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# Anthropology Book Forum

Open Access Book Reviews

## **We Think With Animals, and Thereby We Are Human**

**Review by Melinda Reidinger**

*Animals and Inequality in the Ancient World*

by Benjamin S. Arbuckle & Sue Ann McCarty (eds)

University Press of Colorado, 2015

As soon as I learned about the publication of *Animals and Inequality in the Ancient World*, I was eager to acquire a copy because of my own interests in the historical uses of animals and in food studies. We've all heard the maxim about animals being good to think with, but what thoughts will the social zooarchaeologists who contributed to *Animals and Inequality* give us to chew on? The volume contains seventeen chapters plus an introduction by the editors, so I will serve up a few samples here to whet your appetite.

The emerging subfield of social zooarchaeology seeks to answer old questions that we still ask today about human and animal relations, negotiation of unequal status, and even about the ontological nature of “animalness”—all in the past tense. The authors of the present volume take these questions around the globe and back to various depths of time to visit cultures ranging from the ancient Shang, the Romanized provinces of the Mediterranean, Anatolia, Benin, Mississippian and Mesoamerican cultures, and more. Since many of the more popular works to emerge in the last few years on animal domestication have been written by geneticists or medical researchers, these essays aim to bring a sense of historical depth to understandings of the transformations of the relationships between humans and myriad other creatures, many of which were never domesticated and therefore escaped analysis in the popular studies. As they trace out different people's relationships with other species, the archaeologists also explore the ways in which our relationships with animals have marked different statuses within human social groups. Many of the essays in this volume pick up upon and further the pioneering work

of Ian Hodder, *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things* (2012) who explored categories and contingencies of artifacts, and Tim Ingold who suggested that we “listen to what non-Western peoples (and indeed certain Western philosophers critical of mainstream thought) are telling us, we can begin to grasp a quite different view of life: not as the revelation of pre-specified forms but as the process in which forms are generated. Every living being, as it is caught up in this process and carries it forward, arises as a undivided centre of awareness and agency –an enfoldment, at some particular nexus, of the generative potential of a total field of relations ...In other words, the use of metaphor should be understood as a way of drawing attention to real relational unities rather than of figuratively papering over dualities” (1988, xxiv).

Since well-preserved animal remains can often be found in abundance at archaeological sites, this volume’s editors Benjamin S. Arbuckle and Sue Ann McCarty note their usefulness for interpretive work in their introduction: “the materiality of animals can effectively be used as repositories for, and to express, a wide range of social information.” As per the title, the information mainly referenced here is of social status: how it was acquired, maintained, or lost through access to living or dead animals, or their parts or services (such as traction, or sport, as was the case with falcons). Roderick Campbell, who studied the ancient Shang culture of China, notes that both “animals” and “inequality” are “intertwined systems of classification” (251), which means that we have to view them in multiple, and nuanced ways. “It is no longer good enough to describe animals solely in terms of calorie content; now we must also consider how people used animals to negotiate status and power, frame memories of themselves, and reference their position in social landscapes.

Such renderings add a needful dynamic element to landscape studies, where animals are seen as active elements in shaping human action” (Norman: 311). Inequality may have been traditionally characterized as difference in rank or dignity, or nowadays as differential access to important resources, but Michael MacKinnon reminds us that although inequalities “permeate myriad components of culture,” “upon closer inspection one realizes such imbalances themselves may span multiple components. Who or what has more, and why? Who or what ranks higher, and why? Who or what is privileged or special, and why?” (MacKinnon: 315). Here is where we want to take a look at animals to help tease out the differences, because, “most cultures distinguish whole ranges of agency, animacy, and potency: from the inanimate, the insect, and the beast through to the sage, the immortal, and the god. The common, organizing intermediary of these categorizations and point of reference is, of course, humanity.

