Chapter One

Archaeological Perspectives on Inequality

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In contemporary society we continuously experience the existence, the threat, and the consequences of inequality. It happens every day on both global and personal scales, affecting individual lives as well as groups and societies. In modern times, the debate on inequality is mostly focused on the economic distortions within the society, the differences in income, and their social outcomes. Examples of such climates can be found in recent history, as part of the worldwide 99% and Occupy movements.

Current journalism looks at ancient inequalities, projecting the modern situation onto the ancient one, in a rather naive way.[1] The result is major confusion for both students and the general public. There is a series of scholars, from Gherard Emmanuel Lenski (1966) to Milanovic and colleagues (2010), who believe that economic inequality reached its peak before the Industrial Revolution. Milanovic and colleagues argued that there is less inequality nowadays than in the past, since today the ruling elite are "extracting" less income from their citizens. As a matter of fact, it is hard to compare modern and ancient situations without taking into account the substantial differences between the social and economic structures of the societies. As a consequence, a fruitful comparison between present and past should be very carefully thought-out.

Without such a hypermodern economic view, inequality reveals itself through the presence of unbalanced relationships and can result (and usually does) in uneven relations between genders and ages, but also in terms of ethnicity, religion, freedom, and so on. Social and political divisions within communities were a common feature in past civilizations all around the world. In many ancient cultures there were several discrimination strategies; social boundaries, economic concentrations, and exclusions were typical aspects of many ancient communities, in a way that is not different to the modern world (Giddens 2007:61–71; Khan 2012). Social inequality in antiquity is a complex issue that is often contentious among prehistorians and anthropologists, while it is taken for granted or not considered at all by most of the classical archaeologists (Price and Hayden, this volume). Much contention revolves around how to interpret the available archaeological and historical records, or the cultural models for societies and interactions.

The study of ancient inequality began well before the modern archaeological approach. In fact, several philosophers and thinkers had addressed the issues of human relationships as determining the social structures of communities, and where the origins of the inequalities are rooted. For the greater part of human history, the existing order was regarded as a natural feature of the society, and the intellectual task was mainly to explain or justify this order in terms of religious or quasi-religious doctrines. In the fourth century BC, Aristotle addressed the issue with the following words:

> In the first place we see that all states are made up of families, and in the multitude of citizen there must be some rich and some poor, and some in a middle condition; the rich are heavy-armed, and the poor not. Of the common people, some are husbandmen, and some traders, and some artisans. There are also notable differences of wealth and property—for example, in the number of horses which they keep, for they cannot afford to keep them unless they are rich. . . . Besides differences of wealth there are differences of rank and merit, and there are some other elements. (Aristotle, Politics IV.3)

It was only with the Enlightenment that a critical "rhetoric of equality" emerged in opposition to the civil and legal advantages of the aristocracy and other privileged groups. The declaration expressed by J.-J. Rousseau in *The Social Contract* (1762), "[M]an is born free, and yet we see him everywhere in chains," is the best example of this approach.

Nowadays, there is much attention paid to understanding the nature, the origin, and the evolution of inequalities among human beings, but when it comes to defining what inequality is, there is much debate and, as a result, there are many ways in which inequality can be conceptualized. To better analyze ancient inequalities, both on the social and the individual level, archaeology and anthropology take advantage of approaches and findings borrowed from many other disciplines, such as ethnography, sociology, economy, demography, physical anthropology, geography, and so on. Current approaches often elaborate on the works of modern sociologists and thinkers (M. Weber, V. Pareto, G. Mosca, P. Bourdieu, T. Veblen, J. Pakulski, A. Giddens, etc.).

That part of archaeology that focuses on relationships within communities is often called *social archaeology* (Renfrew and Bahn 2007:141; Wason 1994; Meskell and Preucel 2004; Ames 2008; Haas 2001; Paynter 1989; Smith 2012; Hodder 1982; Shanks and Tilley 1982). Since material culture is fundamentally inherent in the process of self-representation as well as in the configuration of social time and space, this approach focuses on the materiality of human existence, from conceptualization, to making and use, to discard and reuse. For archaeologists, some classes of evidence are more revealing than others, such as burial customs, decorative styles, settlement hierarchy, food consumption, household arrangements, or pottery (Ames 2008; Wason 1994), but the inquiry on inequality can be operated on almost every aspect of the archaeological evidence. Nevertheless, every type of evidence requires some premises that must be tested only under a careful analysis. The strength and reliability of the documentation is enhanced if coupled with other types of evidence, and a diachronic analysis might shed light on potential changes over time.

