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FROM ANCIENT TATTOOS TO TATTOOING OF TODAY

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Purposeful tattooing, defined as the practice of producing a permanent indelible mark on the human body by inserting pigment under the skin using a sharp object, has probably been around since the beginning of humanity. The oldest known European mummy with tattoos dates back about 5,300 years. Similarly, tattooed mummies have been found in Siberia, Peru, Chile and Japan. Tattoos were probably used for decorative, affiliative and religious purposes as well as for therapeutic purposes. However, tattooing was prohibited in the Bible and little is known about tattooing, and was probably rare, in Christian lands during the first 1500 years A.D. The British Explorer, Captain Cook and his crew, were fascinated by the skin markings they found on the people of the South Pacific and the sailors brought back these ideas on their return to the West. Tattooed people were used for shows; tattoo shops were opened. In 1891 the electric tattoo machine was developed. Between the two world wars, tattoos became mainstream among military and working class men. Later they were used for identification purposes, usually as a sign of affiliation with a particular group or gang. In recent years, as techniques have become easier and more sophisticated, tattooing has become fashionable and increasingly common, with a prevalence of almost 40% among 26-40 year olds in the United States. Medical and cosmetic uses continue to proliferate.