INTRODUCTION

Although the term \textit{inequality} may appear, at one level, rather straightforward (e.g., some imbalance within a concept or category), 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? In essence, inequalities permeate myriad components of culture, whether or not humans acknowledge, institutionalize, or otherwise mark these aspects. Although inequalities exist even among egalitarian societies, they are arguably more pervasive in complex societies, where the span between ends measured on this scale of imbalance is often rather substantial. Among complex cultures, the ancient Greeks and Romans display abundant criteria for inequality (e.g., rulers and slaves, masters and servants, rich and poor, native and newcomer, Roman and non-Roman, etc.) (Potter 2004). Animals yield data about a variety of these facets. They may be considered property, yielding information about economic and social inequality (Barth 1969; Dahl and Hjort 1976). Many are consumed, providing data about dietary inequality. Animal types differ temporally and geographically, aspects that in turn are manipulated by human agency, itself a concept heavily influenced by social and economic inequality. Herding, consuming, producing, and even caring for and thinking about animals are all components whose actions and results may be shaped by inequalities (Ingold 2008).

Complex cultures, such as the ancient Romans, contain many examples to investigate in regards to animals and inequalities. These span a variety of dimensions:
from site to region; from individual to community; from tangible commodity to intangible idea or concept. Explanations of these phenomena are also diversified. One prominent concept used in assessing Roman cultural inequalities and societal identities is romanization. Although romanization might imply acculturation, variously expressed in multiple aspects—material, cognitive, behavioral—it is controversial. Some have argued that romanization “civilized” barbarians (Brunt 1976; Haverfield 1923). Others see it as an elite-driven mechanism to exert control (Millett 1990; Woolf 1998). Still others concentrate on reciprocal exchanges between “Romans” and “Natives” (Mattingly 1997). More recently, arguments incorporating “creolization” or cultural blending have been employed (Webster 2001), as have explanations focusing on identity, such as structuration theory (Mattingly 2010).

Romanization, inequality, and animals are all interconnected. The ties among these are explored here, under the following aspects: (1) the connection of pork to Roman cultural identities, and the impact this had upon animal-husbandry regimes; (2) cases for persistence in dietary and/or husbandry schemes, despite romanized contact, presence, or control; (3) butchery and marketing changes that resulted from greater urbanization in many of the areas of the empire; (4) Roman improvements to animal breeds, and the spread and trade of new varieties; and finally (5) pets and inequalities.

**PORK AND ROMAN CULTURAL IDENTITY**

The pig (Sus scrofa) formed a prominent component of the meat diet of Roman Italy, especially, and embodies a defining aspect of Roman identity (MacKinnon 2001). As the empire expanded, provinces emulated components of Roman Italy. Increased pork consumption, therefore, often typically coincides with romanization, which in turn frequently underlies patterns of inequality: who partakes in augmented pork consumption and what does this mean about their cultural identity and social status? The relationship, nevertheless, is multifaceted. Regional and temporal variations exist.

Taking Italy as the core, the empire might be broadly divided into four regions for exploration of animals, romanization, and inequality: North (including Gaul, Britain, and the Germanic provinces), West (Iberia), South (African provinces), and East (Eastern Europe, Greece, and Asia Minor).

Certainly, regional climates and topographies factor into setting limits upon animal-husbandry schemes. Cattle thrive in lowland fields of northern Europe, whereas sheep and goats are better suited to scrublands in North Africa or the eastern Mediterranean. However, diets are not determined exclusively by
local environmental conditions; cultures, like that of the Romans, did shape husbandry and dietary systems. This process appears to take two forms: (1) a “people-led” emulation of Rome and (2) a “military-influenced” catalyst.