Following the strong IEMA tradition of interdisciplinarity, this book aims to present and debate different aspects of social boundaries, by comparing several approaches and methods for the analysis of archaeological data, as well as actual case studies. The 19 international scholars that were involved in the two-day conference at Buffalo explored practical methods of analysis as well as the theories about ancient inequality, how these are culturally shaped and reflected in the material culture.

The contributions collected in this conference proceedings are devoted to the Mediterranean, Europe, and North America, from the Neolithic to the Roman Imperial time and the 20th century CE. Their focuses and approaches are varied, as well as the case studies they discuss, ranging from settlement analysis to funerary evidence, from physical anthropology to demography, from architecture to epigraphy and iconography, from theory to the presentation of new finds. As we are aware of the complexity of the topic of the conference we did not want to cover all the aspects, but, rather, to present a variety of approaches from different disciplines at different levels of the theoretical framework.

The different essays collected in this book aim to present the results of past studies together with some novel investigations. It is appropriate to summarize some of the main archaeological approaches and the contribution to the topic made by the essays presented to the reader. In addition to the chronological and geographical order followed in the book, it is possible to highlight some alternative trajectories connecting the different papers, from the relation among individuals of a single community, to the wider territorial perspective. This volume addresses how the archaeological evidence is varied and rich in information about the social structure, but at the same time how it sometimes provides unclear data, often difficult to understand.

The Process of Differentiation: From Natural Differences to Social Stratification

Human beings are alike, but differ in personalities, intelligence, interests, skills, and other individual characteristics that by nature define horizontal, fair categories. On the other hand, divisions are socially constructed, and their precise forms vary over time from community to community. Differences become inequalities when they are invested with cultural and social meanings, or unequal access to resources and shares, or to knowledge. In the progressive development of the social structure, social categories and roles assume different values and are perceived—or practiced—in a stratified ranking, marking the passage from social divisions to social stratifications.

Among the major elements that describe social inequalities, there are status, gender, age, and ethnicity (Price and Feinman 2010). Those elements, today as in the past, are deeply connected to each other and often overlapping. Every identity is constituted at the same time by a multiplicity of attributes, a condition that is sometimes referred to as "intersectionality" (Meskell and Preucel 2004:121–141; Preucel and Mrozowski 2010:284).

While archaeological methods of investigating ancient inequalities vary, the common threads are the analyses of differential access to basic resources and prestige, production and surplus, elite control, and the nature of structural power (Hayden 1995; Price and Feinman 2010; Wolf 1999; Price and Brun this volume). Each level of this multifaceted system is a challenge for scholars, given that each requires specific methods of inquiry in a continuous relation with the limits and fragmentary nature of the archaeological record. The major sources for archaeologists are administrative evidence, burial analysis and wealth differentiation, monuments and public works, means and forms of production, settlement analysis and demography, material culture, iconography, warfare, land ownership, written records, and ethnography (Ames 2008; Wason 1994).

As long as social inequalities can be defined in terms of differences in power and status, distribution and access to resources, within and between societies, such inequalities are created and maintained by those in powerful positions via social processes and institutions. The dynamics of power relationships, domination, and resistance have also been partially investigated in recent years (Paynter and McGuire 1991:1–27). Moreover, the powerful affirmation of even (egalitarian) or uneven (hierarchical) social organization is a controversial topic often given as a key factor in determining the relative success (or not) of ancient societies (Westgate this volume).

Many variations can be found among historical—as well as modern—societies. However, these variations, even when showing different degrees of social complexity, should not be seen as evolutionary steps in a continuous development. It is even true that in the initial stages of the process of development it can stop and move back, as a result of social negotiation and dominance mitigation (Hayden 1995; Price, Parkinson, and Brun this volume). In past decades, several efforts have been made to identify and describe general trends within this range of variations (Brun this volume). The most popular is the one designed by Service in the 1960s, and later criticized and further developed, that makes a distinction between band, tribe, chiefdom, and state (Service 1962; Kristiansen 1998; Drennan, Peterson, and Fox 2010; Peregrine 2012; Peterson and Drennan 2012; Drennan Peterson 2012). Using a simpler model, we can recognize egalitarian, ranked, and stratified societies, each characterized by the different access that people had to basic resources, prestige, and power positions. The model can be sketched as follows:

	basic resources	**prestige position**	**structural power**
Egalitarian	equal access	equal access	absent
Ranked	equal access	differential access	sometimes
Stratified	differential access	differential access	common

From the structuralist to the cognitive, from the functionalist to the interactionist, every school of interpretation highlights different triggering factors for the development of inequality in early communities and the development of cultural complexity: population pressure, risk management, social or ideological factors, social or geographical circumscription, ritual values, external threats, resources control and management, feastings and debts, demographic imbalance, storage management, environmental conditions (Hayden 1995; Hendon 2000). The emergence of potential leaders and social struggles seems to appear in every human group that is larger than 50–100 people (Hayden 1995) and a stratified level of power and administration occurs in every complex society. In terms of economic functioning, the development of private property and binding contracts are critical elements in the establishment of structured power, resulting in further levels of social restraint.

