound experience that many pilgrims want to obtain something tangible to remind them or given them a lasting memory of their journey—as the quotation of a participant in the title of this paper shows. Since the Middle Ages, specific pilgrim souvenirs have been used by those who have walked the Camino as memorabilia, such as scallop shells, metal badges, statuettes of Saints (Roseman & Fife, 2008; Reynolds, 2014; Blick, 2019), and, more recently, pilgrim tattoos. Unlike traditional souvenirs, pilgrim tattoos ensure a truly permanent memory as they cannot be transferred, sold, or lost—they symbolise *par excellence* an experience that gets under the skin.

Methods

The data presented in this paper were obtained between April and October 2019 through the use of a multi-lingual questionnaire (in Spanish, English, and German) distributed to pilgrims who had a tattoo made in the tattoo studio Sagrado Corazón in Santiago de Compostela. The Sagrado Corazón was chosen because it is the oldest tattoo studio in the city and centrally located, meaning it is easily accessible to pilgrims. The questionnaire was distributed by staff of the studio to all pilgrims who got tattooed during the research time frame.

The survey consisted of 18 questions, most of them operationalised as standardised single or multiple selections or Likert scale questions. Due to the exploratory nature of the present study, two additional open-ended questions were also included in order to explore the decision-making process regarding the choice and design of the tattoo. The answers given here were coded by means of content analysis. A total of 256 pilgrims filled out the questionnaire. In order to answer the research questions outlined above, nine independent variables were defined. These variables included four sociodemographic variables to measure the socio-demographic characteristics of pilgrims, which included items such as gender, age, nationality, and employment status, and five independent subject-related variables, including distance travelled, travelling together with others or alone, 'first time' pilgrim or a 'repeater', the biographical triggers of the pilgrimage, and if pilgrims had tattoos on their bodies previous to their pilgrimage. Other questions focused on dependent variables related to pilgrim tattoos, including the part of the body that the respondent had tattooed, the tattooed symbol or the tattooed text, the reason for choosing a particular symbol or text, and whether the respondent has been tattooed together with other pilgrims. The collected data were examined with descriptive statistics in terms of frequencies and mean values. Correlations between independent and dependent variables were identified bivariately using Cramer's V.

Results

Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Regarding the socio-demographic characteristics of the pilgrims who filled out the questionnaire, approximately 40% were male (N=102; 39.8%) and 60% were female (N=154; 60.2%).^[2] The average age of the participants was a little more than 35 years (median: 31 years; SD: 12.7); the youngest participant was 17 years old at the time of the survey, while the oldest was 73 years of age. Due to the small case numbers, the respondents were assigned to one of three age groups: young (N=109; 42.5%), middle-aged (N=99; 38.7%) and elderly (N=48; 18.8%). In terms of nationality, the largest group of respondents came from Spain (N=92; 32.0%), followed by Germany (N=51; 19.9%), the USA (N=29; 11.4%) and Canada (N=8; 3.1%). 58 respondents came from other European countries (22.7%) and 20 respondents from South America (7.8%). Only six respondents came from countries on other continents (2.3%). In terms of their employment status, more than four fifths were employed (N=200; 81.3%). 38 participants were undergoing vocational training or studying at the time of the survey (15.4%). Only eight participants were unemployed (0.8%) or retired (2.4%) (see Table 1).

Subject-Related Variables

In terms of distance travelled, it appears that the largest group of respondents can be characterised as shortdistance pilgrims (N=92; 37.4%), meeting the minimum 100 kilometres (63 miles) requirement to obtain a pilgrim's certificate from the Pilgrim's Office of the Archdiocese of Santiago de Compostela (Lois González, 2013; Lopez, Lois González & Castro Fernandez, 2017). A further third of those surveyed were classified as medium-distance pilgrims with a distance travelled of between 200 and 800 kilometres (124-497 miles) (N=81; 32.9%). 73 of the respondents can be labelled long-distance pilgrims with a distance of more than 800 kilometres (29.7%). This latter group mostly walked the complete Camino Francés from St.-Jean-Pied-de-Port to Santiago de Compostela.