First is the relatively abundant contribution of pigs in the Roman diet in Italy, which ties with higher social status, sparking elevated pork levels elsewhere in the empire. Figure 15.1 outlines the rise in pork consumption as measured by the relative frequency of pig bones (by NISP) recovered from pre-Roman and Roman sites in Italy and across the four general regions denoted above. All site types are pooled (rural, urban, military, and so forth), so values reflect averaged patterns within each zone. In some regions, such as southern Iberia, parts of Italy itself, and areas of western North Africa and Gaul, the increase is sizeable (e.g., 10–20 percent, or more). In the north, however, only sites of strong Mediterranean orientation, generally in this case urban centers where greater wealth was typically concentrated and where larger populations of Roman citizens might reside, display the Rome pattern. Immediately, inequality in how the pork-rich Roman diet spread across the empire is evident and not all areas changed equally in this respect.
Succinctly, the pork-rich diet of Rome was being emulated within other high-status, romanized sites, especially urban ones. Inherent within this are additional notions of inequality: Roman versus non-Roman sites, higher-versus lower-statuses, and urban versus nonurban sites. These dichotomies, with their underlying frameworks of inequality, can be extended further with a case study. Pig frequencies between pre-Roman (i.e., Punic) and Roman Carthage, for example, climb from 18.9 percent to 38.5 percent, one of the biggest increases for Roman North Africa. Data for these derive from eleven sites within the city (MacKinnon 2010c). Zooarchaeological evidence does not support the hypothesis that Carthage predominantly imported pigs or cuts of pork from overseas; presumably, it was supplied locally. As pigs cannot easily be herded vast distances, pig breeders would have displaced pastoral herders and grain farmers around Carthage as urban pork demands escalated. The suburban husbandry dynamic therefore changed because of the Romans. Again one encounters an added dimension of inequality: here, an imbalance between farmers and herders who could afford to modify their husbandry schemes and those who could not.

Two principal types of pig-raising operations were possible at Roman Carthage. Both are outlined in the Roman agricultural texts (Columella 7.9.3–4), first for Roman Italy, though the principles proposed could be applicable across larger areas of the Mediterranean as well (MacKinnon 2004). Farms closer to cities could have capitalized on urban demands for tastier, costlier, younger piglets, and practiced biannual breeding schemes, generating surpluses. This option, however, would only be available to sufficiently prosperous farmers who could afford to grow or purchase the necessary fodder for these pigs on otherwise prime suburban lands. Alternatively, pig herds could be kept some distance from the city, where fodder could be more cheaply produced and the pigs either herded or transported to Carthage as required. Given the increasingly complex logistics of this, however, such movements probably occurred annually, perhaps coinciding with harvesting of crops, so pigs could feed off stubble left behind even while making their way to market. Either option would tend to push sheep and goat pastoral operations even further away from city, and would be most productive under a unified, extensive, and relatively peaceful domain, as existed during Roman times.

Romanization also has a military catalyst. Thus, for northwestern provinces we typically cannot refer to a common Italian origin, but rather a “Gallicization” or “Germanization” of the diet (King 1999). Beef was a major meat in the Roman army diet among many northwest regions, averaging 45–65 percent on most sites, but with a greater emphasis on pork in German establishments, and
mutton at British sites, particularly in auxiliary forts and their local supplying towns. Still, the army, particularly the legions, could operate a command economy and exercise dietary preferences without constraints that affected those living closer to subsistence levels (King 1999). Pork was still prized, if it could be acquired. Consequently, legionary assemblages (legions were comprised of Roman citizen-soldiers) generally record higher percentages of pig bones than their auxiliary counterparts (auxiliaries formed the standing noncitizen corps of the Roman army), presumably because pork was seen as higher status, or perhaps had some perceived nostalgic feel to it. Its consumption formed part of identity, even if armies here were not strictly of Italian origin. Inequality in pork consumption, in this case, stems from a divide between military and civilian, and citizen-soldier and noncitizen-soldier, with soldiers, and especially citizen-soldiers, feeding upon more pork.

