

ATOM DEFENSE REEVALUATES THE ANCIENT ART OF TATTOO

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THE POSSIBILITY of giving tattoo marks to indicate blood types and so to insure speed and safety in transfusions that might be necessitated by an atomic bomb attack was the subject of inquiry by the newspapers recently.

The exact antiquity of the practice of pricking the skin and introducing pigment is unknown. There is, however, in the Royal College of Surgeons, London, an exhibit that assures us that tattooing by puncture was practiced in Egypt about 1300 B.C. The exhibit consists of three pieces of human skin and a small clay doll taken from a Nubian cemetery in Egypt. Microscopic research showed that the lozenge-shaped marks are true tattooing, since the blue coloring is in the dermis or true skin. With the skin is a small figurine of clay that bears marks corresponding in shape to those on the human skin.

The girls of Chicago expressed many suggestions to reporters respecting the most desirable, or shall we say the least objectionable, locations for the tattoo mark. All were agreed on the need for concealment, and here they differ markedly from their primitive sisters, whose main desire is to wear facial tattoo marks for adornment and an indication of social distinction. Women of the Ainu tribe, northern Japanese islands, tattoo (or did so until recent times) elaborate moustaches. The men are naturally hairy, with well-developed beards and moustaches. Apparently the women were envious of the male adornment and wished to imitate it.

PERMANENT 'BEAUTY SPOTS'

Facial markings, usually tattooing by puncture and especially tattooing of the chin, have been widely accepted by many tribes in various parts of the world as a desirable female embellishment. In south-east New Guinea tattooing of a girl's face and body is done by easy stages over a period of several years. The completion denotes maturity and fitness for marriage, and the occasion is celebrated by a feast.

There are a few instances of hidden tattoo marks, notably those recorded by a criminologist named Lombroso. He examined inmates of jails in Italy and France and came to the conclusion that criminal gangs and members of secret societies were often the bearers of tattoo marks that were symbolic of their gangster unity. In early Colonial America and in many countries of Europe the hunting of witches was a crude pastime as well as a religious duty. Many innocent old women were executed because of their eccentricities and the physiological fact that as the teeth disappeared the nose tended to reach downward and the chin upward. Court officials searched for tangible

evidence of witchcraft, and the records state that members of a society pledged to sorcery often bore concealed tattoo marks. A tattoo picture of a toad was one of the common symbols of witchcraft. The presence of such a mark—called the devil's tattoo—was held to be undeniable evidence of guilt.

SAILORS' SENTIMENT

The writer's interest in tattooing was first aroused by observation of the tattooed designs of men of the Royal Naval Division and the Marines with whom he served in Gallipoli and France in 1914-18. The "in memoriam" design was a common one. In one instance there was a tombstone design beneath these words. On each side of the stone a sailor stood with bowed head and cap in hand. An added epitaph, all neatly tattooed, was "in loving memory of my dear mother." A few sailors carried on their forearms a record of their infidelity. The names Molly and Mary were partly deleted and the most recent conquest, Jane, was left intact.

The most elaborate tattooing, sometimes in several colors and covering the entire body, has been done by Burmese, Japanese, and natives of the Marquesas Islands (Polynesia). Many years ago the French government prohibited tattooing in the Marquesas Islands, and the Japanese government passed a similar edict.

To an anthropologist, tattooing is of interest not merely because of the intricacy and artistic merit of the designs. There is no doubt that from ancient, probably from prehistoric, times the practice had a social and psychological significance. For women the embellishment meant marriageable status. For men, marking the body was part of the tests of endurance associated with puberty rites. Tattoo marks of males have represented social distinction by birth, by prowess in war, by success in head-hunting, and in making canoe voyages.

MAORIS GO FARTHER

Among the Maori of New Zealand, who are Polynesians, a peculiar form of body marking called moko was developed. The operator chiseled grooves in the skin penetrating rather deeply into the dermis (skin under the outer layer). The instrument used was a small adze with a serrated bone edge. Into these facial and body cuts, which were usually in the form of spirals, red ochre or soot was rubbed. When the thighs were treated in this way the body appeared to be clad in a tight-fitting garment. The operation was performed by a well-paid specialist, sometimes a priest, who graded his class of work and the time taken according to the status and wealth of his patient.

During the period of tattooing, a warrior

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FUR EXHIBIT TO CONTINUE; ANIMAL PHOTO SHOW ON WAY

The special exhibit, "Stories in Hair and Fur," which opened in Stanley Field Hall on August 1, will continue on display until September 20. This demonstration of major facts about the fur industry is here on loan from the Cranbrook Institute of Science, of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. An added feature, provided by members of the Associated Fur Industries of Chicago, Inc., is a case of finished fur garments of various types. These are changed each week of the show.

Shortly after the close of the fur show, the Museum will open another special exhibit, "Animals in Action." This collection of unusual photographs of wild life is a one-man show by the noted nature

photographer Roman Vishniac of New York, whose work frequently appears in *Life* magazine. The photo show is scheduled for October 1 to 31, inclusive.



FASHION MODELS AT MUSEUM FUR SHOW

At opening of special exhibit, Sandi Wells (left), Elaine Winn, and Joyce Ann Byers ("Miss Associated Fur Industries for 1950") posed for press photographers with garments supplied by local furriers.



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