Moreover, “humanity is generally not so much a point in this spectrum of being as an attenuated and contingent range. The demarcation between god, human, and animal is blurry, shifting, and shaped by local ontologies of order” (Campbell: 251-2). Zooarchaeology, thus “provides one lens through which inequalities of wealth or status may be visible materially, yet this ideally forms part of a strategy involving analysis of multiple material categories and techniques...The conjunctive approach ideally correlates household-associated faunal assemblages with other indicators of status or wealth to more convincingly infer inequalities...The multiple, independent lines of evidence that build such arguments may include faunal remains, botanicals, other artifacts, use of space, architecture, bioarchaeological data, and documentary history” (Sunseri: 167).



*What's in the pie?*

Clearly, this volume is intended for archaeologists (particularly faunal analysts) and their advanced students, and to a lesser extent for anthropologists and historians who work on some of the particular topics or cultures covered, or on animals or inequality in broader ways. Yet, I feel that there is much here that other readers can draw from as well. The volume's authors collected and interpreted their faunal data using approaches that are standard within the field today, but they did not select any methods that were experimental, because that was not its *raison d'être*. I am not going to pretend for the purposes of this review that I know my way around an archaeology lab, but it didn't matter because the authors do not exclude non-experts from the circle of knowledge. In fact, one of the aspects of all of the essays that I found particularly appealing was the deft manner in which comments and embedded definitions that seem like “asides“ draw even non-specialists into the conversation. Some particular examples that come to mind relate to differences among animal fibers such as wool, hair, and kemp, the old huntsman's definition of “excoriation,” the “corbyn bone,” the original contents of a “humble pie,” and the frequent inclusion of common English names for animals next to their Latin ones.

*“What is an Animal?”* was the deceptively complex question asked by Ingold’s eponymous 1988 volume, which seems to have inspired a number of the present volume’s authors . The question defies us to take it seriously, because it seems to submit to a simple us/them definition for an answer. However, this is just exploiting the privilege of an uninterrogated querier to make a definition of others by assuming their exclusion, so, to turn that back around: what is it about animals that makes us human? Can we channel Descartes through Lévi-Strauss and say “I think with animals, therefore, or rather thereby, I am human?”

If there isn’t an answer that fits all humans and all animals at all times, how do some groups or individuals become (socially) more or less human than others? And can we draw scales from some absolute form of animality (or other non-human quality) through partly, fully and more-than human beings, such as gods/spirits/ancestors? How will these scales look in cross-cultural comparison? And within a particular one, how does one come to occupy one of these positions within complex networks or hierarchies of beings?

As one answer, Sugiyama et al. provide an Ojibwa concept of personhood, defined by agency and capacity for metamorphosis through establishing interpersonal relationships, which seems to extend beyond humans and animals to also encompass plants and other natural objects (13). This involves an intricate dance with the productivity of the landscapes they can either access themselves, or through their political or other ties. “Through granting personhood to animate and inanimate beings, Amerindian societies perceive that as humans move through an empirical natural environment they are also moving through a cultural landscape that becomes the setting for developing meaningful relationships with their surroundings” (Saunders 1991:109). Thus, in this case, the animal and human are “constructed”—created by a culture-specific system of classification and etymology based on repeated relationships that are negotiated personally and/or collectively with the ‘other-than-human persons’ (Hallowell 2002; Ulloa 2002)” (ibid).

When ethnozoology creates hierarchies of animals, such as the one uncovered in the burial offerings found in the Mexican Basin city of Teotihuacan (Classic period), the domestication and management of the powerful beasts styled as “masters of animals,” such as jaguars, eagles (the “jaguars of the sky”), wolves, and pumas, put those who made the creatures submit to their power at an analogous vertical distance above those they ruled to the predators’ distance from their prey. Animals that were captured, kept within the city, and then ultimately sacrificed by ruling elites served as metaphors for or

exemplified state power and leaders' personal charisma and helped those who wielded them to incorporate cosmological qualities into their performances.

“It is obvious that the species that the Teotihuacanos picked for state-level rituals were determined by the widely established symbolism of the most ferocious carnivores present in the landscape. These were empowered animals, beasts that gained a fundamental role in state societies through their ecological and biological characteristics, their interaction with humans, and their status as top-level carnivores within the natural hierarchy” (Sugiyama et al.: 26).