Sheep and goats dominate eastern Mediterranean Roman assemblages, but military sites here also register relatively more pig bones than do their non-military counterparts. This suggests that the army’s preference for pork had some larger empire-wide component to it, again stressing a level of inequality between military and civilian in terms of diet. Still, environmental limitations restricted levels of pig exploitation in the East. Their frequency values among many eastern romanized sites never increase as much as elsewhere in the empire (King 1999). Cultural choice for increased pork consumption within the Roman army was in part tempered by practical concerns for what the local landscapes could produce. Landscapes and regions themselves, it may be argued, also exhibit inequalities in terms of animal resources.

Romanized pork diets clearly filtered into the provinces, either through emulation of Roman patterns at urban centers, presumably through elite administrators who in turn likely influenced local economies, or through military operations, and legionary desires for pork where available. Embedded within these concepts, however, is a notion of inequality. Control and distribution of pork was not uniform, since frequently the commodity was imbued with deeper meaning, separating Romans from non-Romans, soldier from civilian, elites from peasants and slaves, or, more generally, “haves” from “have-nots.” Pork consumption underscored one’s identity; it could be manipulated to codify inequality on numerous scales—social (who is Roman and who is not), philosophical (who wishes to be Roman and who does not), economic (who can afford to emulate a Roman lifestyle, and who cannot), and so on. Nevertheless, the process was not uniform. Even if other aspects (e.g. fashions, pottery styles, or a myriad of other cultural parameters) may have become markedly Roman, at various intensities and rates, regional identity
within a loosely drawn Roman framework seems best to characterize the diet of the provinces.

PERSISTENCE DESPITE ROMANIZED CONTACT, PRESENCE, OR CONTROL

Romanization is less evident in animal economies of the eastern provinces, which maintain a Hellenistic predominance of sheep and goats. Whether this is deliberate persistence or simply upholding traditional schemes that best suit local geographies and economies is debatable. Nevertheless, it raises questions about dietary persistence despite Roman contact.

Figure 15.2 shows comparative NISP frequencies for pre-Roman (I) and combined Roman Republic (II) and Imperial (III) contexts in Iberia by geographic area (roughly divided as North, West, Central, South, and East). Average frequencies for pigs increase within all areas. Arguably, romanization augmented pork consumption in Iberia overall, much at the expense of beef.

Changes were unequal, however. Northern areas of Iberia changed the least, suggesting dietary persistence; where the frequency of pigs does increase in this zone, it is at urban sites. As highlighted above with Carthage, Roman cities throughout the empire attracted a burgeoning elite population, many of whom, if not Roman citizens already, presumably felt some pressure to emulate romanized lifestyles, including augmented pig consumption (Fentress 2000; MacKinnon 2010c). Western and central Iberia show similar trends: the frequency of cattle drops, sometimes significantly, as sheep/goat and pig values rise under Roman contact, presumably to cater to wool and pork demands upon these regions. In the South, sheep/goat values remain fairly consistent whereas pig numbers increase appreciably. This area saw extensive Roman contact, so significant elevation in pig frequencies lends support for the hypothesis that inhabitants favored a “romanized Italian” diet.

When data for wild animals are added, new patterns emerge. As shown in Figure 15.3, an increase in wild-animal frequencies occurs among practically all regions of Iberia in the Roman period (save the East, where sample sizes are insufficient), but with significant increases in western and central Iberia. In fact, with Roman-period frequencies ranging between 20 and 25 percent, western and central Iberian percentages of wild animals are among the highest for all ancient Mediterranean sites, compared, for example, to an average of less than three percent for sites in Italy (MacKinnon 2004). Why is this so?