Two thirds of the respondents stated that they started their pilgrimage together with others (N=168; 66.1%), while the remaining third started alone (N=86; 33.9%). More than two thirds of the respondents stated that this was their first pilgrimage (N=173; 68.4%), but 80

2. Whether this means that a higher proportion of women get pilgrim tattoos as compared to men cannot be answered as part of the present study.

respondents were ‘repeaters’ who have already completed more than one pilgrimage. On average, the ‘repeaters’ surveyed had already undertaken an average of 3.6 pilgrimages (median: 3; maximum: 18; SD=2.8).

With regards to biographical triggers, study participants were asked if they agreed with several statements. It was assumed that the respondent’s pilgrimage is linked to a biographical trigger if they (strongly) agree with the general statement ‘I have come on the Camino to think about myself and my life’. As noted earlier in this paper, five types of biographical triggers can be identified. Those respondents who (strongly) agreed in addition to the general statement with ‘I contemplate the end of my life’ were viewed as balance pilgrims. Crisis pilgrims (strongly) agreed with the question that asked them if they had experienced one of five crises within the past two years (serious illness or injury, serious accident, separation from partner, loss of employment, or death of a close relative). Time-out pilgrims were identified if they (strongly) agreed with the statement: ‘At home I

have a lot of stress’. Transitional pilgrims (strongly) agreed with the statement: ‘A new chapter of life begins for me’. Finally, a new start pilgrim strongly agreed with the statement: ‘I want closure from my past’. If respondents (strongly) agreed with the the general statement ‘I have come on the Camino to think about myself and my life’ and additionally at least agreed with one of the other situation-specific conditions it was assumed that the person was motivated to undertake the Camino pilgrimage because of a biographical trigger. This applied to 182 respondents (71.1%).

The final independent subject-related variable was whether respondents had already been tattooed prior to participating in the Camino. This was the case with more than half of the respondents (N=142; 56.1%), with 36 respondents having more than five previous tattoos (13.7%). According to Bell (1999), the respondents are thus primarily ‘people with tattoos’ and less frequently ‘tattooed people’ (Table 1).

Table 1: Characteristics of Independent Variables (N=256)

Variable	N	%	Variable	N	%
Gender			Age		
Male	102	39.8	Under 30 years	109	42.5
Female	154	60.2	30 to 49 years	99	38.7
Nationality			50 years and older	48	18.8
Spain	82	32.0	Employment status		
Germany	51	19.9	In training	38	15.4
Other European countries	58	22.7	Working	200	81.3
North and South America	57	22.3	Unemployed or retired	8	3.2
Other Countries	6	2.3	Distance travelled		
Biographical trigger of the pilgrimage			Short-distance pilgrims (up to 200 km)	92	37.4
Pilgrimage has biographical trigger	182	71.1	Middle-distance pilgrims (200-799 km)	81	32.9
Pilgrimage has no biographical trigger	74	28.9	Long-distance pilgrims (800 or more km)	73	29.7
Previous pilgrimages			Accompaniment during the pilgrimage		
First time pilgrim	173	68.4	Started alone	86	33.9
Repeater	80	31.6	Started together with others	168	66.1
Previous tattoos					
No tattoos yet	108	43.2			
Up to 5 previous tattoos	106	42.4			
More than 5 previous tattoos	36	13.7			

Comparing Socio-Demographic and Subject-Related Variables

Some interesting trends can be seen when comparing the socio-demographic and the subject-related variables. Both the characteristics of a pilgrimage and whether respondents had tattoos previously were strongly influenced by the age and nationality of the respondents.

