

SYRENKA TATTOOS

Personal Interpretations of Warsaw's Symbol

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ABSTRACT: The Mermaid of Warsaw – known in Polish as the *Syrenka* – is the principal feature of the city's coat of arms. In recent years it has also become popular with residents as a tattoo design that has civic, community and individual significance. This article analyses a selection of *Syrenka*-inspired tattoos inscribed on the bodies of city residents. Although approximately 90% of the images addressed conform to the classic model of the *Syrenka*, with regards to the position of the figure's sword and shield, in most other aspects the tattoos differ significantly from the one featured the coat of arms, referencing other images of the *Syrenka* scattered throughout the city. As such, these tattoos represent more than simple homages to the city's emblem; they evidence a sentimental bond with the community of Warsaw and express the tattooed individuals' commitments to and attitudes toward their metropolitan locale.

KEYWORDS: Mermaid, *Syrenka*, Warsaw, tattoos, semiotics

Introduction

Warsaw is located in east-central Poland on the Vistula River, which rises in the south of the country and drains into the Vistula Lagoon via a delta and directly into the Baltic Sea via several direct channels (Figure 1). The city has its antecedence in riverbank settlements that date back to the 9th Century. Warsaw has served as the nation's capital since 1596 and its current population of is just over 1.75 million. The city's most prominent symbol is a mermaid, known in Polish as *Syrenka*, which features on its coat of arms and is represented in various statues and other public artworks around the city and in a profusion of popular cultural contexts. In this article we examine the *Syrenka's* role and symbolic function as a popular local tattoo motif. We commence with an historical excursus, explaining the origin of the *Syrenka* and her accessories (tools, a shield and a sword). The remainder of the article examines a selection of *Syrenka* tattoo designs, discusses identity issues raised by the images and discusses the social implications of this figure as a symbol inscribed on the flesh of the city's inhabitants.



Figure 1 – Warsaw, the Vistula River and Poland’s national boundaries (Source: <https://www.ducksters.com/geography/country/poland.php>)

Warsaw’s coat of arms and the evolution of the *Syrenka*

A mythological human-animal figure first appeared on Warsaw’s coat of arms in the 16th Century (1977: 37). As Figure 2 details, at that time the creature’s appearance was completely different from that adorning the coat of arms today. Back then, the entity was a composite of a man and griffin. The figure lacked a tail, and instead had the body of a lion endowed with powerful wings. In the 16th Century the wings, at least as displayed on seals and etchings, were changed into fins. In the 17th Century these fins became smaller and the figure’s feet also metamorphosed into fins. In that period, the *Syrenka* was also given a dragon-shaped head. A decisive change happened in the 18th Century, when the figure started to be represented as a woman. The present-day *Syrenka* emerged as the image was simplified. The figures lost its the recently acquired dragon head and finned legs and was replaced by a more familiar fish-tailed, female figure. Her face changed further in the 19th Century, when her head was turned to the right and her hair – which in early renditions flowed loosely onto her shoulders – was gathered into a bun. A century later, the tail – previously corkscrewed – became straight with an upward turn, as in the current coat of arms (Figure 3).

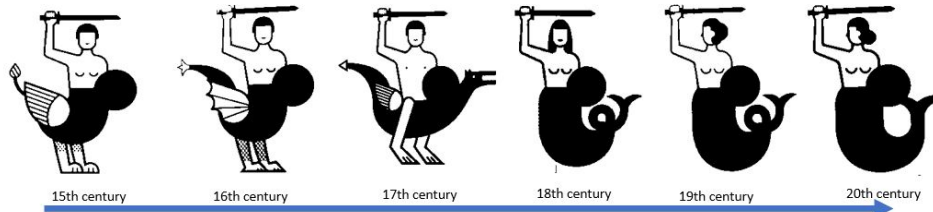


Figure 2 - The transformation of the Syrenka between the 15th and 21st centuries.
 (Source: The Warsaw Data, exhibition at the Museum of Warsaw)

