

A man wearing a golden mask with a fierce expression and a dark robe is using a traditional tattooing tool on a person's arm. The background is dark and textured.

Text by Joe Cummings  
Photography by Dan White

# SACRED TATTOOS OF THAILAND

Exploring the Magic, Masters  
and Mystery of Sak Yan

Joe Cummings

# Sacred Tattoos of Thailand: Exploring the Magic, Masters and Mystery of Sak Yan



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portraits the photographer has taken great effort to show the people and areas featured in the book in their everyday lives, producing them the story. While Thailand remains the centre of the cultural form's conservation and advancement, similar traditions can be found today in Cambodia, Laos and elements of Vietnam, China and Burma. Instead of deciding on posed "While masters range between monks to laymen, the " presented in the book come from all walks of lifestyle, from New York rock drummer Ming Roth, Singaporean deejay Chris X'Rather than sensationalize sak yan and popularize the misconception that the custom is the stuff of gangsters and bad boys, Sacred Tattoos of Thailand sheds light on the tradition'sak yan people"s spiritual roots and how it combines into a solo belief system components of Buddhism, Brahmanism and animism, all of which are underpinned by way of a strict moral and ethical code that is passed from get better at to disciple.Ho and Thai celebrity Jan Yousagoon, to nightclub bouncers, wandering monks and an officer from the Department of Special Investigations.Joe Cummings professional text message traces the development of the tradition in Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. While sak yan is certainly in decline in neighboring countries, the narrative displays how Thailand continues to be the safe harbor of the vibrant cultural type which otherwise will be vulnerable to dying out.Beyond getting the life stories of the many ajarns and their predecessors to light, the writer explores the magic and symbolism of the various tattoo traditions, including main research into the little known Lanna script from Northern Thailand.Visually, Dan White colored's reportage-style picture taking takes readers in to the salas of the sak yan ajarns, shedding light on their daily lives, the preparations and rituals that give the tattoos their power, and the deep associations which are formed between expert and disciple. The merchandise of 18 months of field research and pictures, Sacred Tattoos of Thailand brings the globe of this fascinating and commonly misrepresented tradition to light.artistic"Sacred Tattoos of Thailand: Explore the Magic, Masters and Mystery of Sak Yan is the first illustrated book in English to trace the history and origins of the Tai hand-inked tattoo tradition.



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The finest text available on the Sak Yan tradition I have been an annual visitor to Southeast Asia since 2007. My curiosity in the region was formed by a combination of factors, one of which was watching the Vietnam Battle on television while growing up in the past due 60's/early 70's. This reserve goes behind the moments describing tattoo meanings, mantras and even the best tattoo artist in Thailand to visit, if you have the money. Asia was a specialized interest then; Lonely World had yet to come along and most visitors to the region were either part of a tour group or, through the war years, US soldiers reporting for duty (and in the case of Thailand; there either on keep, doing reconnoissance function or flying on missions to Laos, Vietnam or Cambodia from one of the united states air bases after that established in the united states). A custom established in the Thailand for over a thousand years at this time, sak yan was out of favor in the conservative lifestyle of that time period and for all intents and purposes still just about underground. These tattoos possess a deeper signifying and purpose. Drawn to the visual aspects (which are certainly amazing and completely unique in the wonderful world of traditional tattooing), most of them remain ignorant of this is behind the symbolism of the tattoos themselves, the spiritual/philosophical tenets (or 'contract') that's an essential part of receiving sak yan and the cultural contexts that need to be understood if one really wants to be really knowledgable concerning this very exclusive spiritual route. Enjoyed the book very much. Along with providing a detailed and thorough historical review, enlightening interviews with many present day masters and several interesting contemporary tales from both Thai and foreigner's personal encounters with sak yan, the text also clarifies many misconceptions and details holes found in other available books about them. I'd had exposure to sak yan before my first visit to Thailand but mostly in the form of photos of monks with these strange, esoteric looking tattoos. It could make for a good story to say the least. I took it along with me, began to browse and, figuratively speaking, it immediately started getting 'under my skin'. The scope of scholarship and study in the text is normally unrivaled by any other book available in English that I've noticed about them (and I have all of them). Mr. Cummings field research, combined with his lengthy experience in your community, academic background, fluency in the principal essential languages (Thai and Lao) needed to penetrate beyond what is available to the average foreigner, have made the book a sensational and revelatory read. Sacred tattoos These tattoos possess fascinated me since I heard of them. Thai culture is normally a complex web made up of many threads, all of which appear to connect at a single (or even more) points. Sak yan is one of the fundamental underpinnings of traditional Thai lifestyle and in addition has recently begun receiving much more exposure and interest in the West. Many foreigners right now travel to Thailand in part, if not exclusively, to get sak yan (generally at the well-known Wat Bang Phra in Nakhon Pathom Province). Aided by way of a deepening interest in Buddhism I finally became a normal visitor to the area along with being truly a more active pupil of the cultures there. This is evidenced in the roots of the language system, various elements within Thai (Theravada) Buddhism and, more relevant to this review, the custom of sak yan. Whether you're interested in sak yan itself, Thai culture, Buddhism or spirituality in general and wish to penetrate deeper/increase the depth of your knowledge on any of these topics after that this book can be an absolute must have. Five Stars Great information and background behind the art of Thai Sak Yan! In the course of my travels it became apparent to me that the people of Thailand stood out as having a specific genius for assimilating components (artistic, spiritual, philosophical) of the international cultures they came into connection with and innovating, expanding and putting their very own 'stamp' on

what they learned while always maintaining their unique identity or 'Thainess'. The photography by Dan White colored is equally impressive and provides a home window of intimacy just unavailable in virtually any other text message I've seen about them. I'm not really a tattoo guy, because I know I would tire of the same design on me all of the time. I never thought an image would hold plenty of meaning to use it permanently. As a youth and as yet unaware of sak yan I continued hunting through National Geographics, articles, books, etc (the only sources of information available after that) for just about any insights I possibly could find on the region. Tapped in by monks while chanting sacred blessings empowering the tattoo. At the start of my 5th trip over in 2012 I picked up a copy of this reserve in Bangkok before going to Cambodia for twelve times or so. Although images coming through the established were generally violent (we were watching a war after all) it was clear that there was something unique about this area of the world (that is when items related to the original cultures were allowed to arrive through the war coverage).



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