**CRIMINAL TATTOO IN THE CONTEXT OF RADICALISATION IN PRISON FACILITIES – SIGNIFICANT RESEARCH FINDINGS**

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**Abstract**

The paper deals with the significance of tattooing symbols in the criminal environment and prison subculture from the perspective of potential radicalisation processes and related security threats. Higher attention is paid to the function of tattoos, especially in the area of identification and communication. Frequently used symbols have a considerable explanatory value. They could reflect the criminal past of the wearer, expressing religious or ideological beliefs, indicate a membership in a criminal group, gang or a key point in a process of radicalisation. With the help of analysis of the selected tattoo symbols is possible to collect valuable information about the personality profile of a particular individual. Information about inmate’s criminal past, special skills, personal characteristics and preferences can be principal in the penitentiary procedures and measures. The styles and forms of tattoos are variable and pose a unique way of secret communication, namely in prison environment. Many tattoo´s motifs are spread and shared by the criminals on the international level. Prison facilities are in common assessed as a very vulnerable place from the perspective of potential radicalisation and sensitive recruitment pool for terrorist and extremist organisations. The paper introduces also fundamental aspects of ongoing empirical research projects of criminal tattoo symbols is crucial in the identification of radicalisation procedures of potential risky person in the criminal and prison subculture but also its affiliation in the extremist organisation, street gangs and socio-pathological communities. The most important research findings in the paper below mentioned are exemplified by authentic photos from the author´s archive.

**Keywords**

Identification, indicator, prison facility, radicalisation, tattoo.

**INTRODUCTION – CLARIFICATION OF TERMS**

The issue of radicalisation is an actual topic frequently discussed in an academic discourse but also in the policy and security platforms. Causes and factors initiating radicalisation process are essential for following and consequent de-radicalisation and disengagement proceedings of responsible bodies. Detailed analysis and understanding of radicalisation attributes have a multiple importance for intervention measures of different preventive institutions, but also for the employees of law enforcement authorities and intelligence services, who are responsible for early detection of potential risky person from the security perspective. Key point for effective response in the field of radicalisation phenomena poses clarification of fundamental terms related to this topic. It needs to be highlighted that exact defining and more over unifying of terminology in this area is complicated by different legislative conditions in each country all over the world and especially by individual approaches of political and academic sphere as well.

In the context of above mentioned facts, there is numerous definitions of radicalisation, but to express complicated internal process of individual´s radicalisation in one unique definition is seemed and still remains as an academic and scientific challenge. Radicalisation processes, as well as, social, political and personal factors initiating, influencing or accelerating this process belong to the area of interest of many scientists, security experts and academic community. It needs to be underlined, that radicalisation is a field, where a multidisciplinary approach of different academic disciplines must be applied.

The crucial point for understandable clarification of elementary terminology is an explanation of two terms related to this topic, thus *radicalism* and *radicalisation.* Despite the similar etymological background (both terms are derived from Latin word *radix* that can be easily translated as “a root”), there are important differences between these two concepts. From very simple and laconic perspective, it´s possible to describe *radicalism* as *an attitude* and *radicalisation* as *a process*. Radicalism is in general point of view understood by the majority of academic community as a policy, actions or opinions advocating and choosing closer political, economic or social changes in relation to the traditional political parties and mainstream debates. Radical person or group usually requires or implements underlying economic, political or social changes in the areas of higher interest of general public, as a criminality, corruption, migration issue and security. These proposals and requirements can vary in the connection with socio-cultural background and each state specifics and actual topics. For instance, society in the Czech Republic was in the recent years deeply disconcerted by the so called Roma issue. Roma people is ethnic minority which has a different life style and is according some social stereotypes connected with crime against property and misuse of social welfare. These problems and other differences caused tension between the majority of society and Roma people and related topics have been constantly misused by radical persons and extremist organisations for their propaganda. This issue is not already actual due to development in the society and policy and was replaced by the migration discussion and other themes.

Traditional and characteristic sign of radicalism of these days is strong amount of populistic statements combined with impressive propaganda manipulation. Radical opinion can be identified very easily in the common political campaigns short before the elections. Sophisticated and well organised extremist groups have been preferred in last decade a concept of moderated agitation which balanced on the edge of legality and social acceptance.