Mermaids from other European cultural traditions have had similar evolutions of form to that of the Varsovian¹ *Syrenka*. As Leofranc Holford-Strevens has written, “the first and still most famous manifestation of the siren in Greek literature is in the twelfth book of the *Odyssey*” (2006: 16), where, however, the sirens’ appearance is not described. The term siren derives from the Greek word *Seirén*, meaning “bewitching song” (ibid: 17). The siren’s appearance evolved in ancient Greece. At first, they were birds with human heads and later they gained a human torso and could play musical instruments. In some cases, they could also be depicted as men. In 300 BCE Heraclitus wrote that sirens had bird’s legs but female bodies (ibid). At the beginning of the CE, various sources wrote that sirens had wings and could fly. The creature as we know it today was known in antiquity as a triton (half human, half fish) but a half-fish siren appeared in the 8th Century *Liber Monstrorum* (ibid: 29).



Figure 3 – Warsaw’s (standard) coat of arms. (Source: Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coat_of_arms_of_Warsaw#/media/File:Grand_CoA_Warsaw.png - accessed 2nd August 2018)

¹ The term “Varsovian” indicates association with Warsaw. The term “Warsawian” is used more rarely.

Whereas the sirens of antiquity and, to some extent, the mermaids of north-western European folklore, were threatening figures; the Warsaw mermaid has largely been represented as more positive one. Her name is modification of the term *Syren* (ie Siren) in which the final *ka* signifies as both little (as in a child) and/or conveys a degree of affection. There are several legends concerning the origin of the *Syrenka*. One of them claims that the Baltic Sea was home to two *Syrenkas*: one of them swam west and settled on the shore of present day Denmark, while the other swam up the Vistula and finally came to rest on the most beautiful part of the river's banks. Other versions talk about the love between a fisherman and a *Syrenka* in which the *Syrenka* promised that she would return with a sword and shield to protect the place if ever its inhabitants were threatened (Gal, 2016: 383-388).

The variety of representations

The *Syrenka* has been a continuing inspiration for artists over the last two centuries. One of its most famous representations is the 1855 sculpture located in the Old Town Market Place (Figure 3). The statue was installed over a fountain that was built during the installation of the city's first modern water supply system (Dubrowska and Soltan, 1999: 75), many of which were decorated with *Syrenkas*, dolphins and tritons. The monument was moved several times. It initially stood at the Old Town Market Place, close to its current position, and was then relocated to three other places before finally being returned to its original location in 1999 (Grzesiuk-Olszewska, 2003: 50). Ten years later, after being significantly damaged by visitors who cut off fragments as souvenirs, the statue was substituted with a copy and the original was moved to the Museum of Warsaw. Other well-known statues of the *Syrenka* were created in 1905 and 1939 and were placed near the river. One of these had the facial features of a student who came to Warsaw to study at the Academy of Fine Arts and eventually died during the *Powstanie Warszawskie* (the 'Warsaw Uprising') against the occupying German army in 1944 (Figure 4).



Figure 4 - Statue by Konstanty Hegel (1855) Old Town Square. (Photo by Agata Kostrzewa)



Figure 5 - Statue by Jan Woydyga (1903-1905) Stanisław Markiewicz Overpass
(Source: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plik:Wiadukt_Markiewicza_Warszawa_008.jpg-
April 2018 - accessed 2nd August 2018)



Figure 6 – Statue by Ludwika Nitschow (1939) Powiśle District. (Source:
[https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warszawska_Syrenka#/media/File:Syrenka_warszawskao205.](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warszawska_Syrenka#/media/File:Syrenka_warszawskao205.jpg)
jpg - accessed 21st June 2018)