The connection between the Roman elite and wild game in Iberia may not be as simple as for Roman Italy, where elevated frequencies of wild animals
generally imply wealthier diets (MacKinnon 2004). Wild animals were plentiful in Iberia during antiquity, as ancient authors attest (Strabo 3.2.6, 3.2.14; Polybius 34.8.4; Martial 1.49). If the local Iberian diet was marked by a high percentage of game initially, then Romans, especially elite Romans, may have distinguished themselves from this “native” pattern by consuming more domesticated, or even exotic animals—in other words, picking a menu distinct from the traditional Iberian one. This then would identify them as Romans. The use of diet, among other parameters, to define social boundaries and ethnic identities appears among many cultures (Barth 1969), including Romans (King 1999). Game animals, Roman elite, and overall Roman influence arguably were all plentiful in southern Iberia, but this is also the location where wild animals were consumed less than elsewhere in Iberia. Elites in Italy may have craved wild resources to help define their identity, but this was not so in southern Iberia where wild animals may not have had as much social significance. Still, no classic romanized dietary patterns are established anywhere in Iberia. This suggests that local patterns persisted in many areas, becoming somewhat modified by romanization, although never entirely supplanted.
Inequality again underlies patterns displayed for Roman Iberia. Elite individuals and Roman citizens often desired to distinguish their meat diet from those less privileged or from those viewed differently from themselves. Inequalities in wealth, rank, and identity-labeling were the criteria creating such divides among people. The choices made to display and advertise such inequalities, however, were contingent on cultural and environmental parameters. Where conditions favored such parameters, pork consumption could be used to denote elite, Roman identity, especially in urban settings. However, a greater abundance of wild animals in Roman Iberia overall, compared to provinces elsewhere, such as Italy and North Africa, diminished the role game meat had in marking dietary inequality. Consequently, alternate patterns for noting dietary, and in turn, social inequality were sought, in this case a drive by elites in some areas of Iberia to augment the proportion of domestic taxa on their menus.

BUTCHERY, MARKETING CHANGES, AND URBANIZATION

As romanized urban sites see an increase in pork, changes also surface in butchery practices. Much relates to the need to process more carcasses for
expanding urban populations. Take cattle in Roman Britain, for example. Up until the Romano-British period, cattle here served primarily as beasts of burden; however, in urban and military enclaves of Roman Britain, cattle became a main source of meat. Experiments involving the replication of cut marks show great uniformity in how animals were processed, especially among Romano-British urban contexts (Seetah 2006). Results indicate a principle of butchery based on quick and efficient dismemberment. Heavy chopping tools are employed frequently, and limb bones are often chopped apart rather than carefully separated with knives (Seetah 2006). Implement and technical specializations are apparent. A degree of interaction among people of different trades (e.g., butchers, metallurgists, herders, and cooks, among others dealing with animals) must have taken place for the level of tool specialization shown.

Meat processing in Britain, therefore, became highly systematic in the Roman period. Personal assessments of faunal assemblages in Italy, North Africa, Greece, and Iberia show similar butchery uniformity that appears with Roman cultural influence (MacKinnon 2002, 2004). These patterns are displayed especially at urbanized sites, and in part exhibit elements that parallel routine, assembly-line procedures in some cases. Could this have happened without the Romans if settlements themselves were naturally headed for greater urbanization? The answer is probably “yes,” but romanization catalyzed urbanization in many areas. Romans sped up this process.

**ROMAN IMPROVEMENTS TO ANIMAL “BREEDS”**

Inequalities also factor in the development and spread of animal “breeds” under the Romans. The term *breed* as used here should be understood as surrounded by quotation marks to distinguish it from modern definitions of the term, which employ a broader understanding of the genetic principles behind the manipulation of physical and behavioral traits in animals (i.e., to create new breeds). Certainly ancient cultures bred animals to promote certain features, but how they distinguished types of the same species often depended more upon geographic location and other features than upon genetic and reproductive criteria today used to mark breeds (MacKinnon 2001, 2010a). Nevertheless, romanization did bring size improvements to animal breeds, most notably domestic cattle, sheep/goats, and pigs (Audoin-Rouzeau 1995; Bökönyi 1984; Filean 2008; Lepetz 1996; MacKinnon 2001, 2004, 2010a; Peters 1998).