The first chapters of this book deal with the emergence of social inequality from different points of view and shed light on its economic foundations. The paper presented here by Price provides a thorough analysis of differences between early gatherers and more structured hunter-gatherers. The latter show some degree of social complexity and organization, but only some groups seem to have institutionalized inequalities. On the other hand, gatherers have customs and social strategies to limit individual attitudes and to guarantee egalitarian behaviors. As a conclusion to his extensive survey, Price argues that the beginning of social inequality lies within the changes associated with the origins of agriculture, together with the earliest forms of hereditary status differentiation. Surplus, wealth, feasting, prestige technologies, corporate and network strategies are the main factors involved in the emergence of inequality, though they are affected by issues of visibility of their material correlates. During the Neolithic, when some individuals or social groups gained power and wealth, the many ceded their egalitarian status for benefits in terms of reliable food and greater security.

In his chapter, Hayden summarizes his past research and highlights the early signs of complexity and inequality among the transegalitarian societies of hunter-gatherers of the American Northwest Plateau, an environmental area with great diversity in natural resources. Both ethnographically and archaeologically, the major centers on the plateau exhibited pronounced wealth, sedentism, large communities, inequalities, but also a coexistence of corporate and more egalitarian groups. The area studied by Hayden exhibits relevant cultural similarities with Near Eastern Late Mesolithic cultures, such as the Natufian, and contributes to the development of more general explanatory models for the emergence of inequality, also taking advantage of relatively detailed ethnographic accounts available for the Northwest Plateau. Hayden criticizes some theoretical concepts followed by others, such as the institutionalized inequalities and the hyper-heterarchical approach, offering a coherent view of the archaeological evidence. He provides evidence for a strong correlation between the distribution of prestige items and the best fish procurement sites and discusses other classes of evidence such as burials and houses. Following a political ecology approach, Hayden rejects a stress-driven theory while supporting a surplus-and-aggrandizer model as the base for an economically based inequality. In Hayden's view, transegalitarian societies are based on privately owned surplus production, and a variety of competitive aggrandizer strategies are meant to increase self-interests and benefits.

Parkinson in this volume addresses the origins of institutionalized hereditary political and economic inequality within early agricultural villages of southeastern Europe, from the

Neolithic to the Bronze Age. In this area, patterns of landscape occupation and changes in material culture style characterize the long period between the establishment of sedentary agricultural villages and the emergence of societies with institutionalized hereditary ranking and hierarchy. His peculiar approach stresses how the archaeological perspective on the emergence of social inequalities is skewed by success stories that Parkinson considers exceptional with respect to human history. He focuses on what he calls "false starts" that never experienced political and economic complexity and did not persist over time, but that can be extremely useful in order to understand the reason for great historical changes. False starts occur in social contexts that are precocious and cannot support a certain social process. In his area, for example, massive settlements dating back to the Neolithic were abandoned and only reoccupied later, when both the historical situation and social life had changed. During this new phase, the previous large households were replaced by smaller houses with storage facilities, denoting a change in the family structure. These new social conditions were likely more suitable for the development of permanent inequalities.

Similar trends of cyclic evolution and crisis are presented in Brun's chapter, which describes the social changes that occurred in France through five distinct stages during the Iron Age. Giving an explanation for the cultural oscillation in Iron Age France, Brun seems to follow an environmental model, where climate improvements correspond to political and economic growth. Migration of groups involved the entire area, causing further turbulence but also new contacts with external people, such as the Etruscans and the Greeks. Also, the technical development of iron tools caused an increase in agropastoralism and supported the gradual formation of large political entities, from simple to complex chiefdoms. At the end of this process, the political centers were managed by political institutions such as magistrates, oligarchs, and judges, while small and large armies defended the cities. Coins and writing were introduced and functioned as administrative tools for these new political entities. At the same time, the funerary evidence does not present signs of significant social stratification, so perhaps religion and ideological customs were masking the stratified structure of the society.