Pablo Picasso also drew a version of the *Syrenka* during his visit to the city in 1948. Along with his friends, the painter went to see the construction site of a new apartment building in a working-class neighborhood. He was fascinated by its functionality, and especially appreciated the district's innovative construction materials (the edifices were built from the rubble that was still lying around the city after the war). While looking over the unfinished buildings, Picasso went into one of them, entered a one-room apartment on the first floor and, using some coal, drew a large image of the *Syrenka* holding a hammer instead of a sword on the wall. The drawing became so popular that the apartment, which was soon occupied by a newly married young couple, started attracting visitors and classes of school children. The bothersome visits prompted the inhabitants to paint over the work, and only photographs prevented it from being completely forgotten. In March 2017, a mural portraying a full-sized version of Picasso's original *Syrenka* sketch was painted on the square outside Warsaw's main metro station (Figure 7).

The *Syrenka* is portrayed throughout Warsaw in many relief sculptures. One of these, created in 1933, can be seen on the headquarters of the Zespół Stacji Filtrów (the Department of Flood Filters) (Figure 7); another one – dating back to the 1950s – is on the Boleslaw Prus High School facade (Figure 8) and there is also neon version from the 1970s, which was initially displayed outside a local public library and is currently on display at the city's Neon Museum (Figure 9).²



Figure 7 – Reproduction of sketch by Pablo Picasso (1948) painted on exterior wall of Warsaw Central rail station in 2017.

(Source: <http://warszawa.naszemiasto.pl/artkul/warszawska-syrenka-jest-chyba-wszedzie-gdzie-ja-znajdziesz,4586869,artgal,t,id,tm.html/> - accessed 21st June 2018)

² The *Syrenka* is also a pop culture symbol. The film *Corki dancingu* (English title: *The Lure*), directed by Agnieszka Smoczyńska in 2015, tells the story of two *Syrenka* sisters. One day they surface on the Vistula River and begin their nightlife in 1980s' Warsaw. The movie re-imagines and re-reflects traditional *Syrenka* imagery and associations.



Figure 8 - Jan Goliński, 1933, Department of Flood Filters.
(Source: <http://nazawszewarszawa.blogspot.com/2009/11/syrenki-cz2.html> - accessed 21st June 2018)



Figure 9 - Wojciech Czerwosz (1950s), Bolesław Prus High School. (Source: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warszawska_Syrenka#/media/File:POL_Warszawa_Katowicka_syrenka_02.jpg - accessed 21st June 2018)



Figure 10 - Syrenka lightwork, The Neon Muzeum (1970s). (Source: <https://podrozeodkuchni.pl/2014/02/neonow-czar-warszawa/> - accessed 21st June 2018)

Research into tattoo images

In 2017, the Polish Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej (Public Opinion Research Centre) conducted a survey to determine the percentage of Polish people with tattoos. The result (Cybulska, 2017) revealed that 8% of the respondents had tattoos (with 10% of men having them and 6% of women). In the group aged 44 and above, 2-5% of Poles identified as having at least one tattoo. This lower percentage is probably due to the stereotype, still frequent in the 1960s and 1970s, that associated tattoos with criminality and jail. Tattoos are more popular among young people: the age group from 25-34 represented 16% of the sample, and that between 35-44 represented 12%. The youngest respondents – from 18 to 24 – represented 9%, not the highest section but this might have included individuals who were still planning to get a tattoo (since the same research also showed that 15% of respondents were considering getting a tattoo in the future). This percentage has probably grown since, because – as noticed by other researchers – tattoos are no longer associated with subcultures and are becoming fashionable accessories (Turner, 1999). A research study by Armstrong, Owen, Roberts and Koch (2002) has shown that there are three main reasons behind people's decisions to get a tattoo: aesthetic (tattoos as a body ornament), individual (tattoos can emphasise a person's uniqueness) and social (they can reinforce a person's sense of community). In our study, the third motivator appears to be the most important factor in Warsaw residents choosing to be tattooed with *Syrenka* images.