Animals also had a part to play in constructing mental maps and cosmologies of empire. As in the above case, the temple in Tenochtitlan also held buried remains of species that were not considered comestible, but were imbued with symbolic values. This time, however, there was a geographical breadth to their selection that emphasized the conquests and political or economic ties thus established as well as resources that were available through tribute and trade to the rulers of an empire that reached out to both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, spanning a vast array of ecosystems in between.

“The use of fauna in offerings to recreate[s] vertical tiers of the universe and configure[s] veritable cosmograms...Thus, coral, clams, and snails symbolized the aquatic underworld; felines, turtles, and sawfish, the surface of the earth; and eagles, herons, and hummingbirds, the skies above” (Luján et al.: 36). The taxa identified had lived in nine different environments including coastal seas, reefs, estuaries, freshwater environments, grasslands/pine-oak forests, hillsides and prairies, temperate and tropical forests, temperate and arid mountains, and deserts” (ibid: 44). Some of these creatures were distinguished by unusual features such as strangely-shaped bodies, long spines, sharp teeth, or unusual colors (ibid: 36). In the authors' opinion, the Mexica priests who buried these faunal assemblages “endeavored to express, through ritual language, a typical ‘definition by extension’—that is, a definition that expressed the whole by enumerating each one of its parts (ibid: 53).

But it was not only the bearers of state power who used animals to characterize their status. As H. Edwin Jackson discovered, “Ethnohistoric and ethnographic accounts indicate the importance of animals as representatives of different parts of the earthly and cosmic realms of [prehistoric Mississippian] Indian conceptualizations of the universe. These associations were often inferred from particular characteristics of certain taxa; simultaneously, as determined by the realms they represented, the associations conferred supernatural qualities on the elite social stratum...There were likely to have been multiple dimensions on which these qualities were measured: pure–polluted, order–disorder,

weak–strong, and harmless–dangerous, for example” (Jackson: 113). Here, researchers discovered there were subtle differences to be teased out in the frequency of particular cuts of meat, the scale of feasting, access to prestigious craft items made from non-food animals, or sometimes the presence of remains of an animal, such as a squirrel, that was known to represent diplomatic office in later societies that arose in the region surveyed.

Animals could be also be used to fit into more abstract cosmological schemata, as exemplified in Abigail Holeman’s study on the use of red and green feathers from non-indigenous scarlet and military macaws in Northern Mexico. The use of color/directional symbolism, sometimes associated with birds, animals, stones, shells, clans, deities, seasons, etc. is well known across the Pueblo lands of the American Southwest all the way down to southern Mesoamerica, with local variations in the correspondences. The parrots’ brilliant plumage therefore participated in a structuring principle that governed many areas of life and granted access to arcane powers to those who wielded the most powerful color-bearing objects.

She writes: “Along with others, I argue the power to create and maintain a hierarchical position lay in the ability to control and mobilize ritual knowledge...or as Whiteley put it in reference to the Hopi, ‘secret ritual knowledge serves as the. . .”currency” of power. . .[and] both configures the structuring of hierarchy and provides the idiom of political action.’ To be effective, this ritual knowledge must be displayed in highly controlled contexts; in other words, it must be displayed in rituals” (130). In the case of the items crafted with the parrot feathers in Paquimé, they must be understood within the context of

“repeated associations of red and green across different media, suggesting the scarlet macaw was folded into a local system of meaning. These items may have taken on significance mainly in reference to each other, or the red and green in combination. This suggests that red and green were part of a ritual complex that bestowed rank on those who were able to use these symbols and display their knowledge in rituals associated with both human and avian mortuary practices. The limited distribution of both the birds and the ceramic hand drum suggest that access to these items was restricted...There was clearly a limited group of people allowed to mobilize the red and green colors together, and therefore a limited number of people who could demonstrate their ritual knowledge in this particular way by linking themselves to the deities and/or powers associated with these colors” (139-140).