In terms of *age*, pilgrims who walked the longest distance tended to be elderly, with 85.7% of those aged 50 or older having walked more than 800 kilometres, compared with only 40.6% of the younger and 34.4% of the middle-aged respondents who walked a similar distance. Conversely, there were very few elderly among the short-distance pilgrims, while 59.4% of the younger and 65.6% of the middle-aged respondents have made a pilgrimage of less than 200 kilometres. Younger pilgrims also tended to start their pilgrimage together with others as well as based on biographical trigger, while both become less likely with increasing age. Those who identified as ‘repeater pilgrims’ were primarily older (36.1% of the middle-aged and 43.8% of the older pilgrims), with only 22.2% of younger pilgrims having made a pilgrimage more than once. Also, among elderly respondents there were only a few who were already tattooed before their pilgrimage (32.6%). For younger respondents, the number previously having a tattoo was 65.1%, and for middle-aged pilgrims, 59.8%. This finding was surprising, in part because one could assume that having a tattoo becomes more likely with increasing age, because in the course of life one has more time and more situations in which to get a tattoo. The fact that this is not the case in this study may be indicative of the fact that tattoos have only been experiencing a renaissance since the 1970s (Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, 2014; Rees, 2016).

In addition, *nationality* influences some of the subject-related variables. For example, Spanish respondents were mainly short-distance pilgrims, where 88.2% of them had walked less than 200 kilometres. In comparison, this is only true of 43.8% of Germans, 38.0% of pilgrims from other European countries, and 24.4% of Americans. Conversely, there are hardly any long-distance walkers among pilgrims from Spain, as only 11.8% of the Spanish respondents had walked more than 800 kilometres as compared to 56.3% of German pilgrims, 72.0% of pilgrims from other European countries, and 75.6% of Americans. The longer the journey to Spain, it could be stated, the longer and further the pilgrimage. Furthermore,

Spanish respondents most frequently start their pilgrimage together with others, were more likely to be repeater pilgrims than respondents from other countries, and are less likely to engage in a pilgrimage due to a biographical trigger. These findings support earlier research, which suggests that there is a widespread tradition in Spain of more frequent and shorter distance pilgrimages with larger groups mostly consisting of family members (Frey, 2002; Jenkins & Sun, 2019). Finally, nationality also influences the number of previous tattoos. Almost two thirds of pilgrims from Spain and Germany had a tattoo before their pilgrimage (63.4% and 64.0% respectively), while this was true for just over half of the pilgrims from other European countries (53.6%) and 45.5% of North Americans.

The two remaining socio-demographic characteristics, gender and employment status, had at best a weak influence on subject-related variables.

Tattooing the Pilgrim Body

Regarding questions related to the part of the body where the respondent had themselves tattooed, the majority of pilgrims had their pilgrim tattoos placed on body parts that are clearly visible to others (see Figure 1). This finding can be interpreted as an expressive acting that goes along with the desire for displaying the pilgrim tattoo. Almost a quarter of the respondents had a tattoo on their ankle (24.3%). This corresponds to the current fashion trend of ‘flanking’ or ‘flashing your ankles’, where a person’s ankle area is exposed all year

Figure 1: The Most Frequently Tattooed Body Parts

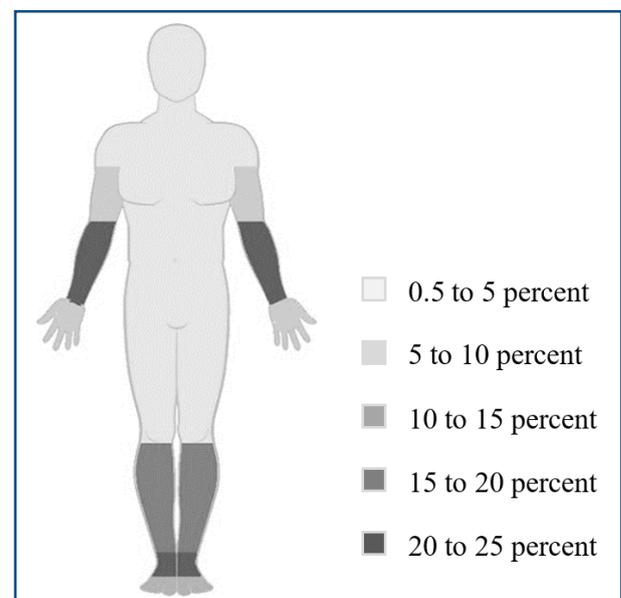


Figure 2: The Scallop Shell is the Most Frequent Pilgrim Tattoo

Photos: Sagrado Corazón

round by wearing light footwear, invisible ankle socks, and short trousers (The Guardian, 2015). A fifth of those surveyed had a tattoo placed on their forearm (21.1%), which coincidentally was historically the most popular body part for medieval pilgrim tattoos in Jerusalem (Schaller, 2019:72). Other popular body parts for pilgrim tattoos today included the lower leg (18.8%), the foot (10.6%), the upper arm (9.6%), and the hand (9.2%) (see Figure 1).