When starting our study, we adopted two hypotheses: the first was that *Syrenka* tattoos are a way of paying homage to the Warsaw community; the second was that these tattoos are inspired by popular *Syrenka* images and sculptures around Warsaw.

Our research analysed 65 photos of Syrenka tattoos.³ 16 of the images came from photos sent to the 'Syrenkas forever' contest announced in September 2016 by the Museum of Warsaw. In order to be eligible to enter, participants needed to reside in Warsaw and to have a *Syrenka* tattoo. The other photos were found on Instagram through the tags #warszawskasyrenka or #syrenkazwarszawy. For Warsaw inhabitants, the *Syrenka* is a potent emblem. The local political activist Joanna Erbel, who has a Syrenka tattoo on her forearm, describes it with affection: "I like to look at her when I'm down. Anyway, I got it when I needed extra support" (Bet, 2016: online – authors' translation). The tattoo, in this context, is more than just a drawing: it is a symbol that motivates people in times of need. Erbel explained that her arm is tattooed in such a way that she is the only one who can see it from the correct perspective (ie the mermaid's the body is drawn upside down, with the head near the wrist and the tail near the elbow – Figure 10). Erbel's search for an appropriate tattooist was protracted and she finally settled on Wojtek Klosowski, an artist who is an expert in the city's culture who also does graphic art. Appropriately, the tattoo was inscribed at the Syrena Tattoo Studio located in the Powiśle neighborhood (close to the sculpture created by Ludwika Nitschowa). Erbel had her tattoo done at a time when there was discussion on whether Warsaw should remain a city or be expanded into a province (see O'Sullivan, 2017). This was an important moment not only for the city, but for all Poland, as the impetus behind this plan was political. Warsaw voters have commonly supported opposition parties rather than the conservative ones that have dominated the national political landscape since the early 2000s. Amalgamation with a wider area that included a great percentage of conservative voters would have dramatically changed the political complexion and identity of the capital.



Figure 11 - Joanna Erbel's tattoo. (Source: Museum of Warsaw Official Facebook Fanpage: <https://www.facebook.com/muzeum.warszawy/photos/a.1182025218510710.1073741915.177958135584095/1182025261844039/?type=3&theater> – accessed 21st June 2018)

³ In one photo there were two tattoos, therefore there were 66 images in the 65 photos.

Analysis of research results

Nearly 41% of the images we analysed were inspired by particular versions of the *Syrenka* present in public art around Warsaw. The most popular models were those of the statue in the Old Town Square (Figure 4) and the wall-frieze at Boleslaw Prus High School (Figure 9). In our sample these occurred 5 times each. Tattoo reproductions of the *Syrenka* from the city's official coat of arms (Figure 3) appeared 3 times — a relatively low number considering that this is the most historical and famous *Syrenka* design and is present not only in public administration buildings but also on buses and trams. Versions of the *Syrenka* from the Neon Museum (Figure 10) and of the sculpture created by Nitschowa in Powiśle (Figure 6) also occurred 3 times each. The *Syrenka* image from the Department of Flood Filters headquarters (Figure 8) and the one drawn by Pablo Picasso (Figure 7) both came up twice. The latter is notable since even though Picasso's image has reappeared several times in recent years (as a mural and in an exhibition about *Syrenkas* at one of the museums), it is not a deeply ingrained symbol. Many tattoos were a combination of different *Syrenka* designs. For instance, the figure's body position and appearance could be inspired by one model while her hair style could be taken from a different one).

When can a mermaid be called *Syrenka*?

There are numerous representations of the *Syrenka* of Warsaw. Some have curving tails while others have straight ones; some have loosely flowing hair and others have it gathered in a bun. Our analyses required us to set criteria by which an individual tattoo could be interpreted to represent the Warsaw *Syrenka* (rather than a more generic mermaid). To this end we settled on the formulation that *Syrenkas* share several elements (Figure 12).

