



# The Tattoo History Source Book

By Steve Gilbert

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*The Tattoo History Source Book* is an exhaustingly thorough, lavishly illustrated collection of historical records of tattooing throughout the world, from ancient times to the present. Collected together in one place, for the first time, are texts by explorers, journalists, physicians, psychiatrists, anthropologists, scholars, novelists, criminologists, and tattoo artists.

A brief essay by Gilbert sets each chapter in an historical context. Topics covered include the first written records of tattooing by Greek and Roman authors; the dispersal of tattoo designs and techniques throughout Polynesia; the discovery of Polynesian tattooing by European explorers; Japanese tattooing; the first 19th-century European and American tattoo artists; tattooed British royalty; the invention of the tattooing machine; and tattooing in the circus.

The anthology concludes with essays by four prominent contemporary tattoo artists: Tricia Allen, Chuck Eldridge, Lyle Tuttle, and Don Ed Hardy. The references at the end of each section will provide an introduction to the extensive literature that has been inspired by the ancient-but-neglected art of tattooing. Because of its broad historical context, *The Tattoo History Source Book* will be of interest to the general reader as well as art historians, tattoo fans, neurasthenics, hebephrenics, and cyclothemics.

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## **Editorial Review**

From Library Journal

Body piercing and tattooing have seen a resurgence in America in the last decade. Sometimes referred to as an aspect of the "new tribalism," body arts harkens to practices usually associated with so-called primitive societies. Medical illustrator, writer, and part-time tattoo artist Gilbert seeks to explore the historical depth and aesthetic variations of tattoos as permanent body decoration. The text consists mostly of excerpts from the works of anthropologists, explorers, physicians, artists, and others and dates from Greek and Roman times to the present. The organization can be confusing, but Gilbert provides contextual essays for individual chapters, which are arranged primarily geographically, with the deepest coverage on Oceania, Japan, and Europe/America. The illustrations, ranging from crude line drawings to full-color photos, are perhaps the most fascinating element in the book. Unlike some books on tattooing, the images do not emphasize the salacious. While the text is not academic in tone, Gilbert supports his research with an extensive reference citation list and bibliography. Capable of entertaining and enlightening both young enthusiasts and anthropologists, this is recommended for both public and academic libraries. Eugene C. Burt, Seattle  
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