Regarding the pilgrim's choice of tattooed symbol or the tattooed text, most respondents chose symbols they associate with a pilgrimage on the Way of St. James. As such, the scallop shell was by far the most popular pilgrim tattoo (58.6%) (see Figure 2). Other popular symbols included tattoo designs that depict animals and aspects of nature (8%), the cross of St. James (6.4%), the pilgrim's arrow (6%), images of pilgrims (3.6%) and stylisations of pilgrimage paths (1.6%). The fact that animal and nature designs are the second most popular type of pilgrim tattoo may be an indication that nature experiences made in the extraordinary context of the Way of St. James are experienced by many pilgrims as one of the most profound experiences of their pilgrimage (Heiser, 2012).

Nearly one-fifth of the respondents had a text tattooed instead of or in addition to a symbolic design (18.7%). As we see in Figure 2, some pilgrims get tattoos that include both a symbol and the date their pilgrimage was completed. The tattooing of completion dates,

however, are only the third most frequently chosen tattooed text (16.6%), as 23% of respondents chose a tattoo of the contemporary pilgrim greeting 'Buen Camino', followed by 20.9% choosing to have the classic pilgrim greeting 'Ultrera'. 4.3% opted to have the distance they travelled tattooed on their body.

There were several reasons pilgrims gave for choosing a particular symbol or text as their tattoo. First, it is remarkable that for almost a quarter of the respondents the tattoo was primarily a memory of their pilgrimage (23.8%). For them, the tattooed symbol itself seems to play a subordinate role. For example, some of those for whom their pilgrim tattoo is mainly memorabilia wrote that they got a pilgrim tattoo because

I wanted a tattoo to remember the experience
and

I wanted to get something to remember this journey.

Some respondents also emphasised the biographical motivations for taking their pilgrimage. Some sample responses included:

This trip is very meaningful to me, so I want to remember it forever

I always want to remember the Camino as a metaphor for my life

To remember the journey and to remind myself to keep moving forward

Because the Camino taught me things I don't want to forget

To remind me of all the experiences I made on the Camino and not to forget the changes in life I planned to make.

Almost a third of the respondents stated that they purposefully chose a tattoo symbolising the Way of St. James (30.5%). Some of the reasons for doing this included:

For me the most representative design of the way

The shell is the symbol of the Camino. For me it means a spiritual experience, friendship, courage and love

It's a good symbol of the Camino. A group of friends chose the same. Completing the Camino is an important and significant thing for me and I'd like a symbol of it

It makes me a pilgrim.

13.7% of the respondents said that they chose a design that symbolises their connection to other pilgrims, as depicted in tattoos that include stylised images of pilgrims. This is in part because the social relationships that are established between pilgrims during a pilgrimage are generally felt to be the most important part of the experience with pilgrim groups becoming almost family (Specht, 2009; Heiser, 2012). Those respondents that chose tattoos of pilgrims justified the choice, stating:

Because I did the fifth Camino with the same pilgrim friends

As a sister tattoo to signify the journey my sister and I had together

To mark the end of the Camino and keep the connection to my friends

To remember the experience and to celebrate with the two people I did the Camino with, we all got matching tattoos.

The respondents chose especially animal and nature designs for aesthetic reasons. This justification is found in 10.5% of the answers, often only briefly justified with statements such as: 'I like it'. 9% of those surveyed chose their pilgrim tattoo for spiritual reasons. Some of these pilgrims wrote:

I identify myself very much with the cross ... promise to the Apostle ten years ago

It is the Pali translation of a Buddhist principle, I knew the design from a meditation course

Angels fly because they take themselves lightly ... I want to be my own angel

Because it's my mantra not to give up – on and on!