Household, Gender, Age, and the Body

Other forms of discrimination are based on age and gender, and have different outcomes in different types of societies. In more egalitarian societies (i.e., hunter-gatherers), the social categories of age and gender do not take on rigid and determining qualities; all voices provide some contribution to the community decision making (Gilchrist 2004). In these "simple" societies, status and roles are not based on economic production and resource management (Hayden this volume). In hierarchical societies, in which access to inherited property is crucial for economic well-being, age and gender criteria are frequently quite rigid and strongly sanctioned. An example is the textile production and specialization of the advanced Iron Age communities in central Italy: early female burials show several tool sets associated with different phases of spinning and weaving, the sort of activities that were likely performed by females of different ages (Gleba 2008).

In different cultures and times, the social roles of gender and age were also affected by the concept of the household. The household is in fact a social arena for economic organization, structure, power, and agency, but also, as the place for everyday experience and practice, it is crucial for the construction of social identity (Hendon 2004).

Of course, it is necessary to be aware that roles exercised in a social group based on cultural divisions are not constant, but may change over time; and sometimes this phenomenon makes it very difficult to analyze the material evidence and extract meaningful information. An example is the variation in the status value of men and women during the course of a lifetime: in many ethnographic cases, women's status improves once menopause has released them from reproductive roles, and they achieve a senior place within the family through institutionalized roles of grandmothers or mothers-in-law (Gilchrist 2004). A woman's influence grows with age, since her power over kin and household increases until she dominates more generations of the family. Men, in contrast, achieve greater public power, but hold this authority for a shorter period, with influence decreasing with age and the termination of military activity.

Children and the young have different consideration and status in egalitarian and hierarchical societies, and their productive role can change as well. Their involvement in social life is often marked by stages (each with specific roles and tasks) that may vary in different cultures. Young girls and boys can have separate and complex pathways to adulthood, as shown by L. Beaumont (2000) for fifth century Athens. Moreover, the young usually have funerary practices and tomb locations separated from the rest of the community, in isolated burial grounds or within the settlements (Gilchrist 2004).

The paper by Bagnasco investigates the relationship between men and women in terms of social polarity, both in the archaeological and the textual evidence. It is still hard to define Etruscan women's condition through the lens of the archaeological and literary record but recent analyses can shed new light on the topic. For example, the series of painted tombs found at Tarquinii show women taking part in banquets and feasting over more than three centuries, but it is not easy to understand how much this representation reflects the actual condition of females and how it changed over time, even in restricted aristocratic circles. Epigraphic evidence is somehow elusive too, but a relevant presence of inscriptions with women's names, rather than men's, is clearly documented. Furthermore, the most ancient texts mention women and female goddesses. Textile production—a typically female activity—is a symbolic action connected by Bagnasco to the social role of bringing together what is socially parted, as if threads of a fabric. And it is significant that the earliest epigraphic evidence in Etruscan archaeology comes from textile evidence. Bagnasco also stresses how early literacy is related to women, as a system of "organizing signs." Bagnasco highlights how the role of women was also central to some cult activities, for example, at the "monumental complex" of Tarquinii. As a matter of fact, onomastics shows that the Etruscan woman had some relevant legal rights, but the condition of women and their role within society had also changed over time.

A completely different approach to inequality is offered in this volume by Muller, who introduces the potential impact of inequalities on the physiology of the human body, as recorded in skeletal remains. The evidence discussed by her belongs to impoverished and marginalized peoples from the recent past, but has broader applications. The paper constitutes a great contribution to the theme of the book because it proposes a point of view that is far from the traditional archaeological perspective, but whose integration is beneficial. In particular, Muller clarifies how in addition to cultural and social outcomes of inequality, specific sets of behavior, biology, and psychology could impact the material dimension of humans, both positively and/or negatively. Analytical study of the micro- and macroscopic evidence preserved in bones can result in the recovery of the causes of death, such as violence or the social and environmental conditions at the time of death.

The Unequal Death

The evidence from the necropolis is somehow more revealing. Although the funerary contexts can be strongly characterized by customs influenced by religion and ritual practices, the tombs are usually a well-preserved context, providing multiple levels of information about society, ideology, and religious beliefs (Wason 1994). In many ancient societies, funerary rituals constituted a public arena where social structure was reaffirmed. Thus, from an archaeological perspective, the analysis of the variation in the disposal treatments and patterns of association can help identify the position of the deceased within the social framework.