1. The first element is gender. Since the 17th Century, when the *Syrenka* in Warsaw's coat of arms stopped being a man, all representations have shown the *Syrenka* as a woman (with bared breasts, female beauty and female hair styles).
2. The next element is the figure holding a raised bladed weapon, which can be a sword or a sabre. This is always raised above its head – as if ready to strike – in reference to the legend of the foundation of Warsaw in which the *Syrenka* is portrayed as a defender who remains watchful to make sure nothing bad happens to the city's inhabitants (Łochocka, 2016: 353-360).
3. The *Syrenka* of Warsaw holds a shield on a side of her body. The shape of the shield varies (it is usually round but, in some cases, it can replicate the boundaries of the city). The elements pictured on the shield also differ (sometimes the shield is plain and sometimes it is decorated with symbols or carvings).
4. The *Syrenka's* tail is a key element. Fish scales are not indispensable – sometimes the tail is smooth – but it is always the only element of her lower body (and there are no additional side-fins, legs or paws).
5. The last characteristic feature is its body position. The *Syrenka* of Warsaw never faces forward. It is always, even as a sculpture, turned at a certain angle.

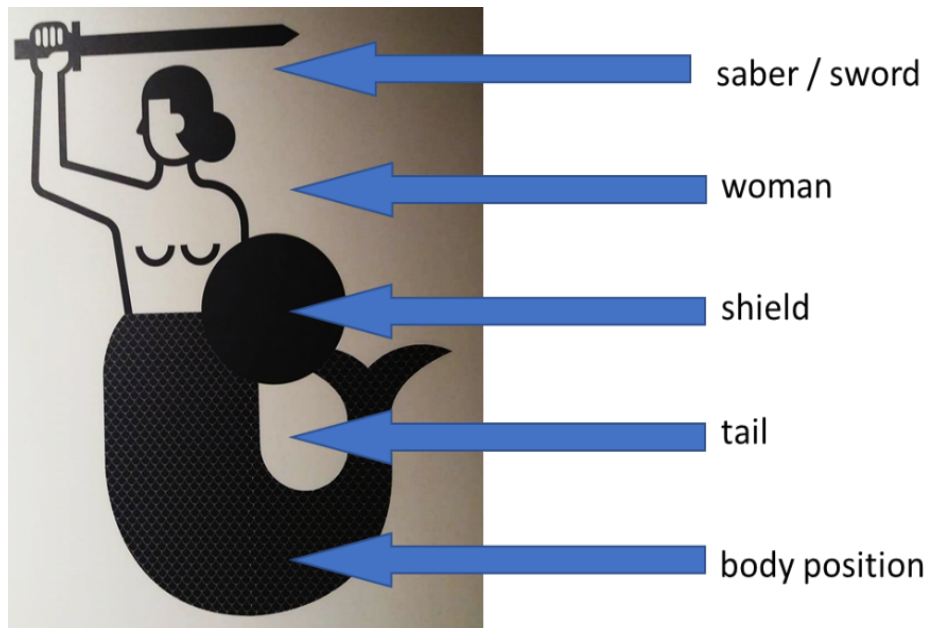


Figure 12 – Components of the *Syrenka*. (Source: The Warsaw Data, exhibition at the Museum of Warsaw, 2016)

In our assessment, and for the purposes of our research, a combination of all the above elements were deemed necessary to classify a figure as a *Syrenka*. In the study sample, 94% of tattoos included a shield and 88% featured a bladed weapon. But, for the purposes of our exercise we also allowed the replacement of these elements with other symbols provided that the body position was preserved. Numerous tattoos presented the *Syrenka* of Warsaw with one arm raised and the other bent at the elbow covering its side but with a pen, a notebook, or other objects supplanting the sabre and the shield. These symbols paid homage to the *Syrenka* of Warsaw while also indicating the interests of the tattooed person (the pen and the notebook are the working tools of journalists or writers).