Lest it seem that animals can only be passively manipulated by humans beings into symbolizing their position vis-à-vis others of their kind, the study by Neil L. Norman entitled “Pythons, Pigs, and Political Process in the Hueda Kingdom, Benin, West Africa AD 1650–1727” discusses the roles played by pythons in “multiple scales” (Oof! That was a bad one!) and locations within the historical kingdom of Hueda. His contribution “builds on attempts to expand the theorization of socialized landscapes beyond built places and the unbuilt spaces connecting them, to include the numerous animate, nonhuman things that did memory work, actively framed social relations, and served as mediums for configuring and reconfiguring identity. In short, the chapter argues that pythons were part of the materiality of the Huedan social world and thus builds on this volume’s focus on writing animals into human landscapes to arrive at a more complete rendering of past social landscapes” (p. 297).

As part of both the human and natural landscapes (ibid: 305), pythons shaped relationships between people, their cosmos, and their domestic spaces:

Huedans today associate ditches with pythons, because ditches contain aesthetic elements associated with the constrictors. These shadowy and dank spaces are ideal for python habitation; they provide the cool and moist temperature that protects a python’s skin, and the vermin that provide a large portion of their diet. When viewed from the surface, the ditches trace a sinuous pattern on the landscape and shape movement away from their voids in undulating patterns. Such shapes and patterns are also associated with the movement of pythons, as are strips of white cloth flapping in the breeze and a cord or string placed on the ground. The logic is clear: ditches that evoke the aesthetic elements associated with pythons and that restrict practitioners’ movements are potent landscape features aimed at protecting the family, or families, living in interiors of house compounds from uncertainty located on the outside (Norman and Kelly 2004; p. 306).

Beyond protecting and delineating the Huedan household compound, the snakes also served as senior or tutelary deities, and were sometimes also used to lend grandeur to massive affairs of state, such as an annual parade by the king and his retinue to their temple, thus bringing something of the wild into cultural spaces.

H. Edwin Jackson describes a general rule for elite control of animals and their gifts to humankind: “In societies with centralized economies, autocratic rulers and/or other elites also often had control of the rearing of domesticated animals, and were able to ‘divert livestock resources as needed to support the goals of state, as well as control access to animal products in a manner that ensured that the social and

political order was reflected by patterns of consumption” (p. 107). However, when animals are neither wild (such as the pythons), nor primarily slaughtered for meat or for materials for craft products – because their consumption may be uneconomical – it can be useful to examine variable access to secondary animal products.



*“Mechanisms of communication in an ancient empire: the correspondence between the king of Assyria and his magnates in the 8th century BC” – Assyrian empire builders (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sargon/>)*

Close examination of faunal remains can help disentangle the webs of interrelationship between groups who have interwoven yet distinct roles in a society, as Levent Atisi manages in his “Tracing Inequality from Assur to Kultepe/Kanesh: Merchants, Donkeys and Clay Tablets.” He writes: “systems of animal management and exploitation played a central role in establishing and maintaining systems of inequality at Kanesh during the MBA.” In an area where ethnicity seemed to be a fluid concept lacking fixed markers, “asymmetrical access” to animals that could be ridden, driven before a plough, used to carry packs, or sheared for wool not only shored up an individual’s or a household’s position by providing immediate services and a form of economic surpluses and heritable wealth, but, could even (in the case of wool, anyway) on a larger scale “protect the trade network” and “legitimize the local political agendas,” which were based upon keeping the social roles disparate (p. 243).

Now that we’ve seen the uses to which animals-as-things can be directed, Roderick Campbell helpfully re-complicates the question of how these things come to be by opening up his brilliant essay “Animal, Human, God: Pathways of Shang Animality and Divinity” with the etymology of the concept of the “thing”.<sup>1</sup> He colors between the “lines” traced out by Tim Ingold (2007) by stating that “the nature of things is not bounded and atomistic, but rather collective and interconnected. Second, in seeing people in the same terms he implies at least potential equivalence. Third, by conceiving both people and things



as tied-together paths of growth and movement, he asks us to consider the dimension of time and the potential for transformation” (p. 251).

