

**History of Tattooing:  
The Postmodern Era meets Archaism. The Culture of „Modern Primitives“**

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The presented dissertation concerns tattooing as the main theme - its history, functions, techniques, media presentations, individual motivation and general human attitudes towards decorating (and mutilating) the body. The author, ethnology / social anthropology student Martin Rychlík (Department of Ethnology Charles University in Prague), provides a comprehensive overview of many aspects of tattooing – considered as an universal cultural custom, so far poorly mapped in the Czech republic.

Tattooing is a very complex and archaic phenomenon that has roots in the ancient Stone Age. The first direct archaeological proof was found in 1991, in Soelden near the Austro-Italian border. The mummified remains of a 5300 year-old hunter/shepherd emerged from a melting glacier and got nickname „Oetzi“. Other well known tattooed mummies are the Egyptian Middle kingdom priestess Hathor and the frozen Scythian chief from Pazyryk.

Many "primitive" tribes worldwide have adopted tattooing as a means of expression. Among the best documented are those of the Maori, Ainu, Samoans, Dayak, Tahiti islanders, Inuit, South American Indians and nomadic Siberian groups. The first so-called renaissance of tattoo is associated with Captain James Cook's overseas travels and his introduction of the word "tattoo" or "tatu" into Western languages. For a long period, tattooing was commonly perceived as a type of brand used by sailors, prostitutes, bikers or criminals. However, the last three decades have seen a second tattoo renaissance: pricking (and scarification) have undergone vital changes and have been transformed into primarily aesthetic decoration while other functions have vanished – as shown in the essential affirmation of this ethnography.

The author proposes that there exist or have existed eight main tattoo functions that can be variously and freely combined: ritualistic, aesthetic (erotic), religious (magical), medical preventive, communicative, social, hierarchical and, finally, individualistic. The work itself is divided into twenty sections, each analysing the topic in a specific context: a brief introduction, structure, proposition, commented literature and sources, general purposes of body adornment, functions, physical characteristics of skin, the oldest proofs of tattoo, history and ethnography, tattooing in the modern era, motivation of the tattooed, media analysis, tattoo in the arts, film and literature, conclusion, and full bibliography. There are also three appendices (this English summary, authors articles and DVD disk).

The methodological background of the presented thesis is grounded in the works and postmodern philosophy on corporal concepts by Michel Foucault. Anthropological studies are still influenced by cultural analysis of the body developed by US ethnographer Mary Douglas (distinguishing between pure vs. impure categories etc.) and others. Cardinal method used in this thesis is a dense and holistic case study: a monography.

Although the thesis of doctoral student Martin Rychlík, led by lecturer Oldrich Kaspar, concerns many aspects of tattooing and body modification exceeding 280 pages in length, it still raises several unanswered questions touching on history, ethnography and contemporary practice. In conclusion, by emphasizing holistic view this dissertation offers a concise and detailed introduction to this very archaic form of art – tattooing.