We also observed the extent to which red and yellow, the official colors of the city of Warsaw, appeared in tattoos. While the *Syrenka* stands on a red background on Warsaw's formal coat of arms (Figure 3), it also frequently appears superimposed over Warsaw's official flag (which comprises an upper yellow half and a lower red one) (Figure 13).⁴ We ascertained that 19 of the 66 tattoos (approximately 29%) presented at least one of the two colours, with red being the more popular one. However, only 4.5% tattoos contained both colours. This makes difficult to say that there is an attachment to the city's official colours in tattoos and might be taken to suggest that inhabitants of Warsaw who adopt *Syrenka* tattoos do not want to identify with the city's official interpretation of the *Syrenka* symbol.

⁴ See *Flags of the World* (2014) for discussion of Warsaw's flags.



Figure 13 – The Syrenka superimposed over Warsaw's official flag (Flags of the World, 2014: online).

Syrenkas: alone or within a context?

Syrenkas are not the only tattoo motif connected to Warsaw. Other popular symbols that were present in tattoos along with the *Syrenka* included:

- a) Urban icons: Sigismund's Column,⁵ the Royal Castle, the Palace of Culture and Science, surrounded by skyscrapers (Figure 14) or tenements at the Old Town Market Place. These places are iconic for Varsovians and are also associated with professional success. Warsaw identity, therefore, is built not solely on history but also on its people's resourcefulness and self-initiative.
- b) The Vistula River: as seen in Figure 15, the *Syrenka's* hair is drawn in an undulating pattern that resembles the waves of the river (also see ripples represented in Figure 14).
- c) Shield design: in some instances, the *Syrenka's* shield was shaped like the city boundaries or comprised the shield of Legia – a local football club that has won the national championship several times and is the pride and joy of local fans.
- d) Patriotism: some bore the image for a crowned eagle the Polish coat of arms, the emblem of Polish resistance during the Nazi occupation, or paid tribute to the Warsaw Uprising. This selection included the monument to the so-called 'Little Insurgent', created to honor the youngest resident of Warsaw who took part in the Uprising, as well as a *Syrenka* formed from the numerals 6 and 3 — symbolising the number of days the protest lasted (Figure 16). These symbols express a trend that has developed over the last few years, the so-called "conservative rebellion" of young people in Poland constituted by Generation Z's return to conservative values (Czapinski and Panek, 2015).

⁵ King Sigismund III Vasa is celebrated for having moved the capital from Cracow to Warsaw.