In this volume, Hanks presents a case study from the Southern Ural Mountains region, where archaeological evidence suggests relevant social, economic, and political change during the second and first millennia BC. Special focus is given to the complex picture of mortuary practice and symbolism in the area that is greatly changing thanks to modern research and analyses. The burial record is varied and several intriguing cases are discussed by Hanks, showing how some complex evidence can bear multiple meanings. In particular, the high degree of variability of some burial contexts encourages a more nuanced understanding of mortuary rituals and their relationship with social practices and organization. While cemeteries revealed the disposal of select members of the community and special burial customs, contemporary settlements have not revealed any clear difference in terms of house structures and associated material finds. Moreover, the use of cemeteries sometimes continues long after the abandonment of the related settlement, denoting different social functions as well as the crucial role of the tombs as a way of legitimizing access and control over environmental resources.

The complete analysis of a necropolis can show major changes in burial customs, sometimes related to changes in the right to a formal burial. Different trajectories of burial practices in ancient Greece have been widely explored (Morris 1992; Whitley 1996), but similar trends can also be found in other areas. For instance, if we look at the prominent urban center of Cerveteri in Etruria during the Iron Age and the early Archaic period, a marked drop is evident in the number of burials at the end of the eighth century BC, at a time when the city went through a major political expansion, when new monumental burials were erected and new economic and power systems were established. While a demographic decrease is very questionable, it seems likely that this phenomenon represents a deep change in civic burial rights (Cerasuolo 2016). The illusory disappearing of a part of the community, or its invisibility in the archaeological record, must emphasize the idea that most of the time only a part of the society left a durable evidence, while the rest of the community is also marginalized in terms of the archaeological record.

Marginalization is surely at the base of the development of social inequalities, and in its extreme forms led to slavery. It is one of the goals of the ruling class to create and maintain the marginalization of part of its community, as well as of other communities. The ruler eases the marginalization, for example dislocating manpower to build monuments, fostering the specialization of craftsmen (that are by nature not self-sufficient), or conditioning the economy (for example, by organizing communal feasts or redistributing prestige goods). Furthermore, aspiring rulers used the social imbalance caused by marginalization to act as advisors and negotiators, thus increasing their power (Hayden 1995).

The so-called deviant burials are often attributed to individuals of lower social status. An interesting project devoted to late prehistoric Italy is presented here by Saracino and colleagues. They collected burial data from cemeteries and settlements in order to understand whether abnormal mortuary practices (special rites, body treatment, lack of grave goods, isolated location, etc.) and osteological characteristics might be connected to the "marginal" social situations of specific individuals. Burial findings from settlements and natural locations seem to be related to specific ritual activities typical of liminal areas. The funerary variability has been connected by Saracino and colleagues to changes in the ritual practices and the economy of this region, and might have expressed changing perspectives on social inclusion and exclusion.

In antiquity, a common selective process, perhaps testifying to status and age marginalization, was that a part of the community, sometimes the great majority, never received a formal burial. The Dalsoglio chapter discusses a pattern of differentiation among the Transitional and Protogeometric burials in the Kerameikos cemetery at Athens through quantitative and qualitative analyses as well as the measurement of the energy expenditure. The sample is small but significant. During that period, burials became selective, and likely only the higher part of society received a formal burial, even if there was a strong egalitarian ideology and self-representation (Morris 1987; Whitley 1991). The number of burials is inversely proportional to the quantity of pottery and metal objects found in them; a few graves (about 20 percent) stand out among all the others, which contain precious and rare items. There are male burials with and without weapons, while female burials can be divided into rich and poor depositions; higher tombs being generally female. Thus, the grave hierarchy based on gender and status constitutes a further differentiation among an already selected group, while most of the community did not receive a formal burial.

The funerary custom of ancient Greece is a crucial topic, and two more papers analyze the Iron Age evidence for male (D'Onofrio) and female (Vlachou) burials. D'Onofrio focuses on the complex evidence of weapons in the funerary set of the protohistoric

Athens and provides a comprehensive dataset. Weapons, together with personal ornaments, are present in only about 20 percent of the male burials and are clearly a marker of (engendered) rank selection, as is also highlighted by their presence in adolescent graves. Weapons are buried in a few tombs and distributed regularly in intervals of decades, suggesting, in the framework of a strong continuity of use of burial plots, the presence of single-armed males for every generation (perhaps the subsequent masters of the *oikos*). The distribution of these graves in the necropolis suggests that they pertain to local, corporate descent groups. Ritual damage to the weapons is common and the presence of swords, in particular, carries significant symbolic meanings, as in the use of wrapping it around the neck of the cinerary urn in a sort of long-lasting embrace. In a few fortunate cases, particular tombs show a combination of local and foreign elements together with a marginal location within the necropolis. For example the case of tomb PG2N, where local pottery is associated with one of the most ancient swords found at Athens, recalls an Argive custom.