Starting with Italy, measurement data record an increase in average withers heights of all three taxa going from Republican to Imperial times (Figure
The biggest changes register in southern and central Italy, presumably related to higher population densities in these areas, and the need to feed cities. Although to some degree the improvement of southern Italian breeds of cattle may be linked with the import of quality stock from Greece, the increase in pigs and sheep/goats is tied with conscious breeding performed by the Romans (Bökönyi and Gal 2010).

When values for Italy are compared to other areas, interesting patterns develop. Figure 15.5 displays height ranges and means for cattle for pre-Roman Europe, alongside values for Roman Imperial Italy, and Roman provincial territories in Hungary, Gaul, Germany, and Britain. Overall the pre-Roman European average is less than all Roman cases. Romanization improved cattle sizes across the empire (Audoin-Rouzeau 1995). Ranges are still sizeable, however, and many smaller breeds were never totally replaced under Roman contact and influence. Nevertheless, following the mean values from Italy to Britain, the impression is that larger breeds appeared first in Italy, and were later disseminated to more distant regions of the Roman Empire. Such a pattern, in part, lends support to a notion of inequality among Roman provinces. Italy appears favored as a center for breeding manipulation, at least as regards breeding larger livestock.
Assessments of animal size using zooarchaeological metric data are contingent on many variables. Cultural, genetic, and environmental factors influence an animal's size and shape. Sexual size dimorphism is also a factor. A change in the balance of the different sex ratios among samples under consideration can result in an apparent size increase (Filean 2008). While the interaction of all of these forces is difficult to determine for the Roman cases above, preliminary analyses show no dramatic variation in environmental conditions or sex ratios among the periods investigated (MacKinnon 2010a). The impression is that size changes within the animals relate largely to cultural factors to “improve” livestock. Nevertheless, although romanization seems to have brought an overall increase in livestock sizes, which seems to funnel out from Italy across the empire, Romans did not eliminate smaller local breeds,
especially breeds of sheep and goats. In fact, the minimum size for sheep/goats in Roman Britain is below the minimum for pre-Roman European contexts (Figure 15.6). It is better to view Romans as shrewd breeders, variously improving or maintaining animal breeds that suited geographies, economies, and diets within regions of their empire.

The focus above has been on withers height, and certainly in many areas animals got taller. What about other traits, like stockiness? Did Romans change these too? Data seem to support as much. In fact, for Italy some of the biggest width and depth changes to cattle bones—variables that correlate with strength, as in pulling plows and carts—coincide neatly across regions that underwent major agricultural and economic change during antiquity.

**Figure 15.6.** Box plot minimum/maximum ranges and means (cm) for sheep/goat withers heights from pre-Roman European contexts (from all geographic regions) and five Roman provincial zones (Italy, Hungary, Gaul, Germany, Britain). The pattern is similar to that of cattle in Figure 15.5. Even as average sizes improve, smaller breeds are not totally eliminated; the minimum for Roman Britain, for example, remains below the minimum for pre-Roman European contexts.
(MacKinnon 2010a). Campanian cattle, for example, show the first significant increases in bone-width measurements during the late Republic and early Empire (MacKinnon 2010a). The same trend is documented for cattle in the Po River area. In Umbria, Romans are responsible for much of the initial developments that eventually lead to the great, white Chianina breed—the variety prized for Roman sacrifices and a model for Roman artistic representations of cattle (MacKinnon 2010a).

The assessment of changes in animal size and shape during Roman times adds another aspect regarding animals and inequality, though now among the animals themselves (as distinct from their use in human dietary aspects). One may argue that Roman breeding tactics created and manipulated “inequalities” among livestock, on a variety of levels. First, there was an overall drive to “improve” stock by breeding larger animals. Consequently, one sees height increases across the empire. Italy, as the core of the Roman world, seems to capitalize on this notion earlier than its provinces—perhaps another example here of regional inequality, with Italy promoting its dominance over other zones. However, animal “inequality” among areas of the Roman world also operated on a second level, with various efforts to select and promote a range of physical and behavioral features within different livestock as suited the local and regional demands and settings. Weight, stockiness, color, hide and wool quality, strength, hardiness, docility, and so forth were among a range of characteristics under selection, all of which the Romans manipulated as suited their needs. In sum, not all animals within a single species were considered equal, and the Romans bred multiple types to augment this variety.

