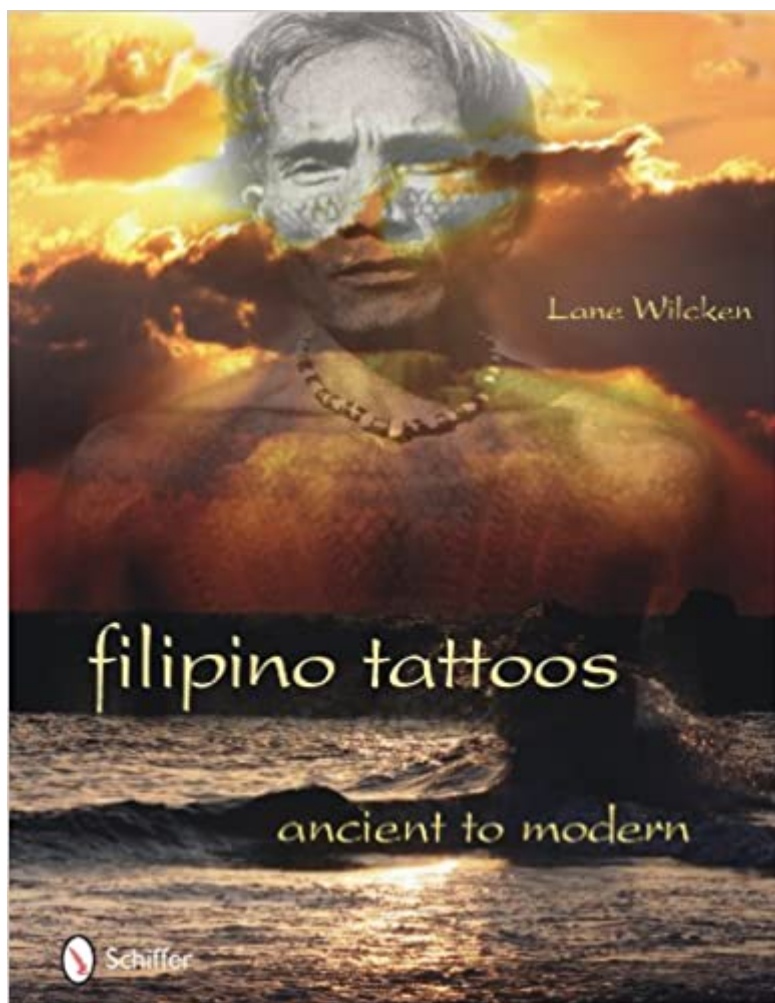


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# Filipino Tattoos Ancient To Modern



## Synopsis

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, tattoos 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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A must-have reference guide for tattooists who are intrigued by other cultures and inspired by their dramatic and meaningful tattoo art." -Bob Baxter [tattooroadtrip.com](#)"There hasn't been anything put out like this before. If your interested in getting a tribal tattoo, buy this book first. Trust me, you wont regret buying this." -Christian Cabuay, [pinoytattoos.com](#)"This is a critical intervention needed for us to fully appreciate these traditions outside of the colonial gaze and outside of the construction of "modern primitives." Filipino Tattoos: Ancient to Modern, returns us to our nobility, beauty, wisdom, and...a sense of magic." -Leny Strobel PhD, [Sonoma State University](#)

Lane Wilcken has been researching the indigenous past of the Philippines and the Pacific Islands for more than two decades, incorporating oral traditions, written history, linguistics, and personal experience. His ancestral ties to this work continue to motivate his research.

