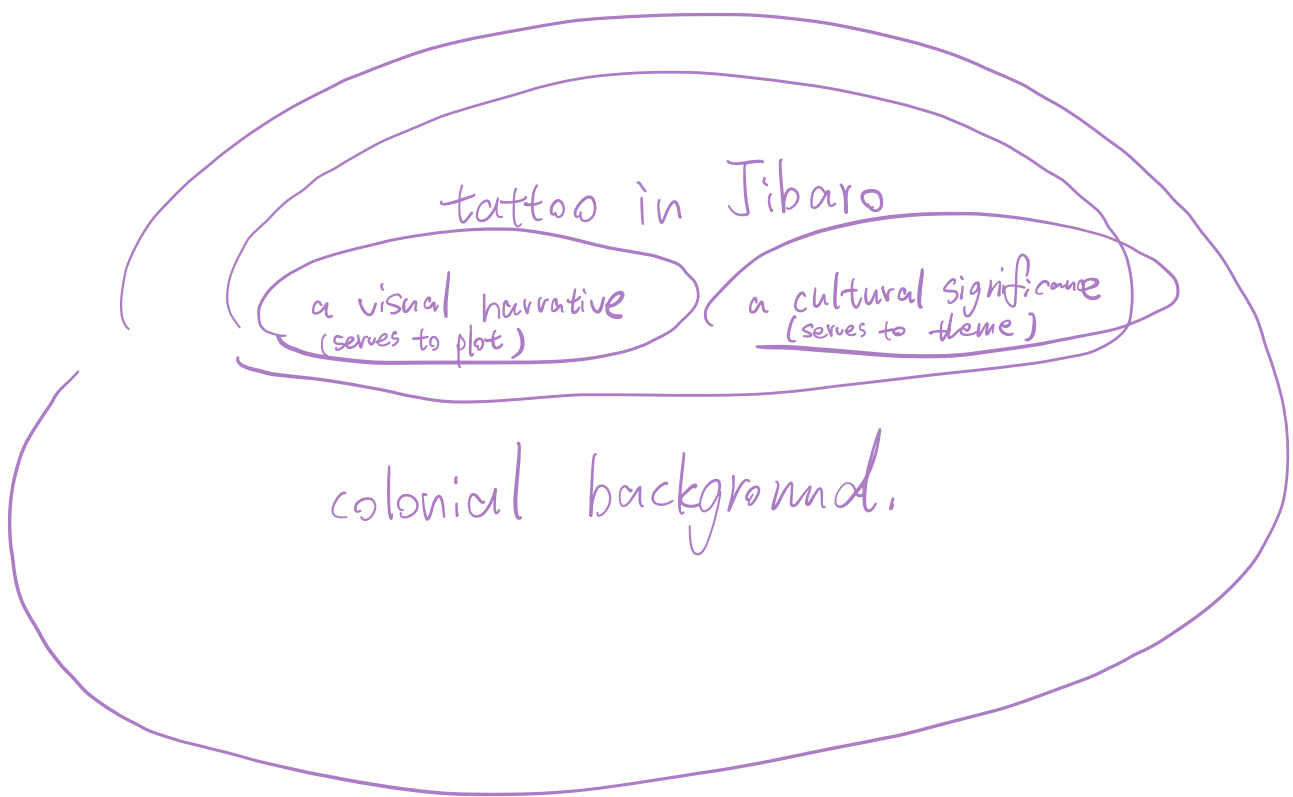


**The Cultural Significance of Tattoos in Jibaro: a visual narrative in the colonial background**



1. Introduction, statement on the Issue, topic to be investigated and purpose of report (200 words)

Jibaro is a short film in the Netflix series Love, Death and Robots, directed by Alberto Mielgo, who was nominated for an Oscar for Best Animated Short. The story is set during the Spanish colonization of Latin America, it tells the story of an encounter between a deaf Spanish knight and a siren in the deep forests of Latin America. What makes this film unique is its impressive visual design and how the director accurately expresses the story setting and narrative through visual elements and design without dialogue through animation.

In Jibaro, tattoos are not only decorative elements. Instead, they serve as visual representations of the story's colonial context, playing an important role in shaping the narrative. Although tattoos might be easily overlooked because of their decorative appearance, they carry deep symbolic meanings that reflect the cultural and historical aspects of the narrative. This thesis aims to explore the cultural significance of tattoos and their narrative function in Jibaro by analyzing the historical context and the contributions tattoos make to the plot development.

2. Critical Review a of literature or gathering of evidence. Critical appraisal of research undertaken and how you used your sources to investigate the topic and achieve objectives or answer the question (250 words)

- The value of tattoos in Latin American tribes
- Tattoo development and conceptual changes
- Latin American tribal tattoo patterns
- The identity of tattoos in the colonial context
- Balvay-TattooingRoleFrenchNative-2008
- Indigenous Nationalism in Bolivian Tattoo Art
- Antillean Islander Space: On the Religious Beliefs and Representations of the Taíno People
- Catholicism and National Identity in Latin America
- Literature Review: The Taíno — Connecting Erased Histories and Contemporary Ethnographies Ken Chitwood
- Mestizaje and the Discourse of National/Cultural Identity in Latin America
- The Chicana Canvas: Doing Class, Gender, Race, and Sexuality through Tattooing in East Los Angeles

? How to link the literature review with my topic.

I think this story is a microcosm of history, so when discuss tattoo designs, I can't only analyze the pattern, shapes, and role in the character plot. I should integrate history to support.

