Ancient Greek Tanners and Tanneries. A further look into discarded matter

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In this seminar I will present the current state of my research on tanning, tanners and tanneries in ancient Greece. I will briefly explain the content of my ongoing work and its current state by giving you a brief overlook of the contents of each part of it listed below. I have chosen two themes for a closer examination at the seminar since I wish that all of us, students and scholars of ancient studies and archaeologist alike, could discuss together some principal methodological and even theoretical questions as well as more detailed archaeological dilemmas concerning the motivation, importance, and the role of such study. I will also take an opportunity to dwell a bit on the problems of identification of tanneries in archaeology in my specific contexts since as archaeologist you may have valuable and most welcome opinions on this specific issue.

Dirt, Risk and Disparaged Matter: Ancient Greek Tanners and Tanneries

Introduction
  1. Tanning, tanners and tanneries in ancient Greece: neglected and devalorised phenomenon
  2. Theorizing
     A: Tanning and tanners reflecting binary oppositions:
        Conceptual- ideological
        Cultural
        Social
        Spatial
     B: ‘Othering processes’ and tanning

Chapter I: Tanning and tanners in ancient Greek material (with comparanda)
  1. Terminology
  2. Texts and inscriptions
  3. Archaeological material
  4. Visual media
  5. Tanning procedure ‘reconstructed’

Chapter II: Attitudes and reaction to tanning and tanners
  1. Wealthy Athenian tanners as mocked ‘nouveau riche’: Cleon, Anytus, Nicias and the political discourse
  2. Stinking tanners: slaves, outsiders, foreigners
  3. Disgusting tanneries: Tanneries have to be situated at safe distance from city centres
  4. Simon the Tanner as reflection of ancient attitudes to tanning and its effect
Chapter III: Tanning and (ritual) impurity
  1. Origin of hides and skins in ritual realm: Tanning material as ‘sacred waste’
  2. ‘Sandals made of leather from a sacrificial victim’: dichotomy of pure and impure in tanning material
  3. Tanners, tanneries and miasma
  4. Tanners and scapegoating

Chapter IV: Tanning and risk
  1. Tanning as toxic production in ancient Greece and today
  2. Risk management and tanning: Comparing ancient Greece and modern situation
  3. Practical and symbolic risk:
     Coping with danger and risk of tanning in antiquity
     Coping with risk in modern tanning
  4. Still ‘Othered’: What can we learn?

Conclusions
Historiography: Why has tanning been lowly regarded in antiquity and in modern scholarship?

Bibliography
Appendices

Parts for more detailed discussion at the seminar are:
Introduction 2 B ‘Othering processes’ and tanning and Chapter IV: Tanning and risk

At the seminar I will raise the following questions, although you are welcome to comment on any part of the above list of contents:

- Why have tanning and tanners been lowly regarded both in antiquity and in modern scholarship as a subject of study?
- How can we pinpoint ‘othering processes’ in the case of tanning and tanners (if any) in antiquity?
- Why and on which principles is it possible to research ancient tanning and tanneries with regard to the modern phenomenon of tanning?
- Could some of the ancient Greek remains associated with dyeing and fulling by which textile products are bleached and thereby impurities from the fibres are removed may have served (also) tanning purposes?

I look forward to seeing you at the seminar