Interestingly, the choice of the Cross of St. James as a pilgrim tattoo is quite often not linked to spiritual or religious reasons. Apparently, pilgrims perceive the cross of St. James as an ideologically neutral symbol representing the Way of St. James rather than a Christian one. Finally, 8.2% of the respondents chose a particular pilgrim tattoo because it symbolised the accomplishment of a great challenge, as walking the Camino is a physically, emotionally, and spiritually challenged path to walk. Examples of comments by pilgrims who chose this type of symbol include:

I got it because of the sense of achievement after walking 779 km

Table 2: Cramer's V for all independent and dependent variables

Variables		Dependent Variables			
		Tattooed body part	Tattooed symbol	Choice of tattoo	Joint tattooing
Independent Sociodemographic Variables	Gender	.240	.247*	.170	.115
	Age	.458	.429	.487	.499
	Nationality	.426*	.388	.406	.530**
	Employment status	.297**	.249**	.175	.073
Independent Subject-related Variables	Distance travelled	.300**	.160	.199	.270**
	Accompanied	.284	.218	.218	.294**
	Number of pilgrimages	.151	.241	.230	.310*
	Biographical trigger	.200	.143	.241*	.054
	Already tattooed	.332	.332	.400	.335

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01

Completing the Camino Francés was an important accomplishment for me

To show that I've done the Camino

Because there [where the tattoo was made] I got footsore.

Finally, just under a quarter of the respondents got tattoos together with other pilgrims they met during their pilgrimage (23.0%). Interestingly, it is mainly those who started their pilgrimage alone who got tattoos together with others, whereas pilgrims who started together with others tended to get tattooed alone. Group dynamic processes, as noted by Friedrich (1993), only seem to play a subordinate role with regard to pilgrim tattoos.

Between the nine independent variables explained so far (four socio-demographic, five subject-related) and the four dependent variables (tattooed body part, tattooed symbol/text, choice of tattoo, joint tattooing) some correlations can be identified (see Table 2). Strong correlations ($V \geq 0.4$) were found between the age and nationality of the respondents on the one hand and their pilgrim tattoos on the other. The presence of previous tattoos also strongly influences the choice of the tattoo design. However, the pilgrimage practice (pilgrimage route, pilgrim's company, and biographical relevance) influences the pilgrim's tattoos only weakly or very weakly.

The age of the respondents has the most far-reaching influence on their tattooing practices, having a strong influence on tattooed body parts, the choice of tattooed symbols, the reasons for choosing a pilgrim tattoo, and the choice of being tattooed alone or together with others (see Table 3). For example, 29% and 16% of young pilgrims had their ankle or their foot tattooed respectively, while the older pilgrims only had their ankle tattooed in 21.6% and no cases of foot tattoos. Conversely, 29.7% and 27% of older pilgrims chose to have their tattoos placed on their forearm and lower leg respectively, while young pilgrims chose this body location in 12% and 18% of cases. This finding suggests that tattooing practices are subject to certain fashions that change over time. The forearm and the lower leg are considered classic body parts for tattoos, whereas tattoos placed on the ankle and foot are considered more modern tattooing trends. In addition, age also influences the type of symbols pilgrims had tattooed on their bodies. For example, the scallop shell was particularly popular among older pilgrims (69.9% vs. 60.2% of young pilgrims). The same applies to the pilgrim's arrow, where 8.7% of the older respondents chose this symbol but only by 3.7% of younger pilgrims. On the other hand, animal and nature designs are particularly popular with the younger respondents, as 8.4% of younger pilgrims and 11.6% of middle-aged pilgrims chose this design but not a single respondent aged 50 years or older.