In this study, the positioning of human beings takes place within the context of their shifting identification with polarized qualities like wild/tame or male/female. A given human being may be positioned closer to gods and deified ancestors or to livestock than to other humans occupying the middle ground – but each individual is a moving target. Displacement from one position on the scales of honor, value and service to another would take place after particular types of actions had been performed upon one, or fate had taken a decisive course.

War, in particular, was capable of wreaking such changes, for it “combined the divine, the human, the animal, and the material in a crucible of violence that dialectically transformed both the defeated and the victors, captives, and captors. Meeting as equals on the field of battle, the captured losers would be reduced to something less than human, the capturing victors elevated to something more” (p. 256). Besides war, hunting was another deeply consequential activity that, “along with sacrifice and divination, formed a suite of kingly ordering practices aimed at the domestication of the enemy, the wild, the dead, and the numinous” (p. 252).

If each person’s status is liable to change, humanity, Campbell tells us (as I already cited above, but repeated here for emphasis), “is generally not so much a point in this spectrum of being as an attenuated and contingent range. The demarcation between god, human, and animal is blurry, shifting, and shaped by local ontologies of order,” or, to put a finer point on it, distinctions are graded by legible acts of ordering (as above, though those are not the only ones). Along this scale, “animal” becomes a relational term of being and agency rather than a “fixed category of bounded things”. He suggests following Ingold’s (2008) lead and viewing animals, therefore, as “shifting nodes of interconnected properties and relationships” (p. 252), which allows us to trace out the unique life stories of individuals. The genius of this chapter, which I have to admit was my favorite in the whole collection, was the way that following these movements generated laconic biographies. Portraits like the one below, of a sacrificed warrior, provide excellent illustration for the author’s primary argument about the fluidity of these categories: “...from child to kinsman, to respected warrior, to nameless captive, to animalized sacrificial livestock, to symbolically destroyed body, to ritual deposit and animating force. This pathway of *ren* [person] crosses that of other categories of offering at the locus of elite sacrifice such as *niu* (cattle), *shi* (pig), *chuan* (dog), or *yang* (sheep/goat) but diverges from most of them thereafter,

terminating as ritual deposit rather than passing through the kitchen and the meal to the midden, or the workshop to a new life as a bone artifact” (p. 254).



*Human/animal relationships can be enigmatic.*

If you're still reading this review, you may have worked up an appetite by now. The *Anthropological Book Forum* is not yet interactive enough to dispense snacks, but we can open up a discussion of food and you can go get your own. Arjun Appadurai's (1981) concept of "gastro-politics," or using food to create and reinforce competitive social advantage, as the editors parse it, is nothing new. ("The history of the world, my sweet, is who gets eaten and who gets to eat" – Sweeney Todd.) Yet, while this may be a commonly entertained understanding, new examples can always be found that challenge our ideas about who had access to what sort of victuals, how they were distributed, or – even more specifically – what various parts or cuts of meat may have meant to those who parceled them out and consumed them (or perhaps craftily re-sold or redistributed them through unofficial channels.)

As Susan deFrance illustrated with findings from the Wari site of Cerro Baul, Southern Peru, sometimes elite status is indicated by a "luxury of variety" in both food and nonfood animals. "The ability to acquire a variety of animals reflects elite control of trade networks, the means to transport food items from distant lands, and the ability to order specialists to acquire local wild animals through hunting or other capture methods...A variety of fauna may also signify gifts or offerings that are brought by supplicants or individuals invited from the hinterland to the regional capital. A diverse range of foods circumscribed in their spatial distribution may indicate that elites created a class of luxury foods and restricted the intake of these foods to enforce their social standing" (p. 63). Where people are able to hunt, fish, or gather animal sources of protein outside of organized networks of husbandry, the elite's share of the butchery may be defined more by relative abundance, or the cuts of meat they consumed. Or, perhaps, by their ability to hold larger-scale feasts than others (See Watson: 146 for

discussion of Hayden's typology of distinctive and solidarity-type feasts), or access to more luxurious ritual or craft goods.