As we move to the female burials, Vlachou provides an updated and in-depth analysis. From her point of view, Attica offers an important perspective for the study of the role of women in Greek society. The funerary record reveals significant inequalities in burial treatments and sheds light on the representation of wealth, status, age, and gender both vertically and horizontally. A long-term view allows for an analysis of the constant negotiation of an individual's role within the broader social context. In the framework of funerary customs, burial practices and the selection of specific classes of items serve as ritual choices. Some hints of the representation of relatively lower classes are also recovered from the archaeological record. Patterns in the distribution of burial gifts demonstrates that wealthier burials tend to incorporate personal items of value as well as ritual options exercised by the relatives during the funeral. The evidence is complex and there are trends that cross vertical distinctions of wealth. Female burials, especially young females, seem to represent the major social arena for aristocratic families, with more complex funerary sets and rituals. The lavishness of items and their quantity, or in some cases just their presence, may constitute an indicator of rank. The careful analysis made by Vlachou points out which items are personal (those burned on the pyre together with the dead body) and which are added during the interment (that is, outside the urn). The latter perhaps might be connected to family choices, in the light of social display of power.

An interesting approach is the one proposed by Borbonus in his paper, which discusses inequality more in terms of political dynamics than of social injustice, marking an important difference between modern and ancient perceptions of inequality. The author analyzes a distinctive form of organized collective burial, used by urban slaves and freed slaves, starting from a dataset of funerary epitaphs and the characteristics of the architectonic monuments—the *colombaria*. It is an interesting case study because of the nature of the relationship that binds the individuals, which is not familial but socially selective, structured and regulated by specific customs. Beyond the funerary aspects, the *collegia* created complex networks of relation supporting the members and creating new levels of interactions, which also worked as a "social pressure valve."

Economy and Subordination

All of the evidence of economic activity and resource management might result in a formative condition of status. At least since the Chalcolithic period, the evidence of hunting, as well as animal raising and management has been interpreted as a means of communicating social position, status, and group membership inside and outside the household (i.e., Arbuckle 2012). The social use of food in feasting and other communal activities is a powerful tool in the hand of the ruling individuals and groups, and represents “gastro-politics,” as defined by Appadurai (1981).

Classical historians have addressed the issues of economy size and income distribution in the Roman world, as the available sources are more abundant. For the Roman Empire period, several attempts have been made to assess the Gross Domestic Product based on the expenditure, income, and the supposed consumption of wheat (Scheidel and Friesen 2009). These analyses are mostly focused on the wealthy classes, while the data about subordinates are more faint and difficult to recover.

A robust analysis of the historical and archaeological sources related to the servants in the last phases of the Etruscan civilization is undertaken by †Torelli in this volume. The object of his study is to understand the dynamics of emancipation and the character of the subordinate classes before and after the definition of a new social role at a crucial historical turning point. The analysis highlights a far-reaching network of cultural connections and local developments, demonstrated by historical accounts and archaeological finds. The social dimension of slavery is part of major economic activities, such as metal production and landscape management. Servants, both men and women, have also a central role in ritual, as the evidence from sanctuaries clearly shows. But the historical reconstruction, through the sequence of political claims and social achievements, suggests also the chain of priorities felt by the Etruscan servants, which are ultimately directed toward reshaping the social order.

Zelnick Abramowitz, in this volume, discusses levels of social status in classical Athens. They were demarcated by administrative boundaries (born citizens, naturalized citizens, metics, slaves, etc.), not always matching with individual economics resources. These statuses entailed access to different civil rights, but ambiguity was common, since in the relatively big city of Athens a person’s status could be questioned on a few occasions. The privileges and social rights were also affected by temporary situations, that is, noncitizens could take part in some religious celebrations together with citizens, as equals, while being separated for the rest of everyday life. How one’s political condition was socially visible in ancient Greece is still hard to say, as different sources of information give different pictures of citizenship attributes.

De Ligt offers the reader a complete synthesis of many aspects of inequality in the Roman world from a long-term perspective. The evolution of major developments related to funerary practice, social organization, politics, and dissent as well as the economic bases are discussed in depth thanks to a robust theoretical framework.