Almost all terrorist and extremist organisation don´t underestimate the power of structured and efficient publicity and propaganda. Political extremist movements and radical Islamist organisation use the internet and social media as a part of wide media strategy. Extremist rely on media channels, primary on internet, to distribute their propaganda, recruit new followers and operatives and rally support.

Radicalisation is in common sense understood as a *process* describing an individual´s transformation, whereby, in identity terms, an individual moves from one set of identity indicators to an entirely different one over a period of time.[[1]](#footnote-1) Among the characteristic signs of radicalisation belongs following attributes. Firstly, it is a dynamic, multi-staged process of developing extremist ideologies and beliefs, secondly, in some cases this process could lead to political or religious violent extremism or acts of terrorism. .

Many researchers conceptualize radicalization as a process characterized by increased commitment to and use of violent means and strategies in political conflicts. Radicalization from this point of view entails *a change in perceptions towards polarizing and absolute definitions of a given situation, and the articulation of increasingly ‘radical’ aims and objectives. It may evolve from enmity towards certain social groups, or societal institutions and structure. It may also entail the increasing use of violent means*.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Another scientific definition described the radicalisation as: „*the social and psychological process of incrementally experienced commitment to extremist political or religious ideology”*[[3]](#footnote-3)

Almost all definitions named as an integral part of radicalisation process *ideological and religious motifs* (especially in the context of Islamism)and *use of violence or any form of force influence.* For instance, “*radicalisation is the process by which an individual adopts an extremist belief system leading to his or her willingness to advocate or bring about political, religious, economic, or social change through the use of force, violence, or ideologically motivated criminal activity.”[[4]](#footnote-4)*

Some extremist organisations aim to disguise their violent aims by employing diplomatic stance to promoting acceptable solutions, providing logical arguments aiming to convince the audience of legitimacy of extremist goals.

Different case studies and researches confirmed that a highest phase of radicalisation is usually an act of terrorism or politically orientated violence, but it doesn´t have to be exact explanation. There is really close association between radical or extremist views and attitudes, but these approaches have not to include necessary use of violence or aggressive tactics. Radicalisation has to include a process when an individual also accept or support terrorism or forms of extremism leading to terrorism in unaggressive or non-violent way. Such behaviour is sometimes very complicated to identify and these individuals usually accent and keep strict rules and codes of conspiracy.

These attitudes and activities can be identified in general public but also in special social segments and subcultures, including prison environment, whereby the individuals are more vulnerable to be radicalised or to radicalise the others. Such a behaviour can lead and in some case escalate in a violent action and thus represents a pre-radicalisation phase, which is necessary appropriately identify and assess.

**SELECTED ASPECTS OF RADICALISATION IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES**

Prison radicalisation is understood as the process by which inmates adopt extreme views, including beliefs that violent measures need to be taken for political or religious purposes,”[[5]](#footnote-5)

Radicalisation in the prison environment is characterized by some attributes typical especially for the prison environment. Prison facilities are specific areas with unique internal processes, convict codes and unwritten rules. These are developed mainly by the dominant inmates with strong criminal experiences and background. The stages of radicalisation are very similar to the recruitment of street and prison gang and other security threat group. In many cases criminal subculture represents crucial recruitment pool for terrorist and extremist organisation, where they find their potential supporters or even devoted and fanatic extremist activists.

Prison system put together two forms of criminals, on one side, offenders of politically motivated crimes or even terrorists and so called *ordinary criminals*, who haven´t been ever intentionally involved in extremist activities. Both groups are usually in constantly interaction during prison routine life and are able to influence each other.

Hamm worked with the US Correctional Intelligence Initiative (CII), a program to prevent potential acts of terrorism by inmates in the US. The CII accessed 2,088 state and local correctional facilities in the US and Hamm found that radicalisation is developed on the prison gang model and prisoner radicalisation cannot be separated from the prison gang problem. Gang members were seen to be crossing racial lines, joining forces to create larger groups and some crossovers involved supremacists joining militant Islamic groups.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Time period spending in prisons could pose a challenge for selected part of criminals to develop and improve their illegal skills or even start or deepen their political or religious belief with tendency to violent extremism or terrorism. Such individuals are in the centre of interest for recruitment and radicalisation.