Because Christian and Muslim religions deem tattooing as pagan, thus evil, most Philippine people no longer practice this ancient art. What's worse, is that foreign religions not only turned the majority of Filipinos against the practice of tattooing, it also caused their thinking and perceptions to change so much so that Filipinos began looking down on and deeming inferior their fellow Filipinos who still practiced it. Wilcken makes it clear that this tradition is important to uphold and preserve and shares the unseen beauty of the practice. Wilcken is also specific in identifying the northern Philippine regions that still practice tattooing today and is respectful of their regions and identities. An extraordinary chapter is dedicated to the spiritual aspects of tattooing. This chapter is especially significant because it gives actual examples of different beliefs and rituals that accompany the tattoos. That chapter explains to readers that tattoo motifs were not just a practice to embellish one's physical appearance, but that each motif, pattern and symbol had a deep meaning that imbued its wearer with specific energies, powers, and protection and in that process simultaneously created lasting and sacred connection between the bearer with his/her community, fellows (Kapwa), and with nature or the Divine, during different stages or actions in their life journey (Lakaran). I think readers, especially westernized Filipinos, by reading this book, can begin to discover and realize that their ancient culture was more artistically sophisticated and

esoterically advanced then their colonizers perceived them or how they themselves were taught to perceive themselves by their colonizers. Lane Wilcken's book *Filipino Tattoos: Ancient to Modern* is a result of around two decades of research, connecting with tattoo practitioners, masters and enthusiasts, and is also a result of a lifetime of experiencing Philippine traditions directly for him self via his family. The book of *Filipino Tattoos: Ancient to Modern* may cover a significant amount of information that hasn't been published before. It isn't just a book with photos and drawings of traditional and modern tattoos. This book also has a large amount of information about the history of Philippine tattoo culture, the tools and processes of the traditional Philippine practitioners, the different traditional and modern reasons for tattooing, and more. Both the traditional and modern reasons for tattooing, that are shared in this book can give people who have Filipino tattoos (and/or otherwise) or are planning to get Filipino tattoos, cause to consider more thoughtfully, even contemplatively, what their tattoos mean for them. Even non-Filipino tattoo enthusiasts can get something out of this book. Wilcken also dedicates a whole chapter to tattooing motifs and practices that are shared among the Pacific Isles. The two forewords are written by Suluape Alaiva and Petel, a master tattoo expert who hails from the oldest tattooing family of Samoa, and by Keone Nunes, a Hawaiian master tattoo practitioner (tofuga). The work of Suluape and Nunes has perpetrated the ancient art of hand-tap tattooing today (Bob Baxter, 2010). (Side story: After this book was off to the press, Nunes and author Wilcken traveled together with friends to the Philippines to meet with the Filipino master tattoo artist Apo Wang-Od, who resides in the mountainous region of Buscalan. You can read about that trip in an email of Nunes to blogger MisterRoadTripper aka Bob Baxter, editor of [tattooroadtrip.com](http://tattooroadtrip.com). Entitled "Keone Nunes Visits Buscalan" the email relates about the trip, meeting Apo Wang-Od, and the differences and similarities between traditional Philippine and Hawaiian hand-tap tattooing. The email also talks about why it was important for Nune to meet the very old, and thus senior (yet still energetic and lively) Apo Wang-Od, who by the way, is also featured in this book). With *Filipino Tattoos: Ancient to Modern*, Wilcken balances out our perceptions of this dwindling Filipino tradition. He does a valid and truthful revelation of the beauty and meaning of Filipino tattooing. Wilcken's book uplifts the traditions of tattooing from decorative or supposed superstitious devices of so-called primitives, savages, and from the non-understood fringe movement of new tribalism. The book also enlightens tattoo enthusiasts and mere curious readers, such as myself, to the meaningfulness of the original traditions and even the practices that are persisting today. Wilcken helps the reader find the value and wisdom of ancient and modern Filipino indigenous culture and beliefs. This is an important