The chapter by Fentress provides an account of an exceptional discovery of slave barracks in the area of a large Roman Imperial residence. The similarity between the excavated building and the military barracks is evident and perhaps reflects a logic of optimization of functions and spaces. The analysis of the findings provides an interesting range of data about life, work, material culture, diet, health condition, death, and many other aspects of the people living in the barracks. For the author of the paper it is also a chance to gather the rare evidence of similar housing for the constrained labor force in other areas. The examples seem to highlight complex and articulated structures, conceived in order to keep workforces relatively comfortable, though productive. A general comparison between a similar situation between the Late Republic and Early Empire suggests a worsening of the conditions of slaves over time.

The contribution by McCallum addresses the issue of measuring inequality in the Roman countryside of Italy, based on the evidence for an imperial estate and its structured economy. By the end of the first century AD, these estates were collectively the most important land property in the empire and constituted a complex economic and social reality that was managed directly by imperial agents or tenant farmers. Thanks to literary sources, epigraphy, and archaeological remains, McCallum attempts the first analysis of both the internal organization of the estate and the broader economic interaction of imperial estates and other land properties. The imperial estates, though largely variable, were complex infrastructures, with diversified functions and spaces, as well as an articulated material culture. Available data allows a general comparison of slave organization—mostly productive—both within the single context and in its association with representative and residential elements. The distribution of the different types of estates and their relation to resources and services are also explored in the paper. In general, the imperial estate could be seen as a self-sufficient and market-oriented community, located at crucial nodes of multilevel networks, differentiated in relation to their political and natural landscape. Thus, the economic dynamics echo inequality at a landscape level. At such a large scale, to fully understand the evidence under discussion, it is necessary to develop a holistic approach, for which McCallum poses a first systematic operational scheme.

Inequality and Spatial Relations

Within archaeological studies, spatial analysis began to develop in the 1950s (Wason 1994:128–138). Spatial approaches have been used in different ways by different generations of archaeologists, but the general trend has changed from "how people are conditioned by the landscape" to "how people interact with the landscape" to "how people shape the landscape." Since these approaches are not contradictory, today's trend is to put them together, in a more comprehensive, multidimensional analysis.

Spatial analysis considers any pattern of distribution of elements (settlements or building) as useful for defining hierarchy and rank. This is based on the assumption that higher characteristics are material expressions of individuals or groups with leadership functions controlling part or the entirety of the economic process. Consequently, the idea is that we can infer spatial hierarchy and social inequality from any evidence of personal status. Of course, the direct correlation between the ranking of individuals and spatial ranking is not always accurate, and it must be proven case by case.

At the broader landscape level, the social basis for the stratification among sites is the centralization of certain activities. This results in the concentration both of the physical structures used directly for these activities (palaces, archives, etc.), and of the material correlates of their presence. Of course, the character of residences might be affected by a large number of factors external to the social or economic organization: environment, history, utilitarian consideration, social factors, and religious beliefs.

At the level of a single settlement, structure, plan, and architecture may indicate functional differentiation among buildings, implying specialization and role division among residents (Wason 1994:134). Other features usually listed among the evidence of nonegalitarian settlements (although none are in themselves sufficient) are the presence of major residence size differentials and the presence of nonresidential constructions. These are considered as direct evidence of different statuses, although not necessarily of different ranking (Renfrew 1972). Organization and planning can say a lot about the social organization of the communities, since planning requires leadership and capacity to exercise power.

There are a series of elements that seem to be important to verify the existence of social differences; major differences among them point toward qualitative differences in status. The house of the ruling family might be larger than the other houses because the leaders would require more space to house crafts, food, and equipment, and since it would serve additional purposes or accommodate different activities (social, public meeting space, etc.) in contrast to a normal household. In many civilizations, the houses of the chiefs were important to the religious/ritual system and were used for feasts. If we look in more detail at the structure of the dwellings, we might also derive hints about the social relationships among the members of the household (Blanton 1995; Morris 1999; Westgate 2007; Goldberg 2013; Hayden this volume).

The case of the earliest Greek domestic architecture is very illustrative. Morris (1999) identifies changes in the use of domestic space in the eighth century BC and suggests that the contrast between Homer and later sources does indeed represent an important diachronic shift in gender ideologies in the central parts of Greece. Before 800 BC, attitudes toward gender were much more flexible than those we see in archaic and classical literary sources; but, by 700, the outlines of the classical model, with a more segregated role of women, were starting to become visible. Parallel changes can be seen in the domestic architecture: for example at Oropos and Zagora, the huts belonging to the eighth century were built in open spaces and all the domestic activities were performed outdoors, where everyone could see each other. Later, the huts were surrounded by precincts, where all activities were done inside a courtyard, in a more private environment. And this exceptional transformation occurred within the space of a single human lifetime.

