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Unreviewed Mixed Matters Article:

# Book Review: Natural Leather Tanning by Markus Klek

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**Author(s):** Doug Meyer [1]

[1] Independent researcher, 1001 Sprucewood St, Kannapolis, North Carolina 28081, USA.

Writing a book on a primitive technology in today's fast-paced society, fueled by the internet and instant gratification by observing a skill through video, is a risky endeavor. Adding to this risk is the fact that there are many books about brain tanning already on the market. Two of these are classics of the two most common methods; Jim Riggs, "Blue Mountain Buckskin" (dry –scrape method) and Matt Richards, "Deerskins into Buckskins" (wet- scrape method), which are regarded by most as recommended reading for a hide tanning course. Despite these risks, Markus Klek rose to the challenge and wrote an excellent book about leather tanning.

> Anyone can tan a hide; but Markus went the extra distance by sewing clothes and using this clothing in winter survival conditions while travelling.

Markus Klek's *Natural Leather Tanning* is a complete book about tanning. Markus starts out with the history of tanning and then moves on to procuring hides, preserving them before tanning, tanning methods for hides, pelts and furs, and ends with sewing and patterns for making items out of your finished leather.  This unique method of presentation makes the book a must-have.

This book is a culmination of Markus's life's work, which started with a self-published book that he wrote in his native German because there was no detailed information about traditional tanning in his language. In 2019, Markus was approached by an Austrian publisher to write an extended version of his original book. The Austrian publisher then decided to launch an English version with Schiffer Publications in the United States.  I am always happy with books by Schiffer because they produce well-made books in both hardcover and softcover. Natural Tanning Method's layout is visually pleasing and the colour photos are all great, capturing exactly what Markus wants to show. I like that the book is in hardcover and designed to last and is also affordable to everyone's budget.

What is obvious from this book is that Markus is a master tanner, who studied in America with many master tanners for nine years, to hone and perfect his skill. Recently, Markus traveled in the snow-covered mountains of Germany, wearing leather clothes that he made himself and carrying primitive gear that he also made. Anyone can tan a hide; but Markus went the extra distance by sewing clothes and using this clothing in winter survival conditions while travelling. Markus' mastery of tanning, sewing and understanding leather was put to the test, and he passed the test easily.

The big thing with any skills book is: can I take the information from this book and actually acquire the skill represented? As a person who has tanned hundreds of hides himself, I will tell you that Markus' method is usable and solid. I learned so much from his new and fresh approach to this subject. His Otzi hat pattern alone is worth the price of the book!

*Natural Leather Tanning* is destined to become one of the classics in everyone's brain tanning libraries. It reads quickly, but is set up so you can easily find what you need to review before you perform each stage of the process. A really great read on this subject, that beginners and experts in this field will both enjoy.

## Book information:

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## Corresponding Author

**Doug Meyer**
Independent researcher
1001 Sprucewood St
Kannapolis
North Carolina 28081
USA
E-mail Contact