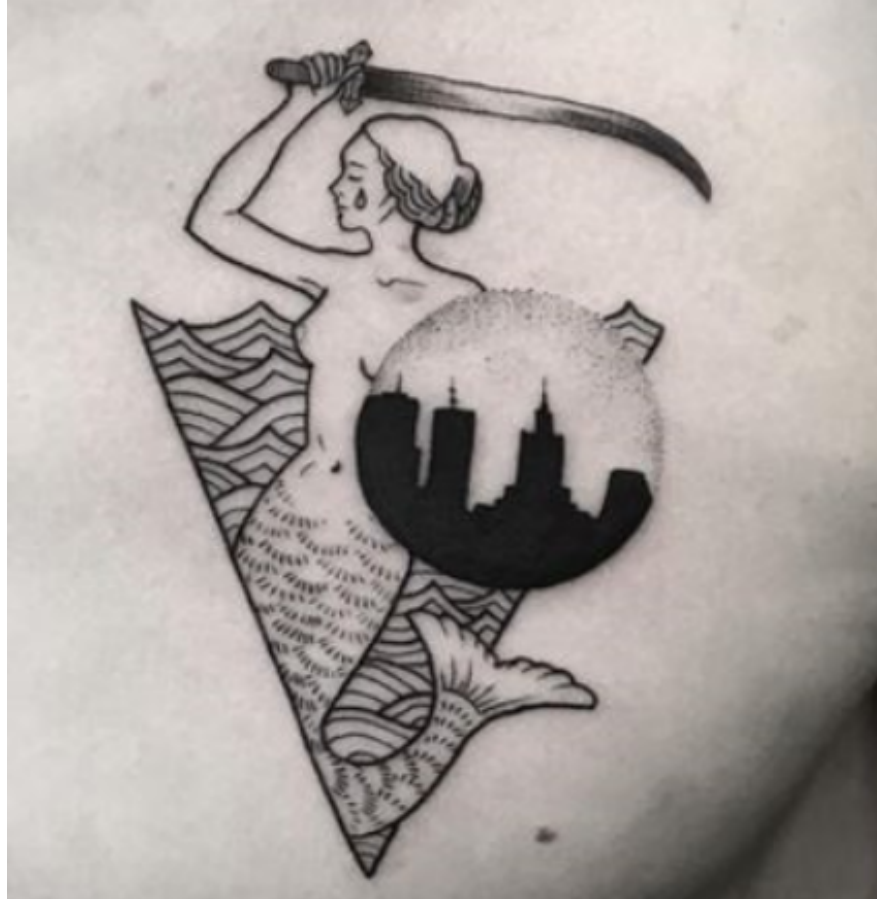


Figure 14 – anonymous tattoo showing Warsaw skyscrapers and river surface imagery. (Source: <https://www.instagram.com/mongotattoo/> [2018])

- e) Popular culture: in one case the *Syrenka* of Warsaw appeared as Ariel, the central protagonist of the 1989 Disney movie *The Little Mermaid*. Other *Syrenkas* wore 1940s' outfits with characteristic 'sweetheart necklines. The image of a *Syrenka* holding a cigarette in its mouth (mimicking Maria Elena, the character portrayed by Penélope Cruz in Woody Allen's 2008 film *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*) appeared four times (Figure 17). This symbolism shows a type of femininity that conveys glamour and a certain self-mockery, representing values that the wearers of these icons might seek to express.
- f) *Syrenkas* tattoos could also be interpreted as reflecting socio-physical changes in the city's population. 14% of *Syrenkas* had fuller figures than those represented in Figures 3-10, at a time when the number of obese women in Poland has reached 16% percent (Central Statistical Office of Poland, 2016: online). A similar aspect is apparent with regard to the length of the *Syrenkas*' hair: it varied considerably, just like the length of hair among contemporary women (whereas in earlier depictions, especially the ones concerning mythical *Syrenkas*, long hair used to be a constant feature). *Syrenkas* in

tattoos can thereby be interpreted not only as symbols of Warsaw but also as evidence of shifting aspects of the female form.

- g) Among the tattoos were some images that revealed individual interests and passions. These not only depicted *Syrenkas* but also, for example, notes, violins or cooking utensils. In these cases, the *Syrenka* can be seen as a way of expressing the individualism of the tattooed person.
- h) Double identity: in one tattoo the *Syrenka* held a shield decorated with the coat of arms of Gostynin, a small city in Mazowia Province (Figure 18). It seems likely that the tattooed person wanted to celebrate a place with particular significance to him while paying homage to his current place of residence.
- i) Gender: The selection of tattoo photos we analysed included one tattoo of a merman. The tattoo's owner explained that he wanted a male figure in order to feel represented as a man. In this case, the tattoo design was a way of expressing an individual's gender identity and self-projection.