3. Investigation of options based on evidence. Main discussion and findings with citations. Sub-headings are recommended (800 words)

### **A microcosm of history**

An important scene in Jibaro portrays the knights' greed for jewels and wealth, where they engage in brutal killings over material possessions. This highlights the colonizers' insatiable desire for wealth and the violence that arises from such greed.



This behavior serves as a reflection of the colonial plundering, with the knights symbolizing the Spanish invaders. Their greed for the siren's jewels represents the harsh exploitation of resources, particularly those of the Taíno people. The Spanish colonization of Latin American natives led to widespread disease, enslavement, and death, as well as the plundering of vast treasures and artifacts. Such exploitation and destruction led to the loss of many cultural relics, and historical research has been hindered by the lack of surviving materials. As Dr. Anna Peterson emphasized, "The study of the Taíno is still, largely, an archaeologist's game. With that said, there is a burgeoning recognition that to truly apperceive the Taíno and their enduring significance it is increasingly salient to engage in interdisciplinary study that incorporates not only the work of archaeologists' usual partners (art historians, geographers, geologists, etc.)"(Chitwood, 2015). The tragedy of the Taíno civilization is reflected in the siren's body in the film, which is marked with wounds after the jewels are taken.



This demonstrates the widespread influence of colonialism on local cultures and the widespread destruction of cultures. This view explains the dual role of tattoos in Jibaro: not only as a symbol of status, but also as a cultural resistance to historical erasures. Although tattoos appear on Spanish knights, they also reflect the cultural mixing and conflict of knights when they came into contact with indigenous cultures. As a visual symbol, tattoos not only reflect the persistence of Taíno culture, but also represent the resistance and enduring strength

of the culture.

The heart-shaped lake in the film corresponds to the historical Fountain of Youth, which Spanish colonizers sought in the Caribbean. After the siren was killed by the deaf knight, red water flows from the main artery of the heart-shaped lake, it brings the dead siren back to life. Unaware of its effects, the deaf knight consumes the water, regaining his hearing. Ultimately, after restoring his hearing, he is drawn into the lake by the siren's song.



### **Tattoo**

Tattoos are not only a powerful visual element, but also an important medium for individuals and groups to express their identity, cultural background, and storytelling. The type, size, style, and color of a tattoo can say a lot about a person's personality, status, and way of doing things. It is part of human identity, and tattoos can be used to infer a person's cultural background and upbringing.

Tattoos are significant visual elements that serve as mediums for individuals and groups to convey their identity, cultural background, and narratives. The type, size, style, and color of tattoos can reflect aspects of a person's personality, social status, and behavioral tendency. As a visual marker, tattoos often contribute to an individual's sense of identity and may provide insight into their cultural background and personality. Tattoos "reflect a journey through the symbology of the human being. They are traces which shape our identities from the resistance of not detaching ourselves from our roots to raising new imaginaries that improve pride and appreciation of our own" (Trujillo et al., 2021).

In this cultural context, tattoos are no longer simple body decoration, but also an expression of personal and collective growth and struggle. Combined with the analysis of the history and the short film *Jibaro*, the tattoo may represent the confusion of identity. Some Spanish conquistadors settled in Latin America and raised families with the local population, and their mixed-race descendants often faced confusion about cultural identity. This mix of identities often leads to confusion about the culture of the settlement to which the individual belongs. The tattoos in *Jibaro* may symbolize the identity crisis experienced by the knights, influenced by the contrast between their Spanish heritage and the local cultures they encountered.



Second, in specific cultural and religious contexts, tattoos are often used to express the



identity of individuals and groups or organizations. In tribal cultures, tattoos are often seen as an extension of totems. It symbolizes the close connection between the individual and the collective. In Jibaro, the symbolism of tattoos reflects the social hierarchy. The knights as a collective, all have different tattoos on their facial designs, while the missionaries have no tattoos. This contrast reflects the class structure of the society, as missionaries often belonged to the aristocracy, a group that typically did not have facial tattoos. Therefore, the use of tattoos as a design elements not only emphasizes the characters' social status but also signifies the occupational and societal hierarchy within the historical context.



The design of the knights in Jibaro creates a strong sense of contrast with the extensive use of impressive facial tattoos. Although knights in the historical period of the Grand Voyage do not get tattoos, in the film the tattoos convey narrative information to the audience for the subsequent plot.

For example, when the knight first enters the forest, he has a circular tattoo near his hairline. In another shot, there are some circular patterns at the water's edge of the lake. This swirl-shaped design may symbolize the power of the Sirens, implying their connection to the forest and hinting that the knights have entered the Sirens' territory.





The knight has a tattoo of a hand with a scar near his ear, which indicates a shot in the story when his hand is cut by the Siren's jewels as a result of his greed.

Overall, in Jibaro, tattoos carry rich symbolic meanings, reflecting the characters' identities,

social status, and the narrative of the story.



## Bibliography

- Chitwood, K. (2015) *Literature review: The Taíno -- connecting erased histories and contemporary ethnographies*, *Academia.edu*. Available at: [https://www.academia.edu/12054494/Literature\\_REVIEW\\_The\\_Ta%C3%ADno\\_Connecting\\_Erased\\_Histories\\_and\\_Contemporary\\_Ethnographies](https://www.academia.edu/12054494/Literature_REVIEW_The_Ta%C3%ADno_Connecting_Erased_Histories_and_Contemporary_Ethnographies) (Accessed: 21 November 2024).
- Trujillo, M.S. *et al.* (2021) 'The tattoo as ancestral legacy and dichotomic element of national identity', *International Journal of Organizational Business Excellence*, 1(2), pp. 130–130. doi:10.21512/ijobex.v1i2.7155.

## Appendices