The reputable authors underline that, there is no single, uniform recruitment process for a group, there are as many recruitment processes as there are distinct regions and nodes in which the group operates. While there may be overlap and similarity between the recruitment techniques in one location and those in another, there will as often be stark differences. The recruitment efforts of a group will not mitigated, shaped, hindered, or halted by on-size-fits-all prescription. Different recruitment patterns will necessitate different counterrecruitment interventions. Some counterrecruitment methods may be effective in more than one locale, but just as often works in one situation will prove ineffective (or counterproductive) in another.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Timely symptoms of radicalisation detection in prison facilities is important for stopping and suppressing radicalisation and recruitment phase and to launch de-radicalisation procedure and further programs. These efforts obstructed actual problems typically presented in the contemporary prison facilities all over the world. Over-crowding and under-staffing prisons represent fundamental problems, which make the detection of radicalisation difficult. The prison system have been faced different related problems in last decade, as an infiltration of prohibited contraband, mainly drugs, mobile phones, improvised weapons and other illegal materials. Detecting of radicalised persons and active recruiters need well educated and motivated prison stuff. Networking and information sharing in the prison system is crucial for identification risky individual among inmates.

Above mentioned facts make from prisons fruitful space for spreading extremist ideas and build almost ideal atmosphere where individuals are particularly vulnerable to the extremist ideologies and doctrines. They provide near-perfect conditions in which radical, religiously or politically framed ideologies can flourish, thus prisons pose in current days centres of radicalisation.

Researchers must also take into account the social processes by which prisoners adopt such views and then explain how they translate their beliefs into violence. In and of itself, being a “prison radical” is not illegal and it does not pose an imminent threat to public safety. Radicalization is a threat only when it is encapsulated in criminal subcultures with the ideology and skill necessary to carry out an act of terrorism.[[8]](#footnote-8)

The threat posed by prisoner radicalization does not end when inmates are paroled or released. Former inmates are vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment because many leave prison with very little financial or social support. To the extent that radical groups may draw upon funding from well-financed, extremist backers, they can offer much more support to released prisoners than other more legitimate community programs that would facilitate genuine reintegration into society. By providing for prisoners in their time of greatest need, radical organizations can build upon the loyalty developed during the individual’s time in prison. If connections are made with a radicalized community group, the recently released inmate may remain at risk for recruitment or continued involvement in terrorist networks.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Many convicts are radicalized by other radical inmates and not by outside influences. Crucial role plays in this process charismatic person or recruiters. Recruiters will show the way forward through increased ideology schooling as well as physical or military training. Recruiters in prison facilities concentrate their attention to the most vulnerable convict in prison facilities, who are mainly the inmates, sentenced to several years of imprisonment and who no longer had a contact with their families. Inmate´s *vulnerability* to radicalisation can be caused and influenced by many internal or external factor, as personal trauma, family or society pressure, frustration, perception of injustice. It is never caused by one single factor but a combination of several factors.

Terrorists jailed for criminal activities can thrive in prison. Recruiters are able to spot, assess, and encourage potential recruits to follow their path, drawing from a constantly regenerating pool of candidates. [[10]](#footnote-10)

Penal institutions is very hostile space, where are usually placed people culturally and socially dissatisfied with predisposition to the violent acts, problematic behaviour, low probability for reintegration and resocialisation. Isolation combined with unhappy prospect to succeed in the future life can function as an intensive trigger of radicalisation.

Prison radicalisation results from – and is related to – the conditions inherent in the prison environment, including: the presence of terrorist inmates; the need for protection; the search for meaning and identity; and the desire to defy a system which may be perceived as unjust.

Clark McCauley and Sophie Moskalenko, based on a comparison of participants in terrorist campaigns from various periods, came up with a dozen mechanisms of radicalisation on the individual and group level, which often work in combinations:

* Individual radicalisation through personal grievance;
* Group grievance;
* Love for one already more radicalised;
* Risk and status, e.g. risk and thrill-seeking;
* Slippery slope – a slow progression of increased radicalisation in which each step becomes a preparation and justification for the next step;
* ‘Unfreezing’ of old social connections which initiates a search for new sources of connection and meaning in an individual;
* Group polarisation – extremist shift in like-minded groups;
* Group isolation;
* Intergroup competition;
* Jujitsu – using the opponent’s strength against him;
* Hate;
* Martyrdom[[11]](#footnote-11)