process that some may identify with the term “decolonization” (for both the colonized and colonizer mind frames). I want to add, that some of my babaylan designs have been taken by others and turned into tattoos on their bodies because the art had deep meaning for them. I met Lane Wilcken recently and began working with him within the Center for Babaylan Studies to research, share, teach, promote indigenous knowledge systems and practices. I know, first hand, that Wilcken has worked on and written this book with the utmost passion for his Philippine roots, and with love and respect for his family and ancestry. He writes in the true spirit of Pakikipagkapwa---Sacred Interconnection with all Life. Thank you, Lane Wilcken. Here is a summary from the Table of Contents for Filipino Tattoos: Ancient to Modern: Foreword by Suca Suluape Alaiva, a Petel Foreword by Keone Nunes Testimonial by Leo Zulueta Acknowledgements Introduction Chapter 1 - Early Accounts and Fragments of Philippine Tattoo Culture Chapter 2 - The Tattoo Process and Tools Chapter 3 - Reasons for Tattooing Chapter 4 - Facial Tattooing Chapter 5 - Spiritual Aspects of Tattooing Chapter 6 - Shared Tattooing Motifs with the Pacific Isles Chapter 7 - A Selection of Filipino Tattooing Motifs Chapter 8 - Modern Filipino Tattooing Appendix Endnotes Glossary Bibliography Index

In 2010 I flew to Cebu Philippines to pay final respects to my Grandfather and had the fortune of receiving a traditional\* tattoo. Though having talked it out in great detail start to finish over time my memory has faded some of its meaning away. Having done so I went on a pursuit to find a book perhaps at least on Polynesian tattoo symbolism when I stumbled upon this book. Not only does he break down associated meanings behind select parts, he also provides tidbit stories of its origins, who primarily used the marks, what region, what tribe, and plenty of other extremely insightful pieces of information accompanied with quality imagery. I'm completely blown away and impressed with this book and at a great price. If in the market to gain understanding of Filipino tattoo symbolism and a wealth of other hard to find information (even on the web) then this book may very well do you strong justice along your journey.

As a Filipino interested in our ancient tattoo traditions this book was an invaluable resource. Lane Wilcken has done years of scholarly and experiential research and is one of the few people I would trust on these issues. I eventually even received my first batek from him several years later. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in pre-colonial tattoo traditions within the PI and anyone seriously considering being part of the cultural reclamation of these practices.

If you're looking for a tattoo book where you can get tattoo stencils or copy tattoo designs, then this isn't the book for you. Although there are heaps of large pictures and drawings of Filipino (and neighbouring islands) tattoos, I see this book as a history book which focuses on the Philippines' pre-Hispanic period. Philippine history taught in our schools usually starts from the arrival of the Spaniards and onwards. I found it fascinating that the author was able to gather loads of pre-Hispanic material for this. When I was young, I never had the time nor the interest to go to a school library and do some research regarding Pre-Spanish Philippines. I was contented with my knowledge of Lapu-Lapu's fight as the start of Philippine history. This book is also great for tattoo artists and enthusiasts to be able to create ORIGINAL Filipino-inspired tattoo designs.

Filipino-inspired tattoos aren't just random, repetitive designs that create a "cool-looking", hypnotic and "tribal-like" pattern. Each tattoo is distinct to the bearer of the tattoo and tells us something about the person. It is for this reason that copying from the book's pictures is discouraged. Reading the text and understanding each minute design teaches us how to create our own.

This book is amazing, full of more info than I thought. Has a testimonial from Leo Zuleta in the beginning! Definitely great if you're researching the culture of Filipino tattoos, less for references. Though the writer does give a few patterns and what they mean. It's more about the culture of tattooing. As a tattooer and Filipina it's one of my favorite books. Definitely worth it!

As a researcher on the subject, tattoo designer and Sociologist myself - I found the book interesting in that it highlights the relation of Austronesian tattoo patterns, culture and languages among the peoples of the Pacific. It is always a good read for an enthusiast and would serve as a good reference for designs. I would definitely recommend having this in your private library.

Thorough on the cultural history, practice, meanings and significance of our beautiful tattooing past as it evolves into our modern day designs of the future. Covers the meaning and significance of the placement, motifs, and designs of the various regions and tribes of the PI with plenty of color printed pictures and examples to reference to. An overall great book.

Well written and quite intuitive. I was able to research and gather much information from this book in designing my own tattoo.

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