Figure 14 – anonymous tattoo (Source: <https://www.instagram.com/zerodwadwacom/> [2018])



Figure 16 – anonymous tattoo (Source: <https://www.instagram.com/8mariush6/> - [2018])



Figure 17 – anonymous tattoo (Source: <https://www.instagram.com/jagodasketches/> - 2018)



Figure 18 - anonymous tattoo (Source: <https://www.instagram.com/jagodasketches/> [2018])

Drawing on the material surveyed above we can produce a characterisation of what the *Syrenka* looks like in contemporary tattoos. Approximately 90% of the analysed samples retained key elements of the *Syrenka* of Warsaw. Around 30% of them also exhibited additional details, symbols of individual interests or passions. The most popular *Syrenka* models were inspired by different versions found around the city and not by the city's official coat of arms. Not only the symbol of the city, but also the female figure herself, have undergone changes. We observed how some tattoos represented body shapes that diverged from traditional models. Designs representing individual traits of the tattooed person (by showing his/her opinions or interests) were also popular. While popular symbols that accompanied the *Syrenka* included architectural structures from various epochs, the identity of the city of Warsaw is not expressed by the monuments most readily recognised by tourists, but rather, showed diversity.

It is worth noting that a similar phenomenon of reinterpreting a city's symbol can be seen in Singapore with regard to the Merlion (a figure with the upper half of a lion and the lower half of a fish). In a 2012 study Hayward identified and discussed the symbolic strength of the Merlion, a figure that was first created as a national symbol in 1964. In a follow-up article

(2017), he discusses a number of recent tattoos that have reinterpreted the classic Merlion design by varying the position, look and the symbolic meaning of the original:

Initially designed as tourist trademark, the Merlion has developed as a national icon that is sufficiently potent and evocative to have been acquired as a skin souvenir by tourists, as a marker of temporary residence and/or a memento of that by expatriates and, most recently, as a symbol of national pride acquired by Singaporean nationals. (ibid: 80).

What does the symbolism behind the *Syrenka* say about the identity of Warsaw inhabitants?

The identity of Warsaw residents is complex to define, since they do not comprise a cohesive and singular community. One aspect of this is attributable to Warsaw being the Polish city with the largest number of non-native-born inhabitants (Szukalski, 2014: online) and, since the mid-19th Century, half of its population have been born elsewhere. These internal migrations intensified after World War II, when the demolished city was rebuilt by non-local labourers, many of whom later became the inhabitants of the neighbourhoods they reconstructed. Rather than being the result of sustained ancestry, Warsaw residents' identity is connected with residence and adoption of that identity is a conscious and individual choice of belonging that tattoos help to emphasise.

Although social diversity is not very visible, there are more and more neighborhoods occupied by newly-arrived and, often, career-seeking young people. These neighborhoods consist of functional residential areas with children's playgrounds, small green spaces, shops and gyms. People living within these places are part of the individualistic, energetic and hard-working middle class that is mainly the result of freshly-established young people arrived from other parts of Poland to start a life in the capital. The current wave of internal migration is also due to Warsaw's reputation as a city of opportunity and of constant change. In terms of Poland's urban landscape, many neighborhoods offer an interesting mix, as monuments from the 18th Century, art nouveau buildings, soviet edifices and 21st Century modern structures coexist side by side.

Varsovian identity can be articulated on two levels, that of the individual and the community. On a community level, feeling part of Warsaw means adhering to a peculiar set of values: Varsovians tend to consider themselves energetic, enterprising, ambitious and resourceful. On an individual level, identity is connected to personal interest, worldview and physical appearance. *Syrenka* tattoos combine both components – the *Syrenka* is a symbol of belonging to Warsaw's community but the personalised elements added to the design also make it a mark of self-expression. Such tattoos thereby show the historical connection that some residents feel with Warsaw but also what contemporary Warsaw represents for them. Our research thus reveals different ways to be Varsovian: tattoos embody a sense of community and a sense of self, an attachment to the city's historical memory and to its contemporary vernacular life. Referring to the previously mentioned research by Armstrong, Owen, Roberts and Koch (2002), it turns out *Syrenka* tattoos do not serve just one purpose, as we previously assumed, but two — individual motivation being equally important as social motivation. In this sense, *Syrenka* tattoos demonstrate that every resident is the creator of his or her own individual city, seen through the lenses of self-perception and personal experience.

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