The challenge for policymakers and prison authorities is to mitigate those conditions, so they are less likely to feed into radicalisation. It follows that prison policies should be geared towards

* Recognising radicalisation;
* Monitoring the activities of terrorist inmates
* Controlling external influences;
* Encouraging prisoners to embrace ‘inmate identities’ rather than defy the authorities;
* Mitigating conflicts between ethnic, racial and religious groups;
* Channelling prisoners’ search for meaning and identity into productive directions.
* To what extent current policies have addressed these objectives will be shown in the next section.[[12]](#footnote-12)

In the connection of above mentioned facts the indicator of radicalisation can be defined as *various expressions and behaviours that provide clues that a person is being radicalised, radicalising another or that an activity is being planned which is violent or even terrorist in nature.* Such behaviours and expressions can potentially function as an early warning signs, provided they are detected on time and interpreted correctly. Radicalisation in correctional facilities is connected in the European countries mainly with *jihadism* and so called *prison Islam.* The context of this phenomena is in fact much more enormous and interconnected.

For instance, German authorities offer following approach to this issue. A first step is often to search for possible indicators of radicalisation. With regard to individual radicalisation to jihadist terrorism, the German federal state of Brandenburg developed the following list of possible indicators:

* Visible changes in style of clothing and behaviour;
* Break with their own family and turn to ‘new friends’;
* Religion becomes an explanation for everything and is constantly referred to;
* Other Muslims who do not follow strict religious practices are denounced as unbelievers;
* Participation in combat sports and survival training;
* Fraud and other criminal activities against non-believers;
* Participation in religious seminars of radical preachers;
* Visit of jihadist websites and viewing of jihadist videos;
* Taking of language lessons followed by trips abroad;
* Efforts to evade detection (loss of passport, etc.);
* Sudden change back to Western clothes, partying before the attack.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Thus, as an indicator can be considered different behavioural and appearance changes. The general indicators represent changing names – using allies, possession of propaganda material, change in religious practices, participating in closed meetings, use of Internet and chat-rooms with radical content, glorification of martyrdom or violence, becoming increasingly outspoken with an extreme viewpoint (i.e. participation in radical demonstrations – listening to radical music groups),social isolation and changing into peer groups, i.e staying away from school and youth clubs and last but not least using different symbols and signs (tattoos, graffiti, hand signs, badges). One of this signs can be specific *tattoo,* usually applies in the prison environment.

Above mentioned problems are frequently discussed in the states with the experiences of terrorist attacks (Great Britain, Germany, Belgium, France, Spain etc.). But this issue is also presented and spread in the prison of another European Union countries. To be able understand this phenomenon and to launch de-radicalisation measures is inevitable to undergo this phenomena a deep analysis and to describe key indicators of radicalisation.

Extremism and terrorism belong among one of the security threats for the Czech Republic, on the other hand in comparison with West European countries is this threat less immediate. Level of extremism in the Czech society is rather low, revealed cases of radicalized individuals willing to commit politically or religiously motivated criminal acts e.g. foreign fighters, are rather exceptional. But on the background of the current situation in Europe Czech inmates are getting radicalised or are imprisoned already being radicalised and contrary to the social situation it is not exceptional. The contribution reflects current situations in Czech prisons in context of political or religious radicalisation and discusses the attempts of the Czech prison service in order to empower prison staff, i.e. pilot projects in education of prison staff, so the prevention and intervention will be as much effective and successful as possible.[[14]](#footnote-14)

This concept laid the foundation of research project focused on prison environment in Czech Republic.

**RESEARCH PROJECT – CRIMINAL TATTOO ANALYSIS AND RADICALISATION INDICATORS**

At the start of the project in 2013 key objectives were defined as having provided insight into questions such as:

* Are the radicalisation processes in Czech correctional facilities feasible?
* What are the objective observed indicator of radicalisation?
* Is there a mechanism to categorize and explain radicalisation symptoms?
* Is it possible to detect the indicator of radicalisation in prison facilities?
* Can tattoo symbols play important role as indicator of radicalisation?
* Are the employees in prisons adequately educated in this area?

In the following text there will be briefly sum up key methodological background of the project and research environment, where the research has been pursued, thus correctional facilities in the Czech Republic.