Table 3: Variables Classified by Age (in %)

Variable	Up to 29 years	30-49 years	50 years and older	Variable	Up to 29 years	30-49 years	50 years and older
Tattooed Body Part				Tattooed Symbol			
Ankle	29.0	19.8	21.6	Scallop shell	60.2	51.6	69.6
Forearm	12.0	28.4	29.7	Animal/nature	8.4	11.6	-
Lower leg	18.0	16.0	27.0	Cross of St. James	6.5	5.3	8.7
Foot	16.0	8.6	-	Pilgrim's arrow	3.7	7.4	8.7
Upper arm	10.0	11.1	5.4	Pilgrims	4.6	4.2	-
Hand	6.0	7.4	5.4	Route	-	4.2	-
Reasons for Choosing Tattoo (multiple answers possible)				Getting Tattooed Together			
Symbol for the Way	31.2	29.3	31.3	Together	17.4	23.7	34.8
As a memory	27.5	21.2	20.8	Alone	82.6	76.3	65.2
Symbol for relationships	12.8	14.1	14.6				
Aesthetic reasons	13.8	7.1	10.4				
Spiritual reasons	11.9	7.1	6.3				
Symbol for coping	6.4	6.1	16.7				

Table 4: Variables Classified by Nationality (in %)

Variable	Spain	Germany	Rest of Europe	North and South America	Variable	Spain	Germany	Rest of Europe	North and South America
Tattooed Body Part					Reasons for Choosing Tattoo (multiple answers possible)				
Ankle	26.0	23.3	22.4	22.2	Symbol for the Way	25.6	23.5	27.6	48.2
Forearm	16.4	27.9	26.5	20.0	As a memory	23.2	33.3	15.5	21.4
Lower leg	21.9	11.6	14.3	26.7	Symbol for relationships	19.5	11.8	5.2	16.1
Foot	8.2	16.3	14.3	6.7	Aesthetic reasons	6.1	13.7	17.2	7.1
Upper arm	13.7	9.3	4.1	8.9	Spiritual reasons	8.5	5.9	10.3	10.7
Hand	4.1	7.0	10.2	6.7	Symbol for coping	7.3	3.9	10.3	12.5
Getting Tattooed Together									
Together	7.3	40.0	31.6	23.6					
Alone	92.7	60.0	68.4	76.4					

Furthermore, young pilgrims viewed their tattoo primarily as a memory and chose the tattooed symbol for aesthetic and / or spiritual reasons. These patterns of justification play only a subordinate role for middle-aged and older pilgrims. It is noteworthy that 16.7% of the older pilgrims see their tattoo as a symbol for overcoming a great challenge, while this is only the case for 6.4% of the young and 6.1% of the middle-aged respondents. Especially older people experience the strains of a pilgrimage as challenging for obvious physical reasons.

Age also influenced whether the respondents were tattooed together with other pilgrims. The joint tattooing is especially common among older pilgrims (34.8%), whereas only 23.7% of the middle-aged pilgrims and 17.4% of the young pilgrims were tattooed together with others.

The nationality strongly influences which body part a pilgrim tattoo is placed on, the reasons for choosing a particular pilgrim tattoo, and joint tattooing (see Table 4). In particular, Germans and other non-Spanish Europeans more often get a tattoo on the forearm (27.9% and 26.5%) or on the foot (16.3% and 14.3%). By contrast, this is much less common among Spaniards and Americans (16.4% and 20.0% on the forearm, 8.2% and 6.7% on the foot). Conversely, only 11.6% of Germans and 14.3% of other Europeans had their lower leg tattooed, compared to 21.9% of Spaniards and 26.7% of Americans. This shows that tattoos on the hand are particularly popular among other Europeans, but they are much less likely to be tattooed on the upper arm than respondents from other countries.

North and South Americans in particular tend to see their pilgrim tattoo as a symbol of the Way of St. James, as 48.2% of Americans justify their choice of tattoo in this way while the numbers for respondents from other countries are all well below 30%. Spaniards and Americans in particular see their pilgrim tattoo as a symbol for the connection with other pilgrims; Germans and other Europeans choose it primarily for aesthetic reasons. Remarkably few Spaniards also get tattoos together with other pilgrims, applying to only 7.3% of Spanish respondents, but to 23.6% of American, 31.6% of European, and 40% of German respondents.

