



# Spiritual Tattoo: A Cultural History of Tattooing, Piercing, Scarification, Branding, and Implants

*John Rush*

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Say "body modifications" and most people think of tattoos and piercings. They associate these mainly with the urban primitives of the 1980s to today and with primitive tribes. In fact, as this fascinating book shows, body mods have been on the scene since ancient times, traceable as far back as 1.5 million years, and they also encompass sacrifice, branding, and implants. Professor John Rush outlines the processes and procedures of these radical physical alterations, showing their function as rites of passage, group identifiers, and mechanisms of social control. He explores the use of pain for spiritual purposes, such as purging sin and guilt, and examines the phenomenon of accidental cuts and punctures as individual events with sometimes profound implications for group survival. *Spiritual Tattoo* finds a remarkable consistency in body modifications from prehistory to the present, suggesting the importance of the body as a sacred geography from both social and psychological points of view.

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