PEOPLE . PLACES

TATTOOS: ENIGMA OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

2 × 52' (ENG, GER), 4 × 30' (GER)

Deep within the valleys of the Marquesas Islands endures a knowledge once thought nearly lost: patutiki, the intricate tattoos that for centuries embodied status, spirituality, and identity.

More than a hundred years ago, German explorer Karl von den Steinen recorded and preserved these sacred designs, consigning them to European archives even as they continued to live on the skin of islanders. Today, patutiki exists in two worlds: in the quiet drawers of museums and libraries, and on tattooed bodies across the globe. But who truly holds this knowledge? Caught between scientific study and oral tradition, between colonial archiving and the living practice of tattooing, the story of patutiki reveals itself as far more than art – it is a testament to memory, resilience, and cultural survival.

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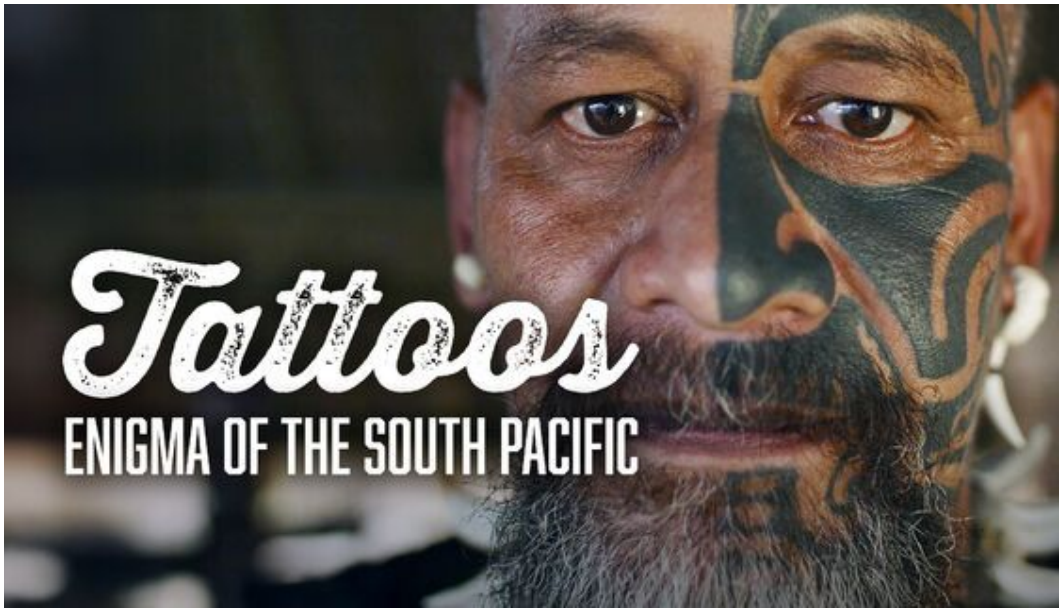

1. **The Myths**

   The Marquesas hold nearly lost knowledge: Patutiki, enigmatic tattoos that once connected identity and spirituality. A German researcher preserved their symbols in books – now their secret is being deciphered.

2. **The Power**

   Patutiki belongs to the Marquesans – and yet they share it with the world. But what does this mean in a time when cultures assert ownership? At the Matavaa Festival, the Marquesans show that their symbols are not only the past but also the future.