PETS

In the same manner in which sizes and shapes of livestock were manipulated by the Romans, so too did they modify breeds of pet animals, notably some types of dogs (De Grossi Mazzorin and Tagliacozzo 1997; Harcourt 1974). Dogs were by far the most common pet in Roman antiquity. Perhaps the earliest, major proliferation of dog sizes and breeds can be traced to Roman times, where a dramatic range of varieties is displayed among archaeological, ancient textual, and artistic evidence across numerous parts of the empire (De Grossi Mazzorin and Tagliacozzo 1997; Harcourt 1974; MacKinnon 2010b; Toynbee 1973). Pet dogs factor among these types. Particularly noteworthy is the case of an elderly, pathological toy breed (likely an early form of a Maltese) from the Yasmina necropolis in ancient Carthage (MacKinnon and Belanger 2006). This animal was certainly a pampered, cherished pet, considering its
compromised mobility, elderly age, and special feeding needs (it lacked nearly all its teeth). The fact that “lap dogs” appear first in Roman levels at Carthage attests to a growing elite population in the burgeoning city at this time. Toy breeds are not represented in later levels, the assumption being that perhaps only larger, working breeds, such as guard-, hunting-, or shepherding-dogs were favored then.

The example of the Yasmina dog adds another dimension to assessing animals and inequality in Roman times. Here we are dealing with an extremely special pet dog, one whose treatment far surpassed the norm for many other animals, including other pet animals. It was cared for in a manner unequal to most.

What might be the norm for pet-animal treatment in antiquity? This is difficult to assess, given that attitudes toward animals and motivations for pet-keeping varied in the past (Bodson 2000). Literary references record cases of great care among some Roman pet animals, but patterns are inconsistent, and the line separating pets from working or utilitarian animals can be blurred (Gilhus 2006; Toynbee 1973). Some information for the treatment of pet animals, however, is available from the archaeological record. On the basis of zooarchaeological data, patterns of skeletal pathologies among Roman dogs from the Mediterranean largely parallel patterns observed for pre- and post-Roman sites in the larger Old World region (MacKinnon 2010b). Common pathological conditions include dental complications, especially premortem tooth loss, healed limb fractures, osteoarthritis, and infection (MacKinnon 2010b). Generally, these Roman dogs seem to be in good condition, as regards skeletal health, with minimal osteological evidence for human abuse or maltreatment. Moreover, no conclusive data for splinting any broken bones exist, despite the capability to perform such operations as outlined in the ancient Greek and Latin texts (Toynbee 1973; MacKinnon 2010b). Active care toward dogs in the Roman Mediterranean context is indicated, especially in terms of facilitation for feeding. Propensity for injury and illness, and in turn treatment of such ailments may have varied depending on dog breed, size, and role as pet. Smaller toy varieties of dogs in Roman times appear more susceptible to multiple pathological conditions, but also display signs of greater human care, especially in terms of pampering and feeding (MacKinnon 2010b).

In sum, this assessment of Roman dog breeds and their treatment introduces further dimensions to the topic of animals and inequality. First, there is the notion of inequality in appearance and breeding in dogs, best seen perhaps in the development and spread of small toy breeds, themselves not bred on any significant scale in the ancient world prior to Roman times. Second, the
case study from Yasmina, in conjunction with skeletal pathological evidence for differential care among types of dogs in the Roman world, adds a further component, specifically inequality in treatment. This latter form of inequality is itself tied to variation in the emotional connection people felt toward various animals, some of which may be considered pets. Again, not all animals (even those of a single species or which otherwise may appear equal) were viewed, or treated, equally in Roman times.

