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TATTOOS anyone?

By Anna Vivienne

Tattooing has existed around the world for a long time. In fact this ancient and totally unique practice has been carried out since the beginning of time and body decoration is nothing new.

Tattooing has also been a Eurasian practice at least since Neolithic times. Mummies bearing tattoos and dating from the end of the second millennium BCE have been discovered in Xingjian, West China. Tattooing in Japan is thought to go back to the Palaeolithic era, some ten thousand years ago. Various other cultures have had their own tattoo traditions, ranging from rubbing cuts and other wounds with ashes, to hand-pricking the skin to insert dyes. By the way, tattoo is a mark made by inserting pigment into the skin: in technical terms, tattooing is micro-pigment implantation.

It has been used as ways to identify a group of people belong to the same fraternity, like gangsters or like the prisoners of concentration camps.

In Borneo, tattoos indicate status and most people with a tattoo in the past are warriors and chiefs. However there are women who have tattoos on their hands and back of the palm for beauty marks.

In Sabah however tattooing is not very well known except for the Muruts. They sport tribal designs on their body that

depict their status.

Interest in tattooing has somewhat died down among the locals through the passage of time. Not many people are interested in painting their bodies with permanent dye.

In this new millennium however the sons have looked up to the fathers. The people are now looking back to the past and speculating as to their 'tribal' tattoos. What did they look like, the tattoos?

Five youth from Penampang are now promoting tattooing and trying to find out how they can incorporate ancient tattoo designs with new techniques.

Adrian Chong, 24, of Jalan Shantung, Penampang has established a shop to this end, assisted by Luther Motoyo, 20 and Pip Lubasi, 23, from Mahandoi. His two other friends are Miel and Garry also in their 20's.

"I studied tattooing while I was in school. The art of tattooing has always fascinated me. To me it is an expression with the human body as the canvas," he shares.

After high school, Adrian went to Kuala Lumpur to further his study in hotel management.

"Even though I was studying an altogether different subject, I never let go of my interest in tattooing. In fact I noticed that the trend of tattooing in Kuala Lumpur is more prominent."

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