Another strong correlation occurs between whether a pilgrim had previous tattoos and his / her choice of pilgrim tattoo (Table 5). Pilgrims who were already tattooed choose their pilgrim tattoo primarily for aesthetic reasons: these are reported by 13.9% of the tattooed respondents, but only by 6.5% of the non-tattooed respondents. In contrast, non-tattooed people consider their pilgrim tattoo much more often to be a reminder or memory of their pilgrimage experience (30.6% vs. 19.4%). Pilgrims with no tattoos also choose tattoos that symbolise their experiences with other pilgrims on the Camino (18.5% vs. 10.4%), as a symbol of overcoming a challenge (11.1% vs. 4.7%), or for spiritual reasons (11.1% vs. 6.3%).

Table 5: Variable Classified by Previous Tattoos (in %)

Reason for the choice of the tattoo (multiple answers possible)	Not Yet Tattooed	Already Tattooed
Symbol for the Way	29.6	31.9
As a memory	30.6	19.4
Symbol for relationships	18.5	10.4
Aesthetic reasons	6.5	13.9
Spiritual reasons	11.1	7.6
Symbol for coping	11.1	6.3

Summary

This paper presents the results of a study on pilgrims who chose to be tattooed after their pilgrimage along the Camino to Santiago de Compostela. It has been shown that not only medieval pilgrims, but also today's pilgrims get their tattoo on body parts that are clearly visible to others. In times of flanking, the most popular body part for pilgrim tattoos today is the ankle. Most of the respondents chose symbols that they associate with their pilgrimage on the Way of St. James, in particular the scallop shell, to be tattooed onto their bodies. Strong correlations were identified between the age and nationality of the respondents and their pilgrim tattoos. The scallop shell as a pilgrim tattoo was particularly popular among older pilgrims, while animal and nature designs were found exclusively among pilgrims under 50 years of age. The findings also show that the older the pilgrims are, the more likely they will choose a classical body part for their pilgrim tattoo, such as the forearm or the lower leg, whereas younger pilgrims choose to be tattooed on body parts such as the foot or ankle that are connected to more modern popular tattooing trends. This finding suggests that tattooing practices are subject to certain fashions that change over time. In terms of nationality, non-Spanish Europeans in particular got tattoos on the forearm or foot, whereas Spaniards and Americans got tattoos on the lower leg much more frequently. Americans also tend to see their pilgrim's tattoo as a symbol of the Way of St. James, while Europeans primarily choose their pilgrim symbols for aesthetic reasons. Finally, remarkably few Spaniards get tattoos together with other pilgrims.

Due to its high biographical relevance, pilgrimage serves to form identity. As shown in this paper, pilgrimage tattoos are an integral part of pilgrim identity formation, as they fulfil three dimensions as described by Haubl (2000):

A *social dimension*, where pilgrim tattoos serve as relationship symbols that express membership of the pilgrim community. Both the synchronic community of present pilgrims and the diachronic community of pilgrims over generations are addressed (Heiser, 2012);

A *psychological dimension*, where pilgrim tattoos serve as self-symbols that express certain values in the form of esoterically-connoted aphorisms and;

A *spatio-temporal dimension*, where pilgrim tattoos are understood as autobiographical symbols that express biographical processes of change during a pilgrimage.

It is striking that the pilgrim practice has only a slight influence on the pilgrim tattoos. Consequently, it can be assumed that the results presented here are not only specific to pilgrim tattoos, but can be applied to late modern tattooing practices in general. The fact that more and more tattoo studios are opening in Santiago de Compostela is then to be understood as a further sign of a general renaissance of tattooing (Rees, 2016). Future research on pilgrim tattoos might include a larger randomly selected dataset. In order to learn more about which groups of pilgrims get tattoos and for which reason, such a sample should include pilgrims who have not got tattooed. However, the comparatively small sample of the presented study fulfils the exploratory nature of this paper and gives first insights into the increasingly popular practice of pilgrim tattoos in Santiago de Compostela.

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