The population of the Czech Republic is over 10 million and at the beginning of this year the number of prisoners was about 22 000, out of that 1775 of pre-trial detainees and roughly 1800 prisoners with foreign nationality.

There are in total 35 prisons in the Czech Republic and each prison has its own governor. Approximately 11 000 employees work within the Prison Service of the Czech Republic. The central management is operated by the Prison Service General Directorate under the Ministry of Justice.

There are 4 basic types of prisons in the Czech Republic. They can be classified as follows: minimum, medium, high and maximum security. In the minimum security prisons are placed convicts who are sentenced for the least severe offences. In the high and maximum security prisons are placed convicts who are sentenced for the most severe offences. There are more than 11000 convicts in the high security prisons. In the maximum security prisons there are roughly 1000 convicts. There are 48 convicts sentenced to life imprisonment, 45 male convicts and 3 female convicts.[[15]](#footnote-15)

All research subjects (incarcerated persons) were informed of the potential risks and benefits of their participation, and they received enough understandable information to make a voluntary decision. Informed consent and voluntary participation are fundamental ingredients of ethical research. The inmates in Czech prisons were interviewed by the author and during these procedures the tattoos symbols were documented. The gathering information from respondents were marked in the in advance prepared questionnaire. All dates were compared, analysed and final findings interpreted with regard to content analysis of relevant tattoo symbols, tattoo application methods, tattoo purpose and importance and other causalities.

By present day were interviewed and obtained data from a sample of more than one thousand inmates in 14 correctional facilities, including prison for female convicts. The findings, which are based on content analysis of tattoos symbols and structured interviews confined in all types of prison facilities, provide substantial support for the theoretical expectations and bring remarkable findings. Concerning expected outputs, ambition of the research team is innovation of information system using by the Czech criminal police and investigation service related to the databases of criminal tattoos symbols. Research team have been developing electronic database of criminal tattoos symbols logically categorized relevant symbols in specific groups accompanied with adequate description and risk assessment. Criminal tattoos were evaluated as one of the indicator of potential radicalisation processes and were included in the list of indicators, which are detected and assessed by the Prison Service o the Czech Republic. Police Academy of the Czech Republic organise and perform 3 days specials course for the employees of Prison Service with the title *Identification of Radicalisation Indicators in Prison Facilities.* At the same time there is also developed analytic tool for detection radicalised inmates in prisons, with the objective to implement this programme in all correctional institutions in Czech Republic and other affected security institutions.

**SIGNIFICANT RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Codes and symbols using in the criminal groups and subcultures pose a specific phenomenon enhancing internal relation among members. Symbols help to strengthen collective identity in a very intensive way. Impressive criminal symbols can stir up human emotion, both positive and negative. Internal cohesiveness in criminal community is more than important in the group motivated by shared ideological, political or religious beliefs. Widespread use of symbols is therefore essential attribute of different extremist and even terrorist organisation. Sometimes the individual tries to prove his dedication to the new movement or group by exceptional commitment or visualise its new belief by a special symbol. Such symbol represents tattoos, which poses unique way how to express internal belief and personal philosophy.

From the perspective of detection radicalised persons in prisons, the symbolic tattoo may represent one of the important indicator or warning sign, the wearer is involved in organised criminal structure, specific gang or even tent to support extremist ideology or violent extremism at all.

Following text introduces most important findings in this area revealed during research in correctional facilities in Czech Republic. Many symbols used by prisoners have a multiple meaning and are spread on the international level. Due to these facts it is utmost important to assess all tattoos in the context with each other symbols used by individual and with information about inmate´s personality and criminal background. In this phase is crucial psychological and penitentiary support of relevant experts.

***Selected tattoo symbols and motifs are more spread in the criminal environment and prison subculture in comparison with the general public***

Specific categories of tattoo symbols are characteristic for inmates with notorious criminal background with tendency to recidivism. For these inmates are typical symbols standing for loss of freedom, stylisation to the role of incorrigible criminal, adoration of local or foreign personalities of underworld.