On the other hand, there have been places where a more monotonous diet could indicate elite status. Such was the case with pork in the Roman Empire/Romanized provinces, where the elite associations for pork-rich diets developed through elite identity labeling and military dietary influence. "Both of the key social groups (elites and the military), it appears, regularly promoted the consumption of pork, where viable, as a means to display inequality. They wished to be viewed as special and privileged in this respect, and pork consumption helped characterize this inequality" (pp. 329-330).

As a general principle, "elite control over animal-based commodity production" has been viewed as "one of the primary factors that fueled the rise of complex societies in multiple regions of the Old World" (Arbuckle and McCarty: 6). But do the elite always enforce their will? And is their will always to further expand the disparity between their own position and others'? When can we observe pushback from below, or attempts by elites themselves to rein in their own powers? The essay by Joshua Wright about the Mongolian structures called *khirigsuur*, and the one by Naomi Sykes on venison consumption patterns in Roman Britain speak of sacrifice and monumental architecture that undermines social inequality and of fellowships of poachers and smugglers.

Turning first to Mongolia, the dominant landmarks provide an interesting case study in the institutions that helped knit societies together in the steppes of Inner Asia, where nomadic pastoralists tended to leave behind public monuments rather than domestic structures. The author argues that these building projects "discourage inequality by commemorating events of social cohesion...the largest monuments are not monuments to hierarchy but are instead demonstrations of community solidarity and leveling mechanisms in a Bronze Age society in which models of social order were being negotiated by early nomadic pastoralists" (Wright: 275). In the Mongolian human ecology, each family was equally reliant upon horses for food, travel, traction and some other secondary products such as milk and bone. While the animals were certainly repositories of value and personal wealth, they were also "common, quotidian tools" (ibid: 283) to which everyone had access, for the nomadic lifestyle required it, and she suggests that the monuments, although they contained the bones of sacrificed animals, nonetheless signified living horses (p. 277) in a permanent way.

Ritual centers where horses were "consumed" (in sacrifice) therefore performed, in a sense, the same

action as each herder when he culled his own. Such acts were constitutive of a common cosmology and reflected a mortuary order which was not centered on hierarchy but “on the affirmation of common experience in a mobile world in which humans and animals interact within a landscape made up of subsistence resources and monumental structures” (ibid: 283). “[T]he answer to the question of ‘who caused the horses to be sacrificed at these monuments’ is that those who gathered there did. They did so not by the command of one person, living or dead, but by the will of the group” (ibid: 286).

Furthermore, the *khirigsuur* [stone mounds with outlying structures; all of which contained the remains of horses] were not formally much different from funerary monuments for wealthy, charismatic leaders, though the latter would typically contain few equid remains (ibid); so if this can be styled a “popular” type of architecture, it was not set apart from an elite type.

“The Rhetoric of Meat Apportionment: Evidence for Exclusion, Inclusion, and Social Position in Medieval England” by Naomi Sykes focuses on the procurement, portioning, and distribution of venison. She reminds us that “as animal carcasses are, by nature, hierarchical, the giving and receiving of meat often plays an important sociopolitical role, with cuts of different (perceived) quality being given to individuals as a meaty symbol of their age, gender, wealth, or power...Exclusion from such performances can be equally expressive, communicating separation and social difference” (p. 356).

For her analysis, she uses animal bones as a primary material since there is little textual evidence for the foodways of the time, then she turns to knives, including the renowned seax, and ceremonial drinking vessels which first served as practical, then mainly symbolic tools. She describes a complex interlocking of estates and duties revolving around exchanges of foodstuffs:

the period’s economy was based on the accumulation and redistribution of food, whereby landholders were paid in kind for the use of their land, with portions of these food rents given over to support kings and their court as they toured their kingdoms. Kings could, in turn, transfer accrued provisions to religious institutions that, unlike the itinerant royal court, were stationary and depended on supplies gravitating toward them. Lower down the social scale, estate workers could expect to receive food payments in return for their services...The skeletal distribution for religious houses suggests that ecclesiastics were taking receipt of pre-butchered joints of venison and possibly skins (indicated by the high representation of feet), and it is feasible that these were gifted by the king or local nobles in return for pastoral care. The overrepresentation of heads on elite sites finds resonance

with the practices of modern hunting and pastoral societies. (p. 360)