The number of architecturally discrete spaces in the houses and the pattern of connections between the spaces tend to reflect social relations linking the members of the community (Westgate 2007; Blanton 1994). The patterns of circulation within the houses also define different degrees of privacy and interactions between the individuals living in the houses.

The contribution by Westgate in this book further develops the issue of domestic characteristics and organization in the framework of social relations. Through a clear theoretical setting and the available literary sources, she highlights how the analysis of ancient Greek houses could be meaningful, though not straightforward, in determining wealth, political, and status differentiation. To Westgate, the traditional view of large or elaborate households as belonging to rulers is far too simplistic. An analytic analysis might reveal a more complex reality. She considers a range of variables that are potentially linked to inequality, including size and prominence of the house, differences in plan and specialization of the spaces, finishing, decoration, and architectural features. At least until the archaic period, differences in house size was limited, and major buildings seem not to offer any preserved evidence of socially strong functions (such as banquets) formally shaped in the house. In the Classical period, although it has been argued that housing indicates a relatively high degree of equality in wealth as a reflection of a more democratic political organization, the variation between houses is greater than before, with larger and more elaborate buildings at the top end of the scale. In Hellenistic times, a period of rulers with near-absolute power, the differences become even larger. Some of the royal palaces partially survived and even without the evidence of perishable adornments they still preserve paintings and mosaics of superior quality. In light of Westgate's research, it is evident that a great part of the social self-representation is not preserved in the house architecture alone and could only be inferred through a multilevel analysis of the entire range of evidence.

Artifacts and Inequality

To infer the value of status or rank from artifacts (i.e., pottery or architecture) is a delicate operation subject to strong interpretation and uncertainty; general rules are hard to find, and meanings are most of the time culture- or context-based.

Material culture is definitely involved in practices designed to accomplish social goals. Consumption is a social process, and is part of how people define themselves and their identities. As Hodder argued in his seminal work in 1986, material culture should be read as a text. The study of material culture displays the relationship between structure and context, and the object's meanings need to be built up through a difficult contextual consideration of similarities and differences.

Even though most of the chapters of this book consider different aspects of material culture, only a few really deal with it systematically. In general, two points can be made about the relationship between artifacts' variety and the social complexity. First, the greater the variation and complexity in the status system, the greater the variety in artifacts. In fact, hierarchical societies need more items, especially nonutilitarian artifacts, to display differences in status, than do nonhierarchical ones; and greater variety in style generally has a positive correlation with social articulation (Rice 1981). Second, higher-status individuals will acquire a greater variety and number of objects than those of lower status, as some artifacts are restricted to the higher status people (Wason 1994; Rice 1989).

Conclusion

Ancient communities, like modern ones, are not uniform and should not be characterized as such. As the papers collected here will show, there is no single or simple way to define inequality. In general, social inequality manifests itself in different ways within and between communities, often changing over time due to many causes. When examining inequality, it is fundamental to use a combination of several sources and measurements, with a holistic approach, in order to test the research hypothesis. A diachronic perspective and large-scale analysis greatly assist in identifying the major historical processes of our past.

The extremely broad cross-cultural view proposed in this book is meant to cover many different regions and periods and to offer a variety of approaches to the topic through case studies grounded in archaeological evidence as well as epigraphy and historical data. Every piece of evidence discussed in these chapters contributes to the general picture of ancient inequality, and a number of the papers in this book provide a fine introduction to the theoretical debates on social inequality and recent perspectives. While studies of slavery, gender, and ethnicity are relatively common, the IEMA conference explored them as intersecting areas of study within the larger framework of inequality that exemplify to what degree archaeologists can identify and analyze different patterns of inequality. Nevertheless, it seems impossible to develop a general theory of inequality in antiquity since the causes and results of social articulation are affected by cultural and environmental factors, and as such, they exist specific to both time and local scale. Still, it is possible to define wide-ranging strategies for the archaeological analysis of inequality, in relation to social and economic complexity. We hope this collective work will constitute a valuable contribution to the development of the study of inequality in antiquity and support the interdisciplinary trend in social archaeology.

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Note

1. For example: Tim Dechant, "Income Inequality in the Roman Empire," *Per Square Mile*, December 16, 2011; Gillian Berman, "U.S. Income Inequality Higher Than Roman Empire's Levels: Study," *The Huffington Post*, December 19, 2011; Michael E. Smith, "Inequality—the 99% in ancient times," *Wide Urban World*, May 22, 2012.

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