Choosing of concrete tattoo is of course affected by other inmates and their personal influence. Especially *newcomers* are affected by the attitudes and social behaviour of prison life. This complicated process of adoption to prison conditions or assimilation into the inmate society is called *prisonisation.*

Prisonization is the process of accepting the culture and social life of prison society. It can be described as a process whereby newly institutionalized offenders come to accept prison lifestyles and criminal values. Prisonization forms an informal inmate code. Prison inmates slowly accept these institutional features and codes of the prison in their struggle for survival.

Although many inmates begin their prison experience with only a few values that support criminal behaviour, the socialization experience they undergo while incarcerated leads to a much greater acceptance of such values. Prisonization includes all changes the prisoner undergoes in prison, whether due to adoption of subcultural values, opposition to the subculture, or changes unrelated to the subculture.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Tattoos simultaneously symbolize a group-organizational association and the hierarchical status of an individual. Prisoners use tattoos to represent their strength and status, to mark their belonging to a certain group, to create a unifying symbol, and to define their status and position within their group.[[17]](#footnote-17)

***Representatives of police and government in general are frequent object of the hate symbols in the form of tattoos***

The most popular tattoo among incarcerated persons in Czech correctional facilities is so called ACAB tattoo in different designs and also coded versions. The ACAB acronym is an anti-police slogan meaning the phrase “*All Cops Are Bastards*“. The “ACAB” tattoo can be found among the members of various non-conform subcultures and usually groups of delinquents, quite often of contradictory characters and compositions. Yet these groups are clearly linked together by their hate to police and employees of government security forces in general. Wearers of the tattoo can be identified among neo-Nazis, anarchists and extremists in general, football hooligans, members of motorcycle gangs, addicts, gamblers, habitual criminals, persons perpetrating various felonies, and other persons who activities are mostly of illegal character. The wearers of this symbol usually deny the real meaning of this tattoo and use different fictive explanation as: *Always carry a bible, All cats are beautiful, All communists are bastards, etc.* Screaming of ACAB acronym during mass event (especially before or after football matches) could be a trigger of violence and aggression against police officers. Same situation can graduate in correctional facilities and turn into the riot.



*Fig. 1. Anti-police acronym “ACAB” – All cops are bastards*

***Imitation of tattoo symbols using by Russian inmates in former Soviet Union States has in the Czech prisons long and historical tradition***

So called Russian tattoos arise usually fear and respect and provide their wearer with a look of a “rough boy”. More than 60% inmates are well informed about the meaning of traditional tattoos of Russian organised crimes groups or iconic legend of *vor v zakoně* (thief in law). Thieves in law stand for a professional criminal which is respected by the other members of underworld and represent well reputed criminal authority. *Vory v zakone* must follow strict rules and code conduct, every theft mustn´t avoid the punishment and experience taking in prisons.

It should be carefully judged in the context in which the tattoo symbols appears. Tattoos associated with the thieves in law include, but are not limited to St. Mary and the infant Jesus, Christian cross, typical religious Russian buildings, spiders, tom-cat with the hat, and last but not least, eight-pointed star. In this context, it is very important the fact, where the tattoo is placed. The meaning depends on location or even more on relations with another tattooed symbols on inmate´s body. Eight pointed star denotes a rank in prison hierarchy, when it is located on the shoulders, as well as respected prison authority, when the stars are tattooed on the knees. The message of this symbol stands for: *I will never get on my knees in front of anyone.*

Application of above mentioned tattoo motifs can signify an acceptance of convict code or even identification with criminal community a criminal way of life (criminal lifestyle). Under this term is understood a way of thinking and behaving whereby criminals are career criminals.



*Fig. 2. Signs of inmate, who command respect and dignity*

***For younger but criminally experienced inmate is typical higher awareness about the history, existence and symbols of foreign gangs and extremist organisations, especially from United States of America, but not exclusively.***

Surprising finding poses the fact, that more than then one third of inmates have a deeper information about violent prison gang Aryan Brotherhood or transnational street gang *sui genereris* Mara Salvatrucha. This finding is very interesting, particularly when there are no cliques or section of these gangs located in the Czech Republic and the Czech written publication or any other sources about gang issue are rather limited.