CONCLUSIONS

This brief assessment of animals and inequality can serve only as a general overview of how zooarchaeological research can assist in tracing patterns of change in animal use across the Roman world. Overall, while romanization did affect aspects such as pork consumption, butchery procedures, and the creation of, and improvements in, breeds or varieties of animals, it is important to stress that changes were not felt equally across the empire, nor were they brought under similar circumstances. Regionalism did remain strong and cases of persistence occurred. Diet can be a central component of one’s identity, as also can be the company one keeps—including nonhuman company: pets, pests, livestock, and so forth. Diets and animal use, moreover, are often formulated within concepts of inequality. Zooarchaeological remains again provide numerous examples of such cultural inequalities in this respect.

Why did these changes and inequalities occur? It seems that no single, sweeping explanation or theory applies. Any number of factors could contribute (e.g., elite change, urbanization, cultural mixing and blending, identity labeling) whether the participants were cognizant or not of the processes or outcomes. Moreover, factors could present themselves in various capacities and at various times, individually or collectively. The complexity behind the process need not be seen as a failure to derive a single sweeping explanation; rather, it is just part of cultural complexity. Most scholars can probably agree that cultural change occurred during Roman times, across the empire. Changes were felt across myriad aspects of culture, and in different ways depending upon the region, time period, group, and aspect in question. Change was not always a top-down or bottom-up event, and how quickly or slowly it occurred depended as much upon how willing people were to embrace change, at one level, as how forceful schemes were to make change happen, despite objections.

To conclude, it is apparent that romanization, inequality, and animals are all interconnected topics. Cultural change, brought as a result of romanization, was often linked with the expression of inequalities. Pork-rich diets, for
example, spread into various areas of the Roman world through two key processes: elite identity labeling and military dietary influence. Both 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. Dietary identity, however, was complex. Regional variation over a generalized “Roman” scheme for augmented pork consumption among elites perhaps best suits the patterns displayed. In some cases, such as the Iberian example outlined above, pigs were not always the best animal to exploit to establish social and dietary inequality. Wild animals sometimes factored in distinguishing inequities, but again much depended on availability, abundance, and other practical factors. Dietary choices made to construct one’s identity, and any inherent inequalities that helped define that identity, were often fluid. What worked in one area or region of the Roman world need not imply that it held the same role elsewhere. Consumption of wild animals in Roman Iberia, for example, appears widespread. Consequently, evidence suggests that elite Romans in southern Iberia chose to augment domestic meats in their diet as a means to express inequality.

The increasingly urbanized nature of Roman society and settlement provided a second means of promoting inequality as regards animal resources. Butchery procedures became more specialized, mechanized, and routine as cities spread and grew under the Roman Empire. Urbanized centers also attracted more elites and Roman citizens, who in turn wished to display their identity and inequality, often through augmented pork consumption.

While variation in the meat consumed within one’s diet is perhaps a common means to structure social inequality during Roman times, it represents but one level in the complex relationship of animals and inequality. Enhanced breeding operations undertaken by the Romans show inequalities among the animals themselves. Evidence supports Roman selection of different traits within livestock—height, strength, and so on—which in turn are displayed in varying proportions among regions of the empire. Larger taxa seem to appear first in Italy, with many subsequently filtering out to other areas of the Roman world. Not only is there an inequality among breeds of livestock, with some deemed “improved,” but perhaps a second level of inequality in such improvements that initiated in specific areas, often Italy. At one level, enhanced breeding under the Romans created inequalities among animal types (some “better” than others), but on another level, specific areas, it seems, may be unequal in this respect, if they represent the zones where the earliest or more earnest breeding was undertaken. Breed proliferation during Roman times is
also expressed among dogs, with the creation of many smaller toy types. This further creates a dimension of inequality in the variation of human care and manipulation of animals. In sum, inequalities permeate multiple components of ancient Roman life. Animals, in turn, form a vital means to examine the range of inequalities that exist in human social, cultural, emotional, and behavioral aspects.

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