

Martisch, Michael. *Tätowierung ostasiatischer Art: Zu Sozialgeschichte und handwerklicher Ausführung von gewerblichem Hautstich in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart Japans*. Mitteilungen des Instituts für Gegenwarts- und Kulturgeschichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften Nr. 19. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1978.

Wissenschaften, 1987. 76 pages. Illustrations, photographs. Paper ATS 185. ISBN 3-7001-11-98-3.

Despite its broader title, *Tätowierung ostasiatischer Art*, is an encyclopedic synopsis of the history and methods of tattooing in Japan. The first part details the existence of tattoos from early days through the Edo period to Meiji times. The coverage of tattoos as punishment benefits not only from the copious notes (as throughout the book) but particularly from the illustrations. The influence of Japanese tattooing spread to the West but mainly by raising the stature of tattooing (artistic form) and showing the advantages of a whole-body patterned coverage versus a piecemeal hodgepodge collection. (The look at Western tattooing is more a citing of names than a study. This section is brief compared to other sections of the book.)

The second part describes the process of Japanese tattooing step by step. Types of needles, the colors and materials of the pigments, ointments, and antiseptics are all listed as they appear in the process. No doubt the fact that the author made a film of a tattooer at work helped him be precise about the process itself. But there is also preciseness in the section of punishments as mentioned above (the illustrations show the actual designs used for various offenses), in the names for the general type of tattoos (i.e., how much of the body is covered and where), and in the markings used among the Ainu and the women textile workers in Okinawa.

There are very brief summaries of the text in English and in Japanese. The photographs, some in color, are well selected to illustrate the text. Even though most readers would value *Tätowierung ostasiatischer Art* as a handbook, the discussion raises interesting questions about tattooing's status in Japan, the official interpretation that connects tattoos with the yakuza, and what strikes an admiring outsider.

Originally published in 1987, *Tätowierung ostasiatischer Art* went into its third printing in 1997. In 1987 it may not have been so easy to put in the kanji for the Japanese words. However, now that the technology has progressed, in the next printing, if the kanji could be included, it would further enhance the completeness of this wonderfully succinct and informative book.

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