Members of gangs communicate secretly using various methods. Besides the common communication in words these groups employ widely varied alternative ways of communication and information conveying. Graffiti, sign language, movement and clothing styling, hairdo variations, postures, gestures, and tattoos express affiliation with a certain group and the social status within the formation.[[18]](#footnote-18)

The selection of tattoo motifs and their design preferred in the criminal environment or by persons in the sentence of imprisonment may change over time and is affected by numerous factors. For instance, members of prison gangs, street gangs or outlaw motorcycle gangs are extremely prone to using symbols. They usually adopt many symbols to represent their organisation, ideological point of view or a gang. Using symbols, including specific tattoo motifs work as part of way of control and intimidation of potential victims, political opponents, rivals or law enforcement representatives. Czech inmate imitates these tattoo in prison environment with unordinary details and awareness about the system of gang subculture.



*Fig. 3. Traditional Mara Salvatrucha tattoo by the inmate in Czech prison*

***Adoration of iconic personalities from the criminal subculture and moreover, extremists or terrorists is an integral part of prisoner’s tattoo motifs***

Foreign iconic criminals and extremists are also fanatically avowed by selected group of Czech convicts. They admire them so much, they don´t hesitate to tattooed their authentic faces on the body. One of these *criminal personalities* is Robert Jay Mathews or Troy Michael Kell. Troy Kell was sentenced to life in prison by the State of Nevada for murder. Shortly after his conviction he was transferred to the Utah State Prison, where Troy Kell attacked and killed

other inmate, stabbing him a total of 67 times while his associate, held the vitctim down. Robert Jay Mathews was an American neo-Nazi terrorist and the leader of The Order, an American white supremacist militant group. He was killed in 1984 in the shot fight with the federal law enforcement agents.



*Fig. 4. Authentic tattoos of Troy Michael Kell and Robert Jay Mathews*

The words *Blood and Honour* refers to the militant Neo-nazi organisation and white power music network, which was founded by Ian Stuart Donaldson in Great Britatin. The name took the organisation from the Hitler Youth (Hitlerjugend, Blut und Ehre in German language).

Some symbols represent the indicator of affiliation in an extremist organisation criminal group or a gang. During the realised empirical research were many different criminal tattoo categories identified. Every wearer of a tattoo or symbols of other categories must be assessed completely and in an individual approach at the same time. The interpreting of tattooed symbols can bring valuable information on the wearer personality solely if adequate level of objectivity and pragmatic assessment are applied. It must be emphasised that the tattooed symbols are just one of a lot of circumstantial evidence, which, if combined with other findings, may create a more complete profile of a given individual.

**CONCLUSION**

It is of the utmost importance for the work and performance of duty of members of security forces, who virtually on a daily basis move in the criminal environment or are in contacts with its representatives, to have as much as possible information on such persons. Information on the way and about they think, how they behave in communication processes, which determine and form their responses, is very essential. Such information represents useful tools, which may be used for operations in the criminal environment, especially when choosing suitable procedures and tactics for treatment of and dealing with radicalised individuals.

Major aim of in the process of detection radicalised inmates is to launch appropriate efforts heading towards deradicalisation of these potentially risky individuals. Prof. Moghadam agrees and finds that ‘the path to de-radicalisation is not necessarily the reverse of the path to radicalisation’.[[19]](#footnote-19)

From this point of view is important to stress, that prevention is crucial and as well as sharing best practices. Tailor made interventions, adapted to local circumstances of concrete correctional facility, are necessary. Appropriate identification of radicalised persons is impossible without involving and training first line practitioners. Key point is raise an awareness about the issue of radicalisation and factors accelerating these processes. Security sector, civil organisations ant the media play a decisive role in this process. Multi-agency approach is key reaction, how to deal with this serious security threat.

Higher awareness and sharing information in the field of criminal tattoos interpretation is helpful mechanism especially for actors participating in combating different forms of criminality, radicalisation tendencies and other related socio-pathological behaviour. Target audience of the research findings namely are:

* Police Forces (Law Enforcement)
* Intelligence Services
* Prison Service
* Probation and Mediation Service
* Customs Administration
* Fire Rescue Service
* Emergency Medical Service
* Lecturers od Police Schools
* Staff of Ministry of Interior
* Armed Forces
* Refugee Facilities Administration etc.

The author´s and the colleagues from research team interest is to provide the information found to employees of security forces by means of a suitable way within pedagogic activities and lecturing, extraordinary education, and life-long education courses with the objective of making their activities more efficient and ensuring the sufficient education and ability to detect warning signs of radicalisation processes in correctional facilities.

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