



# Filipino Tattoos Ancient to Modern

Lane Wilcken

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Centuries ago, tattooing was so integral to the culture of the Philippines, that the islands were originally called by the Spanish, *Las Islas de los Pintados*, or "The Islands of Painted People" due to the abundance of tattooing seen by early Spanish explorers. However, after centuries of colonization, traditional tattooing in the Philippines now stands on the precipice of cultural extinction. In an effort to preserve this beautiful aspect of the Philippines' history, the author condenses almost 2 decades of research to profoundly examine the nearly extinct remnants of this art in its proper socio-cultural and spiritual context. This includes examining historical accounts, mythology, tools, the social importance of both sexes' tattoos, identification of individual symbols and designs of Filipino tattooing, and cross-referencing them to related designs from the Pacific Islands for a broader understanding of tattooing in both the Philippines and the rest of Oceania. In addition the author discusses the modern adaptation of tattooing from the Philippines.

This is the first serious study of Filipino tattoos, and it considers early accounts from explorers and Spanish-speaking writers. The text presents Filipino cultural practices connected with ancestral and spiritual aspects of tattoo markings, and how they relate to the process and tools used to make the marks. In the Philippine Islands, tatoos were applied to men and women for many different reasons. It was considered a form of clothing. Certain designs recognized manhood and personal accomplishments as well as attractiveness, fertility, and continuity of the family or village. Facial tattoos occurred on the bravest warriors with designs that denoted particular honor. Through the fascinating text and over 200 images, including color photographs and design drawings, the deep meanings and importance of these symbols is revealed. This book will be enjoyed by both cultural scholars and tattoo enthusiasts.



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