In this society, to maintain one's position against other comers was akin to a zero-sum game. When others could gain the same privileges, then one's own position had to be slipping. "[F]or the thegns it was not enough simply to hunt more often; in order to maintain their social position they had to stop the lower classes from doing likewise. So, whereas it had previously been accepted that wild animals were *res nullius* (property of no one), the Late Anglo-Saxon elite established private game reserves and other restrictions that curbed the rights of peasants to take and consume wild animals " (p. 362). That is not to say, though, that peasants did not participate in hunting, but they would be hired as beaters and drivers. "Together with the overall reduction in game representation seen for lower-status settlements, this hints that the peasants were being excluded from hunting culture and presumably also the halls where venison was divided and consumed" (ibid). By the Late Anglo-Saxon period, everyone knew their place and their duties well: they had by that time already been laid out formally within charters and documents such as the *Rectitudines Singularum Personarum* (p. 365). Therefore, there was no more need to swagger with ostentations carving and serving implements.

While cultural debates rage on the effects of inequality in the societies we live in, they seem to take on the character of polarity: that this much inequality is too much, or that much is still tolerable, or a range is identified that might be pushed wider or squeezed back together. These debates are generally constructive for us and will, of course, continue. However, part of the message conveyed by the end of this collection is that inequality can also be a creative and constitutive force within a society. "Inequality should not always be associated with social division because, although it is clear that venison was being used to define social position, its communal consumption must simultaneously have served to create community" (Sykes: 368). It seems clear that inequality should not always be viewed in negative terms because, in many respects, community does not exist without it – even in the least hierarchical societies there is internal ranking" (p. 370). While such examples are far from abundant, it is instructive to observe where people seem to have been brought together in juicy, creative, and beneficial ways, and where, on the other hand, divisions have fomented trouble.

In conclusion, I heartily recommend this volume to anyone who would like to read interesting and unusual case studies that have been unpacked by archaeologists from various corners of the globe and strata of human history. Those who study human-animal-environmental relationships or who are interested in acquiring a new lens through which to view social inequality will find it well worth their time and it will open up new challenges for their own research projects.

## Note

1. Here is an even more detailed etymology, which has been painstakingly crafted from six different reference works: "it is possible to trace back the origin of the substantive *thing* to the Indo-European root *\*ten-*, which had a main acceptance of "to extend (in space or in time)". Originally, this Indo-European root denoted the idea of a "meeting at a fixed time", which could certainly explain the development of the meanings "affairs", "things", and "thing" during the evolution of the substantive. The substantive *thing* is related to the Gothic *þeihs* ("time, assembly taking place at a fixed time") through this Indo-European root. The Indo-European root then generated the Proto-Germanic root *\*thenzán*, from which the substantive *thing* originates in Old English. Through its Proto-Germanic root, the substantive *thing* is related to the following words: *thing* ("assembly, action, matter, thing") in Old Frisian, *thing* ("assembly, action, matter, thing") in Old Saxon, *thing* in Old Dutch, *dinc* ("law suit, matter, thing") in Middle Dutch, which became *ding* ("thing") in Modern Dutch, and *ding*, *dinc* or *thing* ("assembly, law suit, thing") in Old German, which then became *dinc* ("assembly") in Middle High German, and then *ding* ("matter, affairs, thing") in Modern German..."Which brings us to our modern English concept of a "thing," which, of course, is deeply entangled with many forms of law, decisions by assemblies of important persons, and trajectories through time and space. If you are still reading this, the nerd in me salutes the nerd in you. Source: <http://www.dualjuridik.org/uk/Etymology/thing.htm>

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